Season Opens With Course Restrictions
Emily Hulsey, MSGA Handicap and Website Coordinator

This certainly isn't what we envisioned for the start of our golf season, but we find ourselves in uncharted territory. As of the release of this newsletter, Montana is under a "Stay at Home" order until April 10, to help stop the progression of COVID-19.

According to the Governor's Directive, people will be able to take part in outdoor activities, but must keep a safe distance from others. Golf Courses can remain open, if they choose, but will abide by strict guidelines of sanitizing, along with enforcing social distancing of at least 6 feet. Pro Shops and clubhouses have closed doors to the public, with no in-person retail sales, but take-out orders and making tee times are okay, as long as they can be done by phone or online.

Some courses have removed bunker rakes and have raised the bottom of the cups so that you don't have to touch the flagstick to remove your ball. Some are allowing carts, with restrictions, and some aren't. And, some have implemented even more restrictions, but please cooperate with their efforts to protect you. Don't come if you are sick, and if you have been sick, you should quarantine yourself and your household for 14 days. It's a good idea to include hand sanitizer in your golf bag, and to leave the course as soon as possible after your round, to keep any crowds to a minimum.

These restrictions could change, one way or the other, in coming weeks. But, if we all do our part, it will help speed up the efforts to control the spread of the virus - a good thing for everyone! And, hopefully long before our season ends!

How will the temporary course adaptations affect your scores posted for handicap purposes? The USGA has made temporary allowances for this situation, so that, in most cases, your scores will still be legal. Please click here to see the USGA Frequently Asked Questions for more detail about course modifications, including flagsticks, bunker rakes, and modifications to the hole or hole liner.

If you have any questions about the Governor of Montana's Directive, please click here to see the Frequently Asked Questions document.
New State Tournaments Added!

The MSGA is proud to announce its first Men’s and Women’s State Four-Ball Tournament set for August 22-23, 2020, at the Marias Valley Golf & Country Club in Shelby, Montana.

A Four-Ball competition is a team event in which two golfers partner with one another. Each golfer plays his or her own ball throughout each hole. The lower of the partner’s score becomes the team score for that hole. The plan is to have Men’s and Women’s gross and net divisions, as well as a net mixed team division. More detailed information will come soon.

There will also be a Women’s Mid-Am added to the Women’s State & Senior Amateur Tournament. The required age to participate is 30 years and older. The Women’s Tournament Committee is excited about this new offering for women in the state.

Montana Golf News
Lauren Nielson, MSGA Newsletter Contributor

Big Sky Conference - The Montana State Bobcats completed their first two tournaments of the season this spring. The first was the Grand Canyon University Invitational.

The team was led by seniors Delaney Elliott and Kelly Hooper. Both golfers totaled 151 for the 36-hole tournament. Their rounds placed them in 27th overall. Lucia Prieto Romano carded 162 to tie for 71st. Sofia Rodriguez Todd tied for 74th with a 163. Coral Shulz shot 165 to tie for 78th. The Bobcats took 13th as a team, carding a 625 for the 36 holes. Grand Canyon University won the tournament, shooting a team score of 576.

The second tournament of the season for the Bobcats was the Dr. Donnis Thompson Invitational in Kane‘ohe, Hawaii. Delaney Elliott led the team, carding a 12-over-par 228. Her score placed her in 44th overall. She was followed by Kelly Hooper and Coral Schulz, who both shot 234 and tied for 62nd. Sofia Rodriguez Todd shot 243, placing her in 83rd. Lucia Prieto Romano finished in 85th with a 245. The Bobcats took 14th place as a team, with a score of 934 for the three rounds. Arizona State won the tournament with a total score of 852.

The University of Montana Griz team traveled to Saint George, Utah, for the Lady Thunderbird Invitational at Sunbrook Golf Club. The team carded a score of 309 for the first round. They were led by sophomore Kylie Esh’s 71. Faith D’Ortenzio and Tricia Joyce both shot 79. Allison Sobol shot an 80. The second round of the tournament was canceled. Kylie Esh ended the tournament tied for second with Kersten Convoy from Weber State. The Griz ended the tournament in 8th place as a team. Southern Utah University shot a first-day round of 296, leaving them in 1st place overall. They finished just one stroke ahead of South Dakota State.

The Carroll College Fighting Saints competed in the MJGA Collegiate Tournament at Aliante Golf Course in Las Vegas, Nevada. ... Continued next page
GOLF NEWS ... from previous page

The men were led by Joseph Potknojak with a two-round score of 157. He tied for 22nd. Samuel Berry shot 159, placing him in a tie for 27th. He was followed by Connor Mora (184), Josh Neth (187), and Palmer Moylan (222). The men finished in ninth place overall with their total score of 687.

On the women’s side for Carroll College, Caroline Hobson and Weslee Nehl both shot a two-round score of 176. They were followed by Katie Fagg (177), Cailin Spencer (179), and Sydnee Nowlen (194). The women’s score of 708 placed them in fifth as a team.

The men’s MSUB Yellowjackets competed in two tournaments this spring. The first was the Bay Area Invitational hosted by Holy Names University in northern California. The men’s team was led by Garrett Woodin with a three-round total of 224. His score left him tied for 27th overall. He was followed by senior Payton Stott (234), Caleb Trost (235), Riley Lawrence shot (243), Kevin Kolb (244), and Riley Kaercher (249). Garrett Woodin was named the St. Vincent Golfer of the Tournament.

The second men’s MSUB tournament was in Livermore, California, at Poppy Hills Golf Course. Again, Garrett Woodin led the team and finished in 14th place overall with a three-round score of 923. Payton Stott tied for 38th with a score of 231. Riley Kaercher carded a 236 and tied for 54th. Rounding out the team, Riley Lawrence shot 241, and Kevin Kolb shot 251. The team finished in 11th place overall. The Academy of Art won the event as a team, shooting a three-round score of 876 (+13). Joey Herrera from California State East Bay won the tournament with a score of 211.

The women’s MSUB Yellowjackets team competed in one tournament this spring. They traveled to the Tim Tierney Pioneer Shootout hosted by California State University, Easy Bay. The team shot a total of 709 for the two-round tournament, and they finished in 18th place overall. Tierney Messmer shot 164 to lead the Yellowjacket team. Kinsey Irvin shot 180, Avery Gill shot 185, Sydney Rochford shot 186, and Jalen Wagner shot 188. California State University, San Marcos won the tournament, shooting a two-round score of 597. Jamie Jacob from CSU San Marcos carded a score of 140 total to win the individual title.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, there will be an unexpectedly short season this year for all of our Montana college golfers. All remaining 2020 spring competitions and championships have been canceled. Additionally, all Montana High School Association sports have been indefinitely suspended until further notice. The MHSA board will reevaluate on April 13th.

Congratulations to our NEWEST WINNERS!

MARCH’S DRAWING:
Park City, Utah - Deanna Carpenter
$200 cash - Marcia Hafner, Laurel

** APRIL’S TRIP PRIZE is Palm Springs, California **
MARCH 17, 2020 - Given the recent CDC guidance and the evolving dynamics of the Coronavirus pandemic, the USGA announced today that it has canceled its first two 2020 championships, the U.S. Women’s Amateur Four-Ball, originally scheduled for April 25-29 at Quail Creek Country Club in Naples, Florida, and the U.S. Amateur Four-Ball, originally scheduled for May 23-27 at Philadelphia (PA) Cricket Club. These championships will not be rescheduled in 2020. In addition, the USGA has canceled local (first stage) qualifying for the 2020 U.S. Open and qualifying for the 2020 U.S. Women’s Open in their current forms, and in conjunction with our Allied Golf Association (AGA) partners and International Federations, will look to redesign qualifying going forward as events unfold. We will continue to hold the dates for the 2020 U.S. Women’s Open at Champions Golf Club (June 4-7) and the 2020 U.S. Open at Winged Foot Golf Club (June 18-21).

At this time, it is premature to speculate what might occur with other 2020 USGA championships. We will continue to monitor all guidance and regulations from the CDC, WHO, and other federal and state authorities to do what is in the best interests of our community. We appreciate everyone’s understanding and support during these unprecedented times.

RULES AND HANDICAPPING GUIDANCE DURING COVID-19 ERA

MARCH 20, 2020 - The USGA stands with our entire golf community during this time. We all love the game for the escape it provides, and it is our great hope that we will all be able to play it, watch it, and enjoy it together soon. We continue to urge everyone to follow the guidelines from health and governmental officials to keep you and those around you safe, and to minimize any possible exposure to coronavirus. This is especially true on a golf course, where golfers, workers, and owners should heighten their level of awareness on exposure to surfaces like flagsticks, golf balls, bunker rakes, tees, carts, and scorecards. We all need to do our part to respect expert advice and make the right decisions to protect each other.

It is not the intended purpose of the below guidance to either encourage or discourage anyone from playing the game, but rather, in our governance role, to help golf course operators, committees, and golfers better understand how the Rules of Golf and Rules of Handicapping apply to the various questions we have received.

The 2019 Rules of Golf were drafted to offer each Committee the flexibility to make decisions as to how golf is played at their course or in competition, and the Committee Procedures section of the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf offers a significant amount of guidance and recommendations on how to address circumstances unique to each course or competition. This flexibility will prove to be very helpful as Committees look to address many of the challenges they are facing within the current environment. While the Committee Procedures section is a tremendous resource and has much to offer, many of the current questions were not originally contemplated under the Rules of Golf and therefore there is no history or guidance provided. To better address the questions that have come about because of these unique circumstances and the related challenges, additional guidance can be accessed by clicking here. This will continue to be updated as additional questions are received.

From the perspective of the Rules of Handicapping, the most frequent questions received are primarily related to the acceptability of scores for posting to a player’s scoring record. In particular, relating to modifying the hole and not requiring the player to “hole out” as required under the Rules of Golf. These are founded in a desire to minimize the possibility of exposing golfers to coronavirus and have included leaving the hole liner raised above the putting surface or placing various objects into the hole so the ball can be more easily removed. In these specific cases, provided guidance from health and governmental officials is being followed, a temporary measure is now in effect within the United States, until advised otherwise by the USGA, to accept scores played under these conditions for handicap purposes using the most likely score guidelines, even though the player has not hole out.