

USGA legend playing in Women's Mid-Am

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Carol Semple Thompson, resting comfortably at her deck last week in Sewickley, Pa., near Pittsburgh, was contemplating a rare trip to Arizona.

The problem?

She couldn't remember the last one, eight years ago to compete at Desert Mountain's Cochise Course in North Scottsdale.

It's where Semple Thompson won the 1999 USGA Senior Women's Amateur, the first of four in a row.

"How could I forget?" she said. "It was my first USGA Women's Senior Amateur, I had designated my mother (Phyllis, now 86) as my caddie. She rode in a golf cart and didn't do anything, but it was nice to have her there."

Beginning Saturday, when the 2007 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship tees off at Desert Forest Golf Club in Carefree, Semple Thompson will compete in a record 107th USGA championship.

An unexpected win in Carefree would give Semple Thompson her eighth USGA individual title. That would tie Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus and JoAnne Carner.

Semple Thompson, who turns 59 next month (Oct. 27), is a two-time Mid-Amateur champion (1990 and 1997). Amazingly, she has advanced to match play 20 consecutive times since the inaugural tournament in 1987.

Roberta Bolduc, chairman of the USGA's Women's Committee, said her record is unmatched. "Arguably, I think she's the greatest female golfer in the history of golf," Bolduc said. "She's also given so much back to the game."

A Pennsylvanian her entire life, Semple Thompson said she doesn't make it to Arizona often.

In 1999, she won the USGA Senior Women's Amateur at Desert Mountain, needing 19 holes to beat Cecilia Mourgue-D'Algue.

"It was not easy," she said. "I think Cecilia 3-putted the last hole. I was feeling tremendous pressure to win it because it was expected." This time, at Desert Forest, competing against many women half her age, she's cautiously optimistic.

"If I don't think I can win it then I shouldn't play," she said. "So I'm going to think positive

thoughts even though I haven't played well this year."

Semple Thompson grew up in a prominent golf family. Her late father, Harton (Bud) Semple, served as president of the USGA in 1974 and 1975. Phyllis Semple, her mother, played competitive golf and has served on various USGA committees since 1957.

She won her first tournament at age 16, defeating her mother in the final of the Western Pennsylvania Women's Championship.

Her first USGA title was the 1973 U.S. Women's Amateur Golf Championship at the Montclair Golf Club in Montclair, N.J. Her father presented her the championship trophy.

Semple Thompson has been on more Curtis Cup teams (12) and has more victories (18) than any competitor in the history of the Curtis Cup matches. She captained the winning U.S. team in 2006 and will serve again in 2008 at St. Andrews Golf Course in Scotland.

In 2003, the USGA recognized Semple Thompson with the Bob Jones Award, the highest honor given by golf's governing body.

In 2005, she was named recipient of the PGA First Lady of Golf Award.

"The Bob Jones Award means the most because it's a USGA thing and I'm a USGA brat," she said, "although they both mean a lot."

Carol Semple Thompson

Age: 58

Hometown: Sewickley, Pa.

USGA individual titles: 1973 Women's Amateur; 1990 and 1997 Women's Mid-Amateur; 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 Senior Women Amateur.

College: Graduated from Hollins University in 1970, where she played field hockey, basketball, lacrosse, tennis and "a little bit of golf."

U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship

Who: Field of 132 amateurs, ages 25 and above. Top 64 players after two rounds of stroke play advance to match play.

Defending champion: Meghan Bolger, Oxford, Miss., defeated Tui Selvaratnam of Tempe at Old Waverly Golf Club in West Point, Miss.

When: Stroke play, Saturday-Sunday. First round of match play on Monday, second and third rounds on Tuesday, quarterfinals and semifinals on Wednesday, 18-hole final on Thursday.

Where: Desert Forest Golf Club (6,209 yards, par 73), 37207 N. Mule Train Road, Carefree.

Admission: Free.

More information: uswmidam.org.

