

My diary from the U.S. Senior Open

BY CARR MCCALLA

Tuesday, July 4, 2006: Well, here we go....I'm starting a stretch of five events in seven weeks. The U.S. Senior Open this week, our Junior Am at Bayou DeSiard in Monroe next week, then our 4-Ball Championship at Ellendale in Houma the week after. A week in the office (wonder what my desk will look like by then), then our Senior Amateur and Net Amateur sandwiched around another week in the office.

I've got a 10:25 flight out of Baton Rouge this morning. I stopped by the office on the way out of town to check messages and clear out the spam from last night's email. I had hoped to meet with Haze Briganc and the staff at Beaver Creek Golf Course in Zachary this morning to discuss our upcoming Net Amateur Championship there. We couldn't make our schedules mesh however so I'll plan on setting that up once I return from Monroe next week. I always meet with the staff at our championship venues a month or more prior to the event just to be sure we're on the same page with all of the issues of the event.

Prairie Dunes Country Club (a wonderful old Perry and Press Maxwell course) is in Hutchinson, Kansas, so I'll fly into Wichita (about an hour's drive from Hutch). I have a cousin who's a physician in Wichita and he'll pick me up at the airport there. Haven't seen him in quite some time so he's going to drive me to Hutch and we'll be able to catch up on 'old times' this afternoon and tonight. I was able to get him a couple of tickets to the championship but he won't be able to get there until the weekend when I'll already be headed back to Louisiana.

I saw Tai Kawata at the Dallas airport. He also worked the Open at Winged Foot and had just arrived after an 11.5 hour trip from Tokyo. He works with the Japanese Golf Association and is on a three-week rules excursion...will go from here to the British Open before heading back home. We had the same flight from Dallas into Wichita and decided that we would meet at 8 in the morning to walk the course prior to our rules meeting tomorrow afternoon. Had a great visit with my cousin...he toured me around Wichita before we headed to Hutch. After checking into the hotel, we went out to the course and walked 4-5 holes...he's played Prairie Dunes a number of times over the years and was interested to see how it had been set up for the Senior Open. After we grabbed a bite to eat he headed back to Wichita and I headed to bed.

Wednesday, July 5, 2006: After a quick breakfast at the USGA hospitality area, I met Tai Kawata to walk the course. We started on No. 1 around 8 a.m. and were finished by 11 a.m. I can honestly say it is one of my favorite USGA venues after only one trip around the course. It was built in two stages...father Perry built nine holes (the present Nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, and 18) in the 1930s and then son Press finished the final nine holes in the early 1950s. You would never know that there had been a 20-year lapse in the completion of the course...it all flows together wonderfully. It has a links feel to it and reminds me somewhat of Pine Valley in New Jersey. Unlike the trend in most of our newer courses, the

course was built to complement the land instead of land being moved to accommodate the course. We caught up with Mike Shea from the PGA Tour rules staff on No. 12 and walked the rest of the holes with him. Mike's a native of New Orleans and played golf at UL-Lafayette. I served with him on the USGA Rules of Golf committee so it was good to see and visit with him. We walked the last couple of holes with Hale Irwin and Andy Bean. It's funny how you have perceptions of people based on their television persona or what others might have said about them. My perception has always been somewhat negative on Bean but the reality is that he's a very nice man. After we finished Tai and I had lunch in the USGA hospitality area and Bean came over and ate with us. Walter Hall, who's also from central Florida, joined us and Bean introduced us (which was nice as I have Hall's group tomorrow afternoon).

Our assignments were ready when we got to the course this morning. I'm off No. 1 at 1:48 tomorrow afternoon (with Hall, Tom Purtzer, and former baseball pitcher Rick Rhoden), and then in the first group off No. 10 on Friday at 7:15 a.m. (my players are amateur Allan Small, Mike Blackburn, and Scott Spence). It should be a fun couple of days.

Our rules meeting and dinner was at the Hutchinson Town Club this evening. We had a great meal, then back to the hotel.



Thursday, July 6, 2006: I fell asleep almost immediately after I got back to the hotel last night, so even though I've got a late time today, I was up by 6:15. I had breakfast with one of our other rules officials from Florida, Mallory Privette from West Palm Beach. We both have late times today...I was back in the room by 8:30 and was able to get some work done in the room before heading to the course around 11 a.m. The good thing about having a late time on the first day is you have time to review the issues from the rules meeting to be sure you're on top of the unusual issues that some of the courses present. Prairie Dunes is really pretty straightforward. The only thing that's a bit unusual is that we'll probably be hitting more provisional balls than normal as most of the holes are bordered by high, thick native grasses. Even with volunteer spotters on each hole, there's still a chance that we may have some lost balls during the round.

We got off to a pretty inauspicious start. Rhoden made birdie, Hall par, and Purtzer bogey on the first hole. Purtzer started bogey-bogey-bogey-par, before hitting his drive into the gunch left of the fairway on No. 5. We found the ball relatively quickly but it was in an unbelievably difficult spot at the base of a yucca plant with some other gnarly plants around it as well. He attempted to hit it sideways into the fairway and advanced it maybe six inches. After an interesting discussion/argument with his caddie, he decided to then declare it unplayable, dropping it into a significantly better lie, still in the gunch but playable. A pitching wedge short of the green, another 90-yard pitch, and two putts later he had an easy triple bogey and was 6-over after five holes. On No. 7 (the only par-5 on the front) Rhoden hit what appeared to be a good drive

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