

Time to recap our championships

By **CARR McCULLA**

It's hard to believe but we're winding down the 2007 LGA Championship season. With only one event, our Senior 4-Ball Championship at Atchafalaya Golf Club at Idlewild, left it's been another great season. We reported on our first two events of the year, the Club Team Championship and Net Amateur Championship in an earlier column. Since then, we've crowned Champions in our State Amateur, Junior Amateur, 4-Ball, Mid-Amateur, and Senior Amateur Championships. We've been fortunate again to be able to have some of our top LGA facilities serve as host venues for our Championships and are indebted to those clubs for allowing us to bring our Championships to their courses.

AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

This year's Amateur Championship, our organization's 88th consecutive year conducting this event, was held at the TPC Louisiana course in suburban New Orleans in early June, host also to the PGA Tour's Zurich Classic. Former LSU golfer Chris Wells of Baton Rouge took the crown by one shot over a trio of players including 2006 Champion Jason Kuperman of Shreveport, Covington's Tommy Brennan, and B.C. Thibeaux of Lafayette. Brennan held the lead after 54 holes, but again couldn't find the touch to bring home the elusive title. It was the second consecutive year that he led this championship after 54 holes. Wells' winning score of 2-over-par 290 was the highest winning score in recent memory, no doubt a result of the challenging TPC Louisiana course.

JUNIOR AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

BREC's Beaver Creek, just north of Baton Rouge in Zachary, hosted our Junior Amateur Championship for the second time in the last three years in late June. Mandeville's Austin Gutsell ran away from the field, shooting 11-under par over 54 holes, firing rounds of 67-69-69 over the par-72 layout. Fourteen-year old Myles Lewis of Metairie finished second alone at 5-under par, with 2006 runner-up Andrew Noto of Luling in third place one more shot back at 212. Another 14-year-old, Peyton Vitter of New Orleans, was at 214 and in fourth, with 2006 Champion Cody Santone of Haughton finishing at one-under par in fifth place.

Gutsell and Noto represented the LGA in the third annual International Junior 4-Ball Championship in Savannah, Ga., in mid August. This event, started in 2005 and hosted by the Westin Savannah Golf Resort and Spa, brings the top junior players from each state to Savannah to compete in a 4-Ball Championship, one of only a handful of Junior 4-Ball events in existence. The two Louisiana Juniors had a wonderful experience and represented our state well.

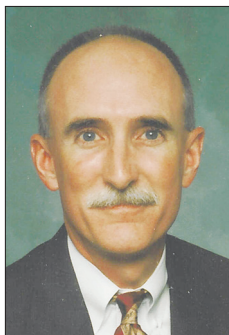
FOUR-BALL CHAMPIONSHIP

The University Club in Baton Rouge played host to our Four-Ball Championship July 21-22. The Baton Rouge area, inundated with rain in June and early July, stayed dry the week of this event, allowing the course to firm up and be in wonderful shape for this popular event. The scores were low, LaPlace's Brett Bergeron and Harvey's Nat Bhanthumachinda, former teammates on the golf team at Southeastern Louisiana, took home the title after firing book-

end rounds of nine-under-par 63. Their 36 hole total of 18-under 126 was the lowest ever score in this event conducted for the 24th time. The teams of Garrett Prather/Jeff Riemann and Brent Struthers/Thomas Galloway tied for second, three shots back at 129. Former winners in this event include current PGA Tour players David Toms, Brian Bateman, and Mike Heinen.

MID-AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

Tommy Brennan, who's had so much tough luck in the Amateur Championship, seems to have turned this event into the "Tommy Brennan Invitational," winning the Championship for the third consecutive year, and sixth time total. Squire Creek Country Club, located in Choudrant, just outside Ruston, hosted this event and proved to be an extremely popular venue. The Tom Fazio design that features generous fairways and challenging green complexes was a tremendous hit among the Mid-Am participants. Brennan, playing the course for the first time ever during championship week, had rounds of 73-70-69 to finish four-under-par for 54 holes and best Robby McWilliams of Bossier City by one shot. Brennan and McWilliams had finished 54 holes tied for this championship two years ago at Bayou DeSiard Country Club in Monroe, with Brennan winning the title that year on the second playoff hole. Two-time Champion John Davis of Lafayette finished third one more shot back at 214 with Lafayette's Robert Shelton another shot back and in fourth at 215. Lake Charles' Bo Stewart finished fifth at 220.



McCulla

SENIOR AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

First-year Senior Bob Cooper of Monroe took home the Senior Amateur Championship at Carter Plantation in Springfield on Aug. 16-18. Leading wire-to-wire, Cooper finished at two-under-par 214 with rounds of 70-71-73. Heading into the final round with a four-shot cushion, he shot a conservative round of one-over 73 on the final day to maintain his four-shot advantage over the field. Baton Rouge's Jim Adams finished in second at two-over 218, with Hal Wright of Shreveport in third place at 220 and Monroe's Doug Farr in fourth at 221. A logjam at fifth included defending champion John Davis of Lafayette, Robert Shelton and Bill Land, of Lafayette, 2005 Champion Darrel Benoit of Belle Chasse, LaPlace's Vernon St. Amant, Monroe's Roy Holloway, and Donaldsonville's Sid Harp (they all finished at 223). Champions in the age-group divisions of this event included: Jim Lipe of Shreveport (60-64), Curt McClure of Shreveport (65-69) and Ron Guidry of Baton Rouge (70-and-over).

U.S. AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

I'm fortunate to have the opportunity to work as a rules official at this year's U.S. Amateur Championship at the Olympic Club in San Francisco and will plan on reporting on my time and experiences there in next month's column. We're also pleased to report that we'll have a couple of participants from Louisiana there as George Cestia of Lake Charles and John Talley of St. Martinville have qualified for the championship.

Carr McCulla is the Executive Director of the LGA. He can be reached by e-mail (cmccalla@lgagolf.org) or by phone (337-265-3938).