

# It's the Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of

Superintendents gear up for chance to play **Crenshaw**, **Leonard** — and win \$100,000 — in BASF's People vs. The Pros

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR IN CHIEF

In his dream, superintendent Bob King envisions himself playing a round of golf with his favorite player, Ben Crenshaw. In his wildest dream, King's match-up with Crenshaw is televised during prime time on ESPN. And in his Don Quixote-like impossible dream, King defeats Crenshaw and walks away with 100 grand and a glimmering glass trophy after sinking a 30-foot putt on the final hole of the match.

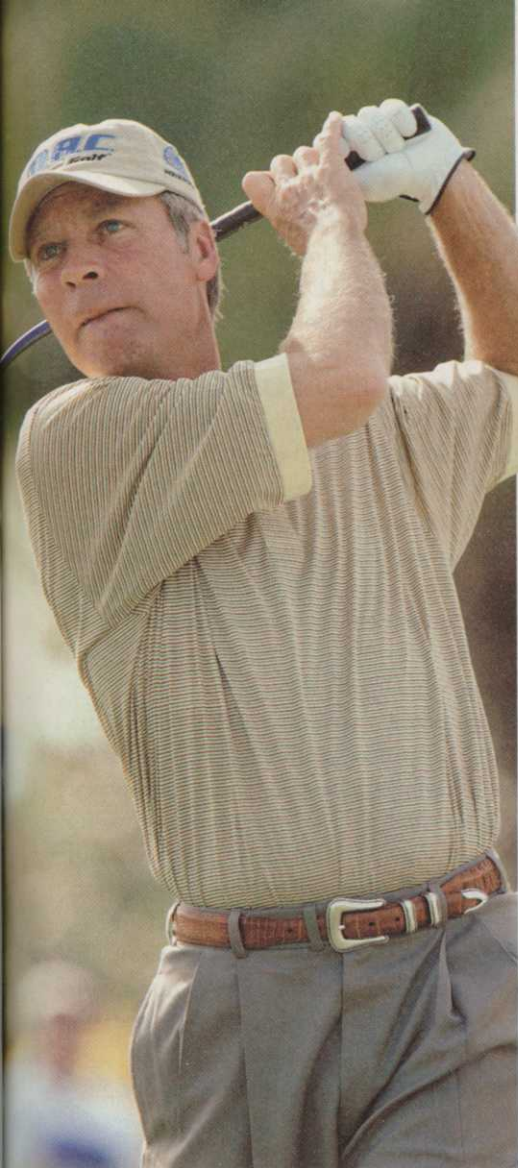
Welcome . . . not to King's golf fantasies . . . but to the People vs. The Pros, America's "ultimate pro-am championship," as it is billed. But in the third-annual tournament, scheduled for Barton Creek Resort Sept. 8-12, King has a chance to live out his dreams. The 50-year-old superintendent of The Orchards Golf Club in Washington, Mich., is one of 20 superintendents and 288 amateur golfers who qualified for the event.

"Isn't that amazing?" King says of his golden



◀ Justin Leonard  
Ben Crenshaw ▶





"Being a presenting sponsor at the national tournament provides BASF a national platform to recognize the professional dedication of golf course superintendents," says Toni Bucci, business manager for BASF Professional Turf and Ornamentals. "It's our way of saluting the crucial work that superintendents around the country are doing to provide quality turf for their home courses and especially for the golfers who play on them."

Growing up, King watched Crenshaw, one of the 1980s and 1990s best golfers, score a hoard of PGA Tour victories, including two Masters titles.

"I think about how amazing it would be just to be in his presence — just to hang out with him, walk down the fairway with him and putt on a green with him," says King, who qualified for People vs. The Pros after winning a regional event in Michigan.

King, who sports a 9.4 handicap, has as good a chance as anyone in the field to face off against his idol in the grand-prize match. You can bet your loft wedge he's going to make the best of that chance.

So what if King wins the three-day tournament and a date with Crenshaw? Will his knees be knocking in nervousness like they did at the high school prom? Or will King . . . gasp . . . attack his idol with the eye of a Tiger Woods in an attempt to beat the golfing legend and walk away a rich man?

"I'll try to beat him, absolutely," King says in a determined tone.

But, he adds, respectfully: "Just being there with him would be something."

Crenshaw says he's looking forward to the title match. Don't expect him, however, to don the same game face the golfing world saw when he won the Masters in 1984 and again in 1995. That said, Crenshaw certainly won't pack it in. He says he expects a spirited game.

"It's certainly not a life-and-death struggle," Crenshaw says with a laugh. "We'll have a lot of fun. I'm sure there will be a few friendly barbs going across from each other."

Crenshaw, who lives with his family in Austin, says he was glad to be invited to the event. "Gosh, it's right here in Austin and it just looks like fun," he says. "Barton Creek is a wonderful complex."

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opportunity. "I'm totally shocked."

So are most of the superintendents, who qualified for the event at 17 regional qualifying tournaments held nationwide by BASF, the presenting sponsor of People vs. The Pros.

The event is divided into two age categories — 18 to 49 years old and 50 and over. The amateur golfers will play in a three-day, 54-hole handicapped stroke-play competition. A winner in each age group advances to the grand-prize match. In the 18-to-49 category, that's a round with Justin Leonard. In the over-50 category, it's a match with Crenshaw. Total purse is \$300,000, with \$100,000 to each winner and \$50,000 to runners-up.

BASF will also host the second-annual BASF Superintendent's Cup during People vs. The Pros. The two superintendents with the lowest net scores from the three-day tournament outside of two overall winners will compete for a \$10,000 prize and free BASF products for their home course. The runner-up receives \$5,000.



The two superintendents with the lowest net scores will compete for the Superintendent's Cup, a \$10,000 prize and free BASF products.



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In the 49-and-under category, Mike Werth, the 36-year-old superintendent of Monroe Country Club in Monroe, Wis., is looking for a shot against Leonard, who hails from Dallas. The 33-year-old Leonard has nine PGA Tour wins.

Werth, a 13 handicap, qualified for People vs. The Pros after winning a regional tournament in Wisconsin.

"It was about 90 degrees (F) and 100 percent humidity," Werth says of the tournament held in June. "I just kind of grinded it out for an 85 and won by one stroke. It's the first time I've ever won a golf tournament."

Werth says his main goal is to make the Superintendent's Cup, won last year at Pinehurst Resort by Kip Wilson, superintendent of American Legion Golf Course in Kokomo, Ind. "If anything happens beyond that, it would be a big bonus," he adds.

That bonus would be playing Leonard for the \$100,000. "It would be a thrill to play with a PGA pro for 18 holes," Werth says. "Hopefully, my first drive would make it to the fairway."

Last year both amateurs defeated the pros — John

Daly in the 49 and under and Gary McCord in the 50 and over. John Sniegowski of Cadillac, Mich., defeated Daly, who was a bit miffed about his competition's double-digit handicap. Sniegowski played like a "pro," not a "people," when he defeated Daly for the cash.

Crenshaw, however, isn't too concerned about handicaps, but he's quick to point out that handicapping is a complex subject.

"There are a lot of traveling handicaps these days that are open to suggestion," Crenshaw says, noting a player's golfing prowess on one course doesn't always translate to another.

Crenshaw pauses. "I could get shellacked," he says with a guffaw.

(Incidentally, a player's handicap during this year's tournament is subject to adjustment for the following day based on exceptional play if he betters his handicap by five or more strokes.)

Crenshaw and his design partner Bill Coore designed one of the resort's four 18-hole championship courses that People vs. The Pros contestants will play. Crenshaw Cliff-sides is a 6,553-yard links-style course with wide fairways and the opportunity to run the ball up from the fairway.

"We had a lot of fun with that design,"

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## The Entrants

These superintendents qualified for the People vs. The Pros after winning tournaments staged by their local chapter associations and BASF:

**Matt Miller**, superintendent of Carey Park Golf Course in Hutchinson, Kan. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Pat Murphy**, superintendent of Northshore Golf Club in Orlando, Fla. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**David May**, superintendent of Copper Mill Golf Club in Zachary, La. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Rafael Martinez**, certified superintendent of Via Verde Country Club in San Dimas, Calif. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Steve Vaughn**, certified superintendent of The Clubs of King-

wood in Kingwood, Texas. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Mark Esoda**, certified superintendent of the Atlanta Country Club in Marietta, Ga. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Brian Brown**, superintendent of Chicago Lakes Golf Estate in Lindstrom, Minn. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Bob Graunke**, certified superintendent of Tidewater Golf Club in North Myrtle Beach, S.C. (50-and-over group).

**Charles Sheffield**, superintendent of Croasdaile Country Club in

Durham, N.C. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Jeff Connell**, superintendent of Columbia Country Club in Blythewood, S.C. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**L. Don Tew**, superintendent of Calabash Golf Links in Calabash, N.C. (50-and-over group).

**Mike Werth**, superintendent of Monroe Country Club in Monroe, Wis. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Matt Curl**, superintendent of Indian Creek Golf and Country Club in Fairbury, Ill. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Roger Frazier**, certified superintendent of Cattails at Meadowview in Kingsport, Tenn. (50-and-over group).

**Bob King**, superintendent of The Orchards Golf Club in Washington, Mich. (50-and-over group).

**Chris Caporicci**, certified superintendent of the Cherry Valley Club in Garden City, N.Y. (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Greg Wiles**, superintendent of The Links at Echo Springs Golf Course in Johnstown, Ohio (18- to 49-years-old group).

**Steve Ravenkamp**, superintendent of Tenkiller Golf Club in Vian, Okla. (50-and-over group).

**Scott Wagner**, superintendent of Leisure World of Maryland in Spring, Md. (18- to 49-years-old group).

*Editor's note: At press time, one opening remained for the tournament. The Golf Course Superintendents Association of New England held its qualifier at Marlboro Country Club on Aug. 23 in Marlborough, Mass.*



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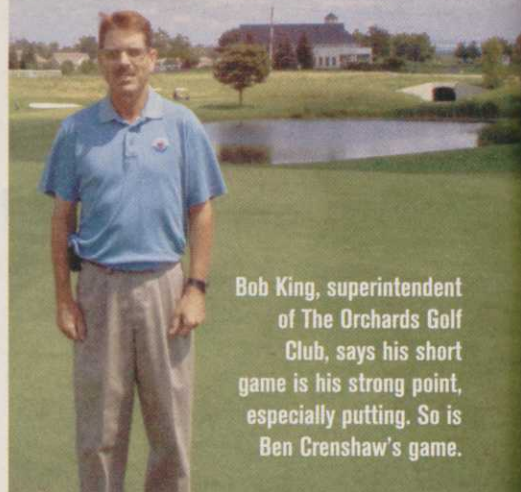
Crenshaw says. "The course is not meant to be punishing. You can roll it around there. It's a nice piece of property, and it's fun to play."

It would be appropriate that a superintendent end up opposite Crenshaw in the title match of the 50-and-over age division. Appropriate because Crenshaw is a fan of superintendents.

"I'm telling you, there are two people at every golf course that everybody should just take their hats off to every day — that's the professional and the superintendent. Throughout golf's long history, superintendents have made it possible for golfers to enjoy the game."

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) awarded Crenshaw its Old Tom Morris Award — the association's most prestigious honor — in 1997. Crenshaw is still excited about receiving it, noting "he was lucky enough to be recognized."

That's how King, Werth and the other superintendents feel about playing in the People vs. The Pros. Of course, they're nervous, too.



Bob King, superintendent of The Orchards Golf Club, says his short game is his strong point, especially putting. So is Ben Crenshaw's game.

**I can't imagine having Ben Crenshaw watch me hit the ball."**

**BOB KING,**

SUPERINTENDENT

THE ORCHARDS GOLF CLUB

Werth and King admit the butterflies will be flapping in their bellies come tournament time.

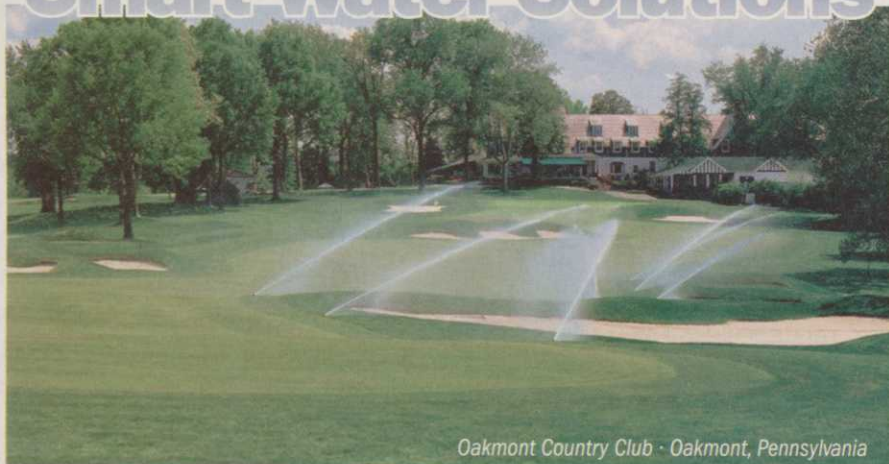
"I played high school golf," Werth says. "But playing for money is a little different, especially this kind of money."

If King ends up in the final against Crenshaw, he'll have worse than butterflies. His stomach will feel more like Chubby Checker is doing "The Twist" inside of it.

"I can't imagine having Ben Crenshaw watch me hit the ball," King says, the awe in his voice. "That would be something I've never felt before."

Except for in his dreams. ■

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