

SPORTS

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Volunteers key Open success

BY JIM TOTH
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STAFF WRITERS

History has run its course again at Oakland Hills Country Club. The Club's famed South Course was the showcase venue last week for the world's best professional golfers who teed it up in search of the 96th U.S. Open championship. It was the 13th major event hosted by Oakland Hills - including the sixth U.S. Open - since the 1922 Western Open.

Indeed, it was a successful week by all accounts.

But it took teamwork from top to bottom to make the 96th U.S. Open a wonderful event. More than 3,000 volunteers paraded through the grounds the past seven days to help ensure that success.

Following are three of those workers' stories.

JIM JUDGE: Jim Judge has redefined the responsibilities that go along with being Assistant Chairman of the press tent. Not only did he have to accommodate the needs of nagging media members, but Judge was also forced to make time for duties that go along with becoming a grandfather.

Judge's daughter Julie Neihel, a graduate of Bloomfield Hills Lehigh, gave birth to a healthy baby girl, Megan, just 10 minutes prior to the start of Thursday's opening round.

"There's been a little more responsibility than I had planned on," said Judge, a Troy resident and Oakland Hills member for the past 14 years. "I've had to get my wife (Marcia) to Cincinnati to be with Julie and also take care of business here. It's been quite a week."

"It's a lot of fun, it really is. This is spectacular," he said. "We don't get these kind of tournaments all the time. I went up to see the Ryder Cup last fall. But when you're involved with it and know a lot of people it's a lot more fun."

ROGER OBERG: Oberg, a member at Oakland Hills since 1987, was captain of the 18th hole through board. His job was to post scores for golfers entering the dramatic 18th hole on the small through board immediately adjacent to the giant 18th-green leader board.

"You receive electronically the scores you have to post. Then you have to post the names of the players (coming onto the 18th hole), their scores today and their totals," said Oberg, who also worked the 1991 U.S. Senior Open. "You have to keep up with each group coming through."

Oberg, who manned the afternoon shifts, was one of six volunteers working in two shifts at that location. He enjoyed the workload, although the shifts got long at times. There was one funny situation that popped up in the early rounds.

"What you find is that you have a million critics," he said. "Like, for example, we misspelled Janzen (using an 'z' instead of a 'j'). We had about 45 people tell us about it within about 14 seconds. But that's okay. We just made a mistake, that's all."

"It's a volunteer thing. We feel, in terms of being a club member, that we can give something back. We earn some money off this," he said. "You have a lot of fun with your crew. You feel you're doing some good and it's a nice event. It's a happening."

JANE JUETT: Jane Juett did not have far to travel to work last week. Juett lives on the club's North Course and was just a couple good tee-shots away from her volunteer station as Standard Bearer organizer.

Standard bearers are the young men and women who walk 18 holes while holding the cards with names and scores of each golfer - arrived at Oakland Hills from across the country. Juett said 73 standard bearers started the week and the field was reduced to 40 by Saturday's third round. The standard bearers - ranging in age from 14-30 - came from such places as Kansas City, East Lansing, Canada, St. Joseph's (Mich.) and Coldwater (Mich.).

"I had kids write to me from college golf teams and from other golf teams in the area," said Juett, a media specialist at Bemis Elementary school in Troy. "The (standard bearer) has to change today's score and the cumulative score (of each golfer in that group), and they only have the time from when the player leaves the green until the time he tees off. That's not a lot of time."

"If you're into golf, this is the great job they get out of school is great. They've done a great job. If you truly love the game of golf, it doesn't get much better than this."

Monster madness

Jones holds off course, competitors to capture U.S. Open Championship at Oakland Hills

BY JIM TOTH
STAFF WRITER

Sheer survival proved once again to be the key ingredient for producing victory on The Monster.

With golf's greatest talents bearing down in attempt to tame the famed 6,974-yard, par-70 layout of Oakland Hills Country Club's South Course, it was longshot Steve Jones escaping The Monster's wrath long enough Sunday to finish with a two-under total 278 and win the 1996 U.S. Open Championship. Longshot only in the sense that Jones, 37, was forced away from Tour competition for three years due to a dirt bike injury in 1991, that among other injuries, left him nursing ligament damage to his left ring finger.

"This is a thrill of a lifetime," beamed Jones, earning custody of the Open Championship Cup following his final-round 69 that left him one stroke better than runners-up Davis Love III and Tom Lehman. "When I injured my finger, I wasn't sure I'd ever play again. But I continued to work and things began to come together. You really can't prepare for something like this. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time."

For Jones, that was no more evident than being in the fairway on the decisive 18th hole. After watching playing partner Lehman find the bunker with his tee shot, Jones found the center of the fairway. A seven-iron to the green and two putts into the cup handed Jones his first major championship and first tournament triumph of any kind since he won the Canadian Open in 1989.

"It takes a lot of guts to win," said Jones, who along with Lehman and Love were the only golfers in the field to post sub-par totals. "I didn't know if I had the guts to win another tournament, let alone a major."

"But I know every kid who grows up and plays golf dreams of making a putt on the final hole to win the U.S. Open," Jones said. "Fortunately, I had about a one-foot putt to make mine."

Unfortunately for Lehman and Love, they were unable to negotiate putts on 18 to force a next-day playoff.

"I'm a little closer than I was last year and a lot more disappointed than last year," said Love, following a three-putt performance on the final hole. "This is as hard a course as I have ever played day-in, day-out. With the rough being the way it is and the greens as fast as can be, there's a lot to be upset about."

Lehman, who like Love continues to seek his first major victory, echoed Love's feelings toward battling The Monster.

"My goal was to shoot under par, and if I could shoot under par, it was going to be a lot to beat me," said Lehman, who one day after equalling the course record with a 65 settled for a one-over 71. "I thought I played



STAFF PHOTO BY DAN DEAN

What a day! Steve Jones continued an interesting streak with his victory Sunday in the United States Open tournament at Oakland Hills. The 37-year-old head pro became the fifth consecutive champion to make the U.S. Open his first major victory, joining such standouts as Tom Kite, Lee Janzen, Ernie Els and Corey Pavin. Jones finished with a two-under, four-round total of 278.

well enough to win today. I just didn't get the bounce."

Top 10 finishers: 1. Steve Jones (74-68-69-69-278); 2. (tie) Davis Love III (71-69-70-69-279);

Tom Lehman (71-72-65-71-279); 4. John Morse (68-74-68-70-280); 5. (tie) Ernie Els (72-67-72-70-281);

Jim Furyk (72-69-70-70-281); 7. (tie) Scott Hoch (73-71-71-67-282); Vijay

Singh (71-72-70-69-282); Ken Green (73-67-72-70-282); 10. (tie) Lee

Janzen (68-75-71-69-283); Greg Neis (73-66-74-70-283); Colin Montgomerie (70-72-69-72-283).

Caddies bag lifetime memories

BY MARTY BUDNER
STAFF WRITER

A few lucky Oakland Hills caddies bagged a lifetime remembrance last week.

The prestigious Bloomfield Township club employs 169 caddies - more than enough to field one caddy for every participating pro in last week's U.S. Open championship. Unfortunately, it didn't work that way.

Most of the world's best golfers, of course, employ their own caddies. It's rare when a host club has more than a couple caddies to run "loops" with the competing pros.

This year was a little different as six Oakland Hills caddies got to carry bags at one point or another.

Scott Staudy, Rich Power and Don Myers carried bags for one day of practice. Two others - Rich Harrison and Dan Totonchi - carried loops for two championship rounds. Corey Sumner had the longest workload as he hit the loop for all four championship rounds with third-year pro-

fessional Rich Yokota.

Totonchi was overjoyed to represent the host group of caddies in the championship rounds. However, after his assignment late Friday afternoon, Totonchi shared the disappointment of his pro John Flannery who did not make the final cut.

"It's an awesome feeling to be inside the ropes," said Totonchi after Flannery's second-round 75 resulted in tournament elimination. "But right now I'm kind of disappointed (Flannery) didn't make it. I was hoping he could. The dreams are just shattered."

Totonchi, who has been a caddy at Oakland Hills since 1990, is considered one of the club's top five caddies. Those five caddies' names were thrown into a hat and the order of draw would be the order in which they were given assignments, as necessary.

It happened that six golfers - mostly sectional qualifying pros from across the country - requested caddies.



STAFF PHOTO BY DAN DEAN

Caddy duties: Oakland Hills Country Club caddy Scott Staudy (right) assists professional golfer Brian Gay during a practice round earlier last week.