A merger of the Montana State Golf Association and the Montana State Women’s Golf Association was approved by the MSGA Board of Directors by a unanimous vote during the 100th Annual Meeting of the MSGA, August 16, 2017, at Green Meadow Country Club in Helena.

After various discussions during recent years, the MSGA and MSWGA decided to form an exploratory committee regarding a merger of associations. Over the past year, the MSGA/MSWGA Merger Committee has met nine times.

The committee’s focus was to discuss the advantages/disadvantages of merging the two organizations and to determine what a merged organization might look like. The committee, which was made up of four directors from each organization, determined that the positives outweighed the negatives and that a merger would be in the best interest of golfers across Montana.

The committee focused on four areas of a merged organization: governance, committee structure, finances, and tournament administration.

“From 1917-1951 the two associations were together, then they split into two. In 2017, that doesn’t make sense. Combined we can do more together to further golf in Montana,” MSGA Executive Director Jim Opitz said.

Committee discussion yielded a consensus that one merged organization will have the opportunity to focus on growing golf among women and juniors, which will strengthen the success of golf courses and golf programs throughout the state.

Women will have the opportunity to develop and implement women’s programs, instead of concentrating on the women’s championship. Additionally, the women’s association will have additional leadership opportunities. Carla Berg of Sidney and Mary Bryson of Helena were the first two female board members of the MSGA. Other female members will join them as committee and board structures are revised and determined.  

...Continued on the next page
Joe Cielak Wins 31st Montana State Mid-Amateur Title

*Nick Dietzen, MSGA Communications Director*

Joe Cielak of Libby defeated Ross Bartell of Great Falls in a one-hole playoff at Green Meadow Country Club in Helena to win the 31st Montana State Mid-Amateur Championship.

With 54 holes not being enough to crown a champion, the two players hit drives on the dogleg left first hole into the fairway and each reached the green on their approach shots. After both players lagged their birdie puts to within ten feet, a measurement was taken to determine which player would putt next. Cielak calmly made a seven-footer. Bartell was unable to equal the par, narrowly missing his attempt and recording his only three-putt of the championship.

Cielak, who bogeyed the opening hole, was the picture of consistency as the veteran tournament player made six birdies en route to shooting a final round 67 (-4), with sides of 33-34, and finishing three under for the championship.

Cielak played in the second-to-last group and, while a large gallery followed the final group...

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**MERGE ... from previous page**

“The goals of both organizations are to enrich all aspects of golf in the state of Montana. Since our purposes are the same, it’s a benefit for Montana for us to be joined as one association — we can be more effective and efficient and provide better service as we grow the game for all golfers in Montana,” MSGA board member Mary Bryson said.

**Benefits/Advantages of a Merger**

The Committee recommended the MSGA and MSWGA merge into one organization primarily because a merged organization allows for more efficient use of existing resources to encourage the growth of golf in Montana. There are several benefits identified by the Committee. These include:

- One membership fee for clubs;
- One handicap fee for individuals which represents their membership fee in the organization;
- Centralize tournament administration, including consistent and professional championship and event administration;
- Coordinated site selection, extending further into the future;
- Growth of competitive and recreational golf opportunities for all, encouraging greater participation in MSGA/MSWGA sponsored events;
- An expanded source of volunteers with the opportunity to more efficiently use volunteers;
- Greater financial stability of the organization with the opportunity to obtain corporate sponsorship and build the endowment program; and
- The power and resources to grow and impact golf in Montana with the combined effort and energy of the two organizations.

Prior to the merger, there were three amateur championships in Montana conducted by the MSGA and two championships conducted by the MSWGA.

2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the Montana State Amateur and Montana Women’s State Amateur. Each organization recognized their centennial achievement with a celebration in Missoula and Laurel respectively.

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*From Left: Jim Opitz (MSGA Executive Director), Joe Cielak, Tod Fitterer, Chad Carlson (GMCC Pro)*
of leaders (Brady Kirkeby, Parker Heller, Ross Bartell, and Mark Mance), Cielak was staging a come-from-behind victory going unnoticed, aside from his playing partners.

Using a series of strong iron shots and knocking in putts inside ten-feet, Cielak encountered his only real difficulty on his final hole. On the 18th, Cielak’s tee shot went left into the trees and found the cart path. Cielak attempted to carry the creek running through Green Meadow, but was unsuccessful. He took a penalty shot, found the green, and two-putted for his first bogey since the opening hole. Cielak made birdies on 4, 7, 9, 11, 14, and 16.

Bartell, who shot the low round of day two, followed up with another red number shooting 70. The Great Falls competitor had an eventful front nine of 36, which included a birdie on five, an eagle on eight, and four bogeys. On the back nine, he birdied 10 and 14, bogeyed 17, and was able to get up and down for birdie on 18 for 34 on the back, good enough to force the playoff.

Following the 210 (-3) numbers posted by Cielak and Bartell was Brady Kirkeby of Helena in third, who despite five birdies, shot 73, his only round over par of the tournament. Mark Mance of Whitefish, the defending champion, came out with 33 on the front, but could not break par on the back, settling for 37, a one-under round of 70, and a total of 213. Parker Heller’s attempt to go wire-to-wire was unsuccessful as the Helenan shot 75, despite five birdies. Heller finished at 214. Bill Leach of Bozeman shot 216 following a final round of even par. Spencer Williams of Helena shot a closing round 69 to move into seventh position.

Not only did Cielak win the tournament, but also collected the Joe Tomes Trophy, awarded to the low competitor age 50 and above. Ben MacIntyre of Helena fired the low round of the day and tournament with a 66, earning him the Dick Pittman trophy for the tournament’s low round. MacIntyre made a double bogey on hole one, but managed to shoot even par 35 on the front and put together a five birdie back nine of 31, to tie for eighth place with Bob Hasquet. Hasquet of Missoula made five birdies en route to 69, to close out at 219 with MacIntyre. Rounding out the top ten was a three way tie with all players coming from Helena. Todd Waterman (72), Michael Williams (74), and Nick Dietzen (75) all shot 220 for the three days.

Whitefish Lake Golf Club will play host to the 2018 Men’s Mid-Amateur Championship. The Mid-Am is open to players 25 and older with handicap indexes of 15 and below.

Complete hole-by-hole results can be found here: [http://tms.golfnet.com/registration/?eventId=11311#d_leaderboard](http://tms.golfnet.com/registration/?eventId=11311#d_leaderboard).
Alberta Sweeps 26th Montana-Alberta Junior Ryder Cup
Nick Dietzen, MSGA Communications Director

The Treasure State sent a dozen junior golfers to Medicine Hat, Alberta, to compete in the 26th Montana-Alberta Junior Ryder Cup. Although the Canadians prevailed in both the girls and boys matches, our juniors had a competitive trip and were praised by captains on both teams for their grit, determination, and most importantly – sportsmanship.

The junior golfers competed with each match having three Nassau points available: one point for the winner of the front nine, one for the back nine, and one for the full match. The two-day tournament featured four ball, alternate shot, and individual match competitions.

On the boys side, Alberta led 6-3 following four ball competition and extended their lead to 13-5 after alternate shot matches. The Montana boys made a valiant comeback during individual matches claiming 12 of the 18 points over the six matches. Bucky Crippen, Carson Hackman, Jack Thorsen, and Braxton Humphrey all swept their individual matches. The overall tally was 19-17. Boys representing Montana were: Carson Hackman (Laurel), Jarek Shepard (Conrad), Bucky Crippen (Missoula), Jack Thorsen (Bozeman), Braxton Humphrey (Billings), and Rylan Periman (Great Falls).

On the girls side, Alberta started strong in four ball with a 7-2 lead, and narrowly extended the lead after 5-4 alternate shot in the Canadians’ favor. With a 12-6 lead heading into individual matches, Kylie Esh swept her match, but Alberta bested Montana 11-7 for a 23-13 overall win. Girls representing Montana were: Carrie Carpenter (Billings), Isadora Tomazeli (Missoula), Tricia Joyce (Butte), Laurel Ward (Bozeman), Kinsey Irvin (Lewistown), and Kylie Esh (Missoula).

Joe Rossman of Belgrade and Sparkey McLean of Anaconda captained the Montana squad. Next year, Montana’s Whitefish Lake Golf Course will play host to the 27th Montana-Alberta Junior Ryder Cup.

For full results, click here. To view a photo gallery, click here.

High Schoolers Posting Low Scores
Nick Dietzen, MSGA Communications Director

The fall golf season is underway in the prep ranks and, although school has yet to start, the season is reaching the halfway point. It didn’t take long for some red-hot performances to be recorded.

Record-setting golf is becoming routine with standouts Ryggs Johnston of Libby and Joey Moore of Billings putting together eye-popping rounds. A veritable “anything you can do, I can match” has been waged on the scoreboards as the two high school champions posted competition rounds of 61 before September.

Johnston, the two-time defending Class B medalist at Libby High School is now competing in Class A with the Loggers. Those familiar with Johnston’s game knew the step up in class would likely mean a step down for most of Class B in the standings, and it didn’t take long for the future Arizona State Sun Devil to exhibit his skills in his first event of the season.

At Whitefish Lake Golf Course, Johnston posted 61 (11-under) on the North Course, besting acclaimed club professional Ryan Malby, who owned the record of 64 from the championship tees. Johnston posted 61 on the white tees, but it was confirmed by Whitefish Lake that the 61 will stand as the new course record, breaking Malby’s record that stood for 17 years. Previously, Johnston had owned the junior course record at Whitefish (65, posted two years ago). ...Continued on the next page
LOW SCORES ... from previous page

Johnston’s 61 matched his career competition low, which he set this past May at the Class B State Tournament held at Marias Valley in Shelby. Johnston is two-for-two on the season with a win at Meadow Lake in Columbia Falls after shooting 69.

Billings West defending State AA Champion, Joey Moore, is heading into his senior year. Moore had a terrific summer that included a playoff win over Johnston in the Earl Hunt 4th of July Memorial Tournament at Whitefish Lake. Moore, who has committed to San Diego State, has also started the high school season in style.

In his second tournament of the season in Billings, Moore posted a 10-under 61 at Peter Yegen Golf Club. The 61, was a personal best for Moore. He followed that up with a 66 at Lake Hills Golf Course to finish with a sizzling 16-under-par performance and sixteen shots clear of second place. Moore opened the season with a win at the Great Falls Invitational for the third consecutive year after shooting 65-71. To cap off the month, he made a double-eagle not only during his round of 61, but again in a practice round at Yellowstone Country Club.

To borrow a phrase from the PGA Tour Marketing Handbook – “These Guys Are Good!”

Note: A full recap of high school events will be featured in next month’s newsletter.

Attention 2017 Men’s State Am and Mid Am Players:

We need your help!
A brief survey was e-mailed to you, and we want your opinions!! If you didn’t receive the e-mail or didn’t have a chance to respond, please CLICK HERE to be directed to the online survey.
Thanks for your support!

msgagolf.org/golf-etiquette-101

Want to see something in the newsletter?
Contact Nick Dietzen at:
nick@msgagolf.org
(406) 459-3459

SQUIRREL ANTICS!

Sue Matson, fighting with a squirrel for her ball - Round 2 of the Women’s Senior Amateur in July.
August News and Notes
Nick Dietzen, MSGA Communications Director

Old Works Suffers Flood Damage

Heavy rain in July caused significant damage at Old Works Golf Course in Anaconda. The world-class Jack Nicklaus-designed course is open and playable, but will not be completely at its best until spring of 2018.

Anaconda-Deer Lodge County and Atlantic Richfield reached an agreement last week on repair work and reimbursement for lost green fees. The estimate is $660,000 to repair the course from flood damage.

Over the span of about 20 minutes on the evening of July 15, 0.77 inches of rain fell, causing significant damage to the course. Old Works had to close eight holes at first, and the damage hurt the Jack Nicklaus-designed course economically.

All the holes are now open. The sludge that came off the hillside above the course was 18 inches to two feet deep in some spots. The silt and sediment almost covered the ball washer at the end of Hole 3 according to officials. Additionally, thousands of bricks from Anaconda’s first smelter washed down onto the course. Rocks the size of bowling balls rolled onto the course. An arch along the side of the fairway was destroyed.

Old Works, a superfund site that acts as a protective cap over arsenic and other metals in the soil, has been a tremendous draw for golfers in southwest Montana and celebrated it’s 20th Anniversary last fall.

University of Montana Golf Coach Steps Down

University of Montana women’s golf coach, Matt Higgins, has announced that he will be taking a position as coach and administrator at Upper Iowa University, an NCAA Division II school in Fayette, Iowa.

A national search will be conducted to find Higgins’ replacement. Montana opens its fall schedule in two weeks, co-hosting with Montana State the Battle at Old Works in Anaconda on September 11-12.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
Emily Hulsey, MSGA Handicap and Website Coordinator

What is the difference between my Trend and Official Handicap Index? How do I edit or delete a score? Have you ever had a question like this, but weren’t sure where to find the answer? The MSGA website has a whole page dedicated to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). There, you will likely find the answer you are looking for, to questions like Why is there an “R” after my Handicap Index?, Should I post out-of-state scores?, Can I link my out-of-state membership to my MSGA membership?, How do I adjust my score with Equitable Stroke Control (ESC)?, What is Montana’s official golf season?, and more. The FAQ page is located at www.msgagolf.org/golfer-faq, or under the Golfer Tools tab.

And, club administrators, we didn’t leave you out! There is also a whole page dedicated to your questions, like How do we move the handicap software to a different computer?, How do we transfer a golfer to our course?, How can we get a copy of the Tournament Software?, What is the Staff category for?, How do I mark a golfer as a Junior?, among others. The Club FAQ page is located at www.msgagolf.org/club-faq, or under the Club Resources tab.

If, after looking through the FAQ, you are still unable to find the answer to your question, please feel free to contact me at support@msgagolf.org. I would be glad to help!
2017 Recipients For Junior Grant Programs

Dillon $1000
Fairfield $500
Scobey $500
Plentywood $500
Wheat Montana $500
Stillwater $500
Rolling Hills $500
Missoula (1) $500
Pine Meadows $500
Baker $500
Missoula (2) $500
Marias Valley $500
Sidney $1000
Polson $1000
Trestle Creek $500

PLEASE HELP OUR MONTANA JUNIORS

The first drawing for this year’s raffle starts in September, and we only have A THIRD of the tickets sold!! Without your support, we won’t have the funding needed to assist these programs, so PLEASE buy your ticket today! Don’t want to go it alone? Buy a ticket together with your friends and have a mini-raffle or drawing.

The proceeds are entirely devoted to funding junior golf programs in Montana, so it’s for a good cause, our kids!

For more information, visit www.msgagolf.org/raffle-fundraiser.