

Q & A WITH MIKE GARVALE, CGCS



Q: Wow, the years are starting to fly by, how long have you been in the golf business now?

A: Yeah they are, it's 36 years now. I came to Palo Alto Hills back in 1984, following Tim Sedgely.

Q: How's your new position going with Kemper Sports? What are your responsibilities?

A: The position is going great. I started in July of 2007 and I'm technically an Agronomist working for Kemper Sports at Harding Park. Kemper runs the clubhouse and tee sheet. The City of San Francisco handles the course operations. I'm there to help Superintendent Wayne Kappleman in any way I can plus act as a mediator between Kemper, the City, and the PGA Tour.

Q: What are your biggest challenges?

A: It took a while for me to earn Wayne's trust and for him to realize I was really here to help and not after his position. Wayne's doing a remarkable job considering he has his hands full with the five different unions of City workers employed at Harding. I've tried to help the whole staff improve in their daily approach, while still respecting Wayne and his authority.

Q: Did working at a private club for so long help you prepare for your current position?

A: A private club teaches you to be respectful of everyone and how to use a tactful approach to getting things done. I think it actually has helped with all that is going on here.

Q: It is great to see Harding Park and the City of San Francisco hosting the President's Cup in 2009. That is a world class event. How are things shaping up? Have there been any changes to the course since the Tour Championship?

A: Things are going well and we're sort of in the home stretch working towards the October 2009 event. We've rebuilt all of the green side bunkers and have reshaped and sodded the collars around the greens. We've done a heavy seeding of perennial ryegrass into the fairways and are starting that process in the roughs. Beyond the President's Cup, we'll also be hosting the Charles Schwab Cup in 2010 and 2011, and a World Golf Championships event in 2013 or 2014.

Q: Can you talk about the advance personnel of the PGA Tour and their roles?

A: We now have Paul Vermeulen and Cal Roth of the PGA Tour visiting monthly to check on preparations and course conditions. They've made it clear what they are expecting for the event. They would like all preparations to be completely set, well in advance of tournament week. The Tour has been through this many times before and is simply looking to avoid surprises.

Q: Is going from "Municipal" to a PGA Tour quality attainable?

A: It is and has been done before. Everyone just has to come together and work toward that goal. The City and especially Sean Sweeney have worked hard at getting us the resources we need. One of the best things we have done is to minimize play before the event. We will start reducing the amount of play after August, then completely close the course a week before the event.

Q: Does the match play format of the event bring special challenges?

A: The one big challenge is getting the galleries around the course. There will be approximately 30,000 people following just six matches on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Sunday's play will consist of 12 individual matches. But as far as maintenance goes it

will be a pretty friendly event. Play doesn't begin until 1:00 P.M. on both Thursday and Friday. One interesting factor is that the course will be re-routed to make sure the signature 18th hole comes into play. The 18th hole is where most of the hospitality pavilions will be located. Since most matches end before the 18th hole, the 18th will become the 15th in the re-routing.

Q: I heard you went back to Montreal for the last President's Cup. Not a bad destination for a big hockey fan, eh?

A: Yes, Wayne and I went back to observe the matches, and it was NHL pre-season (smiles.) We also went up to Sonoma last month to observe the Champions Tour's Charles Schwab Cup.

Q: Do you have any requests for volunteers or help from the affiliates?

A: That's something I'm working on right now. We will definitely need some volunteer help. I'm just trying to determine what our best staffing levels will be. It is comforting to know some of the affiliates have already offered assistance.

Q: Sounds like you'll have a busy 10 months! Any vacation plans in mind afterwards?

A: We actually do. My wife and I are planning a trip to Switzerland and Italy. We are going to visit distant relatives and re-visit places we both lived when we were younger. It should be a great trip and some great time away. Because before we know it we'll be working toward the 2010 Charles Schwab Cup Championship!

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