



# Trans-Miss Transcript

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## 29th Trans-Mississippi Four-ball Championships **Elway, Hart make the grade!**



*Tommy Hart and John Elway, 2009 Trans-Miss Four-ball Champions.*

*Cont'd on page 3*

# Greetings

## Dear Trans-Miss Supporters,

■ I'm from Minnesota and I know about snow (and ice)! Despite the fact that the rules of golf define snow as either casual water or a loose impediment, it doesn't go well with golf. It's the same color as the ball, and the greens get a little slow.

■ Our recent Trans-Mississippi Four-Ball Championship hosted by the fabulous members and staff at Cherry Hills Country Club in Denver, Colorado was played for two of the three days under "threat" of snow storms. The nearby foothills region got covered by up to seven inches of snow. While we never saw anything but light rain, we did have to make some contingency plans for the arrival of a snow storm.

■ Cherry Hills superintendent Mike Burke and his staff (which includes former Trans-Miss scholar Jason Hinkley) know about snow. When your golf course is a mile-high and that close to the mountains, an early-season dusting is not uncommon. While we were worrying about losing a day of play, Mike and his guys were busy doing their morning preparations the evening before, so that should the course have a few inches of snow on the ground in the morning, the course would be ready as soon as it melted. Now that is thinking ahead!

■ Our thanks to all of the members and staff at Cherry Hills Country Club for hosting 160 of our avid golfers for four days in September. While the weather was wet and cold until the final day, the warmth of the reception "inside" the clubhouse was world-class. In fact, it was hard for us to leave!

■ We also had the pleasure of meeting and hearing the comments of Mark Woodward, the CEO of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Just like the Trans-Miss, the GCSAA is headquartered in Lawrence, Kansas and Mark accepted our invitation to spend a couple of days with us at Cherry Hills. His comments at our board

meeting and then at the players' banquet were very interesting. His organization supports the professional golf course superintendent worldwide through education, support and networking. He knows the state of the golf business and while it is going through a tough stretch there are many reasons to believe that the industry will be stronger as a result. Mark also entertained us with some stories from the 2008 U.S. Open and the months leading up to it. He was the superintendent at Torrey Pines before assuming his current leadership position.

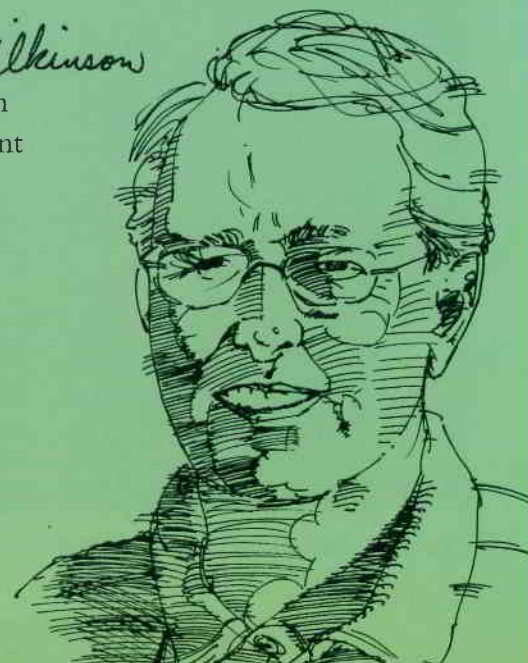
■ Bottom line, the Trans-Miss had a highly successful and memorable event at Cherry Hills. You can read about the golf and view some of the action in this issue of the Transcript. I extend my thanks to all of the players for their support and participation. We were able to raise a very significant sum of money to help support the mission of the Trans-Miss to education future golf course superintendents. Of course, additional contributions are always needed and appreciated!

■ Enjoy the rest of your golf season!

Regards,

*Hank Wilkinson*

Hank Wilkinson  
TMGA President



*“It’s how you pick your partner.”*



*(l to r) Tommy Hart and John Elway share the champions' trophy with senior division winners Steve Dallas and Jim Hays.*

■ Denver Broncos Hall of Fame quarterback John Elway receives an A-plus as a professional football player on anybody's report card. As 2008 club champion and 2009 runner-up at prestigious Cherry Hills Country Club in the Mile-High City, we'll give the two-time Super Bowl champ an A-plus as an amateur golfer too.

■ But how does the former signal caller grade out on picking partners to win key golf events like the 2009 Trans-Mississippi Four-Ball Championship played this past September on his home course?

■ "I got an A-plus, plus with that," Elway said, moments after watching playing partner Tommy Hart birdie Cherry Hills' par-5 18th to cap off a stunning week of golf and an eight-stroke victory for the team. "That's the

key thing. It's not about how good of golf you play. It's how you pick your partner."

■ Playing in his first national event, Denver's Hart fired a 30 on Cherry Hills' front side on his own ball to open the event. He did that one better with an eye-popping 29 in the final round as he and No. 7 turned a five-shot lead into an even bigger runaway. Hart got the Colorado team 11 of its winning 17-under-par total – in just two nines.

■ "Growing up in Denver, playing at Cherry Hills in a national championship with John – is a dream come true," said Hart, 29 and in the golf business with his family in Colorado and southern California. "Then to win it, especially how we won it, was the best golf moment I've ever had. We've had a lot of good ones. My family is a

big golf family. But this is something I'll never forget."

### Like picking cherries

■ Hart, who is a member at nearby Cherry Creek Country Club, played in high school at Kent Denver and then at the University of Denver. He tried professional golf for about a year before going into business with his family. Elway, who's been a member at Cherry Hills since 1991, played many rounds with Hart's father and knew Tommy when he was a youngster.

■ "We've actually played a lot of golf together," said Elway, 49 and a successful business man now after closing his long NFL career with consecutive Super Bowl triumphs. "We were playing about

a year ago and we said the Trans-Miss is coming to Cherry Hills and I asked him if he wanted to be my partner and I'm sure glad he said yes."

■ And how.

Hart overcame the cold, wind and rain that greeted Four-Ball competitors on the first day, shooting a 30 on his own ball on Cherry Hills' par-35 first nine. By the time the rainy first day had ended Elway and Hart had an eight-under 64 and led by two shots over the Dallas father-son tandem of Steve and Stephen Summers.

■ "I hit the ball really close, probably had seven or eight kick-ins," Hart said of his front side dominance during championship week.

■ Hart said the practice round on

Monday proved helpful as he got a little more familiar with the changes that have been made to Cherry Hills' front nine.

■ "I came out in the rain on Monday and played the front nine, just trying to figure out what to hit, like on (the par-3 eighth hole)," Hart said. "It's quite a bit different than the old (layout)."

As the cold and rain continued into day two, Elway and Hart continued their fine play. They turned in a four-under 68 and extended their lead to five shots over the Summers team.

■ "We were excited to play in the weather," Hart said. "The second day we teed off in the afternoon and I think it rained for the first 13 or 14 holes. On the practice tee it didn't bother us and

*Corky Nelson,  
Dallas, Texas*



*Jason Seeman, Kansas City, drives on the 10th hole as Partner David Rismiller looks on. Cherry Hills members John Elway and tournament co-chairman Stan Smazal were impressed.*



*Tommy Hart*



*John Elway*

we were excited to go out and play in it and we thought we could beat everyone playing in it.”

■ If the first two days of golf didn’t prove that...the first nine holes of the third and final day did.

■ With the tees moved back on Cherry Hills’ famous downhill first hole for the final round, Hart blasted a drive down the left side, hit a short wedge shot to about two-and-a-half feet and tapped in the putt for birdie. He chose driver again on the par-4 third and his tee shot wound up about four feet off the green. Hart rammed in the 20-foot-er for an eagle two.

■ At the par-5 fifth, after he was forced to lay-up, Hart hit his approach shot about seven feet above the hole and

calmly rolled in the slippery downhill putt for yet another birdie as the team moved to 16 under par. At No. 7, Hart hit another wedge approach, this one stopping about 14 inches from the hole for another tap-in birdie. He capped his front-nine, odd-numbered-hole onslaught with an eight-footer for birdie at No. 9.

■ “It’s really fun to have a partner make as many birdies as my partner made,” said Elway, a veteran of Trans events at Houston’s Royal Oaks in 2000 and last fall’s Four-Ball at Bandon Dunes. “Tommy really knows how to hit the golf ball. He did a great job scoring; you really have to score on the front side. The back nine is definitely a lot tougher than the front side. So we

were scoring on the right side. I think we had four birdies and an eagle on the front side today. That kind of locked it up...no one was going to catch that.”

■ The team’s rounds of 64-68-67 left them at 199 for the championship. That was eight shots better than second-place Californians and Trans veterans David Bartman and Robert Funk. Los Angeles’s Bartman and Canyon Lake’s Funk shot a 67 on the first day, and turned in an even-par 72 while playing with Elway and Hart the second day. Bartman, the 2005 Trans Match-Play champion at Prairie Dunes, and Funk, the 2006 titleist at Brooke Hollow, closed with a four-under 68 on a sunny and warmer third day.

■ Another two shots back were no



Charles Bagby, Birmingham, AL



fewer than six teams at seven-under 209. The group included the Summers (66-71-72), Scottsdale, Ariz.'s Jim Strickland and Warren Vickers (69-69-71), Omaha, Neb.'s Tom Kelley and Nick Vondrak (68-70-71), Denver's Tom Krystyn and Fort Wayne, Ind.'s Al Martin (67-70-72), San Carlos, Calif.'s Gary Young and San Rafael, Calif.'s Kevin Kobalter (71-70-68) and Austin, Texas's Larry Nunez and Midland, Texas's Mac McGee (71-71-67). Cherry Hills last hosted a Trans-Miss event in 1998. Fort Worth, Texas's Dan Dunkelberg won the Match-Play title that year, defeating Colorado's John Olive in the championship match.

### *Seniors overcome conditions, field for enjoyable Cherry Hills win*

■ If the Championship portion of the 2009 Trans-Miss Four-Ball was a run away, the Senior Division was about survival. And surviving some brutal weather conditions, a challenging golf course and some stiff competition were Prosper, Texas's Jim Hays and partner Steve Dallas of Mesa, Ariz. Hays and Dallas played consistently all three days, including firing a three-under 69 in the final round, and bested two other teams by a single shot.

■ "That's a good victory for us. To have our names on that trophy – that's awe-

some, with all the tradition and history," said Hays, a 64-year-old retiree from the oil and gas industry and most recently a professional golfer.

■ And though they'd played other team events, it was the first time the duo was playing in a Trans Four-ball together.

■ "It's one of our top, top victories – no question about that," said 61-year-old Dallas, who knows a thing or two about golf as well as owner of Las Colinas and Apache Creek golf courses in Arizona.

■ It was certainly earned. After two tough days of cold, rainy golf, Hays and Dallas found themselves just a single shot off the lead after posting six-under

138. That was a stroke behind the 137

■ Birmingham, Ala.'s Charles Bagby and Corky Nelson of Dallas.

■ With finishing "No. 1" as the only goal and playing Cherry Hills difficult back nine to open their round, Hays and Dallas made birdie at the par-3 12th hole. They were two-under for the final round when they made the turn as the Colorado sun finally broke through to warm competitors.

■ "We were two under coming through here, which we thought was pretty good," said Hays, who plays at Gentle Creek in Prosper. "Because we were just fighting...one of us was out of the hole, then the other. We alternated

on that. We got a little sloppy...we bogeyed (No.) 1."

■ But the duo got word that both teams in the final pairing weren't under par for the day with just two holes to play.

■ "We weren't in too bad a shape, then the only team we really had to worry about was the team we were playing with and we just nudged them," Dallas said.

■ Hays and Dallas went on to shoot a final round 69 and posted a nine-under 207 for the three rounds. That was indeed just a single shot better than Hays and Dallas' final-round playing competitors Sean Forey and Scott

Radcliffe. Morrison, Colo.'s Forey and Golden, Colo.'s Radcliffe had a two-under 70 on the final day, to go along with earlier rounds of 68 and 70.

■ Joining them at eight-under 208 were Houston's Hunter Nelson and David Moore. The Texans had the low Senior Division round of the final day with a four-under 68 to go along with an even-par first round and a fine 68 on the difficult second day.

■ Never having played Cherry Hills, the Hays/Dallas team opened the event with a four-under 68 in the cold and rain and joined two other entries just a shot off the pace set by Scottsdale, Ariz.'s Mike Guetz and Tim McAdam.



*Jim Hays, Prosper, TX*





■ “We both hit the ball pretty well, but made about the worst score we could possibly make of 68,” said Dallas, a member at Alta Mesa Golf Club in Mesa, Ariz.

■ The weather may have been even more difficult during their morning round on day two, but Hays and Dallas turned in a two-under 70 to remain in the hunt.

■ “We just never quit fighting,” said Hays, who placed second in the Four-Ball back in the early 1990s and reached the quarters in the Trans Match Play on a couple of occasions. “We said (after round two) it was one of the hardest days of golf in either of our lives...and we’re pretty old guys. Steve hit it good yesterday and I didn’t hit it so good yesterday. We just fought all day long.”

The win left Hays thinking about the team’s

title defense at Pinchurst next fall. “We’ll be the first ones there,” he beamed.

■ But the golf veteran remained mindful of his 2009 experience at Cherry Hills, adding: “...you can put this in there, I’ll tell you this: Cherry Hills has the finest service of any country club I have ever been to, ever, not even a comparison.”

### *Scholars, competitors regaled on prepping for Torrey Pines Open*

■ Four-ball contestants were treated to some of that Cherry Hill Country Club hospitality during the annual Players Dinner on Tuesday evening of championship week. Si Russell, executive director for the Trans-Miss Scholarship Fund, thanked the club’s staff for



its work hosting the annual event.

■ Russell, who's headed the program for 21 years, introduced three Trans Scholars in attendance, David Skiles and Brian Erwin of Colorado State University in Greeley, Colo., and Jason Fleming, a student at Rutgers University and now an assistant superintendent at Castle Pines Golf Club in Castle Rock, Colo. Fleming is the first Trans scholar at Rutgers and has received the Jack Vickers Scholarship. "They're fine young gentlemen who have just been doing a super job," Russell said. "(Jason) has just had super reports from his superintendent Mr. Marshall Fearing."

■ Russell also introduced former Trans scholar Jason Hinkley. Hinkley is an

assistant superintendent for Mike Burke on the Cherry Hills staff.

■ The guest speaker for the evening was Mark Woodward, chief executive officer for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. As golf operations manager, Woodward led the staff at San Diego's Torrey Pines in preparation and through a hugely successful 2008 U.S. Open. The 2004 GCSAA president served in various roles for the city of Mesa, Ariz., for 31 years. The Phoenix suburb's golf courses, tennis center, a city cemetery and the spring training facility of the Chicago Cubs were among his management responsibilities.

■ Woodward spoke on two topics: his experiences leading up to and through

the 2008 Open and the superintendent's standing in the game of golf. He spoke of death threats as he raised greens fees by one and three dollars on Torrey Pines two courses and of police escorts after attending six public hearings on the state of public golf in the southern California city. After developing a five-year business plan for the city, Woodward said he was among 300 top city managers asked by the mayor to turn in their resignation – fortunately for San Diego golf Woodward's was not accepted.

■ "Days after taking the job I told my boss 'I wouldn't take \$20 for this experience'," said Woodward, the GCSAA's first former superintendent to serve as its CEO. "It was the quintessential



*Steve Dallas, Mesa, AZ*



municipal golf course in terms of its conditioning. And she said “that’s why we hired you.”

■ After taking his mayor, who admitted never having been on a golf course, to the U.S. Open at Oakmont, the city leader realized how important Woodward would be in hosting a successful Open in San Diego and informed the golf manager he had a “no-cut” clause in his contract.

■ “He told me you aren’t going anywhere until after the U.S. Open,” Woodward recalled.

■ Surviving the bureaucracy of public golf and the “sense of entitlement” players held at Torrey Pines, Woodward and staff went about turning a run-down south course into a USGA championship venue.

■ “We started really grinding for the U.S. Open...if you had been there in ’05 or ’06 you know it was not in great shape,” he said.

■ The staff converted all greens from bentgrass/poa to 100 percent poa annua in what became a two-and-a-half year process. Eighteen months before the Open, the staff was converting the course’s fairways to kikuyu grass -- “beg, borrow and stealing” the turf from anywhere they could get it.

■ “If you want to get the USGA’s Executive Committee’s attention, be 18 months before a major championship and have turf as yellow as this piece of paper,” said Woodward, tabbed recently as one of Golf Inc. magazine’s Top 35 Most Powerful People in the sport. Spending more than \$6 million on the

total course renovation project, Woodward and the city of San Diego watched as Tiger Woods finally outlasted Rocco Mediate in one of the best U.S. Opens in recent memory in June of 2008. In total, Woodward hosted three Buick Opens and a U.S. Open at Torrey, all won by Woods.

■ “I reminded him of that after the Open...he said ‘Oh cool’ and turned around and walked off,” Woodward joked. “It was a great experience. I tell people it was the best three years of my professional life and the worst three years of my professional life all in the same three years.”



# Burke hosts Cherry Hills Trans

■ The Trans-Mississippi Golf Association has called on the state of Colorado to host its annual fall Four-Ball Championship on numerous occasions, but 2009 was the first time legendary Cherry Hills Country Club was the site. The course was the site of the 1937, 1954, 1969 and 1998 summer Trans Match Play events and boasts three U.S. Opens among a litany of key golf championships.

■ This September Cherry Hills superintendent Mike Burke and his staff, which includes former Trans scholarship winner Jason Hinkley, had the opportunity to showcase the suburban Denver venue in a championship that helps educate future members of their profession.

■ “I think (the Trans-Miss Scholarship) is huge,” Burke said. “I think it’s imperative that the Trans-Miss stays productive, stays a viable association and supports our industry because a lot of kids don’t have the funds to attend these schools. There are a lot of good candidates out there.”

## Championship Cherry Hills

■ At Cherry Hills, Burke guides a staff of 31 full-time employees, including 11 year-round. The remainder is seasonal staff as the course’s golf season runs from April 1 to Oct. 1. Burke employs two assistants, including Colorado State’s Hinkley, two crew foremen, two irrigation foremen, a clubhouse foreman and a par-3 course foreman. The staff oversees the 18-hole championship course, the Rip Arnold par-3 course, practice facility, tennis courts and pool among other responsibilities, Burke says.

■ But the blossom at Cherry Hills is the golf course -- one where Arnold Palmer drove the par-4 first hole in the final round of the 1960 U.S. Open title and went on to win the title. It features bentgrass/poa greens with a ratio anywhere from 50/50 to 70/30, according to Burke. Tees are rye. Fairways are a “hodgepodge” of bentgrass, bluegrass and poa with a little bit of ryegrass.

■ Roughs are predominantly Kentucky bluegrass and were raised from their normal inch and three-quarters height to about two and a half inches for the Trans-Miss

event – about the only change to daily prep at Cherry Hills, according to the superintendent. Water comes into play on holes No. 12 thru 18 and the layout has 58 bunkers.

■ “This membership expects the course to be in championship shape throughout the season...as soon as we open they want it perfect and we try to give them those conditions,” Burke says. “We really don’t ramp up or down for special events.”

## Castle Pines start

■ Burke says he worked at a couple Denver-area courses as a youth and, after deciding to focus on golf course management as a profession, took a summer job at Castle Pines Golf Club, home of the PGA Tour’s International tournament.

■ “I worked my way up the ladder there and both superintendents told me they wanted me to go to Penn State because it’s one of the best turf schools in the country,” Burke recalled. “I applied in 1992 and got in.”

■ Meanwhile, he worked his way up from laborer to assistant superintendent at Castle Pines. In the fall of 1994 he took an assistant job at Cherry Hills and moved into the head superintendent’s position in 1998.

■ “I had a good relationship with the members at the time,” he says. “They didn’t do a search, they didn’t look at anybody and made me ‘interim’ superintendent in the spring of 1998 and towards the end of that season they made me ‘the’ superintendent.”

■ Burke and wife Sophia have two children, sons Aidan, 7, and Owen, 3. Burke says the family does “about everything” including bike riding, camping, skiing and the boys are getting into various sports, including tennis.

■ “They’re great kids and I’ve been married for eight years now...she puts up with my long hours,” Burke says. “I talk with a lot of superintendents and they joke about it. You really have to find that right person that will put up with your hours and the stress level you’re under working at a high-end club. We try to do as much together as a family as possible.”