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106th Trans-Miss Championships **Kessler Adds to Family Trans Tradition**



Chris Kessler, 2009 Trans-Miss Champion.

“I was reading some of the names on that trophy, Jack Nicklaus, Bob Tway... wow, I don’t really belong on there but it’s cool they’re going to let me put my name on there,” a modest Kessler said moments after the match.

Cont’d on page 3

Greetings

Dear Trans-Miss Friends,

- Have you ever found yourself speechless when asked “what’s new?” Well, not for me today!
- The Trans-Mississippi Golf Association has a lot of news to announce. But first, I must thank Tom Devlin and his members and staff of Flint Hills National Golf Club for hosting an outstanding 106th Trans-Miss Championship at their club in late June. It was hot, but so was the golf. Chris Kessler from Scottsdale, Arizona was medalist and champion, and Jerry Greenbaum of Atlanta, Georgia won the senior division. This issue of the Transcript will give you the full story on the Championship.
- The 107th Trans-Mississippi Championship is already making news. While not yet announced to the national golf media, I can tell you that Denver Country Club will be our host July 12-15, 2010 and the format will see two major changes.
- First, after much discussion and surveying of our players, the TMGA board of directors has decided to begin playing the historic summer championship as a 54-hole stroke play event. With decades of match play excitement in the record book, the “Trans” will now identify the best player counting every stroke! The expense of travel and the difficulty with airlines and flight changes made it increasingly apparent that we needed to give our players the certainty of arrival and departure times.
- Second, the “kids” are back! The Championship will no longer be a Mid-Amateur event (with a separate Senior division). The new “Championship” division will be open to golfers at least 19 years old (but younger golfers may be invited to play). Mid-Amateurs are still encouraged to enter and compete, but now they will get to test their game against some of the nation’s top college players. We will continue to conduct the championship with a Senior Division (age 55 or older).
- Going forward, the Trans will continue its tradition to play the summer Championship during the first week after the 4th of July and to conduct the event on some of the finest venues in the nation. With these changes it is our hope and plan to retain the “Trans” in its place of prominence on the national amateur golf schedule.
- The TMGA is an association of member clubs. Unfortunately, over the last decade the number of member clubs has declined and become static at a total number below 200. With the help from some

of our volunteer directors under the guidance of S.I. Russell, we hope to change that trend. Former member clubs are being contacted and asked to come back and annually support the education mission. Other new and prominent clubs are also getting the invitation to join the cause to help educate future golf course superintendents. In short, a club’s Trans-Miss membership is an important part of its stewardship to the game.

- Long-time Trans-Miss director S.I. Russell, Jr. was given the title of Executive Director of the Trans-Miss Turf Scholarship Fund at our March directors’ meeting. He had been the Chairman of the Scholarship Committee for many years, but now he has a title, a budget and a mission to grow the member club roster and get former scholars more involved with the Turf Fund.

- Finally, you may notice some other changes in our appearance. Two new logos will hopefully catch your eye and our website (www.trans-miss.com) will soon have a new, fresh look, greater content and better navigation.

- As always, thanks to all of our supporting member clubs, to those of you that participate in our championships and particularly to those who make generous donations for turf scholarships. The Trans-Miss values your support and participation.

Sincerely,

Hank Wilkinson

Hank Wilkinson
President





Chris Kessler - Champion and Medalist.



“It’s an Honor”

■ Trans-Mississippi Golf Association championships have become a Brown family affair. Roger Brown has been the man to beat in the senior bracket of each event, having won the Match Play at Des Moines’ Wakonda and the Four-Ball at Bandon Dunes in 2008 – his second straight Senior Four-Ball title and third overall. His son Trent won the 2007 Match Play Championship at The Minikahda Club in Minneapolis. Now you can add Scottsdale, Ariz.’s Chris Kessler to the winning family tree.

■ Kessler, son-in-law to Roger and brother-in-law to Trent, outlasted Texan Mark Healer in 19 holes and won the 2009 Match Play title at scorching Flint Hills National Golf Club in Andover, Kan., in June.

■ “I was reading some of the names on that trophy, Jack Nicklaus, Bob Tway... wow, I don’t really belong on there but it’s cool they’re going to let me put my name on there,” a modest Kessler said moments after the match. “This is going to be the last match play tournament, at least for a while, so it’s an honor.”

“Back to Arizona”

■ “I can’t wait to get back to Arizona.”

■ It isn’t often you hear those words when someone refers to the heat of a certain place.

■ But that’s exactly what Kessler said

during one round of the 2009 Trans-Miss Match Play Championship at south central Kansas’s Flint Hills National. The event had been moved up a couple weeks to try and avoid the cruel heat of a Kansas July. But Mother Nature can be moody in the Midwest and she met the 2009 Trans field with a fury.

■ Kessler, who claimed the top seed after two rounds of stroke play on the Tom Fazio-designed gem that is Flint Hills, knew he had a target on his back. But the former college football player would not be deterred by the weather or the challenge of being a No. 1 and disposed of each match play opponent in workmanlike fashion.

■ In the championship match he faced 19th-seeded Healer, a tenacious lefty from Gatesville, Texas. Healer’s run to the title match included a 26-hole marathon victory over the tournament’s No. 3 seed on a triple-digit temperature day when the Texan would play 42 holes of golf.

■ And early in the final, it appeared the combination of Kessler’s talent and Healer’s long previous day would be too much for the 44-year-old. Kessler birdied the par-5 first hole and had himself set up for another birdie at No. 2 when Healer missed a 15-foot par putt and conceded the hole. A two-putt par by Kessler and another Healer bogey at the third gave the top seed a three-hole margin.

■ Buoyed by nice birdies at the long

seventh and the par-3 eighth holes, Kessler held Healer at bay for the remainder of the front side. The 38-year-old banker saw his margin swell to four holes when Healer missed the green and then a short par putt at the par-3 10th hole.

■ “That’s the one that really makes me mad...it just killed me,” Healer admitted.

■ But Healer, a veteran of three Kansas Trans Match Play events with the tenacity of a bulldog and the short game to match, did not go away. When Kessler found trouble off the tee on the long, par-4 12th Healer won the hole before even reaching the green. A fine two-putt par from about 50 feet on the 14th green got Healer back within two holes and he slipped within one as Kessler made double bogey at 16.

■ Both players parred the par-3 17th. And when Healer uncharacteristically found the fairway on the par-5 finishing hole he knew what he had to do.

■ “I’d hit in the water (off the tee) literally every day and this time I was going to hit three-wood and cut it off those trees...I wasn’t trying to hit hard, just guide it in the fairway,” Healer explained. “I don’t know how far the second shot was...I never could find a marker, they said 225 but they were about 20 yards ahead of me. I hit that hybrid hard. I hit a good shot, it was kind of downwind and it just didn’t hold.”

■ Healer’s second shot skidded just

over the green, but he hit almost a perfect chip shot and, after Kessler made a stock par 5, his seven-foot birdie putt found the bottom of the cup to square the match and send it to extra holes. But the playoff went right to the first tee and that was a par-5 hole Kessler had owned. He'd eagled it in his morning 6 & 5 semifinal win over Wheaton, Ill.'s Stephen Daly and birdied it the first time through with Healer.

■ "It seems to set up well for me," Kessler said of the 545-yard opening hole at Flint Hills. "That's one of the benefits of me coming up here and playing with my father-in-law and brother-in-law...stuff that you kind of learn. That hole, when you get (on the tee), you think you can just blow it over the bunker and you can, but you shouldn't. That helped me...I felt like I knew where to hit the tee shot."

■ Kessler calmly drove in the fairway and reached the greenside bunker with his second shot, a place he'd been earlier in the week. His bunker shot rolled to about three feet setting up an excellent birdie try.

■ "I'd been in that bunker twice, and I wouldn't say I chunked it, I just didn't hit it hard enough..." Kessler said. "...so I knew to give it a pretty good thump to get it out of there and luckily it just chased down toward the hole." Healer, who had reached the putting surface in three, missed his long birdie

putt and conceded Kessler's to end the match and give the Arizonan his first Trans Match Play title.

■ "I played (the playoff hole) badly... I probably should have hit that hybrid for the second shot. I can get it there but I can't hold the green," said Healer, an admitted weekend player at Gatesville Country Club these days due to work commitments. "Obviously I wanted to win, but I guess second is better than everybody else."

Greenbaum wins senior

■ Jerry Greenbaum knew exactly what he was doing. Playing in his first-ever Trans Match Play Championship, the 68-year-old Atlanta businessman chose not to play the Senior Division championship match in Saturday afternoon heat just moments after dispatching Canadian Bruce McEwen in an 18-hole semifinal contest.

■ So, when Sunday morning dawned cool and clear after a batch of thunderstorms rolled through the Wichita area Saturday evening, a refreshed Greenbaum went out and knocked off Billy McBee III 4 & 3 to claim the 2009 title.

■ "I wanted to play yesterday afternoon and I know Billy wanted to play, and I felt bad, but I could not play...I was exhausted," Greenbaum admitted. "(The tournament) progressed a lot far-

ther than I expected, because I ran out of clothes. I had to go buy some clothes for today. At 68, playing 36 holes the day before in the heat and then 18 yesterday morning...I couldn't play anymore. I wanted to go ahead and finish up because I'm trying to qualify for the Senior Amateur in New York tomorrow and I would have liked to have played a practice round today."

■ By the time the finals match reached the sixth tee, Greenbaum had taken a 4 up lead. The Georgian had a 10-foot birdie putt conceded on the par-5 first hole as McBee found trouble off the tee. Greenbaum then drilled his second shot off a tough stance on the second hole to tap-in birdie range and led 2 up.

■ After a halve at the third, McBee three-putted from the front collar at the par-3 fourth hole and a poor chip at the par-5 fifth led to his third bogey of the morning and Greenbaum had a four-hole lead.

■ "I had to be on my A game to beat him," said McBee, a third-generation Trans director playing out of Brook Hollow in Dallas. "Any time you're down to a player of that caliber you've got to start making birdies to catch up and the ball just wasn't falling. I mean I had it at the hole all day and I just couldn't get it to drop."

■ When Greenbaum, chairman of the board of a private company whose three



divisions are run by his two sons and a son-in-law, finally bogeyed the par-4 ninth, a two-putt par gave McBee his first hole win of the day and he trailed by three at the turn.

■ But the fifth-seeded Greenbaum quickly regained his four-hole margin by hitting his tee shot on the par-3 10th to six feet and draining the putt for another birdie. He followed that with a birdie at the par-5 11th hole, rolling a long putt through about 15 steps of fairway to about two feet for birdie. McBee had a tap in birdie of his own on the hole after nearly sinking an eagle chip.

■ Both players made pars at 12 and 13, before McBee ran in a 20-footer to save par at the par-3 14th hole and remain alive. But Greenbaum closed out his foe at the next hole with a five-foot par putt to secure his 4 & 3 victory. "Not only is it great to win the Trans-Miss, because I've always heard of it but just never came to play, (but) I actually joined a club so I could play in this tournament," said Greenbaum, who plays his golf at four clubs including two in Florida, one in Portland, Ore., and one in Atlanta. "To win the Trans-Miss is phenomenal; to win a match play tournament...I don't think I've won a match play tournament since I was 16 years old."

■ Greenbaum had rounds of 69 and 77 in stroke play to secure his fifth seed. His march to the title included wins over Steve Creekmore III of Fort Smith, Ark., 4 & 3 in the opening round, 12th-seeded James Hays of Prosper, Texas, 2 & 1 in the second

round and Capistrano Beach, Calif.'s Stephen Yavorsky, 1 up in the quarterfinals. His 1 up semifinal win came at the expense of Toronto's McEwen who had defeated defending champion Roger Brown of Scottsdale, Ariz., in a 21-hole second-round battle.

■ McBee, a 55-year-old broker, tied for 28th after rounds of 76 and 79 in stroke play. He opened match play with a 3 & 2 upset of second-seeded and 2006 champion Steve Hakes of San Diego. McBee then ousted three-time champion Chris Maletis of Portland 2 & 1 and bounced fellow Texan Corky Nelson in a 19-hole affair in the quarterfinals. McBee reached the championship by defeating Long Beach, Calif.'s Jerry Hutton 4 & 3 in the semifinals.

■ "My caddie Kenny kept me calm, he kept me slow and focused and I really owe him a lot of credit for my play," McBee said. "I was very comfortable, no nerves. I knew I could play and I played very well in all of my matches except for (the championship)."

Kessler's second-round 68 earns medalist honors

■ Scottsdale, Ariz.'s Chris Kessler says he didn't play any competitive golf until he was out of college. He started playing the game at the age of nine or 10, but it was football that would be in the forefront of his athletic future. Kessler played football for two years at Northern Illinois University before transferring back to his native Oklahoma and attending Oklahoma State.

■ Kessler did not play for the vaunted Cowboy golf team, but he began to hone his game after college. The 38-year-old says he's played in four Trans Match Play Championships and about four or five Four-Balls. He and brother-in-law Trent Brown, also an OSU alum, won the Four-Ball in 2006 at Desert Forest Golf Club in Carefree, Ariz. Kessler says he tends to be more of a conservative player and that he feels a

Cont'd on page 6



Billy McBee III and Bruce McEwen could not prevail over champion Jerry Greenbaum.

little more comfortable in stroke play than in match play. That was evident as he turned in rounds of one-over 72 and a three-under 68 in grabbing the top seed in the championship bracket.

■ “Match play is not my forte usually. I like stroke play where everything counts and it’s just a different animal,” he admitted.

■ Kessler says he was very pleased with the results of his two stroke play rounds, especially when you consider how a practice round went.

■ “I think I lost about six balls,” he said. “I was a little nervous, even though

there was no cut to get in I still wanted to play well and get a decent seed. So I tried to play a little more conservative and the course sets up where you can hit two or three different clubs off the tee and still get the ball on the green and have a decent birdie putt. That’s one of the neat things about this course.” Kessler said having Trent and Roger Brown as Flint Hills members allows him to play the course whenever he’s in the area for business. That experience got him more familiar with Fazio’s complex greens.

■ “The greens are such to where you

really have to place the ball...some of the longer par 4s have the harder green complexes, like (Nos.) 7, 12 and 16, you’ve really got to put your ball on the right part of the green,” he advised.

“...not only to have birdie putts, but to be able to two-putt. Reading something about the course was very accurate. The first couple holes you can get off to a good start, but then it kind of tightens up. The driving is pretty generous, but around the greens you have to put yourself in the right spot.”



Healer works 26 holes

■ Going 19 holes in the championship match was not the only time finalist Mark Healer got more than a green fee's worth of golf during the 2009 championship. The Texan, playing in slacks and used to the oppressive heat due to his outdoor work with an electrical engineering consultant in the Lone Star State, had to play 26 holes in his third round match with third-seeded Zac Burton of Manhattan, Kan.

■ "I don't think we tied a hole until No. 8," said the 44-year-old Healer. "I bet we didn't tie three or four holes the whole day. Then in extra holes we parred one, two, three, four five, we birdied six and parred seven."

■ Finally, at the par-3 eighth hole, their 26th of the match, Healer sank a

15-foot putt for birdie and Burton, a former K-State player, missed his birdie effort ending the match.

■ "He could have won just as easily as me...he should have won probably," a tired Healer admitted, slipping on a boot over a blistered foot. "Zac's a super-nice guy. He really is and his wife rode around with him; she was really nice. They were both good people." The long morning match left Healer a little tired for his afternoon match with Mark Mance of San Francisco and the Gatesville Country Club player got off to a slow start.

■ "I didn't play too well the first few holes, kind of skanked it around," Healer relayed. "I bogeyed three and four. I didn't have a lot of energy until we really got into the match. But that's all you want to do...keep playing."

■ Healer got things going in the right direction in his match with the 11th-seeded Mance and went on to 3 & 2 victory. He played 42 holes on the day in triple-digit weather and high humidity and moved into the semifinals.

■ Healer said he's played in five or six Trans Four-ball Championships. His appearance at Flint Hills was his second at the course, having played in the 2003 event. He also played in the 2005 Trans at nearby Prairie Dunes where he reached the quarterfinals.

Funk in the Midwest

■ Canyon Lake, Calif.'s Robert Funk has become a fixture at the Trans the last several years. The bubbly 2006 champion at Brook Hollow in Dallas is hard to miss cracking-wise as he prepares for matches or





Semifinalist Bryan Norton's best option was to play from the cart path.



Mark Healer hitting an iron shot on #10.

hangs out near the score board at each edition.

■ Funk, an electrical and solar contractor who turned 46 the Sunday of championship week, boasts his status as a "public golfer" these days, playing most of his rounds at Mareno Valley Ranch Golf Club. And he's pure Californian – though his golf balls no longer sport the word "Funky" on them ("I can't afford them," Funk lamented) his workout routine includes an hour and half of yoga at least two times a week.

■ So you might wonder why he's become such a familiar face at the Trans Match Play event, recently hosted at such Midwest destinations at Minneapolis, Des Moines and Wichita.

■ "It's a national tournament that I've won, so I won't miss it unless I'm not

invited," he suggested at this year's event. "I skipped this year's state amateur to come and play... that tells you how important it is... Being a champion in it and what that did for me makes me want to be a repeat champion in it.

■ The way they run the golf tournament makes you feel like you want to be a part of it."

■ And the top Midwest courses like Flint Hills National are appealing, even to a So Cal...

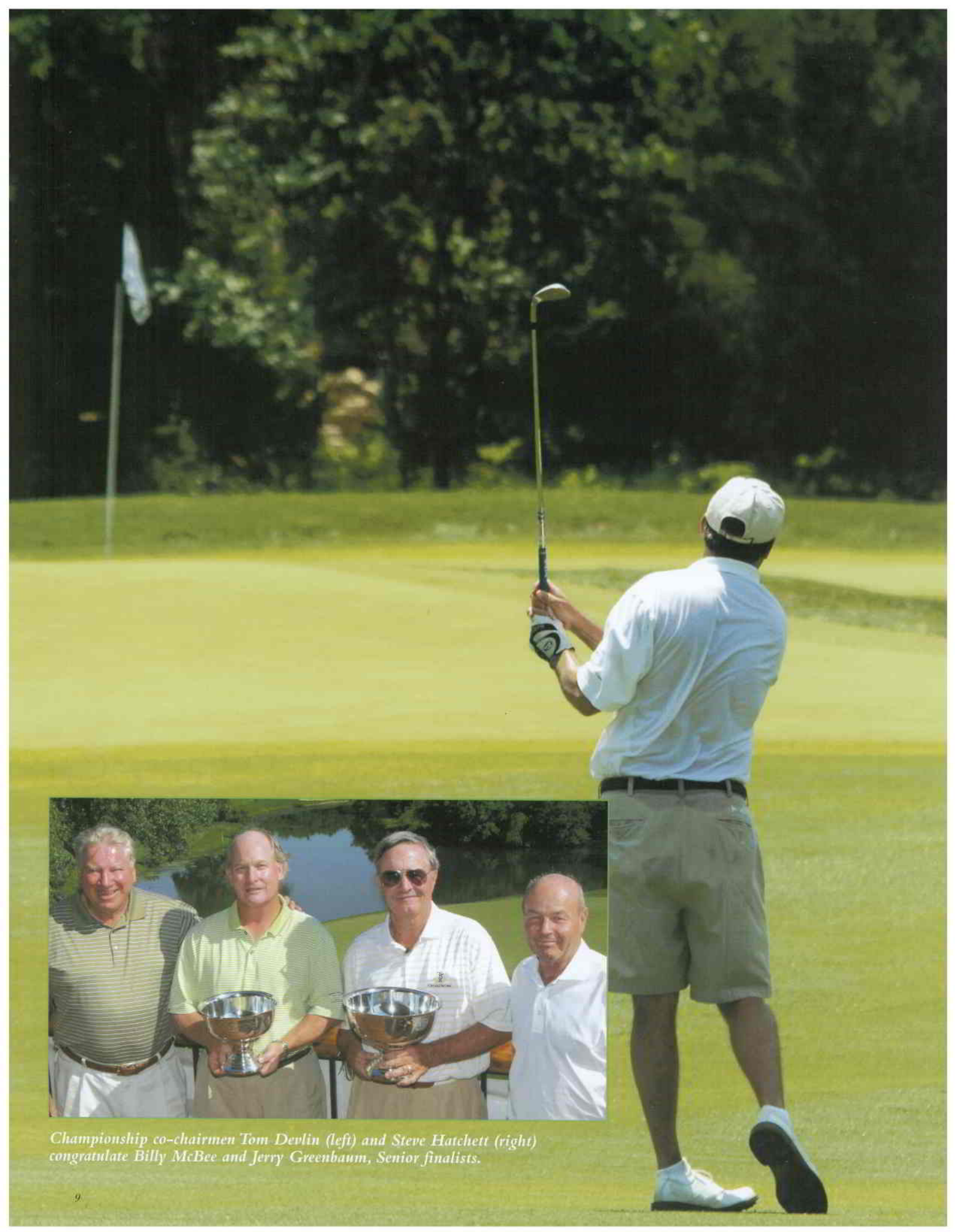
■ "I always enjoy the golf courses... they always use top-ranked courses," Funk says. "They are all quality golf courses. When we came out and played Prairie Dunes I came over and played (Flint Hills National). It's a great golf course and it's a lot of fun."

■ Funk had a pair of one-over 73s during stroke play this time around and

found himself seeded seventh for match play. After a bye in the first round, Funk knocked off Kansan David Jensen 1 up in their second-round match. He blitzed fellow Californian and No. 10 seed Brent Brockermeyer on the back nine and won their third round match 5 & 4.

■ Funk's 2009 Trans run ended in the quarterfinals with a 2 & 1 loss to second-seeded Bryan Norton of Mission Hills, Kan. But that did little to dampen his enthusiasm for the championship.

■ "I think I've co-medaled in two, got to the quarters in two, won one and made it into match play every time," said Funk, who also won the Trans Four-Ball title with partner Dennis Reiland at Pumpkin Ridge in 2003. "I've had nothing but good experiences here."

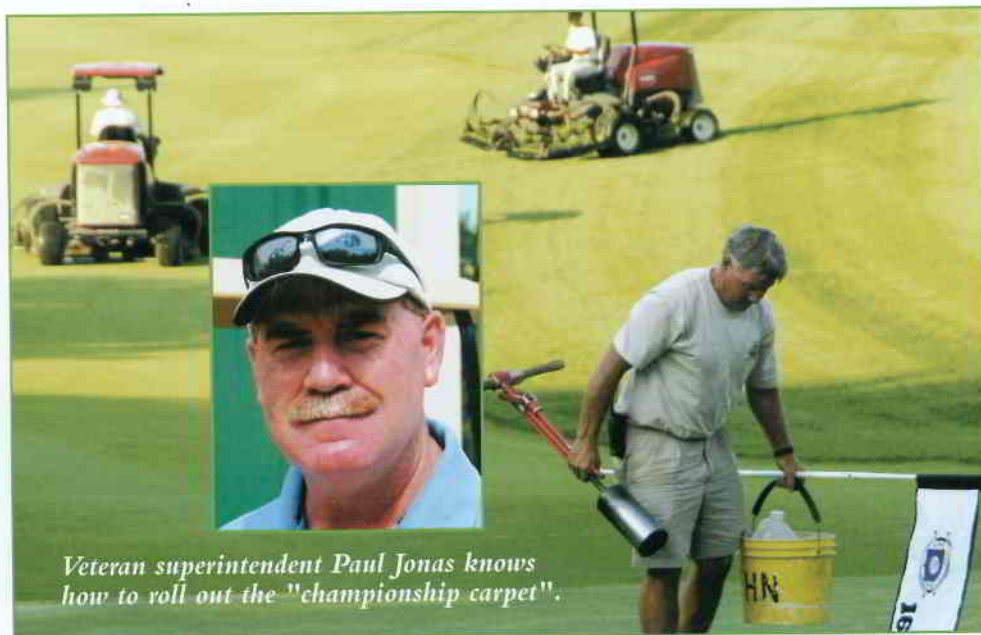


Championship co-chairmen Tom Devlin (left) and Steve Hatchett (right) congratulate Billy McBee and Jerry Greenbaum, Senior finalists.

Trans-Miss returns to Flint Hills National



Paul Jonas and staff prepare course for second championship



■ For the second time this decade the Trans-Mississippi Golf Association called on Flint Hills National in Andover, Kan., to host its match play championship. The 106th edition of the event was held at the private facility late last month as superintendent Paul Jonas and his staff prepared to host one of the longest running amateur championships in golf.

And it is an important event to those in Jonas' profession as the association's primary charitable function is providing scholarships to students headed into golf course management.

"I think the Trans is terrific for our profession," said Jonas, a Kansas State University graduate who has been at Flint Hills from its opening some 13 years ago. "We've had two Trans scholars as interns work for me...I just think it's a marvelous way to promote our profession. There are a lot of fellows who have done marvelous things through the school of hard knocks, but the way our profession has evolved over the last 20 years, you have to have a good education – and that goes to communication skills, not just the turf knowledge, and continuing your education."

■ Jonas worked at Wichita State Golf Course (now Braeburn) for four years prior to college and

gained an interest in turf management. Armed with the bachelor's degree in horticulture he received from K-State in 1985, Jonas went to work as an assistant at Hyatt's Bear Creek Resort, a 36-hole facility in Dallas/Ft. Worth.

But when his mother became ill, Jonas wanted to return to the Wichita area. Though he said he would have taken a job at a sand green golf course just to be close to his mom, Jonas landed an assistant job at Crestview Country Club.

■ Soon Jonas took over the top spot at Crestview and was superintendent at the Wichita club for seven years when Flint Hill's President Tom Dower came calling and set up a meeting for Jonas with owner and Rent-A-Center founder Tom Devlin. In January of 1996 Jonas became superintendent at the club and has been there ever since.

■ Jonas and his staff have hosted key golf events during his tenure. The club hosted the USGA's Women's Amateur in 2001 and it's Senior Am in 2007. The Trans came calling in 2003 and the event was such a success and the facility so well-received the event made its return just six years later as the 106th edition of the event was contested late last month.

Jonas and a staff of 28 (15 full-timers), including assistant Daryl

Clayton who came with Jonas from Crestview, two foremen, and two mechanics, take care of the Flint Hills grounds. That includes the golf course, expansive practice facility and landscaping throughout the property. Golf season is March through December.

The Tom Fazio design uses Meyers Zoysia on its 38 acres of tees and fairways, about 45 acres of rough is bluegrass with fescue inter-seeded the last five years, and greens are a 50/50 mixture of Cato/Crenshaw bentgrass.

"They hold up well in the heat," Jonas, 47, says of his putting surfaces in Wichita's oppressive summer conditions.

With Flint Hills always maintained at championship caliber, Jonas says double-cutting greens and rolling them for a little extra speed was about the only added preparation he and staff underwent in prepping the course for the Trans.

"Really it's just like any other event, be it a member-guest or a USGA event," Jonas says. "It's bringing people in early to get things set up and mowed out ahead of play. And with the weather like it is this week in the 100s, it's bringing people back in later...we've got a lot of guys (watering)."



Trans Scholar Steve Zaverl succumbs to injuries from accident

■ Trans-Mississippi Golf Association scholar and Michigan State University student Steve Zaverl died April 18 due to the lingering effects of a head injury sustained in a motorcycle accident Sept. 27, 2008.

■ Zaverl of Shelby, Mich., who had suffered little other injury in the accident, did sustain a craniotomy with a subdural hemotoma. He spent 37 days in the Grand Rapids hospital, before moving to a nursing facility for 10 days. He went to a rehabilitation center for another 10 days and was released. He then suffered a setback due to a brain abscess and was sent back to the hospital for nearly nine weeks.

■ Zaverl, a 2003 graduate of Shelby High School, flourished while in East Lansing. He had a 3.52 GPA in Michigan State's highly regarded turf management program. He worked at Grand View Golf Course in New Era, Mich., and served as an intern at The Lodge at Ventana Canyon Golf & Racquet Club in Tucson, Ariz. He is survived by his parents, Dan Zaverl of Shelby and Janice Terryn of Rothbury, Mich.; his brother, Chris Zaverl of Rothbury; his sister, Dana Selig of Stony Lake, Mich.; and his grandparents, Jerry and Muriel Zaverl of Shelby.

Scholarship

During the 2009-10 school year a Michigan State turf student will receive a Trans scholarship in Steve Zaverl's honor. If you would like to send a donation to the family to help defray medical costs please contact Janice Terryn at (231) 578-6576 or jverl2000@yahoo.com. Contributions to the Scholarship Fund can be made at: Trans-Mississippi Golf Association & Turf Scholarship Fund, 1201 Wakarusa Drive Suite B5, Lawrence, KS 66049.
