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KRISTINE FRANKLIN**

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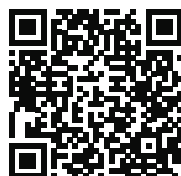
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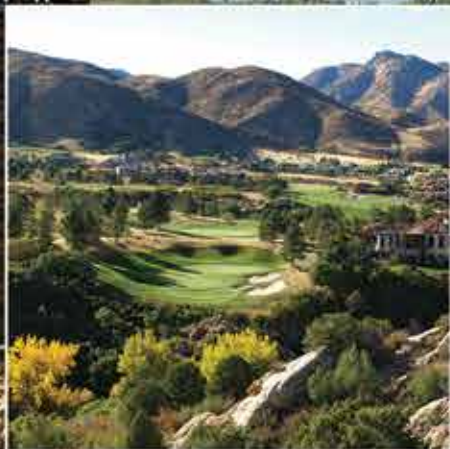
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Erin Jones, Sr. Business Development Officer



Erin was born and raised in Steamboat Springs, CO & attended college at UNC in Greeley. She has been banking along the front range for 17 years. Erin loves that both Coloradan's and Central Bank have the most

passionate, active, and friendly people. She enjoys staying active in the fresh mountain air whether it's hiking, walking the dog, golfing, or taking in the scenic views.

Eric Weichselbaumer, Business Development Officer



Eric has been involved in banking in Colorado for more than 20 years and with Central Bank for 7 years. As an amputee himself, Eric serves as a board member with the Limb Preservation Foundation. His favorite things to do in Colorado includes golfing, camping, and attending sporting events with his family.

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PRESIDENT & GROUP PUBLISHER
ALLEN J. WALTERS

EDITOR
JIM BEBBINGTON

SALES, MARKETING & ADVERTISING
VP OF SALES & MARKETING
LORI PERRY

VP OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS & GOLF OPERATIONS
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BRAD BUTLER

ART & EDITORIAL
CREATIVE DIRECTOR
CHRIS DECONNA

ART DIRECTOR, AVIDLIFESTYLE
MICHELLE M. GUTIERREZ

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
NIKKI BELL

CONTRIBUTORS

ANDY BIGFORD, TONY DEAR, KEVIN GREENUP, CHRIS DUTHIE, SCOTT GARDNER, NICK MCQUEENEY, TED JOHNSON, CHRISTIAN MARCY-VEGA, KIM MCHUGH, JAY MCKINNEY, JON RIZZI, PARRISH RUIZ DE VELASCO, JAMIE SIEBRASE, CHRIS WHEELER, DAVID YOUNG

INQUIRIES

ADVERTISING
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EDITORIAL & LETTERS
JIM@COLORADOVIDGOLFER.COM

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WINTER TRIED. GOLF WON.

We all know Colorado can be a 12-month state for golf, but this year has been pushing that to new lengths.

The warm winter weather showed that golf's popularity is not slowing. Front-range courses saw play throughout January and into February nearly as steady as any other time of year. At Colorado National they expected to host about 150 rounds during January and had topped that number only a few days after New Year.

That's why the opening of a new course in Colorado is a big deal. We featured the newly-opened Bella Ridge Golf Course, near Johnstown, last issue. And this issue we are featuring a behind-the-scenes look at Rodeo Dunes' first course. That course, near Roggen, is projected to be the first of up to six for what will become a new public resort golf complex, built by Michael Keiser.

Rodeo Dunes is not going to be available for public tee times until 2027, but there are plenty of Coloradans who will be playing it this year. Many of the founders, members of the course, are local and will be teeing it up with friends and guests throughout the summer. And at least one national event is being played there in the fall that anyone can enter. Then, in 2027, the real fun begins.

This edition we also celebrate the best of Colorado golf with our annual CAGGY awards. Every year several thousand voters take our survey and they never disappoint in their results. The category that I enjoy the most is the best teaching professional. It is clear from the votes that many of our local teaching pros are giving great value to their clients, who vote in droves. The winners are always strong, but the bench is deep – many of

these pros are worth your time and your business. Congratulations to all the course operators and professionals who earned recognition this year.

For many years Denver-area pro Dennis Murray finished high in our CAGGY Award voting, and won as recently as last year. Dennis died in November of a heart attack and his loss leaves a big hole in the Colorado golf instruction community. He will be missed.

Also in this edition we are updating our Spring Training guide to highlight a different kind of trip that we can make. For some snow birds, playing in Arizona is an all-winter affair. But for others, it's a quick weekend getaway. We have different itineraries for groups of guys or gals to make the most of three-day weekends to Phoenix.

And this edition is also helping us launch our new initiative here at Colorado AvidGolfer, the Scratch Society. We have hosted golf events for more than 20 years, but this season we heard from players what they wanted most. All the tournaments are hosted at private clubs, which normally are unavailable to most of us. And we're adding new options for formats so players will be able to enjoy those courses how they want. We're looking forward to a great season.

So we know that winter here can turn mean at any moment, so the whole 'play golf through the winter' thing could end at any time. But with this spring edition we are joining you all for the 24th year of covering the sport we love in the state we call home. Play on.

Jim Bebbington//
 jim@coloradoavidgolfer.com



RODEO DUNES FIRST RIDE//
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HIKING

The combination of red rock plateaus, candy-colored cliffs and green pine forests make Greater Zion's terrain some of the most incredible, especially for hiking. Get out to see lava tubes, slot canyons, petrified dunes and petroglyphs. With over 300 miles of trails to explore, Greater Zion is a hiker's paradise.



MOUNTAIN BIKING

Year-round access to slick rock and single-track trails make Greater Zion a mountain biking mecca! With warm weather, bright sun and solitude, our trails offer an outstanding experience for any riding level. Trails can be found in every region of Greater Zion, which makes for quick and easy access. Local outfitters can equip you and inform you.



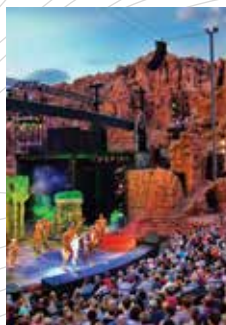
WATERSPORTS

The reservoirs of Sand Hollow, Quail Creek and Gunlock State Parks hold deep, blue-green waters on which to jet ski, motorboat, kayak, swim, or fish, as well as sandy beaches to soak up the sun. Each park is only a short distance from just about anywhere in Greater Zion, and with year-round sunshine, these water bodies create the perfect desert oasis.



ATV/OHV

Greater Zion's diverse landscape lends to the ultimate ATV/OHV experience. The Pine Valley Mountains offer tall, green pine trees and mountain air while Sand Mountain at Sand Hollow State Park delivers miles of warm sand dunes and red, slick rock climbs. Greater Zion's public lands extend the promise of amazing views and breathtaking waterfalls, many of which can only be accessed in an off-road vehicle.



THEATER AND ARTS

Beautiful scenery breathes inspiration into every corner of Greater Zion. Tuacahn Amphitheatre brings Broadway-like show to the desert while St. George Musical Theatre and Kayenta Center for the Arts showcase a variety of musical, comedic and dramatic productions. Numerous art galleries sprinkle the area, showcasing further talents, inspired by their surroundings.



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PEOPLE OF THE CGA: KEITH YBANEZ

BY KAYLA KERNS



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COLORADO GOLF ASSOCIATION

Keith Ybanez is a board member of the CGA and chair of the DEI Committee. Keith and his wife, Katelin, moved to Denver in 2020, drawn by Colorado's golf culture and proximity to her family. Keith is a labor and employment attorney at Husch Blackwell, LLP, where he advises organizations of all sizes and represents them in complex litigation. His home course is CommonGround Golf Course.

KY: I wasn't a lifelong golfer. I didn't grow up around the game, and I didn't really know anyone who played. I was born in the Philippines where my dad was a fisherman. My mom is a nurse and when I was a baby, her career took her to several different countries before landing a job at a hospital in New York City that sponsored our family's immigration visa. That's how we moved to the U.S. when I was about 4 years old.

We settled in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, a world away from where we lived in the Philippines. A lot of my earliest memories are from those years, living in a tiny studio apartment as a family of four. That experience shaped me and made me a city person at heart.

After five years in New York, my family moved to Chicago so we could be closer to my mom's sister so we could grow up with some of my cousins, and my parents are still there today. I'll always consider Chicago to be home for me.

I went to boarding school in California for my senior year of high school, and I loved it. I've always had an adventurous spirit and wasn't afraid to take a leap like that. I stayed in California for college and law school, then returned to Chicago, think-

ing I'd settle there for good. Life had other plans. I met my wife, Katelin, in law school. She grew up in Colorado and eventually convinced me to move here so we could be closer to her family. We moved to Denver about five years ago, and that's been an amazing chapter of our lives.

KK: How did you get into golf?

KY: I worked at a country club in Hinsdale, Illinois, during high school. I didn't really play then, but I watched a lot of members play, and that's when the game first started to intrigue me.

In college, I worked at another golf course near campus. I always thought golf would be something I picked up later in life because I grew up playing basketball like every kid from Chicago during the Jordan Bulls era.

I really started to get into golf at the end of law school. One of my roommates was a great golfer, and we'd go play when we had free time. We played courses like Rustic Canyon and Los Verdes GC, and that's when the golf bug really bit me. I didn't realize at the time how special some of those courses were, but the great ones really stick with you.

What drew me in was the challenge. Golf asks you different questions every time you play—mentally, strategically, emotionally. There are so many parallels to life.

KK: What do you do for work now?

KY: I'm a labor and employment attorney at Husch Blackwell. I advise companies of all sizes—from large Fortune 50 companies to small businesses—on managing their workforce. People are often a company's biggest asset and biggest risk, and I help them navigate that.

I've been practicing for more than 11 years and provide a mix of advice, counseling, and litigation across the country. Like golf, I enjoy the mental stimulation. I love solving problems. It never gets boring.

KK: How did you hear about the CGA Board, and when did you join?

KY: I joined the CGA Board at the beginning of 2023. I was asked in late 2022, after meeting Ed Mate during caddie training at CommonGround. Before we even moved to Colorado, I had heard of CommonGround through golf media like The Fried Egg and No Laying Up. The first time I played it, I took a caddie and immediately thought, "This is

what public golf should be." When we moved here, I made it a priority to live close to the course, and it quickly became my home.

KK: What kind of work are you most proud of?

KY: The work I'm most proud of is creating opportunities for non-traditional golfers and affinity groups to feel welcome in the game.

A lot of people, like me, don't grow up playing golf or think of it as a recreational option that is available to them. Our goal as a committee has been to make golf accessible and welcoming in meaningful ways. I think we've been successful, especially through community partnerships and grassroots groups.

I want to give a lot of credit to Aaron Guereca and the CGA Staff for leading much of that work and building relationships with local communities. Seeing groups come out to CommonGround and experience golf in a supportive environment has been really exciting.

KK: What is your favorite golf memory?

KY: My favorite golf memory is from a trip to Bandon Dunes in March 2025. I've been lucky to go a few times, but this trip really stands out.

We were playing Bandon Dunes in brutal weather—40-mile-per-hour winds, rain, and the temperature was 40 degrees. Some friends decided not to play, which was completely reasonable. But a few of us went out with our caddie, Luke, and we were basically the only people on the course.

The conditions were objectively miserable, but I had the absolute time of my life. Every shot was a battle, and it felt like golf in its purest form. When we finished, people in the clubhouse couldn't believe we played. That round will always stick with me. 🏌️



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Get into the Groove

DENVER-BASED GROOVE GOLF ENTERS THE CLUB FITTING SPACE

A new Colorado-based golf technology startup, Groove Golf, is launching this year with what it offers as a simpler, quicker way for the average golfer to access swing data and club fitting guidance.

Groove Golf was founded by Mark Vedete, who moved to the Denver area in 2020 with his family and brought with him the germ of a business idea he had been developing for more than five years.

Vedete played college golf at American University, where he saw firsthand how coaches worked with players to recommend equipment tailored to their swings. Later, after earning an MBA, he watched as the club-fitting revolution expanded, with high-end services increasingly marketed to everyday golfers. While the technology improved, Vedete noticed that the process often remained time-consuming, expensive, and intimidating for many players.

That disconnect led him to explore the club-fitting business more deeply and imagine a way

to make it more accessible. After five years of development and iteration, Vedete this year began marketing Groove Golf's club fitting system, which is built around speed and ease of use. The brand's slogan — "5 Swings. 5 Minutes." — captures that message of simplicity.

The timing may be ideal. As golf participation continues to skew younger and more casual, many players may be interested in improving but hesitant to commit to lengthy studio fittings or high-tech environments that can feel overly technical. Groove Golf aims squarely at that middle ground: golfers who want actionable insight without a steep learning curve or significant time investment.

The app-based technology links with Apple Watches — with Android compatibility planned for a later release — to measure the speed and movement patterns of a player's swing. Rather than focusing on ball flight or launch conditions, Groove Golf emphasizes the golfer's motion itself. Vedete believes measuring the body directly helps eliminate variables such as inconsistent

ball striking or range conditions, producing recommendations that are faster and more repeatable, particularly for recreational players.

That data is quickly converted into equipment recommendations, and the system can be used either by teaching professionals as part of their services or by players experimenting on their own. Professional adoption is a key part of the company's strategy, with Groove Golf positioned as a complement to existing tools rather than a replacement.

"The uniqueness of capturing a golf swing on a piece of technology is a challenge," Vedete said in January as he and his team prepared to attend the PGA Show in Orlando. "We've been at this for five years. That is the fruits of the labor of having really good fitters and really good professionals to test and great software engineers."

Vedete partnered with San Diego-based software developers Treeline Interactive and Brett Juhas to build the platform and has since assembled a local marketing team focused on signing

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up manufacturers and teaching professionals. At the PGA Show, Groove Golf demonstrated the system in live settings, allowing attendees to experience the fitting process firsthand. Vedete said feedback from coaches and industry representatives reinforced the company's belief that speed and simplicity are becoming just as important as precision in modern golf technology.

The technology enters a space currently dominated by video capture systems and shot-tracking launch monitors. Vedete believes Groove Golf's niche — fast, mobile, and body-focused — can help reach a large segment of players who may otherwise avoid traditional fittings altogether.

"I want people to understand this system was built for everyone," he said. "There is a fear in club fitting today — that it's time intensive and cost inefficient."

That philosophy was on display at a recent event held at the Hangar Club in Denver. Players donned Apple Watches synced to a nearby phone and took five to 10 swings. Within minutes, data was available showing the speed and mechanics of the swing itself rather than the result of the shot. New driver heads and shafts were assembled on the spot, allowing players to immediately test whether the recommended equipment produced measurable benefits.

Groove Golf said most players see an average increase of 25 yards or more on their drives after switching to the recommended drivers.

"We found a faster, less intrusive way to measure a player's swing," said Sean Bucher, Groove Golf's marketing director. "We are the most mobile-friendly testing system available."

While Groove Golf remains in its early stages, Vedete said the company is focused on refining its software, expanding device compatibility, and continuing to test with players of all skill levels.

The long-term goal, he said, is to make swing data as accessible and familiar as fitness metrics already tracked on wearable devices.

Groove Golf presented its new technology in January at the PGA Show in Orlando and is expected to roll out nationally this summer. Colorado residents can get early access to the system by contacting the company at GrooveGolf.com. ©

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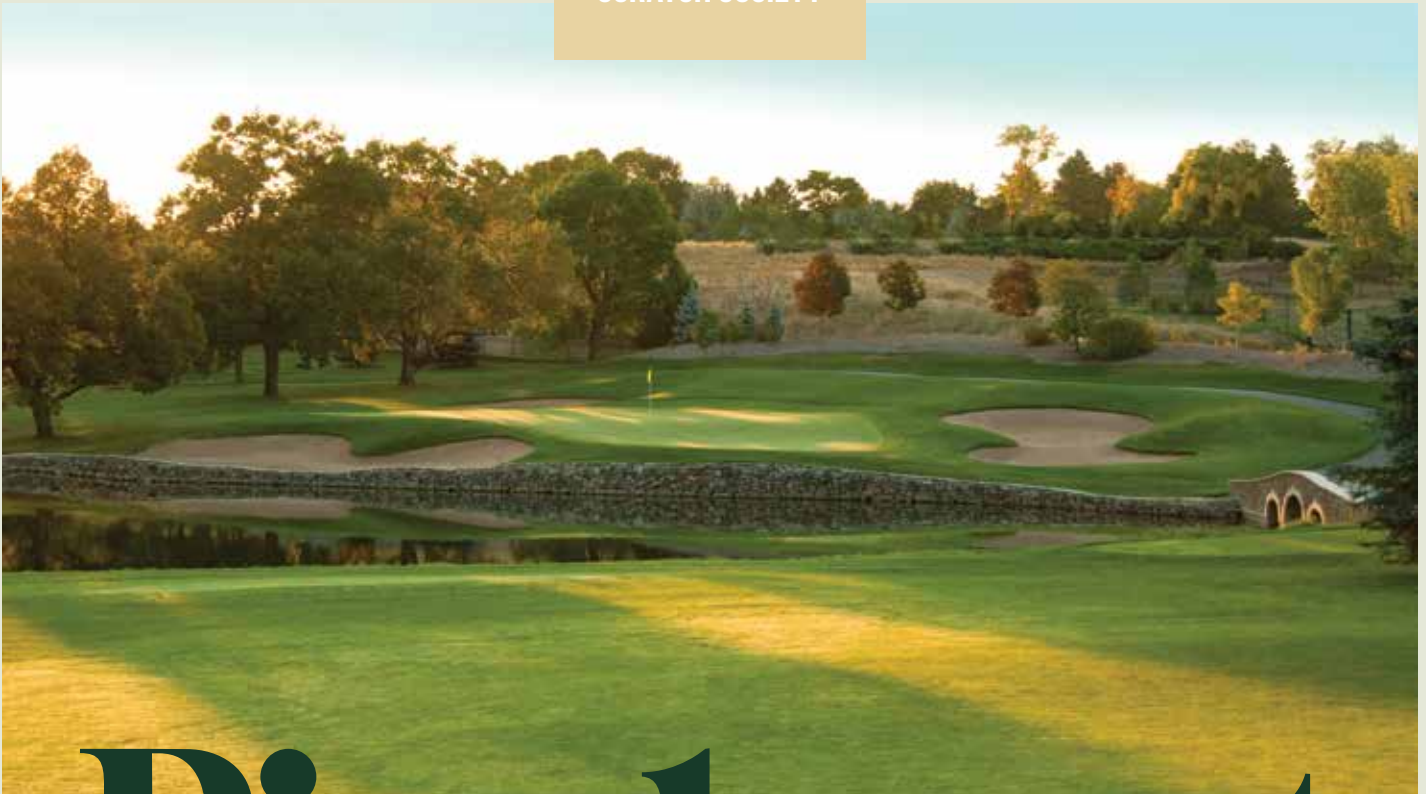
Colorado AvidGolfer is proud to introduce the Scratch Society: a brand-new golf community built for players who love the game, the competition, and the camaraderie that comes with it. This inaugural society offers members the chance to experience the best golf Colorado has to offer, playing in tournaments at some of the most prestigious and sought-after private country clubs. Each event is designed to deliver not only great competition, but also unforgettable social connections and premium experiences.

As a member of The Scratch Society, you'll enjoy exclusive access to events where golf meets lifestyle. Thanks to incredible sponsors and partners like Pins & Aces, Michelob Ultra, Clubhouse Work &

Golf, Central Bank, Delicato Family Wines, Kaiser Permanente, and Orthopedic Centers of Colorado, members will have opportunities to earn and enjoy top-tier merchandise, prizes, and one-of-a-kind perks that elevate every round.

The Scratch Society is more than a series of tournaments; it's a growing community of passionate golfers united by their love of the game. Whether you're playing for bragging rights, networking with fellow members, or collecting unique gear from our partners, every event is designed to keep you coming back. This is just the beginning. Join us as we build The Scratch Society for the future.





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10:00 SHOTGUN | SCRAMBLE FORMAT

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JUNE 5, 2026

COST: \$235 | GOLF PASSPORT MEMBER: \$210

Founded in 1956, Valley Country Club blends classic park-style golf with modern, family-focused amenities. Members enjoy a top-notch course and practice facilities, tennis, pickleball, fitness, and a five-pool aquatics complex, all enhanced by Troon's management and a vibrant social atmosphere.

Play Here





Blackstone

COUNTRY CLUB

JULY 6, 2026

7777 S COUNTRY CLUB PKWY, AURORA | 80016

10:00 SHOTGUN | SCRAMBLE FORMAT

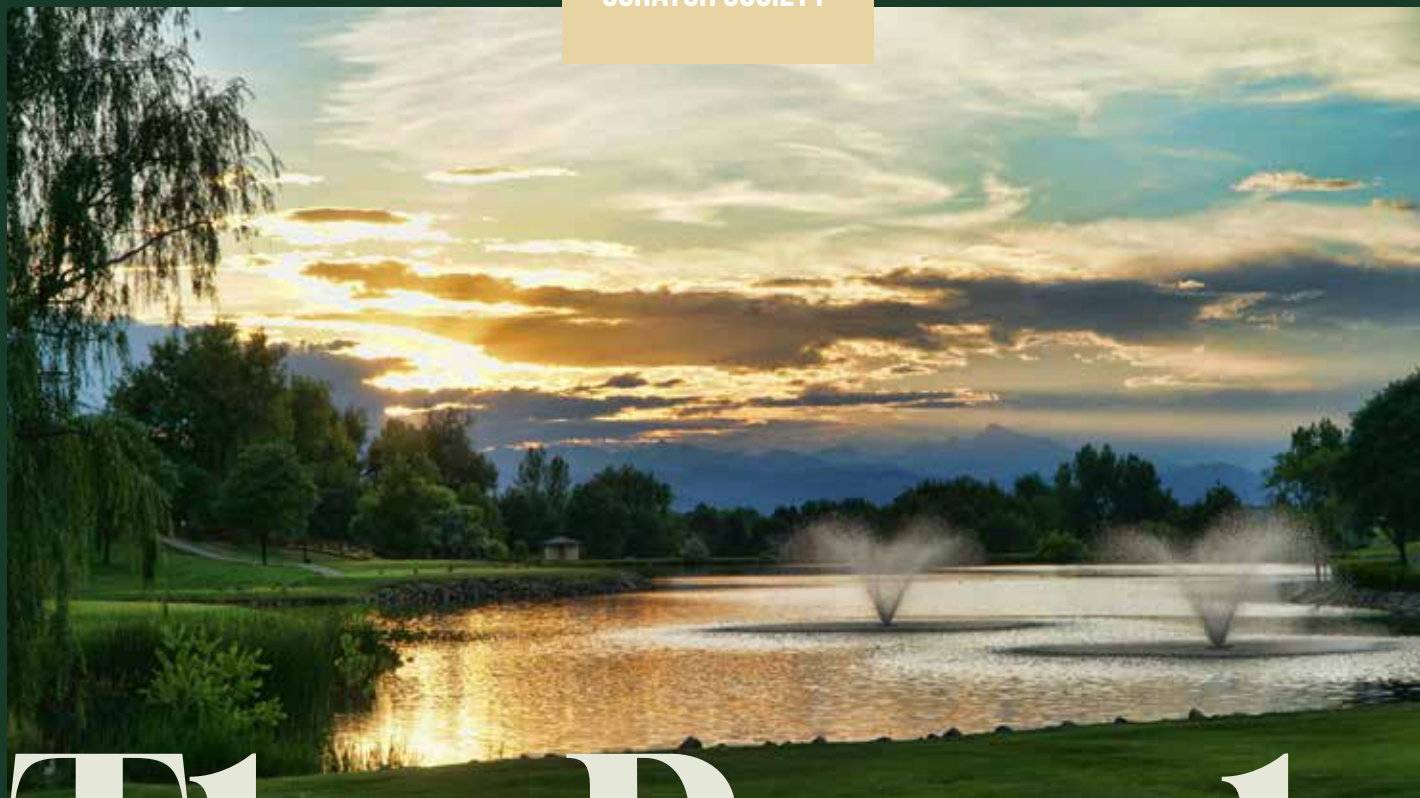
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JULY 3, 2026

COST: \$245 | GOLF PASSPORT MEMBER: \$220

Discover elevated living at Blackstone Country Club in Aurora. Play 36 holes of premier golf, sharpen your game with expert instruction, and enjoy resort-style amenities, dining, fitness, pool and family activities. Membership unlocks connection, community, and unforgettable experiences on and off the course.

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COUNTRY CLUB

SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

11887 TEJON ST, WESTMINSTER | 80234

10:00 SHOTGUN | SCRAMBLE FORMAT

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2026

COST: \$260 | GOLF PASSPORT MEMBER: \$235

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Kissing Camels

GOLF CLUB

OCTOBER 19, 2026

4500 KISSING CAMELS DR, COLORADO SPRINGS | 80904

10:00 SHOTGUN | SCRAMBLE FORMAT

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: OCTOBER 16, 2026

COST: \$255 | GOLF PASSPORT MEMBER: \$230

Membership at Kissing Camels Golf Club offers championship 27-hole mountain golf framed by Garden of the Gods and Pikes Peak, plus a full pro shop, teaching facilities, casual dining, and access to resort-wide amenities—from fitness, pools, spa, to tennis and wellness services.

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QUANTUM LEAP

CALLAWAY'S NEW DRIVER FAMILY FEATURES A HIGH-TECH, TRIPLE-LAYER FACE THAT TICKS A LOT OF BOXES

BY TONY DEAR

Callaway hasn't wiped its new Quantum drivers completely clean of titanium, it has limited its use somewhat.

With its Quantum lineup, Callaway is introducing a new face made with three layers it calls Tri-Force. The outer layer which makes contact with the ball is extremely thin titanium.

On the back of the face is a layer of carbon fiber, and between the two is a high-tech material called Poly Mesh that binds the titanium to the carbon fiber allowing the two to flex and recover in their own way and which was first developed for the ballistics field of mechanics and things like bulletproof vests.

The Poly Mesh and carbon fiber reduce vibration, save a little weight and, together with the titanium, create a face that still flexes and creates impressive ballspeeds without risking deformation.

That saved weight also gives Callaway engineers more freedom to reposition mass elsewhere in the head, fine-tuning launch conditions and forgiveness without sacrificing feel. The result is a driver that doesn't just chase raw speed, but maintains stability across a wider impact area. Off-center strikes benefit from the same layered response, helping retain distance and control when contact isn't perfect.

Essentially, the properties of the three Tri-Force layers enable Quantum drivers to create more ballspeed with greater durability. In addition to all that, thanks to the titanium, Tri-Force also keeps spin consistent reducing it on low-face hits and increasing it on high-face contact.

More consistent spin, ballspeed gains, lower risk of structural failure - only time will tell, of course, and we're reluctant to overhype it, but Tri-Force could potentially be Callaway's next momentous game-changer.



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VISITING WESTERN MAUI WITH A NEW SENSE OF RESPECT

BY JIM BEBBINGTON

The northwest tip of Maui has endured more than its share of hardship, yet the island's spirit remains unmistakably Hawaiian: resilient, beautiful, and quietly determined. Lahaina's historic heart was devastated by the 2023 fires, and the region's tourism-driven economy faltered as communities grieved and rebuilt. Just a mile away, the Kapalua Resort escaped the worst of the flames, but its workforce, like so many in West Maui, was displaced and forever changed. Tourism has returned with a renewed message of respect and gratitude. The adventure is back, but it comes with a deeper sense of intention, and a reminder that every visit helps the island heal.



RITZ CARLTON, PLANTATION COURSE//
PHOTO CREDIT: KAPALUA RESORT



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The northwest tip of Maui has been through a lot in the past three years.

In August 2023 wind-driven fires engulfed the historic village of Lahaina killing more than 100 people, destroying 2,200 buildings and causing more than \$5 billion in damages.

The area's economy depends on tourism and the devastation made hosting luaus the last thing on people's minds.

Just a mile north along the shore the Kapalua Resort community was barely singed, but its hundreds of employees were among the thousands of local residents displaced and traumatized. After a pause the tourism industry cranked back up with a renewed message: Come and enjoy, but do so with increased respect and awareness. Everyone serving you dinner, hosting you on a whale-watching boat, or helping you enjoy a round of golf is likely still dealing with the aftermath in one way or another. Visit respectfully and gratefully. Tip heavily. But come.

"As you enjoy everything that makes this destination so lively and special, we invite you to travel with intention and care," said Rebecca Pang, the director of marketing for the Ritz-Carlton Kapalua resort.

Two years later plans are creaking ahead for redevelopment of the downtown Lahaina shoreline — the buildings which gave it its charming whaling-village vibe were nearly completely destroyed. The resorts, beaches, restaurants and golf courses in the region began to bustle again. Then last summer one of the region's premier golf courses — the Plantation Course at Kapalua — became embroiled in a dispute with the company that supplies its irrigation water. The Kapalua resort's two courses — Plantation and Bay — browned over almost immediately. The PGA Tour cancelled the annual season-opening Sentry Open scheduled for Plantation because of the conditions. And the momentum to 'get back to normal' took a step back.

The golf world was swamped with images this fall of the Plantation Course covered in brown, dormant grass. Two greens - No. 1 and No. 8 - died out completely and had to be reseeded.

So it can come as a surprise to visitors today as they cruise up the welcoming driveway of the Plantation Course to find it lush, green and - again - a fascinating experience for golf.

The course was built in 1991, one of the first by a then-new design team of Bill Coore and Ben

Crenshaw. Coore and Crenshaw have gone on to be some of the most sought-after designers of the past 30 years, and their work includes the recently built Rodeo Dunes first course northeast of Denver.

Their footprints remain on the Plantation Course nearly 35 years later. The course was built on a former pineapple plantation and remains a challenging test. It uses its mountain-foothill location to offer steep variety for many of shots and nearly unending ocean views.

Colorado AvidGolfer visited in December and if a visitor did not know there had been a problem with the course conditions three months ago, they would not know now. The course has returned to a lush and challenging experience. Course operators say the time which the course was closed this fall may have been a forced sabbatical because of the lack of water, but it helped in some way to give the rest of the course a 'rest' from regular play.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Kapalua receives its irrigation water from one of the largest is a water collection systems in west Maui - the Maui Land and Pineapple Company, which manages 22,000 acres of current and former pineapple farms on the slopes near the coast.

In early 2025 the region saw a steep decline in its rainfall, with gauges near the coast reporting a 50 percent drop in rainfall for the year. Maui Land and Pineapple also reported that its water system, parts of which date back nearly 100 years, was fully operational this summer, a characterization that the Plantation Course owners have disputed in dueling lawsuits.

The region in the spring was placed under a water restriction just as the summer heat and dry season began. Water was prioritized for fire prevention and drinking, and agricultural uses were limited. "We are really experiencing what happens when there isn't enough rainfall for all the users," Race Randle, the CEO of the Maui Pineapple and Land Co., told local media in an hour-long interview on the situation.

Plantation Course owners negotiated through the year with MLP to continue to receive water to irrigate their two courses, the upslope Plantation Course where the Sentry Tournament is held, and the Arnold-Palmer designed Bay Course, which winds throughout the Kapalua Resort's residential neighborhoods near the oceanfront.

The Plantation Course operators have placed much of their case before the public on a website,

KapaluaWater.Org and Maui Land has countered on its own site, MauiLand.Com. The Plantation Course owners contend MLP by late summer had recovered and had water to provide for irrigation, but was withholding it until the company agreed to higher rates and to withdraw objections to MLP adding land to its portfolio for development. Maui Land has stated its infrastructure is sufficient to move water but the lack of rainfall has prevented it from supplying enough. The two companies have sued each other and partly as a result of the suits MLP began releasing water for irrigation in August, but at a lesser level than before.

Plantation Course operators opted to devote all of its irrigation water to the Plantation Course, leaving the Bay Course maintained open space, but not available for play. Company officials say the Bay Course may be renovated but may not be re-opened for several years.

In September, as the Plantation Course turned brown during a summer drought without irrigation, the PGA Tour announced it was cancelling the season-opening tournament, The Sentry, which was scheduled for the first weekend in January.

By that time some irrigation water had already begun flowing, but the course stayed closed for two more months while crews worked to replace two greens and revive the rest of the grass. The Plantation Course reopened in late November, and is available for public play again.

“The Plantation Course is open and in fantastic shape – that is what we want the world to know and is important to our community – as we have more than 300 employees at Kapalua Golf and our restaurant partners that rely on our business,” said Kevin Kammiem, senior marketing manager for Kapalua Golf and Tennis.

WHERE TO STAY

The Ritz-Carlton Kapalua is the premier resort north of Lahaina, tied to the famed Plantation Course. February 2026 rates ranged from roughly \$700 to \$1,000+ per night, popular with families drawn to the wide seashore, pools, cabanas, and oversized hot tubs.

Dining includes the beachside Burger Shack, Banyan Tree, and Ulana Terrace. Club Experience guests enjoy an all-day lounge with complimentary breakfast, drinks, and snacks, plus monthly Wine and Chef dinners with visiting Michelin-starred chefs. Many guests explore the Ironwood Cliffs Trail, which begins on the property and follows Kapalua’s dramatic coastline. 📍



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GOLF'S NEW FRONTIER ON THE COLORADO PRAIRIE

BY JIM BEBBINGTON

Out where the prairie stretches flat and endless, where the horizon feels like it belongs to the brave, Rodeo Dunes rises like a new frontier carved from sand and sky. This isn't a golf course built for convenience or comfort: it's a bold claim on the wild, a modern-day Manifest Destiny for the golfer willing to ride a little farther, walk a little harder, and chase something truly untamed. Here, the fairways wind through towering dunes and whispering grasses, and the only landmarks are the Rockies on the horizon and the promise of a game that feels as rugged and free as the land itself. At Rodeo Dunes, you don't arrive—you earn your view, step by step, cresting each dune like a rider scanning the horizon for what's next. It's a place that doesn't ask you to tame it... it asks you to meet it head-on.



PHOTO CREDIT: PARRISH RUIZ DE VELASCO

Last fall – when the heat of summer was gone and the chill of winter was still to come – Rodeo Dunes founders traveled from across the country to the rolling sand dunes near Roggen, Colorado.

Everyone was there to get a first glimpse of Rodeo Dunes – the new course from Michael Keiser, son of Bandon Dunes founder Mike Keiser. Can they add a new destination to the growing phenomenon of remote public resort golf, and will people come?

The fact that getting to the first tee box took a bit of doing is part of the attraction. Most visitors traveled up Interstate 76 and got off at a wide-spot in the road. (Except Rockies great Todd Helton, who said he drove in from his nearby home). They traveled over the highway to the north side on a precarious-looking bridge, then turned left at a gas station where the men’s room has been inoperable since the Carter administration.

A tiny sign stuck in the ground led cars down a winding dirt path that finally let out into a gravel field surrounded by native-grass covered dunes. A short shuttle ride away, players and their clubs were deposited on another wide spot where crews prepared for a full-blown rodeo to be held that night. But there were no buildings, no permanent utilities, nothing but temporary trailers and tents, with horses and steer in pens.

The terrain on which Rodeo Dunes sits must be experienced. The majority of sand dunes are 20 feet high or more, so visitors typically can see only what is immediately in front of them. A wood-chip path led up one dune, and then from the top players got their first glimpse of the emerald golf holes spread out among the landscape.

Near here a small clubhouse will be built, if Keiser’s plans come to fruition. There will be a seven-acre putting course. Scottish architect Clyde Johnson is already at work on this putting course called ‘The Rockies’ right next to the path.

All that was there were those emerald fairways and greens extending off to the north and east, nestled among the light tans and browns of the native grasses.

The first 18-holes of the Rodeo Dunes complex were designed by two of the most sought-after designers of the past 30 years – Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw. Coore has said they wanted to use the land that was presented to them as much as possible, moving dirt only when necessary. As anyone can tell you who has visited Bandon Dunes or Sand Valley, the golf courses take a very light approach to man-made objects. Most signs and benches are



PHOTO CREDIT: PARRISH RUIZ DE VELASCO

made of wood - small and low to the ground. Paths are covered with wood chips or other natural material. The courses are designed to be walked, and to help players leave their busy, mechanized lives behind.

Rodeo Dunes delivers on that promise.

The holes weave through dunes in a way that makes it very easy for players to feel they are the only people on the course, even when they are not. The few times players crest over the top of a dune they get views that push on for miles – the Rockies to the west, Pikes Peak to the south, local grain silos, and miles and miles of prairie. Coore Crenshaw courses are just fun. They famously build greens by meticulously peeling lay-

er after layer off – or on – to the land to see what they create. Rodeo Dunes gives players enormous variety and opportunity for towering hero shots, dramatic saves, and surprises.

What is the future of Rodeo Dunes?

For the complex, Michael Keiser has big plans – up to five more courses, resort hotels and cabins over the next 20 years. The club’s founders will have nearly exclusive access to the course this summer – public tee times won’t begin until 2027.

But were not another blade of grass grown, Rodeo Dunes has already created a glistening destination for golfers in Colorado’s northern prairie that will entice visitors to come for many years to come. ©

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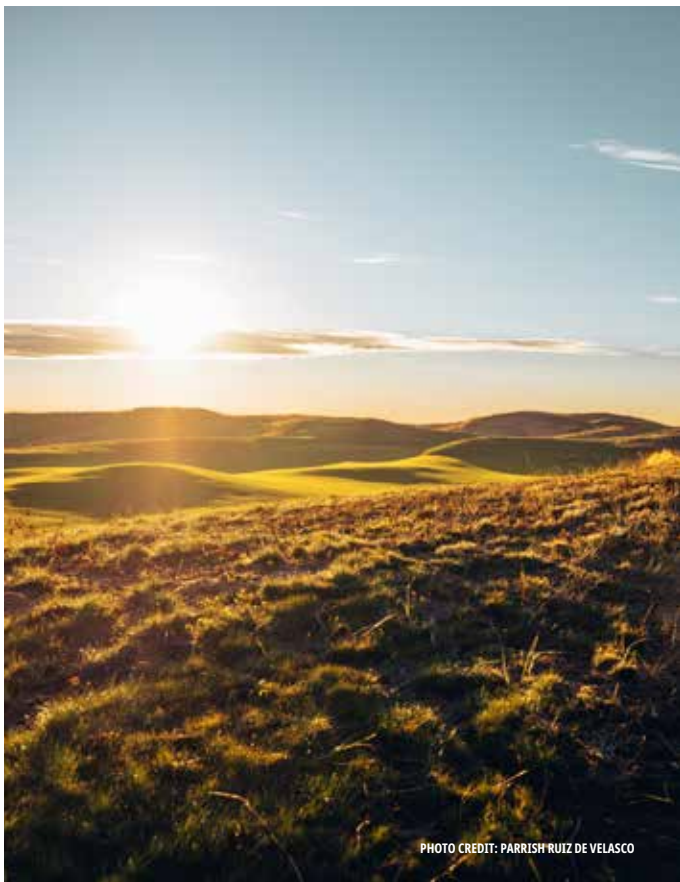


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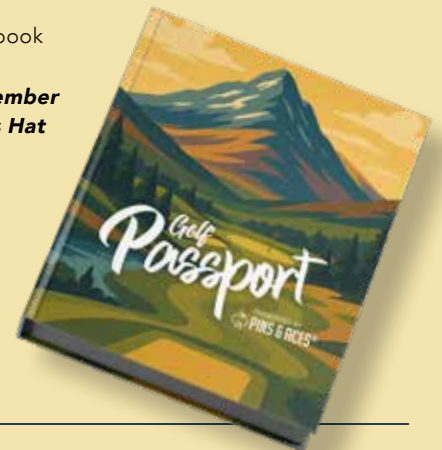
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BEST DENVER REGION COURSES (PUBLIC)

- #2 Red Hawk Ridge Golf Course
- #3 Heritage Eagle Bend Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (PUBLIC)

Alphabetical

- CommonGround Golf Course
- Green Valley Ranch Golf Club
- The Ridge at Castle Pines North



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BEST FRONT RANGE/ NORTHEAST COURSE

#1 TPC COLORADO

- #2 RainDance National Golf Course
- #3 Mariana Butte Golf Course

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Boomerang Links Golf Course
- Estes Park Golf Club
- Pelican Lakes Golf & Country Club

BEST MOUNTAIN COURSE

#1 POLE CREEK GOLF CLUB

- #2 Breckenridge Golf Club
- #3 Red Sky Ranch (Fazio Course)

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Eagle Ranch Golf Course
- Haymaker Golf Course
- Keystone Ranch Golf Course
- Raven at Three Peaks

BEST WESTERN COURSE

#1 REDLANDS MESA GOLF CLUB

- #2 Devil's Thumb Golf Club
- #3 Battlement Mesa Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Dalton Ranch Golf Club
- Lakota Links Golf Course
- Telluride Ski and Golf Club

BEST SOUTHERN COURSE

#1 WALKING STICK GOLF COURSE

- #2 Kissing Camels at Garden of the Gods
- #3 Country Club of Colorado
at Cheyenne Mountain Resort

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Four Mile Ranch Golf Club
- King's Deer Golf Club
- Rio Grande Golf Course

BEST PRACTICE FACILITY

#1 THE GOLF CLUB AT BEAR DANCE

- #2 Heritage Eagle Bend Golf Club
- #3 Murphy Creek Golf Course

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Green Valley Ranch
- RainDance National Golf Course
- The Ridge at Castle Pines

BEST CONDITIONS PUBLIC

#1 RED HAWK RIDGE GOLF COURSE

- #2 Heritage Eagle Bend Golf Club
- #3 The Golf Club at Bear Dance

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Arrowhead Golf Course
- CommonGround Golf Course
- Pole Creek Golf Club

BEST CONDITIONS RESORT

#1 THE CLUB AT INVERNESS

- #2 Keystone Ranch Golf Course
- #3 Red Sky Ranch (Fazio Course)

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Beaver Creek Golf Club
- Lone Tree Golf Club
- Omni Interlocken Resort GC

BEST TO WALK

#1 COMMONGROUND

- #2 Aurora Hills Golf Course
- #3 Heritage Eagle Bend Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Applewood Golf Course
- Indian Peaks Golf Course
- Riverdale Golf Club

BEST GOLF LOUNGE

#1 VAIL COUNTRY CLUB

- #2 The Hangar Club
- #3 Evergreen Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Avid Caddie
- Clubhouse Work & Golf
- South Broadway Country Club
- The Swing Bays

BEST ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

#1 HERITAGE EAGLE BEND GOLF CLUB

- #2 The Golf Club at Bear Dance
- #3 Pole Creek Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Green Valley Ranch
- Pelican Lakes Golf & CC
- Raccoon Creek Golf Course





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1 BRAD ALSTON

Brad Alston is a PGA Class A Member and finished in the top three of all three categories in 2026 CAGGY voting. He is the Director of Instruction at Optimum Golf, and is known for addressing the root cause of poor shots instead of creating compensations. He began teaching locally in 2006 at Aurora Hills Golf Course and taught at the former Park Hill Golf Club before launching Optimum Golf in the RiNo neighborhood of Denver in 2019.



BEST INSTRUCTOR (MEN)

#1 BRAD ALSTON, OPTIMUM GOLF

#2 Jonah Purcell, Perry Park Country Club

#3 Dustin Miller, Dustin Miller Golf

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Nick Clearwater, GOLFTEC
- Ed Oldham, The Ranch CC
- Keith Rogers, 5280 Instruction
- Stan Sayers, Colorado Golf Club

BEST INSTRUCTOR (WOMEN)

#1 SHERRY ANDONIAN, VALLEY CC

#2 Brad Alston, Optimum Golf

#3 Janet Yoder, Red Hawk Ridge GC

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Elena King, CommonGround
- Jonah Purcell, Perry Park Country Club
- Ashley Tait-Wengert, Turkey Creek Golf
- Chris Sholts, Growth Golf

BEST INSTRUCTOR (YOUTH)

#1 BRAD ALSTON, OPTIMUM GOLF

#2 Jonah Purcell, Perry Park Country Club

#3 (tie) Dustin Miller + Janet Yoder

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Kelli McKandless, Kelli McKandless Golf
- Ashley Tait-Wengert, Turkey Creek Golf
- Trent Wearner, Trent Wearner Golf
- Jason Witczak, Blackstone/Black Bear



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PHOTO CREDIT

BEST DENVER REGION CLUBS (PRIVATE)

- #2 Perry Park Country Club
- #3 Castle Pines Golf Club
- #4 Cherry Hills Country Club

STAFF PICKS (PRIVATE)

Alphabetical

- Cherry Creek Country Club
- Colorado Golf Club
- Valley Country Club

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#1 BALLYNEAL GOLF CLUB

- #2 Fort Collins Country Club
- #3 Ptarmigan Country Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Eaton Country Club
- The Fox Hill Club
- Harmony Country Club

BEST CLUBHOUSE (PRIVATE)

#1 RAVENNA COUNTRY CLUB

- #2 Castle Pines Golf Club
- #3 The Broadmoor Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Cherry Hills Country Club
- Red Sky Golf Club (Norman Course)
- The Sanctuary



THE BROADMOOR GOLF CLUB
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BEST MOUNTAIN CLUB

#1 RED SKY RANCH

- #2 The Club at Cordillera
- #3 Frost Creek Country Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Aspen Glen Club
- Country Club of the Rockies
- Eagle Springs Golf Club

BEST WESTERN COURSE

#1 TELLURIDE SKI & GOLF CLUB

- #2 The Glacier Club
- #3 Brookcliff Country Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Cornerstone Club



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BEST SOUTHERN CLUB

#1 THE BROADMOOR GOLF CLUB

- #2 The Club at Flying Horse
- #3 Kissing Camels at Garden of the Gods

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Colorado Springs Country Club
- Eisenhower Golf Club
- The Country Club at Woodmoor

BEST CADDIES

#1 CHERRY HILLS COUNTRY CLUB

- #2 Castle Pines Golf Club
- #3 Colorado Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Ballyneal Golf Club
- The Broadmoor Golf Club
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CASTLE PINES GOLF CLUB
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After golf, head to **O.H.S.O Brewery & Distillery** in Arcadia. It's colorful, lively, and full of groups doing exactly what you are, celebrating a trip with friends. The salads, bowls, and brewed-on-site beers keep things fresh and light.

There are great ballparks in Arizona, but none feel more perfectly made for a girls' trip than **Scottsdale Stadium**. It's walkable, stylish, energetic, and surrounded by shopping and restaurants. Grab lawn seats, they're social, shaded in spots, and offer an easygoing vantage point that lets you snack, chat, sunbathe, and still follow the game.





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By the final night, the desert air feels softer, the tans are glowing, and the group has fully slipped into that care-free, no-alarm, no-responsibilities mindset. Days have been spent poolside with cocktails sweating in the sun, drifting through boutiques, sneaking in spa resets, and lingering a little too long over lunch. Now it's time to trade daytime chic for after-dark energy. Dinner sets the tone. A lively room, bold flavors, cocktails that arrive dangerously smooth. Plates are shared, laughter spills over the table, and the playlist feels intentional. This is the pregame that doesn't feel rushed - just right. Everyone knows what's coming next.

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From there, Old Town becomes your playground. Rooftop bars with city lights glowing, packed patios buzzing with energy, DJs spinning throwbacks and crowd-pleasers. Each stop brings a new vibe, a new laugh, a new moment that will live forever in the group chat. By the time rides are called and shoes come off, no one wants it to end. Scottsdale delivered sunshine, style, and a final night that didn't just cap the weekend, it crowned it.

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COLORADO GOLF CLUB'S MOST INFLUENTIAL HIRE YET

BY JIM BEBBINGTON

John Easterbrook stands among golf's most respected leaders, a seasoned executive whose career has shaped the way the sport is administered, taught, and experienced around the world. Recently appointed as Chief Operating Officer and General Manager of Colorado Golf Club, Easterbrook brings to the prestigious Colorado institution more than three decades of leadership, innovation, and unwavering commitment to growing the game of golf at every level. His journey from a collegiate golfer to one of the industry's most influential executives, mirrors the evolution of modern golf itself; strategic, global, and driven by people.

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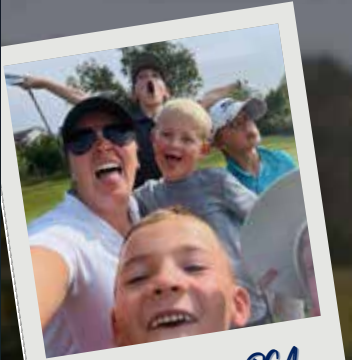
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Geoff Ketter, PGA

SCAN FOR THEIR STORIES



Easterbrook's roots in the game run deep. The grandson of a PGA Professional and the son of a college football coach, he was immersed early in a culture of competition and teamwork. He played collegiate golf at the University of Wyoming, serving as team captain and earning All-Conference honors while completing a degree in finance - a dual foundation of sport and business that would shape his career.

Following graduation, Easterbrook began his professional journey in golf operations with Marriott and Hyatt before joining Troon Golf in 1997, then a growing management company. Over the next two decades, he became instrumental in transforming Troon into the world's largest third-party golf management organization. As Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, he oversaw operations across hundreds of properties worldwide, guiding standards in performance, finance, sales, and service while helping establish Troon as a global benchmark in golf management.

In 2017, the PGA of America appointed Easterbrook as its first Chief Membership Officer, a newly created role designed to better serve PGA Professionals nationwide. In that position, he led key initiatives spanning education, career development, employment services, and member engagement, helping modernize the association's approach and expand professional opportunities across the industry.

Beyond organizational leadership, Easterbrook has remained deeply committed to the broader stewardship of the game. His service on the board of trustees for the GCSAA Foundation reflects a dedication to advancing research, education, and the long-term sustainability of golf course management. Throughout his career, Easterbrook has blended strategic leadership with a people-first philosophy - shaping institutions, strengthening communities, and helping guide golf toward a more dynamic and enduring future.

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Throughout his career, Easterbrook’s reputation has been that of a strategist who understands both the numbers and the nuances of the golf business. Whether guiding multi-national operations at Troon or spearheading golf membership excellence at the PGA, his decisions have often centered on expanding access, fostering career growth for industry professionals, and elevating the overall player and member experience. His leadership has helped shape a more dynamic, inclusive, and professionally rewarding golf ecosystem.

In his new role at Colorado Golf Club, a venue celebrated for its pristine course and championship legacy, Easterbrook is poised to apply his deep operational insight and industry vision to one of the nation’s premier private golf experiences. With his arrival, members and guests alike can expect a steadfast commitment to excellence, innovation in member engagement, and continued elevation of the club’s service and operational standards.



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John Easterbrook, the new general manager for Colorado Golf Club, is a career golf administrator and knows a good thing when he sees it.

“It’s a very stable, very solid future for the club,” he said February 2nd, one month into his new job. “The golf course is one of the best. This place is golf first; it’s not a city club, not a lot of business meetings. We have to get the core golf perfect. The golf course is really, really good.”

Easterbrook, 63, returns to Denver after spending 20 years as one of Troon Golf’s top executives and nearly a decade with the PGA of America working out of Dallas.

Easterbrook’s golf industry career began in 1985 working in the Colorado section of the PGA out of Jacoby Park in Laramie, Wyo. He had gone to the University of Wyoming intending to play football but ended up playing on the golf team for four years instead.

He worked at Camelback Mountain in Phoenix then for Marriott Hotels and Hyatt Hotels directing their resort golf operations. When a golf management startup called Troon opened up in 1997 he was hired as employee No. 12. He became COO of operations and by the time he departed in 2017 Troon had become the largest golf management company in the world with more than 15,000 employees.

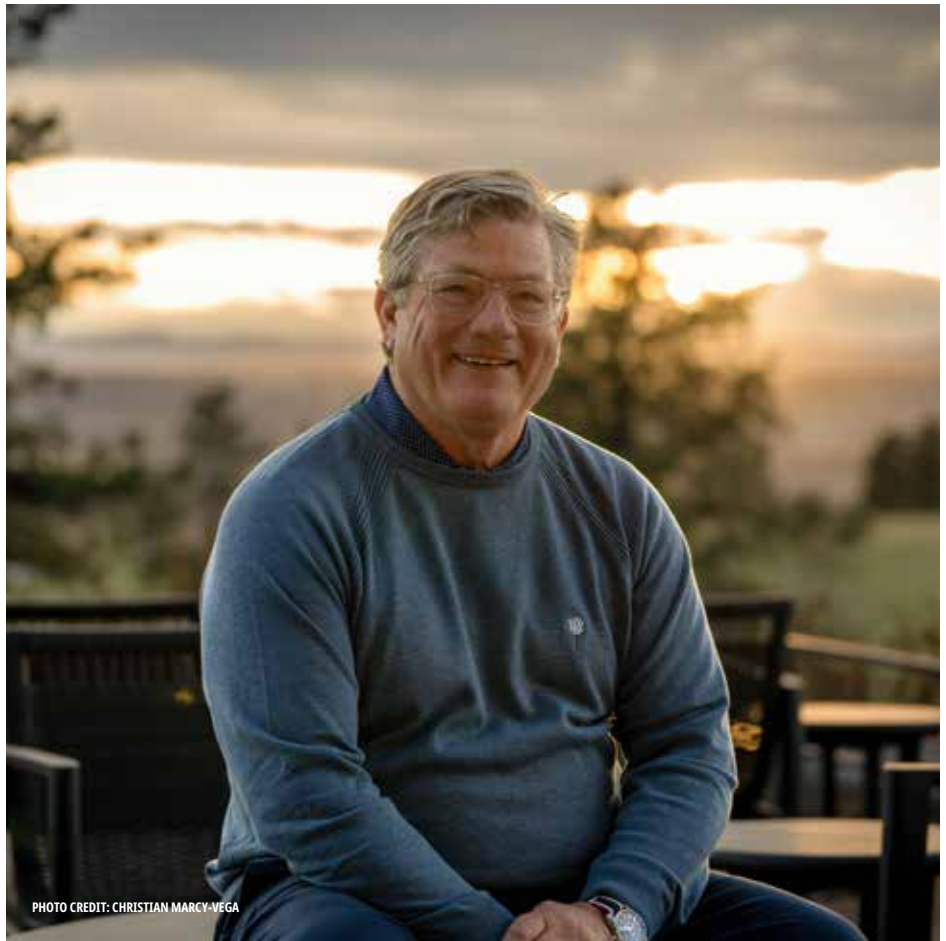
After working with the PGA of America as director of operations for the past eight years, Easterbrook and his wife Lori moved to Parker when the Colorado Golf Club role came open.

“It’s a tremendous, great club and we have a great team that aspires to be considered in the top 100,” he said. “I think we can do that and we’ll align the membership. It’s going to be one of the truly great clubs in the western U.S.”

Easterbrook said they are seeking to grow their national membership, which will entail the construction of residential cabins or accommodations for members traveling in from out of state. In addition, he arrived just as jackhammers began renovations to parts of the men’s and women’s locker rooms.

“The membership has supported the need to continue to re-invent the club,” he said. “They continue to support that.”

As the golf boom has continued in Colorado clubs like Colorado Golf Club are seeing a new wave of potential members. Club membership is an important relationship, and Easterbrook said po-



tential members should look into not just whether they like the amenities at a club, but its financial condition and whether the current members are a good fit for them and vice versa.

When it works, it can offer immediate benefits, Easterbrook said.

“Instant gratification, really,” he said. “I mean, people gravitate in any environment to people they like to hang out with and be with. And so it’s instant connection to other club members like them that have a common goal. Again, there are many clubs across the United States, some of them are more focused on golf, some of them are more focused on social, and they could be right across the street from one another.

And some members may be entering the membership at a later stage in life where they’re not playing as much golf, but they still want that social interaction and they still want that fun social environment at private clubs. Others may still want to just play golf until they’re 90. And you know, that’s the most important thing for them. It goes back to understanding what you’re getting into,” he said,.

“So, you have to understand the financial stability of whatever club you’re going to join.”

Colorado Golf Club was just recently named as a host the USGA’s 2030 U.S. Junior Amateur. The appointment was part of a strategy that the club has to keep its course under consideration for some of the most prestigious tournaments in the world.

The course was designed by Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore, two of the most sought-after designers who recently completed construction on the first Rodeo Dunes course in Roggen.

CGC has already co-hosted a U.S. Amateur, in 2023, the 2013 Solheim Cup, the top international team competition in women’s golf and the 2010 Senior PGA Championship.

Easterbrook said he is looking forward to continuing that tradition and making it even stronger.

“I’m an operator by heart; I’ve always wanted to get back in operations and run a club,” he said. 🇨🇦

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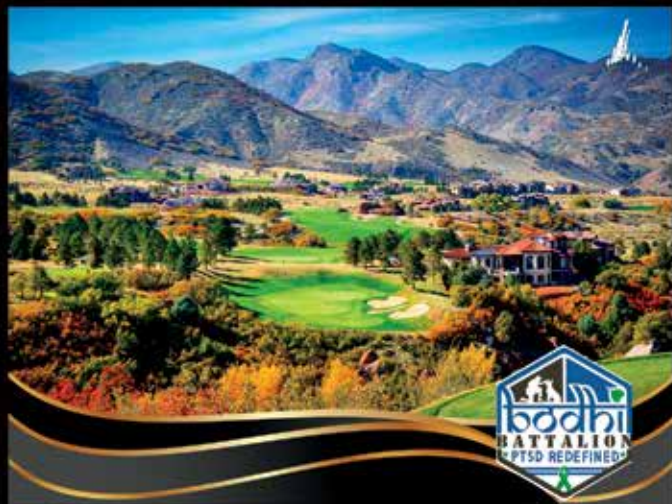
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KRISTINE FRANKLIN: A LEGACY MEASURED IN MORE THAN TROPHIES

BY MICHAEL COLANDER

Kristine Franklin's name is etched into the fabric of Colorado golf. A relentless competitor, perennial champion, and standard-bearer for excellence, Franklin has spent decades proving that greatness isn't a moment, it's a habit. Her résumé reads like a highlight reel of the state's women's game, and in 2025 she added yet another exclamation point, earning Colorado Golf Association Women's Senior Player of the Year honors once again. It's a title she's worn before, but one that never loses its weight, because it reflects sustained brilliance, passion, and an unwavering love for the game. From championship fairways to the next generation she inspires, Kristine Franklin continues to define what it means to compete, endure, and lead in Colorado golf.

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(MC) Talk us through your year in golf. You won Senior Player of the Year again, and you won some big tournaments for the CGA again. What were some of your best moments in 2025 on the course?

(KF) I'd say winning the match play was big, especially with so many players coming in from out of state, that made it a really good win. The stroke play was also a great victory. It's fun to play, but when you're competing against your friends, it can make things a little tricky. We always have a great time out there, and I really enjoyed that. And qualifying for the Senior Women's U.S. Open is always such a treat, just to have the chance to go play. I didn't play as well as I wanted at the event, but that's alright.

(MC) Talk us through the difference between the CGA (Colorado Golf Association) match play or stroke play, and then the US Senior Women's Open. What are the differences between a state-level event and an international-level event.

(KF) They definitely are different experiences, and different vibes. You have to prepare yourself emotionally for the USGA events. I've obviously had more experience playing in CGA events rather than USGA events, but I think it's how you prepare mentally for those versus a CGA event.

The more I play in the bigger USGA events, the little more confidence I get. So, I'm really looking forward to 2026.

(MC) Talking about preparation, what is the difference of how you prepare for match play versus stroke play?

(KF) I don't know that it's a big difference for me. It really comes down to getting my game in shape: my touch, chipping, and putting, and hoping my long game is there. In match play, it's about understanding the dynamics: your opponent might be out of the hole, but you never assume anything.

It becomes more of a mental preparation, playing the course while staying aware of what your opponent is doing, so there's a little more strategy and movement going on.

(MC) What does it take to go back-to-back as the Colorado Golf Association Women's Senior Player of the Year?

(KF) It's always a real honor to get that because it's not just playing, it's also how they look at you as a person out there and how you carry yourself. So, that to me almost makes me feel even more proud. But, going back-to-back, the more you think about it, it starts to get in your head. (*Laughs*) I'd rather not think about it. But no, it's a true honor. I appreciate it.

(MC) You've had a lot of accolades, and a lot of accomplishments on the golf course. What still gives you goosebumps when you look back at kind of what you've done on the course?

(KF) Gosh, I'd say it was probably just starting to play again. My dad had passed away when I picked the game back up as an amateur, and I really wanted to bring home a trophy for him. The first one was the CJA Match Play, which I lost in extra holes, and that was okay. But I was able to win the stroke play and bring him a trophy. They'll always be your parents.

That win made me feel like a kid again. Now it's about continuing to play and setting goals for yourself. For me, it's never been about who to beat, but about how to challenge myself—how I approach things, whether I can do this, and how I set goals without placing too many expectations on myself. That's probably what coming back was really about: being able to do something for my dad, and now, doing something for myself.

(MC) Golf is one of those things, right? It's not a team sport, but there are so many people in your corner that you have to have when you're playing at a level, like a professional level or just even in a competitive level, that it is a team sport.

(KF) When I first came back to competitive play, it's been about 23 years now, I returned as an amateur and qualified for the Senior Amateur. I think I was in third place after the first round, and I started getting all these texts saying, 'Hey, great job, Kris.' I remember asking my husband, 'How do they even know this?' And he said, 'It's on the internet. They can see it.' I was like, 'Oh my gosh,'

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because back then, it wasn't like that. That's when it hit me that people were watching me, they could actually see what I was doing. And that became one of the hardest parts mentally. When I played in the Senior U.S. Open and made a birdie, I'd think, 'Everybody's watching, they're happy.' But then I'd make a bogey and think, 'Oh no, they're watching that too.' And I realized, Kris, you have to get over this mentally.

But then I started to look at it differently. You kind of become like a racehorse, and people get to be part of it—it becomes your team. And I thought, how neat is that? They're following you because they care, and they're only hoping for good things. When I saw it that way, it gave me even more reason to play, to try and bring them a little joy or something fun to watch. And that's when I realized it's okay that they're watching and wishing you the best.

(MC) You've seen golf change a lot. Where do you see the women's game going?

(KF) When I first started playing, it was such a man's sport. I was usually the only girl out at Flatirons Golf Course—that's where I grew up. I tagged along with my brother, and my dad would say, 'Here's the fairway, follow along.' That's how it all started.

I grew up playing with Janet Moore—now Janet Ruma—and that was really the beginning of seeing more women entering the game. What excites me most now is looking at college golf and seeing just how strong and talented the women are. They are so good. Sometimes I think, if I won the lottery, I'd endow the Symetra Tour just to give them more opportunities to play. People don't always realize how good these players are, their power, the

purity of their swings - it's so much fun to watch the women's game grow into what it is today. And especially in Colorado, we're right at the forefront. We have the Annika event at Todd Creek, the Colorado Women's Open is a big one, and it's exciting to see the state leading the way.

I love the Colorado Open because of the prize money they offer. People don't realize that even just making the cut can be a lifeline for these players—it helps them keep going, keep traveling, and keep chasing the dream. There's still not enough to fully sustain them, but opportunities like that make a real difference.

(MC) What advice do you have for those players? The ones that are the high schoolers that are coming up or the junior player or someone on the Anika Tour that's grinding, trying to go pro.

(KF) I would say, celebrate what you do well. We're always looking at what we're not doing and trying to pick that apart. But what about what you're doing right?

And don't forget the mental side. Visualize what you want to do and what you see happening and then follow that while staying positive. It's not always about being happy—it's about staying focused. You have a job to do, and you can't let your emotions swing you up and down or start judging yourself. It's just let's get the job done and prepare.

The guys on tour have their whole game plan ready, and you don't even realize it. That's something young golfers coming up need to learn—course management. We didn't have that when I was starting out. I was fortunate to learn from my father, but even more from my husband. What he

has taught me is unbelievable.

(MC) And your husband's your caddy. Talk about that relationship a little bit.

(KF) It's so fun because he wants it for me so badly, and you can feel that. When I was younger, I had a really solid game because I was playing day in and day out, and I don't do that as much anymore. So when I wasn't playing well, I could say, 'Come on, let's get this going.'

I remember one time we were out there and he was like, 'Come on, you've got to fight, you've got to fight.' And I was like, 'The car's not running well—there's only so much I can step on the gas.' It was during one of the qualifying rounds, and I said, 'Brent, please don't tell me to grind or that I've got this. Just be gentle—be my cheerleader.' I hit the shot and it was just ugly. And he looks at me and goes, 'You're pretty.'

Perfect. That's exactly it. He made me laugh, and we had a great time.

And anytime it's something big, like the U.S. Open and we're going to San Diego, he's like, 'Who wants to go to San Diego anyway?' It's those moments that are so great, and I'm learning to really treasure them.

(MC) Do you have any golf courses on your bucket list that you have not gotten to play in Colorado or in, in the country or the world?

(KF) Just anywhere to go play with my boys. I would love to take them to Europe just for that experience. So that would be on my bucket list.

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Wyndham Clark: Chasing *Redemption*

BY JIM BEBBINGTON

Heading into the 2026 PGA Tour season, Colorado's Wyndham Clark has a new coach, a new driver, renewed optimism, and possibly some regrets about not taking a sweet deal from LIV golf in 2023.

Clark is coming off a down year by his standards. He won \$2.9 million in 2025 and ended with just two top-five finishes. He also earned the ire of some golf fans when he kicked in his locker at Oakmont Country Club after missing the cut in the U.S. Open.

In December he described his 2025 as "An F that became an F-plus. It just was a bad year. A lot of crap happened and then I kind of salvaged it at the end. But the good thing is we've got next year and we're almost done. So yeah, I'm looking forward to next year."

He feels he began to turn the tide when he started in the fall working with a new swing coach, Pat Coyner, the director of instruction at Clark's family course growing up, Cherry Hills Country Club.

"I was spending some time in the offseason in Colorado at Cherry Hills and he's -- he just became the new teaching pro there," Clark said. "We started bouncing ideas off each other, kind of liked what he had to say, I started hitting it better and I said, all right, why don't you come help me."

He also switched to a Ping driver and he and Croyden began working on getting his swing closer to its form in 2023.

"These are good changes for me for the long run," Clark told the podcasting duo of Drew Stoltz, who grew up in Ft. Collins, and Colt Knost on their SiriusXM radio show Gravy and The Sneeze. "After last year and not having a coach for a little over three years it was time to finally go see somebody and get back to some good fundamentals."

He said while his stats suffered across the board in 2025, it was all traced back to his driver. He

would hit at least one 'foul ball' off the tee every round, he said, and the drives that did stay on-property often landed in the rough. Coming out of the hay that often led his iron stats to deteriorate, and no amount of excellence around the greens could save him.

And as the 2026 PGA Tour season has begun, Clark said he had some mixed emotions about the recent moves to briefly open up a pathway back to the tour for four top golfers who defected to LIV. He said he too was offered a sizeable amount of money to go to LIV in 2023 and turned it down.

Now Brooks Koepka, who defected to LIV, was cleared to return to the PGA Tour. His penalty: A \$5 million donation to charity and foregoing the Tour's equity payments for the next five years and the FedEx Cup bonus pool in 2026. The Tour has estimated that the equity payments alone could cost Koepka up to \$50 to \$80 million.

"I'm so torn, I personally really like Brooks and ultimately I think it's really good for the PGA Tour, but it's also a guy that had the opportunity to go to LIV..." he told Stoltz and Knost. "It's kind of frustrating that he's able to get the cake and also eat it. I'm very torn because I feel I want whatever's best for the PGA Tour. I think, if guys come back -- especially top players like Brooks -- it's only going to help the tour which is ultimately going to help me."

"I wish there were a few more repercussions but I'm glad the things they put in place are pretty decent," he said. "I also like the hard deadline and I just really hope they stick with that and don't waver with that in a year or two."

Four LIV players -- Koepka, Bryson DeChambeau, Jon Rahm and Cam Smith -- qualified for the PGA Tour amnesty program but had to accept the deal by Feb. 2. Only Koepka took the deal.

"I had the offer (to go to LIV) just over a year and a half ago," Clark said. "If you would have told

me that I could have gone for a year and a half, make a boatload of money then be able to come back and play on the Tour, I think almost everyone would have done that. It's a little frustrating that that happened and people are now going to see what the Tour has done and then go do that anyways now: reach out to LIV and say hey I want to come and play LIV knowing you go take a bag for a year or two and you're able to come back."

He said he would not be surprised to see some current PGA Tour players to test if this deal works both ways.

"I think there could be guys who would have that mindset and challenge the system and come back and say you let Brooks do it why can't I do it," Clark said. "It will be interesting to see if anyone does that."

Clark, 32, opened his 2026 campaign with a T-13 at the American Express, driving well the first three days. 🇨🇪



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