

Maple Bluff Hosts WSGA Amateur Championship

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

The Wisconsin State Golf Association's Wisconsin State Amateur Championship returns to a course that has a history as old as the association itself. Maple Bluff Country Club was founded in 1899 with 5 holes on a rented parcel of ground. The prospect of a golf club quickly gained support and in 1900 the money was obtained to purchase 58 acres for 9 holes and a clubhouse.

The course was designed by Herbert J Tweedie and built by the John Dunn Construction Crew. Times were different in the early days of golf as shown by the club's history which references "To keep the fairways smooth, 300 sheep and a mower were on hand." In the days before cars it was common for members to arrive by horse and buggy or by steamboat that would leave the University of Wisconsin - Madison area and cross Lake Mendota to reach the club. To facilitate travel across the lake a 40 foot steamboat called the "Putter" was purchased by the club.

In 1901 Maple Bluff joined nine other Wisconsin Clubs to form the Wisconsin State Golf Association. (WSGA Charter clubs - Janesville Sinnissippi GC, Milwaukee CC, Maple Bluff CC, Kenosha CC, Riverview CC in Appleton, Oshkosh CC, Schaghticoke CC in La Crosse, Racine CC, and Tuscumbia CC.)

The course was expanded to 18 holes in 1916 and today the par 71 course measures 6,400 yards from the back tees with a rating of 72 and a slope of 132. The historic layout will challenge the state's best amateur players during the championship. Maple Bluff first hosted the Amateur Championship in 1907 when original Maple Bluff member Frank Jacobs won. Maple Bluff also hosted the Amateur in 1920, 28, 37, 50, 72, and 1987. The other winner who was a member of the club at the time was Craig Brischke in 1982.



Hole 6 at Maple Bluff will play 205 yards for the Amateur.. Photo Courtesy of David Ostby

2011 WSGA Amateur Championship Qualifying Sites

DISTRICT 1A: Drugan's Castle Mound GC, Holmen, Monday, June 27th, 2011

DISTRICT 1B: Turtleback GC, Rice Lake, Tuesday, June 28th, 2011

DISTRICT 2: Wausau CC, Wausau, Friday, July 1st, 2011

DISTRICT 3: Brighton Dale Links (Blue Spruce), Kansasville, Wednesday, June 29th, 2011

DISTRICT 4: Stoughton CC, Stoughton, Tuesday, July 5th, 2011

DISTRICT 5: Thornberry Creek at Oneida, Oneida, Tuesday, July 5th, 2011

DISTRICT 6A: Hartford GC, Hartford, Monday, June 27th, 2011

DISTRICT 6B: Western Lakes GC, Pewaukee, Thursday, June 30th, 2011

DISTRICT 6C: Whitnall Park GC, Hales Corners, Tuesday, July 5th, 2011

Dennis Hamilton

608.295.2494

Ken Goodman

847.878.8420



ARTHUR CLESEN INC.

www.arthurclesen.com

COVER STORY

To enter the 72 hole stroke play event players need have a index of 9.4 or less, be one of the approximately 36 exempt players or qualify at one of the 9 qualifying tournaments. Players must qualify in the district of their home course unless providing a good reason why they cannot do so. 180 players make the field with a cut after 36 holes to allow the top 70 players and ties to play for the championship.

Four days of championship play will provide for the true state champion and winner of the Sinnissippi Cup. The cup received its name from the first championship in 1901 when the amateur was played at Sinnissippi Country Club which is now the Janesville Country Club. While players compete for individual honors WSGA member clubs with three qualifiers compete for the Yule Cup awarded to the low club after the first 36 holes of play.

Past winners of the State Amateur include US Open Winner Andy North, and PGA Tour Players Steve Stricker, JP Hayes and Mark Wilson. At the Bull at Pinehurst Farms in 2010 Jordan Elsen won a rain shortened 54 hole event by 6 over Kyle Murphy or Eau Claire. Elsen who is from Kenosha played 4 years for the Wisconsin Badgers and turned pro at the end of the 2010 season.

Maple Bluff Country Club is a historic venue so it is fitting the course is cared for by an experienced superintendent. Tom Harrison entered the golf industry as a high school employee working for Peter Miller at Nakoma Country Club. At the time Harrison's interest was engineering but after college he joined the Navy for 4 years. Upon his return to Madison in 1968 Tom preferred his summer job in the golf industry and joined the staff at Maple Bluff Country Club working for William Eckert.

Tom had penned an article for *The Grass Roots* called "The Assistant" in which he described the productive working relationship he had with Eckert. The knowledge he obtained during that time made him a natural to take over in the mid 1970's when Eckert left.

With 43 years at Maple Bluff Tom knows how to prepare and maintain the course for membership and tournament play. Harrison uses a mix of tried and true methods but also is ready to try new products and methods to improve the facility. His experience and knowledge of the Maple Bluff soils will provide for fast and firm conditions during the tournament.



Hole 12 at Maple Bluff plays 410 yards and looks short from the elevated tee. However the fairway and green are well protected by bunkers.



Lake Mendota and the Wisconsin State Capital Building are visible from the clubhouse and parts of the course.

COVER STORY

Although Tom has been involved with the WGCSA as a board member and vice president he is best known for his work with the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association. Harrison is a founding member of the association and has been a board member for almost every year of the association's existence and was President from 1983 to 1986. In going through all the early WTA pictures in The Grass Roots file, Tom is in most of them as a leader of the association.

Tom also played an integral part in the formation of the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility. Both the WGCSA and the WTA relied on his ability to work with governmental entities in regards to permits, public works and organizational paperwork. Along with Tom's commit-

ment to Maple Bluff and the turf industry he has served as a volunteer fireman for the Maple Bluff Fire Department and served three terms on the McFarland Village Board. Tom and his wife Diane live in Madison and have three daughters and two sons.

References:

Monroe Miller, "40 years and Counting" Page 46/47 November / December issue of *Wisconsin Golfer Magazine*,

Gene Haas, *Playing Through*, A History of the Wisconsin State Golf Association, 2001, pages 16 & 200

Gene Haas, *Caring for The Green*, The History of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association, 2005, pages 103, 178, 179

Tom Harrison, The Assistant, *The Grass Roots*, June 1976,



WTA President Tom Harrison accepts a check from Bruce Schweiger then superintendent at Janesville Riverside and Blackhawk Golf Courses. (Photo from The Grass Roots files)

Member 9 With Tom Harrison

- 1. First Vehicle?** *First personal vehicle was a 1953 Pontiac Straight 8 Hardtop. First course vehicle was a 1966 Jeep CJ-5.*
- 2. Favorite Piece of Golf Course Equipment?** *My schooling was engineering so I am a "Gear Head". I like all our equipment.*
- 3. 18 Hole Handicap?** *No handicap - prefer not to play golf. Trying to enjoy playing the game of golf when I have worked on a course since 1965 is difficult at best. I prefer recreational activities away from my full time job.*
- 4. Current Vehicle?** *Current private vehicle is a 1984 Chevy C-10 "Street Rod". Current club vehicle is a 2002 GMC Sierra Pickup.*
- 5. Favorite TV Show?** *American Pickers.*
- 6. Favorite Pro Sports Team?** *The Packers*
- 7. Favorite Main Course Meal?** *Seafood*
- 8. Pets?** *No Pets*
- 9. Favorite Thing About Working In Golf Industry?** *I love the landforms of a sculptured golf course. I enjoy the satisfaction of viewing the course at the end of a day when everything is manicured and our staff has the course looking great for our members. It is above all else the satisfaction of a job well done.*
I would like to add the favorite part of my job is my employees. I have great employees and I enjoy coming to work every day and working with them. My younger employees are beginning their working lives and its a real joy guiding them, mentoring them and following their paths as they begin their working careers. I have 15 part time retired employees who are on the other end of lifes spectrum and they bring a whole different skill set to the work place. They are great to work with as they come to work and solve all the worlds problems each and every day. These employees are truly what make my job a great job.