2017 Year in Review – MSGA Celebrates Its 100th Anniversary

Nick Dietzen, MSGA Communications Director

As we draw to the close of 2017, it was a banner year for the Montana State Golf Association on many fronts. Not only did the MSGA celebrate a birthday, but the association made some big changes also.

On the competition side was the centennial celebration of both the Montana State Amateur and the Montana State Women's Amateur. Caleb Stetzner of Anaconda claimed the 100th Montana State Amateur Championship at Missoula Country Club and Teigan Avery of Kalispell was victorious at Laurel Golf Club for the 100th Montana State Women’s Amateur. It was fitting that two Treasure State products have gone from being state junior standouts, to prep phenoms, to current NCAA golfers, with Stetzner competing at MSU-Billings and Avery playing at the University of Montana.

The MSGA celebrated its centennial during the Men’s State Amateur in July at Missoula Country Club. We looked back at the last 100 years and nostalgically celebrated the past champions and programs of the MSGA. We are pleased to offer MSGA Members the 100th Anniversary Retrospective online, with both history and photographs from the past century of MSGA golf. The booklet can be found here.

Most noteworthy was the announcement of a decision to merge the MSGA and the MSWGA. This took place during the 100th Annual Meeting of the MSGA in August at the Green Meadow Country Club in Helena. The merger of the two associations was approved by the MSGA Board of Directors by a unanimous vote. Thanks to the diligent work of an exploratory committee, which was made up of board of directors from each organization, it was determined that the positives outweighed the negatives and that a merger would be in the best interest of golfers across Montana.

2017 also saw not only a renewal, but also growth in the MSGA Junior Instruction Grant Program, as charitable dollars were allocated statewide to grant applicants working towards junior golf education and programming for grades K-8. To learn more about the MSGA Junior Grant Program, click here. You may support junior golf in Montana permanently with a tax deductible and potentially tax-credit eligible gift by donating here.

Celebrating 100 years of golf in Montana has been a great opportunity to look back on the successes and examine opportunities for the future. The MSGA is well positioned to make the next 100 years even better for golf in Montana. We couldn’t do it without your membership and your support. Thank you for being friends of the Montana State Golf Association and cheers to the next 100 years!
NCAA Signees Announced and Prep Coaches of the Year Honored

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Messmer, Irvin Sign with MSU-Billings

MSU-Billings announced the first two signings for the 2018-19 season as Tierney Messmer of Sidney and Kinsey Irvin of Lewistown inked with the Yellowjackets.

Tierney Messmer, a three-time All-State golfer and 2017 Class A State Champion from Sidney, comes to Billings following a very successful senior campaign in which she won six of the nine tournaments she competed in, including the year-end state championship. Messmer was a four-time letter winner in basketball and was academic all-state each year. "I chose MSU-B because I like the golf program and the family atmosphere," Messmer said. "I truly appreciate the attention Coach Woodin has given me and the generous offer to play golf for the Yellowjackets. I feel the University campus is a nice size and within close proximity to my hometown," Messmer said.

Kinsey Irvin, a three-sport athlete at Fergus High School in Lewistown was named all-conference in each of her four seasons and all-state three times. Additionally, Irvin garnered academic all-state each year and was voted team MVP in each of her four seasons on the links. Irvin finished third this season at the state championship; as a junior she was second. "I am excited to be part of a team that draws some of the best golfers in the state and region, and I am looking forward to the challenging competition and tournament venues in the GNAC," Irvin said.

University of Montana Signs Two, Including Missoula's Esh

Class B State Champion Kylie Esh of Loyola Sacred Heart is staying local for her collegiate golf as the prep standout signed with the hometown University of Montana Grizzlies. Joining Esh in the 2018-19 class is Brooklyn Van Bebber, of Murrieta, California.

In her final year at Loyola Sacred Heart High School, Kylie Esh claimed the state title in dominating fashion with a 13-stroke victory. Esh was born in Shelby into a golfing family. Her father was the head pro at Marias Valley Golf Course. Her mother played at Washington State. The family moved to Idaho, but returned to Montana when her father accepted the golf pro position at the Mission Mountain Golf Course in Ronan in the summer of 2016, and Esh promptly introduced herself to the junior scene with a win at the state juniors. She rolled to the Class B championship in May, placed second at the Montana junior tournament in June, and tied for 11th at the Junior America's Cup in Nevada in August. “When I moved here last year, I fell in love with the town and the people. I love Missoula and all the support the University gets from everyone,” said Esh.

Brooklyn Van Bebber of Murrieta Valley High School claimed the Southwestern League individual title as a junior, winning the 36-hole tournament at the Cross Creek Golf Club in Temecula by five strokes. Van Bebber won the competitive Southwestern League championship as a junior. This fall, as a senior, she advanced out of the CIF-Southern Section Individual Regional and into the CIF-Southern Section Individual Championship. “I chose Montana because I wanted a college town with good surroundings and a nice team,” said Van Bebber. “Montana is beautiful, and I love the nature that surrounds Missoula.”

Montana State Adds Two for 2018-19 Class

Hailey Oster and Sofia Rodriguez Todd have signed their National Letters of Intent to join the Montana State University Women’s Golf Team. Oster will join MSU after she completes her prep career at Camas High School in Camas, Washington. A four-time letter winner for the Papermakers, Oster was instrumental in leading her high school team as a junior to a second consecutive runner-up finish at the WIAA 4A state meet this past spring by taking ninth overall with a two-round score of 154. Oster has earned all-league and all-region first team honors each golf season during her prep career. The senior has competed in myriad events as a junior including the Future Champions Golf Championship, the USGA Girls’ Junior Qualifier and PNGA Qualifier. Oster won the West Combine SKILLS Challenge in 2016 and this past summer was the medalist at the Portland City/Bob Allard Memorial Tournament by winning in playoff...Continued next page
hoses after shooting a 153 (76-77). “Hailey will be a good addition and she has some great experience. She's an experienced player over in the Washington area and we like to add players with plenty of experience on the course. She's competed in a lot of tournaments, which is also important to me as well,” Bobcats coach Brittany Basye said.

Rodriguez is an international talent from Madrid, Spain, and has experience at multiple levels of golf. She's played regional, national, and international tournaments since she was 10 years old and currently attends school while competing for the Golf Federation of Madrid. Rodriguez had success at a young age, capturing Madrid's U-12 and U-14 championships in 2012 and 2014, respectively. In 2017, she has been the first-place finisher in two different Sub-18 tournaments in Madrid. She also has been a recipient of two team titles at meets as a member of the Federation. She earned a top 15-showing at the Open Barcelona Championship this year. Rodriguez will join MSU having played in more than 20 national tournaments and having passed the cut at the Copa Valencia this past year. The future MSU golfer has family that lives in the United States and is fluent in both English and Spanish. “I think adding Sofia is a win for us. She's a top recruit coming out of Spain. She's a great kid, comes from a great family, she loves golf, has a ton of experience, and she plays daily,” said Basye.

High School Coaches of the Year Honored

The Montana High School Association has announced the 2017 coaches of the year, and four coaches received honors for golf. In the AA ranks, Marcus Drange of Billings West was named coach of the year for boys golf, while Matt Clark of Bozeman was selected coach of the year for girls golf. Class A saw Jim O’Neil of Laurel (boys) and Benjamin Berg of Sidney (girls) selected for coaching honors.

Class AA and A golf have their seasons in the fall, while class B and C conduct their play during the spring. Coaches of the year for B and C will be announced next spring.

High School Golf Spectator Rule Gaining Attention Locally, Nationally

This past June, the Montana State Junior Championship's tournament committee made a determination to allow spectators on the course at Marias Valley Golf Course in Shelby.

The decision was met with great reception as numerous family members of junior golfers thanked and congratulated both staff led by Dale Newell at Marias Valley and MSGA staff and volunteers led by board of director Sparkey McLean, as well as P.J. Boatwright Jr. Intern Lauren Hausauer, for allowing spectators to watch the action.

If you're surprised to learn that junior golf in Montana has not been a spectator endeavor, you won't be for long, as a petition made to the Montana High School Association to allow for spectators on the golf course for high school events has drawn not only support in Montana, but attention and signatures nationally.

Of the fifty states, Alaska does not have golf as a prep sport; only New Jersey and Montana have any rules forbidding spectators on the course. Chris Kelley of Emigrant, Montana, initiated a petition online at change.org, asking to repeal the MHSA’s rule. The petition, which can be found here, has had over 2,100 signatures as of December 12th and the number has been increasing steadily, thanks to news coverage both in Montana and reaching the national level, with outlets such as the Golf Channel picking up the story.

The Montana State High School Association rulebook reads: “No spectators/fans are allowed on the course except for certain locations as designated by the tournament manager and club professional.” The designated areas refer to areas like the tee box on the first hole or the 18th green. Depending on the course and the area, these may not be accessible.

Discussion of this topic is hardly new to the MHSA ranks as coaches, administrators, course operators, ...Cont. next page
SPECTATOR RULE ... from previous page

and parents alike have discussed the perceived benefits and detriments to allowing spectators on the course during high school tournaments. Montana High School Association member schools have cited numerous reasons for keeping potential spectators out of harm’s way in addition to the concerns over behavior related to spectators. Other sports are played in/on smaller venues, but golf courses are thousands of yards long and present a different challenge. “From an administrative standpoint, it would be a challenge to hire additional marshals to be able to manage the huge area that goes along with a golf course,” said Brian Michelotti, an assistant director of the Montana High School Association.

Thanks to Kelley’s online petition and the exposure drawn from it, a bevy of supporters of the repeal have voiced their opinions and rationale. Golf has been both unique and consistent in that spectators are not a part of the athletic experience in Montana at the high school level. This not only has created a culture of disappointed family members unable to watch the action, but also has prevented potential collegiate coaches from scouting prospects during competition.

“I can go to a softball game and I can sit right behind the pitcher. I can make hand signals,” MSU Women’s Golf coach and high school golf parent Brittany Basye said. “I can yell out names. I can do the same thing on a softball field that might affect that kid. Football games we can yell as loud as we want when someone is making a pass or a catch.”

While the outcome of the petition and potential rule changes is unclear, what is certain is the conversation has drawn significantly more attention. The MSGA is considering the positive reception for having allowed spectators on the course at the most recent State Junior Championship and will continue to review policies going forward in regards to spectators in the junior ranks.

100th Anniversary Booklet Available Online

We’re pleased to make available an online booklet that commemorates our first 100 years! The following is an excerpt of comments from MSGA board member George Geise:

“Any organization or business that manages to operate successfully for 100 years must be doing something right, and we happen to believe that the Montana State Golf Association has done quite a few things right over the past century.

To celebrate ten decades of service to the game of golf in the Treasure State, we are taking a long look back at the good old days, beginning in 1917 when the MSGA sponsored its first state tournament. ... To be sure, the goal of our project wasn’t to write a comprehensive history of golf in Montana. While that is a noble ambition, it’s a target that exceeds our modest research resources. However, since this is the 100th anniversary of the Montana State Golf Association – and its vital partner, the Montana State Women’s Golf Association -- we believe there is no better time to examine the role of our groups in the development of golf in Montana, and also to look at the role we ought to play in growing the sport in the future.”

You can read or download an electronic copy of this booklet by going to the MSGA website at www.msgagolf.org, or by clicking this link: http://www.msgagolf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MSGA-100th-Anniversary-Booklet.pdf.

PLEASE HELP OUR JUNIORS!

ALL proceeds go to support Junior golf programs in Montana! Go to www.msgagolf.org/raffle-fundraiser for more information. Get your ticket today! Thanks for your support!

Congratulations to our NEWEST WINNERS!

NOVEMBER’S DRAWING:
- Rosalie Meltzer and Jan Dean, Missoula
  $200 cash - Dean & Hope Folkvord, Three Forks

** DECEMBER’S TRIP is to Victoria, British Columbia **
VIDEO REVIEW PROTOCOLS FOR BROADCASTED GOLF EVENTS

A working group led by the USGA and The R&A has unanimously agreed to adopt a new set of protocols for video review when applying the Rules of Golf. The group, consisting of the PGA TOUR, LPGA, PGA European Tour, Ladies European Tour, and The PGA of America, as well as the governing bodies, will implement the following measures as of January 1, 2018:

- Assign one or more officials to monitor the video broadcast of a competition to help identify and resolve rules issues as they arise.
- Discontinue any steps to facilitate or consider viewer call-ins as part of the rules decision process.

In addition, the USGA and The R&A have approved the adoption of a Local Rule, available from January 1, to eliminate the additional two-stroke penalty for failing to include a penalty on the scorecard when the player was unaware of the penalty. All of the organizations represented on the working group will introduce the Local Rule for 2018, and this scorecard penalty will be permanently removed when the modernized Rules of Golf take effect on January 1, 2019.

The USGA and The R&A established the video review working group in April to initiate a collaborative discussion on the role video footage can play when applying the Rules, including the challenges and benefits of its use and also the issues that arise from viewer call-ins.

“The level of collaboration with our partners has been both vital and gratifying as we look to the future,” said Thomas Pagel, USGA senior director of the Rules of Golf and Amateur Status. “As technology has continued to evolve, it has allowed us to evolve how we operate, as well.” To watch an interview on usga.org with Pagel on Video Review, plus a copy of the protocols and full Local Rule, click here.

David Rickman, Executive Director – Governance at The R&A, said, “This has clearly become an important issue in the sport that we felt we should address at this stage, ahead of the implementation of the updated Rules of Golf in 2019. “We have concluded that whilst players should continue to be penalized for all breaches of the Rules during a competition, including any that come to light after the scorecard is returned, an additional penalty for the scorecard error is not required.” The new protocols also recognize the importance of limiting video review to material obtained from the committee’s broadcast partner. Other video, such as from an individual’s smartphone or camera, will not be used under these protocols.

The new protocols and Local Rule are the latest measures announced by the USGA and The R&A to address concerns related to video evidence. In April, Decision 34-3/10 was issued to limit the use of video through the introduction of a “reasonable judgment” standard and a “naked eye” standard. For more information, see usga.org or randa.org.

CHANGE OF VENUE ANNOUNCED - 2019 U.S. AMATEUR FOUR-BALL CHAMPIONSHIP

The USGA announced that the 2019 U.S. Amateur Four-Ball Championship will be relocated from Chambers Bay in University Place, Washington, to Bandon Dunes Golf Resort in Bandon, Oregon, to accommodate a turfgrass transition project at Chambers Bay.

“The USGA is extremely grateful to owner Mike Keiser and Bandon Dunes, a trusted supporter of amateur golf, for agreeing to host the 2019 U.S. Amateur Four-Ball while this work occurs at Chambers Bay,” said John Bodenhamer, the USGA’s senior managing director of Championships and Governance. “We also acknowledge the foresight and initiative of everyone at Chambers Bay in undertaking this work.”

Montana’s Official Golf Season:
April 1 to October 31
Off-season scores played in Montana should not be posted. Scores played where it is in-season are valid and should be posted, via the online handicap system, smartphone app, or membership linking.