

Brainerd Lakes Area Tour Showcase enters 2nd year

The PGA Tour (3M Open, July 4-7 at TPC Blaine) and the LPGA Tour (KMPG Women's PGA, June 20-23 at Hazeltine National GC) are both hosting huge golf events in the Gopher State this summer.

Additionally, another fledgling event will be in transition, as the second year of the Brainerd Lakes Area Tour Showcase will be contested at The Legacy GC in Brainerd on Aug. 19-22.

The plan to secure a Web.com Tour event in Central Minnesota in 2020 is the brainchild of 77-year-old Sartell entrepreneur Ron Sanders. When most septuagenarians are sliding into a restful retirement, the indefatigable

Sanders and his co-founder Greg Rueter and dedicated staff are looking forward to hosting this PGA-sanctioned tournament.

At a recent breakfast meeting with Sanders, he apprised me of what's on the docket for the second year of this event. From Aug. 1-17, qualification rounds will be set aside at Blackberry Ridge GC in Sartell and other designated sites.

On Aug. 19, practice rounds will be available for professionals, a Brainerd Lakes Area Fishing Showcase Pro-Am will occur in the morning and afternoon. At night there will be a pairings party along with a stage show and live entertainment.

On Aug. 20, there will be a double pro-am with morning and afternoon sessions.

On Aug. 21, Round 1, the unofficial \$100,000 purse (based on 80+ players), will commence.

On Aug. 22, the final 18 holes will be contested with the winner receiving the first-place prize of \$12,000. Participants in this event will come from current players on the Web.com Tour, the Mackenzie Tour (Canadian version of the Web.com), Dakota Tour and from Minnesota and surrounding area club professionals who qualify at various sites.

At a May 6 media meeting in Brainerd, Sanders negotiated the final financial piece that will advance the tournament to its eventual fruition: A title sponsor has been signed and secured for 2019, with the option of extending its financial commitment for an additional three years. The principal sponsor will be unveiled in Brainerd on May 21.

GOLF NOTES:

The honorary starter for the Brainerd Lakes Area Tour Showcase will be Minnesota legend and golf artist Loyal "Bud" Chapman. At age 96, Chapman plays golf five days a week, sports a 5.2 handicap, recorded 17 aces and has shot his age nearly 4,000 times.

Sartell's Tom Fenton just returned from a trip to Ireland and played the Royal Portrush Golf Club in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. This Harry Holt designed course will host The Open Championship for the first time since 1951. Fenton said they were already getting the stands ready for the July 18-21 event. Fenton also played the K Club, which hosted the 2006 Ryder Cup.

Central Minnesota golfers should be cheering as many Twin Cities private courses were hit hard by the recent winter. Having attended the KMPG LPGA Championship media outing at Target Field on May 6, and playing Hazeltine on May 7, the Hazeltine course came through the rough winter unscathed.

Former Albany native Chris Tritabaugh is the course superintendent.

This is the opinion of Times golf columnist John Lieser. Contact him at Jg11943@gmail.com.



Ron Sanders hopes to secure a Web.com Tour event in Central Minnesota in 2020.