

Some Like It **Cold**

Perhaps only sleet or snow would stay the **John Caliendo Shore Winter Golf Tour**, now in its 58th season, from its appointed rounds. Rain? The guys would definitely play through that.

“We’ll play in anything as long as the snow isn’t on the greens,” said Tim Macken, the league president, noting that only two weeks were cancelled by the elements in 2018. “Last year at Westlake, we had 20 mile per hour winds and it had to be in the teens and we had 70 players that day. Every par 3 at Westlake has water in front of it, so you had to play your shot by bouncing it off the ice because there was no way you could land it on the green [and keep it there]. In the winter you’re running almost everything up because you can’t land anything near the green. It’s links golf.”

It was known as the Jersey Shore Winter League when four club pros—Angelo Petraglia, John Cafone, Andy Sikora, and Roddy Newman—started it in 1961. They met every Thursday and it grew from there. They soon decided it would be a good idea to let amateurs in so that group could play for gift certificates and the pros could clear out the old merchandise from their shops.

Today the tour boasts 170 members, 40 of whom are pros, with play in four divisions: professional, amateur gross, amateur net, and senior net. They play 23 events from the first week of November through the first week of April when the tour championship is held, this year at Heron Glen. There are pots for closest to the pin and skins. Points are kept for Player of the Year honors in each division. An average of 110 players enter each week with 80 to 90 who play every week.

“The age goes from 20 to an 88-year-old fellow who carries his own bag. The average age is 62 years old. A lot of guys are retired,” Macken said. “What I really



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like about it is that we have doctors, lawyers, caddies, ironworkers.”

Jets play-by-play man Bob Wischusen [see page 22] is a member and so is former major-league pitcher Pete Harnisch.

“We have a lot of good players in the league,” Macken said. “Anthony Fioretti is the New Jersey State Senior champ and we have guys who qualified for the U.S. Open and one fellow (John Capras) who qualified for the U.S. Mid Am both lefty and righty. Last year he played lefty in the league. This year he’s playing righty. He’s just as good.”

The league started playing on mostly public courses, but that changed as it grew in prestige: today about 75 percent of the weekly events are on private courses with many more wanting in. The courses used must have no temporary greens, and as the winter goes on, more are located in the southern part of New Jersey where the conditions are less severe. The price is right as well – \$45 per week.

“We’re lucky enough to play every Thursday, and we are really committed to giving back to the First Tee,” Macken said. “At our holiday party this year, we donated easily a few hundred golf clubs.” ■

How are they **Rolling?**

Golf and bowling aren’t generally thought of together, but at **Hempstead Golf and Country Club** it’s a perfect mix. Venture into the basement of the clubhouse and you’ll find four bowling lanes in use throughout the winter months.

“It’s what I always say: We’re a blue-collar country club. That’s what we are,” explains Farmingdale mayor and Hempstead member Ralph Ekstrand, who runs the club’s three active leagues. “[The members] are like a family, and that’s how the lanes came about.”

“The winters were much more severe in the 1950s and ‘60s than they are now,” Ekstrand recalls. “I used to ice skate all winter when I was a kid. Now you’d be lucky to get in a week. The golf course was closed virtually all winter. So what did they do to get together? They bowled.”

What’s more, said Ekstrand, “We didn’t have automatic pin setters until the ‘70s, so in the ‘50s and

the ‘60s the caddies set the pins up and made some money when they weren’t hauling bags.”

Back then, leagues were going every night and Hempstead even held interclub tournaments with other Long Island clubs. It may not be what it was in its heyday, but the club still has bowlers in three leagues scattering the pins from October through April. The two men’s leagues continue even when the club is otherwise closed in February.

“We have a couples league on Friday night that’s been sold out for the last 20 years, and a men’s league on Wednesdays and Thursdays,” Ekstrand said. “The Wednesday league is full and Thursday we’re at 80 percent. The men eat at the men’s grill first and the couples sit in the dining room. They reserve tables for us and then we go down and bowl so it’s a win-win. The club gets the income from the people eating every week, and we get the fun and



camaraderie of bowling.”

The club also rents out the lanes to members for bowling parties, which are popular with the kids.

“It’s a steal,” Ekstrand said. “It’s something like 20 bucks a kid. You bowl for a couple of hours and you get chicken fingers and things like that. Then, two or three times a year, we have Saturday night bowling parties that are open to all members and kids.”

Hempstead upgraded all the AMF equipment two years ago and maintains the wooden alleys in peak condition – just like its golf course. ■