

# The tournament

## GCSAA's first winner still ahead of game

By Vern Putney

PITTSBURGH — First national golf course superintendent champion Ernie Jacob won't be present when 400 sharpshooters fire away over 36 holes in the 42nd event at four Ponte Vedra, Fla., layouts. But he is delighted at the progress and stature the tournament has achieved in 53 years.

Competition in 1938 at Congress Lake Club in Hartville, Ohio, was as intense as today, but numbers were lacking. The 37-year superintendent at Pittsburgh South Hills Club recalls the field as "perhaps less than 30."

Jacob, now 84, and Art Snyder, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's oldest member at 93, motored from Pittsburgh to Hartville, played their 36 holes the same day, and returned to Pittsburgh that night back in 1938.

Jacob received a silver platter for his winning total of 146. Runnerup in 1939 to Don Boyd of Portage Country Club in Akron, he remained competitive over the years. But Emil "Mashie" Masciocchi of the Onwentsia Club in Chicago was too tough.

Masciocchi won six of the seven tournaments held from 1940 through 1950. In 1946 at the Country



Ernie Jacob

Club of Indianapolis, Jacob blazed home in 71 after a morning round of 79. Masciocchi, then of Lake Forest (Ill.) Country Club, went 67-75 — 142. Players had risen to 60.

Jacob suffered a serious leg injury in 1951 that required a foot cast for four years and ruled out golf, but he rebounded well. He ended competition with his superintendent colleagues in 1986 at Palm Desert (Calif.) Country Club.

He played 18 holes in November with Navy captain son Glenn.

Jacob saluted the efforts of Frank Lamphier, superintendent at Aspetuck Valley Country Club in Bethel, Conn., in keeping their tournament alive and shepherding its growth from 1968 through 1988.

Because Ponte Vedra is so distant from New Orleans, site of the annual GCSAA Conference Feb. 10-17, there won't be the 500-plus field of recent years.

Still, it's a far cry from the inaugural test, when it was known as the National Greenkeeping Superintendents Tournament and received little media coverage.

And "chauffeur" Snyder? He still plays frequently with son Jim, who succeeded him as superintendent at Paradise Valley Country Club in Phoenix, Ariz., and recently retired from a similar position at Skyline Country Club in Tucson, Ariz.

Snyder last played in the national event in 1987 at Canoa Hills Country Club in Green Valley, Ariz. He carded an 87, two strokes better than his age, but a couple of triple bogeys knocked him out of senior title contention.

Jacob is "about 10 minutes" senior to Snyder in terms of GCSAA membership. Their applications were being processed in 1929, and Jacob had the last-name edge alphabetically. He became member 568, Snyder 573.

They are as one in lasting friendship, and in wishing well the tournament they helped found.

## Past champs eye return to No. 1

By Vern Putney

PONTE VEDRA, Fla. — Both Roger Null, who will be seeking his third straight GCSAA golf championship here Feb. 10-11, and Dave Wright Powell, who won in 1985, '88 and '89, had the rare good fortune to be raised practically next door to a golf course.

They cashed in on the good luck, though as youngsters they were more geared to improving their game than thoughts of a lifetime career.

Null, 47, figured his future would be in coaching football, following in the footsteps of his father and older brother. Instead, he's been bound exclusively to golf, and is marking his fifth season as superintendent at the prestigious 36-hole Norwood Hills Country Club in St. Louis, Mo. Nephew Mike also is a superintendent there.

Null grew up in Lemars, Iowa, near a small nine-hole course. He spent much of his boyhood summers helping out in the pro shop and dispensing soda.

Powell had much the same background. In 1955, his dad built a home in Anderson, S.C., overlooking a golf course, and in 1960 the first public golf course there was built almost in Powell's backyard.

Powell hung around the pro shop, mowed greens, raked traps and had a sturdy hand in all phases of the business.

He was guided to an interest in turf and toward Clemson University. The golf course took a back seat while he was in college because he married as a sophomore. Graduating in 1969, he landed a job at Myers Park Country Club in Charlotte, N.C., as assistant to superintendent Garland Merchant. When Merchant retired in 1981, Powell became superintendent.

Null's road to Norwood Hills wasn't as direct. He had enrolled at Westmar, a liberal arts college. While working on the grounds at Sioux City (Iowa) Country Club, it was suggested he transfer to Iowa State College and major in turf management. Lacking scholarship and money, he required six years to gain a degree in 1969.

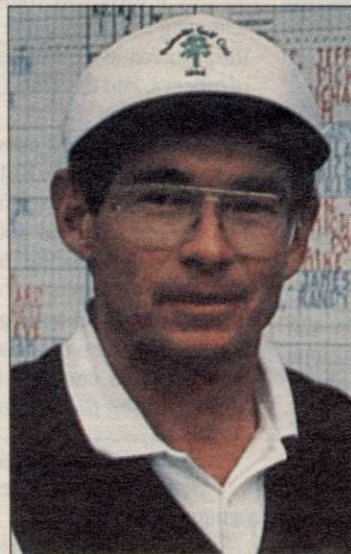
His first post was assistant superintendent at Rock Island Arsenal (Ill.) Golf Club. Superintendent jobs at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Old Warson Country Club in St. Louis preceded his present position.

Though unfavorable weather last November and early December discouraged his play and practice, Null plans to hone his game here a few days before tournament time.

Last year, he opened with a three-under-par 69 and followed with a 75 for a two-shot win over Powell.

Null has qualified for four U.S. Amateur championships and two Mid-Amateur title events for players over 25. He's also won the Ozark Invitational in Missouri, and has played well in state amateur events.

Powell, 42, said he knows Myers Park "like the back of my hand" and is a scratch golfer there. He isn't just a whiz on his home course,



Roger Null

finishing strong in the recent Carolina Mid-Amateur to make the top 20.

Like Null, Powell laments lack of competitive playing time.

As is the case with most superintendents, finding enough hours to sharpen playing skills during what are frequently 60-hour work weeks is a problem.

Myers Park hosts 42,000 rounds a year. From mid-June to late September, bentgrass greens require much care. That means staying on the job a lot longer. Powell will play in the practice round pre-tourney mixer with Kevin Downing, superintendent at Willoughby Country Club in Stuart, Fla.

Firm friends if title rivals, Null and Powell are keenly aware there is a flock of title flight players who could triumph. Powell cited South Carolinians Gary Bennett of Crickentree Golf Course in Blythewood and Charles "Chuck" Green of Florence.

Many superintendents who not long ago might have cast their eyes on cracking the pro tour now see their chosen field as a pleasant alternative.

Having a measure of job security and a firm foothold in the game in which most hope to spend a lifetime isn't a bad way to go, they say.

David B. Oliver at 36 isn't a typical young tiger, but he doesn't lack enthusiasm and confidence.

The 1986 champion and superintendent at Martin Downs Country Club in Palm City, Fla., has a word of warning to Null, Powell and '82 and '87 champion Mike Apodaca, superintendent at Tijera Arroyo Golf Course in Albuquerque, N. M.

"I think my time has come," said Oliver. "I'm playing well." Oliver and Carter Murchison recently combined for a nine-under-par score to win the South Florida pro-super tournament at Willoughby Country Club.

Oliver last year played with Null in the opening round. He could only watch and admire as Null putted superbly for a 69.

Oliver isn't overlooking the tournament's team aspect. Powell and Carolinas foursome companions in 1983 ended Florida's three-year title reign. Except for Rocky Mountain in 1986 and Midwest in 1989, it's since been all Carolinas.



Dave Powell

Oliver likes his team's chances. The title quartet probably will average around par.

Powell isn't sympathetic to the frustration of Oliver and mates. "Just because he's in his home state doesn't mean it's going to be any different. He's just tired of being whipped."

Apodaca matches Oliver's confidence level, pointing out that his first title came in Orlando, Fla., and that this year's Sunshine State location may be a good omen. He's 46 and a 2 handicapper.

A native of Santa Fe, N.M., he began his golf career as a caddie at 11 at Santa Fe Country Club. He's been in the superintendent field 25 years.

Null is pleased to see somewhat tardy recognition of superintendents as players competing at a high skill level. "It's nice to get press comparable to those vying in the national club professional championship," he said.

Powell echoes that observation. He said: "We're professionals in a special profession. Those in positions of club authority should realize we can play well, that our expertise isn't confined to course management and the maintenance building."

At Ponte Vedra, they'll emphasize their competitive side.

One strong contender should be Fred W. Klauk, superintendent at the Tournament Players Club at Sawgrass Stadium Course and the Valley Course, two of the four tournament sites along with Sawgrass Country Club and The Oak Bridge Club at Sawgrass.

In addition to home turf advantage, Klauk's handicap has long ranged from scratch to two.

If there is a playoff, watch out for Thomas C. "T.C." Hamilton. The 1978 and '80 champion is "two for two" on the first extra hole. His second title came at the expense of defending champion Dan Meyers. Meyers, now in the nursery business in the Tampa, Fla., area, won the next year and again in '84.

Hamilton is 50 and eligible for the Seniors division, but feels he's still competitive at the title level. He hasn't had much chance to whittle a handicap varying from 2 to 4 because of a busy schedule, but hopes to hit the practice tee

### Last 25 winners

1963	Chuck Fatum
1968	Art Donaldson
1969	Gene Stoddard
1970	Bob Martino
1971	Harry Cirata
1972	Bob Martino
1973	Bob Martino
1974	Ennio Lattini
1975	John Doughton, Jr.
1976	William Knox
1977	Vaughn Barker
1978	Thomas C. Hamilton
1979	Dan Meyers
1980	Thomas C. Hamilton
1981	Dan Meyers
1982	Mike Apodaca
1983	Roger Null
1984	Dan Meyers
1985	Dave Powell
1986	David Oliver
1987	Mike Apodaca
1988	Dave Powell
1989	Dave Powell
1990	Roger Null
1991	Roger Null