



Metropolitan Golf Writers Association NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2013

MGWA Member Spotlight

BRUCE J. SMITH



Thirty-five years ago this winter, I turned pro. Not a lot of fanfare. Except for me. I received a check for \$500 from Thomas Byrne of Syracuse.

Byrne owned the highly-successful dairy in central New York. His daughter Gretchen had recently made the U.S. Speedskating team and was training in Lake Placid for the upcoming Winter Olympics. It was December 1978 and I was a senior at SU's famed Newhouse School of Communications. For a class project, I produced a video profile of Gretchen Byrne – hometown hero from Syracuse.

Her dad asked me to add to the original 4-minute video; to create a more thorough and longer treatment of his daughter and her success. I was happy to oblige. I wasn't sure I was being paid for this extra work, but I really didn't care. This was my first real production.

Growing up watching lots of sports on television, I noticed that at the end of every show they'd say, "This has been a production of (i.e.) ABC Sports ...". So, of course, when I completed my video, I needed to end it with a tag line. The only problem. I didn't yet have a tag line.

My nickname growing up was Boo Boo, or Bear. And I loved sports. So at the end, I showed a cute bear's head moving slightly on the screen, with the words ... A Sporty Bear Production.

When I began my company in 1985 we named it, what else ... Sporty Bear Productions.

Sports and bears. What's more popular? Oh yah, that too.

SEND IN YOUR NEWS AND NOTES

All members of the MGWA who may have items for our newsletter are urged to e-mail them to **Chuck Stogel** (chstogel@aol.com).

BECK ELECTED MGWA PRESIDENT, LIGUORI NAMED VP

Bruce Beck, lead TV sports anchor of NBC 4 New York, was elected president of the Metropolitan Golf Writers Association at the MGWA Executive Committee's September meeting. The term is for one year and is renewable up to a maximum of four years.

Beck succeeds **Ralph Wimbish** of the New York Post, who served 2012-13 as president and remains on the Executive Committee. Sports broadcaster and author **Ann Liguori** of Ann Liguori Productions was newly elected as a vice president. Peter Morrice of Golf Digest was re-elected a vp.

Also re-elected as Executive Committee members: **Dave Anderson**, New York Times; **Dan Berger**, DMB Media Network; **Martin Davis**, The American Golfer; **Dave Donelson**, Westchester Magazine; **Bill Fields**, Golf World; **Damon Hack**, Golf Channel; **Pete Kowalski**, USGA; **Andy Lavine**, Trump National Hudson Valley; **Jay Mottola**, MGA; **Howie Munck**, freelance; **Pat Norton**, On Course Strategies; **Bill Pennington**, New York Times; **Jimmy Roberts**, NBC Sports; **Ron Sirak**, Golf World; **Chuck Stogel**, freelance. For the full news release, please go to our web site, www.metgolfwriters.org.

MARINE PARK HOSTS BROOKLYN OPEN

New York City's Marine Park GC, looking to attract more Met area golfers — and also make itself known among the ranks of better players — was scheduled to host the inaugural Brooklyn Open golf championship, a one-day medal play event on Monday, Oct. 21. The layout is a Robert Trent Jones design that stretches nearly 7,000 yards. "This [tournament] gives us an opportunity to showcase improvements made at Marine Park and at the same time deliver a first-class golf tournament experience in Brooklyn," said Marine Park operator **Mike Giordano**.

One of our low-handicap MGWA members, who was scheduled to play in the event, offered rave reviews after a recent practice round regarding the putting challenge and the quality of conditioning on the Marine Park greens. "As good as the private clubs in the area," was the observation.

The tournament was offering prize money for the pro leaders and gift certificates for the top amateur finishers. For more info about the event, results or the facility/course: **Nick Nicholas**, Nicholas & Lence Communications, nick@nicholaslence.com, 212-938-0833.

PEOPLE, PLACES, ETC

For an interesting story on the Golf Channel web site about PGA champion **Jason Dufner** canceling the \$750 bet that GlenArbor club pro **Rob Labritz** lost during a practice round match at Oak Hill in August --- just prior to Dufner winning the PGA title (Labritz teamed with **Keegan Bradley** in a match against Dufner and **Dustin Johnson**) --- here's the link: www.golfchannel.com/news/jason-sobel/after-major-win-dufner-voids-bet-with-pga-pro/



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(Continued) I've had the good fortune of covering several sports. In 1979, I was a researcher and stats man on ABC's Monday Night Baseball for Howard Cosell, Keith Jackson, and Don Drysdale; in the booth for the "Bobby Murcer game" after Thurman Munson's tragic plane crash, and for the "We Are Family" Pittsburgh Pirates' World Series run.

In 1981, I was a graphics coordinator for CBS and worked Super Bowl XVI – Joe Montana's first of four SB victories.

Another thrill was my two Olympics for ABC in 1984 – Winter (Sarajevo) and Summer (Los Angeles).

However, I wanted to concentrate on golf, and I have.

Following Syracuse, I was a P.A. for CBS, often alongside Frank Chirkinian, the dean of TV golf. In 1980 I worked on ABC's golf, debuting with Jack Nicklaus' historic fourth U.S. Open title at Baltusrol. The following month I covered the first of many British Opens for ABC, working in the 18th tower for legends Jim McKay and Dave Marr at Muirfield, Scotland.

I've been fortunate to have documented many of golf's most significant events, including Daly's ... The Long Shot, The War by the Shore, 75 Years of the PGA Championship, and Tiger's Triple.

I'm a passionate historian and have produced videos for several prominent clubs, including Winged Foot, Baltusrol, Saint Andrew's, and Sebonack.

For a long time, I was best known for producing the critically-acclaimed Golf's Greatest Moments: 100 Years of American Golf (1988).

In all, I've written and/or produced 22 golf home videos, more than 150 special event videos, and numerous television shows.

A lot of numbers. A lot of great experiences. For me though, it's about having the opportunity to do ... what I love doing. And a long way from Thomas Byrne's \$500 check in 1979.

A native of Ossining, NY, Smith has been involved at the highest levels of sports television and video production.

PEOPLE, PLACES, ETC

Former Met Amateur and Met Open champion **Andrew Svoboda** of Larchmont, NY, won his second Web.com Tour title in a four-week span that culminated in September, assuring himself of a PGA Tour card for 2014. For stories about Svoboda's victories:

www.pgatour.com/webcom/daily-wrapup/2013/09/08/svoboda-wins.html; www.pgatour.com/webcom/news/2013/09/08/svoboda-column.html. For a column by **Clifton Brown** about Svoboda teeing off in the first event of the 2013-14 PGA Tour season: www.pgatour.com/news/2013/10/08/brown-svoboda-eager-for-tee-time.html . . .

Mike Miller advanced to the first stage of Web.Com Tour Q School after closing a prequalifier at Arbor Links Golf Club in Nebraska City, Neb., with a course-record 65. The 21-year-old from Brewster, NY, finished atop the 54-hole leaderboard with an 11-under 205. The Q School First Stage was scheduled for this month, with a second stage in November and final qualifying Dec. 12-17 at PGA West to play for Web.com Tour cards . . . Club pro **Brian Gaffney** is moving from Rumson CC in New Jersey to become the new head professional at Quaker Ridge GC, Scarsdale, NY, succeeding the retiring **Rick Vershure**. Gaffney also was head pro at White Beeches and in 2012 was a qualifier for both the U.S. Open and PGA Championship . . .

Winged Foot's East Course has been closed for major restorations being handled by architect **Gil Hanse**. The course, which has hosted the 1957 and 1972 U.S. Women's Opens and the inaugural U.S. Senior Open in 1980 ---- is scheduled to reopen in May 2014 . . . Although not slated to open until Spring 2015, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held this month for the long-delayed Ferry Point Park course which sits next to the Whitestone Bridge in the Bronx, NY. Designed by **Jack Nicklaus**, the project is being completed by developer **Donald Trump & Co.** (<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304330904579137772016610180>)

. . . Golf course architecture firm **Tripp Davis and Associates** has embarked on a two-year Master Plan for renovating and restoring the course at Spring Lake GC, Spring Lake Heights, NJ. The original 18-hole layout was designed by **George Thomas** in 1911 and redesigned/strengthened in 1918 by A.W. Tillinghast. For more info: MGWA members **Pat Norton** (pat@oncoursegolf-pr.com) or **Jane Dally** (jane@oncoursegolf-pr.com) at On Course Strategies (203-454-0232) . . . MGWA golf shirts have been ordered from Antigua and should be here in a few weeks. We'll contact everyone who ordered once they arrive, and let everyone know about getting them to you . . . **Condolences:** To MGWA member **Tom Mariam**, whose mother, **Lisa Mariam**, passed away in September . . . Also to **Grace Wimbish**, wife of MGWA past president and current Exec Committee member **Ralph Wimbish**, whose father, **Dino Renna**, passed away . . . **OBIT:** MGWA member **Brenda Walsh**, 62, a copy editor at the New York Post, died Oct. 14 after a lengthy illness. Her passion for golf was well known among co-workers, and twice she won the Doc Rot Open championship, a competition for NY Post employees. The family has requested anyone wishing to make a donation in Brenda's memory, send it to The Calvary Fund, 1740 Eastchester Rd., Bronx, NY 10461 Online condolences can be placed at www.westchesterfuneralhome.com.

ROCKRIMMON ATTENDEES UNFAZED BY WEATHER DELAYS

MGWA attendees at our August meeting/outing at Rockrimmon CC in Stamford, CT, proved a hardy bunch, outlasting three lengthy weather delays to complete our afternoon golf competition. Club sirens went off frequently, it seemed, in late afternoon as thunderstorms rolled through various parts of Fairfield County. There was no rain but, to be safe, golfers were called into the clubhouse from the course several times due to the threat of thunder and lightning. Eventually, the entire field finished play.

There were two segments to our competition: our annual Quill & Tee GC President's Cup event; and the inaugural Q&T member-guest. **Paul Lieberman** captured the President's Cup in A Flight with a net 72, **Bill Vostinak** was second at 73, **Woody Lashen** third at 74 and **Joe Ruggiero** fourth at 75. Bill Fullard prevailed in the B flight with a net 69, followed by **Jeff Neuman** at 73, **Dave Donelson** at 75 and **Peter Rosenberger** at 76.



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(Continued) He has earned more than 30 national awards for his work, including 18 Telly Awards.

From 2000-03, Smith served as President of the MGWA. In 2013, he was named the MGWA's first-ever Director of Marketing to raise significant money for our National Awards Dinner, the longest-running (62 years) golf dinner in the U.S.

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The Quill & Tee Member-Guest better ball tournament was won by Donelson and guest **Ned Branthover** at 65, followed by **Joe Ruggiero-Dan Perlman** and **Neuman-Bill Hohaus** tied at 67. Nearest to the pin winners were **Doug Goodman, Eric Berger, Rick Wolffe** and **Yale Stogel**.

During our morning meeting, MGWA members heard about Rockrimmon's history (the club was founded in 1947) from club manager **John Larsen** and veteran starter **Bruce Thomashauer**. Both described Rockrimmon as a "full-service, family-oriented club" featuring a multitude of activities and facilities. Later, after club pro **Jerry Yochum** officially launched the shotgun golf, a consensus of MGWA members had considerable praise for a club that is somewhat of a hidden gem in southern Fairfield, with an enormously interesting, challenging and fair par 72 golf course.

On the educational agenda: **Brian Wittman** and **John Najev**, representing MxV Golf --- after providing a demo session and considerable information about the company's round-faced MxV1 putter --- headed a spirited and lengthy Q&A session with our group about the relatively new putter, about putter technology and about the challenges faced on the green by all golfers. Looking ahead, MxV plans to launch a second putter for its lineup in January.

NOTE: The MGWA Activities Committee is currently working on a meeting schedule for 2014 and expects to have a list of dates and locations to announce in December, including a possible overnigher next year in the Hamptons. Our season-opening gathering in the spring is confirmed already for April 28, 2014, at Knickerbocker CC, Tenafly, NJ, which will be celebrating its centennial anniversary next season.

--- www.metgolfwriters.org ---



John Najev, of MxV Golf



One of the foursomes in the Q&T President's Cup competition: left to right: Bart Silverman, Bill Meth, Chris Lane, Mike Adamucci