

Time to tee it up at U.S. Women's Mid-Am

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They drive the ball nearly 300 yards, can get it up and down from behind mesquite trees, rarely 3-putt and expect to shoot at or below par.

You know the type: the best female amateur golfers in Arizona.



Tui Selvaratnam (left) and Missy Farr-Kaye are two top local golfers who will be playing in the USGA Mid-Amateur Championship in Carefree.

Tui Selvaratnam of Tempe, Lynn Simmons of Phoenix and Missy Farr-Kaye of Scottsdale are longtime friends and rivals on the Arizona golf scene.

Throw in Kerry Postillion, a relative newcomer to Scottsdale, and you've got a quartet of the best female amateur golfers in the country. They'll attempt to prove it in the U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship at Desert Forest Golf Club in Carefree. The USGA championship for women ages 25 and older begins Saturday and runs through Oct. 4.

Selvaratnam already is a national champion after leading Arizona to a victory at the USGA Women's State Team championship last week at The Woodlands, Texas. She was the individual medalist with a 54-hole total of 1-under215, 4 strokes better than her nearest competitor.

She, Simmons and Postillion are members at Desert Forest, which could translate into a home-course advantage.

Farr-Kaye, 40, is not a Desert Forest member, but she has been a top local player since the 1980s, competing at Phoenix Xavier and helping Arizona State win an NCAA Championship in 1990.

"It's such a neat thing to play in a USGA championship in your home town," said Farr-Kaye, the runner-up at the 2001 U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links. "I put it on my radar a couple years ago."

Simmons, 39, teamed with Farr-Kaye and Selvaratnam to finish third at the 2001 USGA State Team championship. She said Arizona-based players will have an edge. "We know the golf course and are used to the climate, so if it's hot it won't really affect us as much," Simmons said.

Selvaratnam, 31, is playing in her 18th USGA championship. She was the runner-up at the U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur last year in Mississippi.

She is a native of Sri Lanka who left her homeland at 18 to play golf at ASU and helped the Sun Devils win three NCAA titles before graduating in 1999. Like Farr-Kaye, she's now a coach, helping Sister Lynn Winsor as an assistant coach at Xavier.

Her resume includes 23 amateur championships in 11 countries. She has been named the Arizona Women's Golf Association Player of the Year the past six years. Farr-Kaye, sister of the late Heather Farr, worked as a golf professional at Orange Tree Golf Resort from 1991-93 and regained her amateur status in 1996. She has won the Arizona State Amateur Championship twice, captured the 2002 Arizona Women's Open and was the medalist at U.S. Mid-Amateur qualifying at Desert Forest in late August.

Since Farr-Kaye returned to ASU as the assistant women's coach six years ago, competing has been less of a priority. She hasn't played in a USGA championship since joining ASU, focusing instead on raising three sons (ranging in age from 3 to 14) and helping Melissa Luellen return the Sun Devils to one of the country's elite programs.

"I absolutely love my job," Farr-Kaye said. "My two older boys play football, so I run from our practice home to get them to their football practice. It's insane. It's actually hard playing in a national championship while you're home because it's a little distracting."

Simmons, who graduated from Westwood High in Mesa, was an assistant golf pro at the Raven Golf Club at South Mountain from 1995 to 1999 before leaving to open a business with her husband, Doug, a sales rep for TaylorMade Golf who will caddie for her next week. Three years ago she changed her lifestyle and has lost 64 pounds. A gifted putter, she now is a personal trainer and fitness instructor in north Scottsdale.

"I'm stronger and can hit it further, but thank God I can putt," she said.

Postillion, 44, also has a home in Burr Ridge, Ill., and is a two-time Mid-Amateur runner-up. She has four children and is home-schooling her 7-year-old son, Drew.

She thinks the tournament is wide open.

"I've changed a few things with my swing this summer," Postillion said, "and I'm still working on them. I hope everything falls together. (But) by the end of the week everyone already knows the course so well, so everyone is usually pretty confident."

U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship

Who: Field of 132 amateurs, ages 25 and up. 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.

Arizonans in field: Selvaratnam, Missy Farr-Kaye, Kerry Postillion, Lynn Simmons, Lisa Desimone, Kristi Joiner-Simpson, Kelly Loeb, Monica Marquardt, Darquise Leduc.

When: Saturday through Oct. 4. Stroke play on Saturday and Sunday, beginning at 7:15 a.m. First round of match play Monday, second and third rounds Tuesday, quarterfinals and semifinals Wednesday, and 18-hole final on Oct. 4.

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

Admission: Free.

More information: uswmidam.org.