

A runner-up no longer:

Sentimental favorite Dick Stuntz captures long-sought-after GCSAA crown

By PETER BLAIS
JAMUL, Calif. — Dick Stuntz hates to admit it, but he expects to be a lot more relaxed when he plays in next year's Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Golf Championship.

That's because the head superintendent of Lawrence, Kansas' Alvarado Country Club finally won his first GCSAA crown after several near-misses over the past 13 years.

This year's 36-hole tourney was played at Steele Canyon Golf Club near San Diego, Calif.

"I was really tickled," said Stuntz, who had previous finishes of second, third and fourth before taking this year's crown by a single stroke over Paul Jett of Duke University

Golf Club in Durham, N.C. "This has been a real goal of mine for a long time.

"You don't like to talk about things like pressure. But I do feel like a monkey has been lifted off my back."

Stuntz felt he was in good position after "an extremely solid first round" of 75 that saw him hit 17 greens in regulation.

"Unfortunately I three-putted four times and ended up with a birdie and five bogeys. I wasn't

alone with putting problems.

The greens were in good condition, but very hard to read because of the mountains in the background," he said.

About a dozen golfers were in front of Stuntz after the first day, led by three-time champ (1985, '88 and '89) Dave Powell of Myers Park Country Club in Charlotte, N.C., with a 1-under-par round of 70.

Stuntz parred the first nine holes on day two. He was

standing on the 10th tee when he heard the news about tourney leaders Powell and playing partner Randy Nichols that opened the door for the rest of the field.

According to Nichols, he and Powell were playing the same brand of ball.

Nichols marked his with a black dot and Powell used blue. They inadvertently putted each other's balls on the 3rd green, but didn't realize it until they

had both teed off on the 4th. Following the rules, they disqualified themselves.

"If we'd noticed it before teeing off on the 4th, we could have taken two-shot penalties," Nichols remembered. "I was doing OK at that point, although I probably wouldn't have won. Dave had a great shot at it, though.

"He was 1-under the first day, had another birdie to go 2-under

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GCSAA tournament's top finishers

Following are the names of the championship flight's top 11 finishers, home courses, first round, second round and total scores for the 1993 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Golf Championship held Jan. 23-24 at Steele Canyon Golf Club in San Diego, Calif.

Richard "Dick" Stuntz 75-72-147
Alvarado Country Club
Lawrence, Kansas

Paul Jett 76-72-148
Duke University Golf Club
Durham, N.C.

P. Mac Blanchard 73-76-149
Jennings Golf & Country Club
Jennings, La.

Sam Williamson 75-74-149
Ojai Valley Inn & Country Club
Ojai, Calif.

David Buckles 74-76-150
Steele Canyon Golf Club

Clint Deeds 78-72-150
Tascosa Country Club
Amarillo, Texas

Roger Null 78-73-151
Norwood Hills Country Club
St. Louis

Michael Wilson 73-78-151
Cannongate at White Oak Golf Club
Newnan, Ga.

Mark Henderson 77-74-151
Atlantis Golf Club
West Palm Beach, Fla.

Bill Martin 74-77-151
Victoria Club
Riverside, Calif.

Michael Orren 73-78-151
El Toro Community Golf Center
Laguna Nigel, Calif.



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'A top-notch guy and a very good champion.' Stuntz wins title

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early in the second round, and was in great position to birdie the 4th hole when we realized what had happened. It was very frustrating."

Stuntz sympathized with the pair. But he quickly took advantage of the situation with an apparent birdie on the 10th after taking what he believed to be free relief from a washed out area. A later ruling (that he

wasn't entitled to the relief) cost him a stroke.

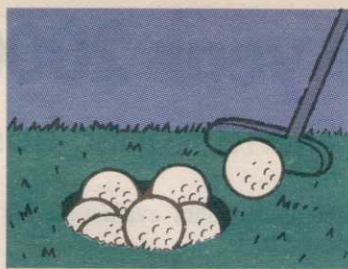
Stuntz continued his journey on the Par Express, dropping everything in regulation up to the 18th.

The last hole is a short par-5 that yields many birdies, Stuntz said.

A solid drive and approach left him in good position for a 4. But two poor chips and a missed 10-foot putt left him with a bogey 6.

Instead of a 69 and a certain title, he stumbled into the clubhouse with an apparent 71 and Ross Randall's words running through his mind.

"Whenever you bogey the last hole, it costs you," Stuntz



remembered Alvamar's head pro saying after the two had bogeyed the final hole several years ago in a two-man best ball tournament they eventually lost by one stroke.

Once in the clubhouse, Stuntz was greeted with more bad news.

He hadn't been entitled to the relief he took from the

wash out on the 10th hole. Another stroke was added to his score, giving him a 72.

He had to watch as the other golfers hobbled home. Jett matched Stuntz' 72, but couldn't overcome the single stroke he'd spotted the eventual champ the first day.

Stuntz' second-day playing partner, Sam Williamson of Ojai Valley Inn & Country Club, finished two shots back and tied for third with P. Mac Blanchard of Jennings Golf & Country Club in Jennings, La. Williamson and Stuntz were teammates at Iowa State University.

"He played as well as I did, but just missed a couple of key

shots," Stuntz said of his fellow Buckeye.

Stuntz' victory was a popular one. "Dick's a great guy. He deserved to win one," Nichols said.

New board of directors member David Fearis of Blue Hills Country Club in Kansas City, Mo., played a practice round with Stuntz at Steele Canyon prior to the tournament. "He was playing well, so I knew he had a good chance," Fearis recalled. "Dick's a top-notch guy and a very good champion."

Show Time '93

Show reflections

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question, the incomparable Patty Berg. Patty spoke twice — at the Golf Course Builders Association of America banquet and at the GCSAA banquet. She brought the house down both times. Some of her one-liners were these questions on the rules of golf asked at her various clinics:

- If the ball falls off the tee on the fairway, are you allowed to re-tee it?
- Are you allowed to play a lost ball?
- Does the 19th hole have to be played in sequence?
- What happens if you whiff the ball and find out it's not yours?

However: Phil Arnold had the best "keeper." When Pete Dye, sans notes, finished a testimonial on Joe Jemsek, Arnold said: "Pete does speeches like he does golf courses — no paperwork."

Best news: Superintendent Greg Williams of King Valley Golf Club in King City, Ontario, received word during the show that his wife had had a baby ... at home with two midwives ... and the child weighed in at more than 11 pounds! Both mother and child were doing just fine, thank you. Congratulations, Greg, and "Phew-w."

Greatest smile: Joe Jemsek's. No contest.

Family affair: Dakota Peat owner Michael Pierce brought his entire clan — wife, parents, brother-in-law, sister... Perhaps there was a distant cousin or a nephew or aunt who couldn't make it, Mike?

Best entertainment: I wish they all could be California (Beach) Boys.

Best timing: It rained for two weeks before the conference and started again soon after we all left.

Worst timing: The GCSAA show ran right into the PGA Merchandise Show and National Golf Course Owners Association meeting, both on the other side of the country in Orlando, Fla.

Most memorable statement of humility: Dinah Shore said she had no idea why the GCSAA was giving her the Old Tom Morris Award. "Was it because I was good at replacing my divots?" she asked.

Biggest disappointment: The lack of time, even in the span of a week, to spend the time I'd like to with friends in the industry. For everyone I missed, I look forward to seeing you next time. Until then, may God bless you!



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