

# Longtime pals plan golf tourney

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CAREFREE - National golf championships don't often come to Arizona.

That's why north Scottsdale residents Gretchen Crosby and Leslie Turner, both 65 and friends since the eighth grade in Minneapolis, are relishing their latest roles.

As co-general chairmen of the 2007 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship, conducted by the U.S. Golf Association at Desert Forest Golf Club in Carefree, Crosby and Turner are the primary points of contact.

Working with staff from the USGA and Desert Forest, as well as a large group of volunteers, the two women will ensure that everything goes smoothly during the championship six months from now.

"It's great fun and a great opportunity," said Turner, who first met Crosby more than 50 years ago. Their parents were both members at the Minikahda Club, a private, Donald Ross-design in Minneapolis that has hosted the U.S. Open, U.S. Amateur, Walker Cup Match, U.S. Women's Amateur and Curtis Cup Match.

"We're very organized in our efforts and planning, but the most important thing is that we have a championship golf course. That, and the positive attitude exhibited by the members, is key," Turner said.

Crosby agrees.

"The most important thing to ensure a great championship is having a great golf course," she said, "but the other key is to make the players (most of whom have regular jobs and pay their own expenses) and the USGA feel as welcome as possible.

"The more you involve your members the happier they'll be. In turn, the players will be happy, as well."

Scheduled for Sept. 29 through Oct. 4, the 2007 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur is only the 14th national golf championship that the USGA has conducted in the Grand Canyon State.

That fact isn't lost on Turner, Crosby and the 17 committees and 200-plus volunteers they oversee.

"It's an honor, and the entire membership is looking forward to it," Turner said.

"We know how exciting a national championship is for the club and the community."

Turner and her husband were co-chairmen of the 1988 U.S. Women's Amateur at Minikahda. Crosby chaired her friends' events committee that year.

Turner also served as assistant chairwoman for the 1998 Curtis Cup at Minikahda, where both women still have memberships.

Lynn Simmons, a junior member at Desert Forest who has played in more than 10 USGA championships, believes Crosby and Turner will get the job done.

"They're extremely organized," said Simmons, who lives in northeast Phoenix. "They've gotten everyone excited, and, as a player, I can really appreciate that."

Crosby, a former event planner, has served as a rules official for nine U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championships. She ran Centennial events at Minikahda and for the Minnesota Golf Association. Like Turner, she's an avid golfer.

Crosby said the biggest challenge at Desert Forest is securing caddies and volunteers for the championship.

In the grand scheme of things, however, the two friends aren't worried.

Six months from now, everyone in and around Desert Forest will be busy with practice rounds, welcoming parties, and a special players dinner. Then the championship will begin with 36 holes of stroke-play qualifying and, finally, the match-play rounds.

"The planning is extensive, but we've got a great team assembled," Turner said.

The championship host club consists of committees and volunteers from Desert Forest and surrounding communities who divvy up responsibilities related to player accommodations, caddies, food service, registration and transportation.

Other important work involves hospitality, player services, medical, putting together a program, signage and volunteers and scoring - not to mention the golf course. Volunteers are still needed for many committees.

The best part for Crosby is seeing the players again.

Because she was a member of the U.S. Women's Amateur Committee, Crosby will know most of them personally.

"You meet lots of wonderful people," she said. "So it's particularly exciting to see them again."

The 2007 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur is open to at least 130 amateurs who have reached their 25th birthday on or before Sept. 29 and who have a USGA Handicap Index not exceeding 9.4.

It is one of 13 national championships conducted by the USGA.

**Russ Christ is a correspondent for the Scottsdale Republic.**

### **A rare occurrence**

This will be only the U.S. Golf Association's 14th visit to Arizona.

Desert Forest Golf Club in Carefree also hosted the USGA Senior Amateur Championship in 1990, and it's one of only three Arizona clubs (Forest Highlands in Flagstaff and Tucson Country Club) to host two USGA championships.

Desert Highlands in Scottsdale hosted Arizona's only other U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur in 1991.

### **Members extraordinaire**

With their intimate knowledge of the subtle green complexes, four Desert Forest Golf Club members should have a good chance to advance far in match play in this national championship.

Tui Selvaratnam of Tempe was the runner-up at the 2006 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur. She's the 2006 Arizona Women's Golf Association Player of the Year. Scottsdale's Kerry Postillion, a 43-year-old mother of four, and 1993 reinstated amateur, was runner-up in 2005 and 1996. She also lives in Chicago.

Lynn Simmons of northeast Phoenix, who chairs one of the committees with her husband, Doug, a representative for TaylorMade Adidas Golf, has played in more than 10 USGA championships. North Scottsdale's Robin Donnelley, then Robin Weiss, won the 1989 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur.