

MISCELLANY

USGA Mid Am Visits Milwaukee Country Club.

By David Brandenburg, Golf Course Manager, Rolling Meadows Golf Course.

For the second time this summer a USGA event was hosted in the Badger State. Just a few weeks after Erin Hills hosted the Womens Amateur Public Links Championship, Milwaukee Country Club hosted the USGA Mid Am Championship with Brown Deere Golf Course.

The Mid-Amateur was started by the USGA in 1981 as an event for amateur golfers of at least 25 years of age. It provides a national championship for the post-college player for whom the game is truly an avocation. It's not saying the over 25 field cannot compete in the USGA Amateur Championship but it is difficult to compete with the college players for whom golf is a full time activity while trying to juggle a family and career.

The first Mid-Amateur was played at the Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis, MO and drew 1,638 entries. The event has grown in interest and in 2008, 3,839 entries were received from players who have a handicap index of 3.4 or less. Not just for fun the winner of the Mid-Am receives:

- A gold medal and custody of the Robert T. Jones Jr. Memorial Trophy for the ensuing year.
- An exemption from local qualifying at the next U.S. Open, if still an amateur.
- An exemption from sectional qualifying at the next U.S. Amateur, if still an amateur.
- A 10-year exemption for the Mid-Amateur.
- A probable invitation to compete in the next Masters Tournament, if still an amateur.
- An exemption from sectional qualifying at the next U.S.



The bunkering is incredible at the 332 yard par 4 9th hole at Milwaukee Country Club. (Photo by Brian Moesch, Chicago Golf Club)



The bunkering and challenging green surrounds adds to the beauty of Milwaukee Country Club.

Amateur Public Links Championship, if eligible.

- An exemption from sectional qualifying at the next USGA Senior Amateur, if eligible.

The Mid-Am starts with local qualifying at 68 different courses to narrow the field down to 264 golfers. The first two days of the event features 36 holes of stroke

play golf, as the field played 18 holes at Brown Deer Park Golf Course and 18 holes at Milwaukee Country Club. From there, the field is narrowed to the low 64 who will start the match play portion of the competition at Milwaukee Country Club. Five 18-hole matches over three days, leaves two players for the 36-hole match final.

Brown Deere Park Golf Course is a backyard neighbor with Milwaukee Country Club and annual host of the PGA Tour's US Bank Championship (Formerly the Greater Milwaukee Open). The municipally owned daily fee course designed by George Hansen opened in 1929. Tim Wegner is the Golf Course Superintendent at Brown Deer a challenging layout playing 6,787 yards from the back tees. The course will be set up with a rating of 72.6 with a slope of 133 for the Mid-Amateur.

Brown Deer Park Golf Course hosted the U.S. Amateur Public Links Championships, in 1951, 1966 and 1977. With the PGA stopping every year, Wegner and his staff are as experienced as anyone in Wisconsin at preparing for tournament golf.

Milwaukee Country Club designed by H.S. Colt and Charles Alison opened in 1911. Patrick Sisk has been the Certified Golf Course Superintendent for 8 years at the club that plays 7,098 yards from the back tees and will be set up with a rating of 74.2 with a slope of 136 for the event.

Milwaukee Country Club hosted the USGA two other times with the 1969 Walker Cup Match and the 1988 USGA Senior Amateur. This was my second visit to this incredible property after watching the WSGA State Amateur there a few years ago. Colt and Alison took a great piece of property and designed a tremendous golf course on it. I went Thursday for the semi-final matches as much to see the



Milwaukee Country Club's par 5, 529 yard third hole requires your "A" game.

course again than to watch the golf.

Sisk and the staff at the Milwaukee Country Club were challenged by the early summer rains and flooding that affected much of the badger state. Set on the Milwaukee River, the course saw 13.5 inches of rain swell the river and cover some parts of the course with 8 feet of water. Silt deposits killed or weakened turf while the water damaged 22 bunkers including six that needed to be completely rebuilt.

The back 9 was closed for 2 1/2 weeks while the water receded and areas were reseeded and repaired. The extra efforts and skill used by the staff paid off as the course looked in great condition and received many positive comments from the contestants.

Wisconsin was well represented with residents Matt Behm, Janesville; Mark Bemowski, Mukwonago; Nathan Colson, Milwaukee; David Foley, Pewaukee; Jeffery Lister, Greendale; Tim Murphy, Eau Claire and John Staehler, Caledonia qualifying for the event.

Matt Behm a starter at Janesville Riverside Golf Club

during the golf season qualified for match play and considers himself a true public links player. Behm who claims to have never had a golf lesson was the WSGA player of the year in 2006 when he won the Ray Fisher tournament and took 5th place and low amateur at the State Open. He was disappointed in his first round loss to Tom Dooley of Albany, MN, 2 down.

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Nate Colson a former standout golfer at Marquette University also made it to match play. Now an accountant in the Milwaukee area, Nate lost his first round match to Jimmy Chestnut of Grand Blanc, MI, 1-down.

The last Wisconsin connection after round one was Mark Scheibach a native of Fond du Lac. The former professional turned amateur and 3-time Big-10 player of the year while at the University of Wisconsin Madison lives in Bermuda Dunes, Florida. Scheibach who manages eight golf courses in Florida and Hawaii lost in the second round 3-2 to Tom Dooley of Albany MN, (the same player who knocked out Matt Behm in round 1) but was pleased with his success at the event and loved being back in Wisconsin.

The 36-hole final was between

Steve Wilson of Ocean Springs, MS and Todd Mitchell of Bloomington, IL. Wilson, owner of two gas stations played professionally for 10 years on mini tour events before being reinstated as an amateur in 2005. He is well known on the Gulf Coast for his amateur play, however until Monday of the tournament, he had never won a match in a match play format. Steve had had to adjust to the speed of Milwaukee's bentgrass greens from the often-slower Bermuda grass greens in the south.

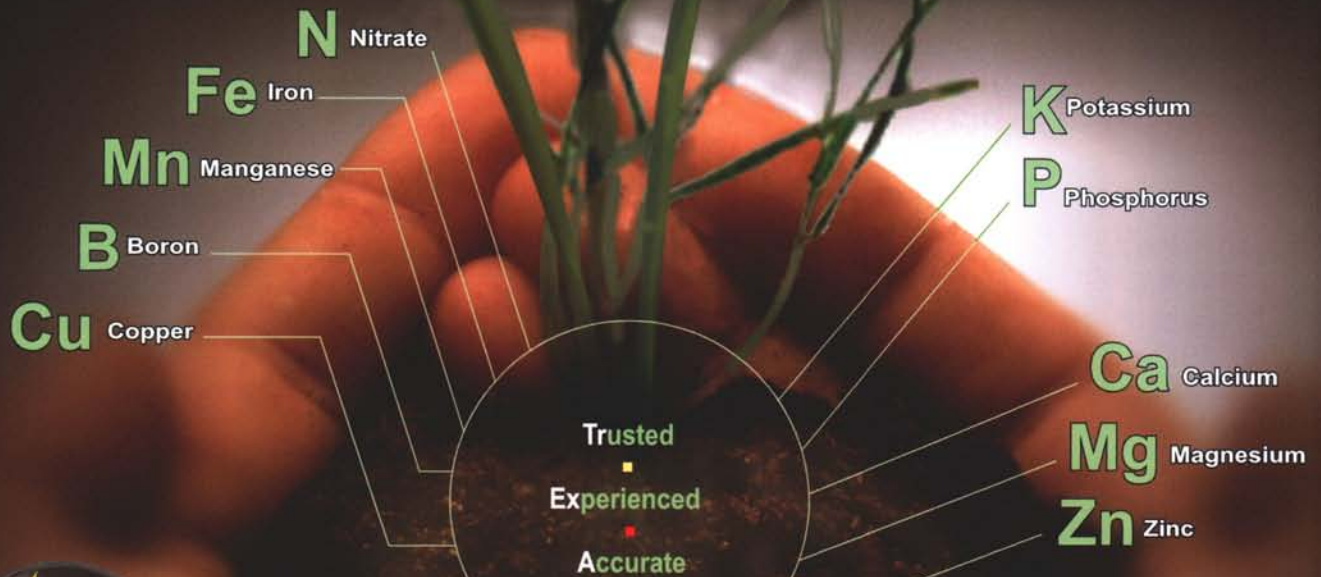
Steve Mitchell, an insurance salesman, was a star baseball player at Illinois State and was drafted in the 14th round by the New York Yankees. He played shortstop for the Yankees' Class A affiliate but quit after two years when he realized pro ball was not for him. Mitchell barely made it

into the match play by making a 12-foot par to get into a playoff with 19 others to make the 64-player field. Steve commented that Milwaukee Country Club was among the best courses he'd ever played, and he compared it to Oakmont where he played in the 2003 USGA Amateur.

Steve Wilson adjusted well to the fast bentgrass greens as he had 14 one-putt holes enroot to a 5 and 4 victory over Mitchell. Wilson was excited to be able to play at next years Masters Tournament even though he is up against tough odds as no Mid-Amateur winner has advance to the final 36 at Augusta.

Wisconsin is lucky to have a number of great golf courses to host both local and national championships. There is a story in every event and every player, we just need to go out and find them. 🌱

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