

Pro prepares club for play

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

Pat Croswell's golf game and sleeping habits haven't been the same lately — all because he's trying to make Oakland Hills Country Club the same friendly host it has always been.

Croswell, the club pro at Oakland Hills, said he has spent about 80 to 90 hours per week in the last month getting the club ready for the U.S. Senior Open. Croswell isn't alone in his endeavor.

He has four assistants and 1,200 members volunteering their services to make sure the seniors will enjoy this stay as much as in 1981, when the last U.S. Senior Open was held here.

Oakland Hills has a proud tradition of hosting majors, including five U.S. Opens, two PGAs, a Western Open, Ladies U.S. Amateur, and two World Carling Opens.

The last major hosted by Oakland Hills was the U.S. Open in 1985. Croswell, an assistant at the time under Al Mengert, had just turned 30 then.

"I'M AN OLD 36 this week," he joked. "The other night I came home and passed out at 8 o'clock in my room with the light on, too weak to turn it off. But it's worth it. I've enjoyed it all and look forward to it. We do a lot of planning and a lot of work trying to build on the great tradition of Oakland Hills."

"The people that make it possible and successful are the members. Sometimes they don't get a pat on the back, but they should. They love the club, love the Detroit area and love the game of golf."

Croswell, who lives in Birmingham with his wife Debbie and 6-year-old son Matthew, took over as the club

pro in 1987 for the retired Mengert. He has four assistants — Jon Helmker, Mike Erickson, Bruce Cunningham and John Swanson — who come in handy considering the last 2½ years of Croswell's tenure has been spent thinking about and organizing the U.S. Senior Open.

Croswell was an assistant pro at Oakland Hills from 1981-86 so he knows what it took to make the '81 Senior Open and the '85 U.S. Open a success.

Despite having played thousands of rounds on Oakland Hills, Croswell doesn't anticipate giving any advice on how to play any of the holes.

"The thing about the Senior Open is a lot of them are coming back to Oakland Hills for the fourth, fifth time; guys like (Lee) Trevino, (Jack) Nicklaus, (Arnold) Palmer, (Gary) Player," Croswell said.

CROSWELL TAKES pride in Oakland Hills' reputation, saying there are only "15 clubs in the country like it." The golf shop at Oakland Hills, which Croswell helps oversee, is ranked among the top 20 in the country in total merchandising. Croswell said three tents of golf merchandise will be set up on the golf course throughout the tournament.

Croswell, a native of Columbus, Ohio, and one of nine children, began his career as a club pro at Ashtabula Country Club in Ohio, where he holds the course record for 18 holes with a 65. Despite having a fine background in the sport as a player, Croswell has never won any major tournaments as an amateur or pro, he said.

At Oakland Hills he's more concerned with the well-being of his players and the upkeep of the club.

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Pat Croswell, club professional at Oakland Hills Country Club, has spent 80-90 hours per week over the last month preparing for the upcoming U.S. Senior Open. Croswell has served as club pro since 1987.

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