

'Inside the Ropes'

BY CARR MCCALLA

This month we're beginning what we trust will be a wonderful relationship. Tee to Green has always been a great supporter of the Louisiana Golf Association (LGA) and that support has been expanded with General Manager/Editor John Price's decision to allow us to author a monthly column on the LGA, golf in Louisiana, and whatever else might come to mind.

The bulk of what we write about will no doubt be geared towards the LGA, what we're doing to expand and grow the game in Louisiana and, in general, what's going on with our great game. There may be some editorializing on occasion, but we'll try to keep that to a minimum. Assistant Executive Director Mike Walder and I will write the majority of columns with an occasional guest columnist thrown in for good measure.

For those of you that have always wondered just what (and who) the Louisiana Golf Association is the LGA is the governing body for amateur golf in Louisiana. Some people refer to us as "the 'USGA' for Louisiana."

We do have many similarities with the USGA. Unfortunately, one similarity we don't have is access to TV revenue like the USGA receives for rights to their Championships (U.S. Open, etc.). As a consequence, we have to rely on other means for our revenue. But that's a topic for another column.

In addition to our responsibilities as the governing body for amateur golf in Louisiana, we provide an array of services to our member clubs and their individual members. Over the course of the next few months, we hope to get you up to date on all the things we do to make golf a better game in Louisiana and expose more people to the game we all love. I think you'll be surprised at the many things we do that you probably take for granted or, in some cases, might not even be aware of.

We administer the LGA Handicap Network, which provides handicapping services to over 90 of our member clubs, with over 15,000 individual participants. We'll no doubt go into more detail on the LGA Handicap Network in a future column, but the reason I mention it now is to segue into a plug for your participation in our 2005 Net Amateur Championship. The Net Amateur Championship is an event that we began in 2000 (this will be our 6th annual Championship).

When our Board began discussions regarding initiating this event, the main focus was to provide a legitimate LGA Championship for our higher handicap players that would have integrity; in other words, one that would be conducted on an even playing field, that would not be dominated by the players that 'manipulated' their handicap indexes (i.e., the infamous 'sand-baggers'). We're pleased to say that we've created a format that has passed that critical test. With the blessing of the USGA, we are utilizing their "Exceptional Tournament Score Probability" and "Index Reduction" tables to reduce any score that exceeds a certain probability. If an individual shoots a score that exceeds the probability selected prior to the event (usually around 75:1), we use the USGA's tables to reduce that person's Handicap Index. We then recalculate the score for the round in question, and the player plays with the new Index in subsequent rounds. We firmly believe that the vast majority of players have no desire to manipulate their

Handicap Index. Our goal, from day one, has been to create an event that will enable those individuals to be confident that they will have a legitimate chance to compete without feeling that the outcome is a foregone conclusion. The proof's in the pudding. We've conducted our Net Amateur for five years and the lowest winning score (remember, this is 36 holes of net competition where we take a player's gross score and subtract their course handicap to get their net score) is 6-under par.

In other words, the best winning score in the five year history of the event is a pair of net 69s. When's the last time you've heard of that?

This year's event will again be held at The Links Course at Pelican Point Golf Club in Gonzales. The dates for the event are Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 27-28, 2005. We'd love to have you participate. I know you'll have a blast! We're also conducting a concurrent Net Club Team Championship. Get four members from your club (including yourself) to play and you might just take home a beautiful crystal trophy to display at your club. We'll take the best 3-of-4 net scores from your Club Team participants for both days to determine your Club Team score. Low total takes home the crown. A club may be represented by as many teams as would like to participate. We encourage you to put a team together or, at the very least, consider playing simply as an individual. I guarantee you won't regret it.

In order to participate one must have a USGA Handicap Index computed through the LGA Handicap Network. If you're not sure whether yours is, contact our office and we'll let you know if your club is a LGA Handicap Network Club. To obtain an entry for the Net Amateur, you can go to our website at www.LGAgolf.org and download an entry form, or you can actually enter on-line if you so desire or simply call our office and we'll be glad to forward an entry form your way.

Congratulations are in order for LSU golfer Aaron Smith, winner of the 86th edition of our Amateur Championship early this past month at Money Hill Golf and Country Club in Abita Springs. Aaron fired a three-under 69 on Sunday for a 72-hole total of five-under-par 283. Finishing in second by a shot was reigning LGA Mid-Amateur Champ Jeff Calloway of Baker. Thanks also are in order for Money Hill Golf Professional Tim Hogan and Course Superintendent Hal Robicheaux and their respective staffs. They helped us administer that event and provided great service and a wonderful venue for our marquee championship.

Also look for the Mississippi Golf Association's column elsewhere in each issue (John couldn't afford to play favorites, and rightly so). We're anxious to see and hear what's going on with the MGA as well. I'm sure we'll probably be able to pick up a thing or two from our sister organization in the Magnolia State.

Again, we're excited to become a monthly fixture in Tee to Green magazine. We hope you'll find our thoughts interesting, informative, and thought-provoking. If you'd like to suggest topics for us to cover please don't hesitate to let us know. As the LGA's mission states, we exist to help grow the game and protect the values and honored traditions of the game that we hold so dear.

See you next month.

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