

# ILLINOIS GOLFER THE OPENING 9

**Monday,  
February 8, 2021**

## Hardy's run continues

**1** It's good to be **Nick Hardy** these days. The 25-year-old Northbrook native is playing the best golf of his career and being rewarded for it.

The latest example came last week, which Hardy opened by surviving a playoff to grab the last spot in the Waste Management Phoenix Open, and then closed by finishing tied for 42nd and padding his wallet by \$23,852.75.

Hardy's seven days in Scottsdale came on the heels of a big week in Hawaii. He four-spotted for the Sony Open at **Wai'alae** in Honolulu, and fired four rounds in the 60s to tie for 14th, five strokes behind winner **Kevin Na**, winning \$113,850.

All that while he's waiting for the Korn Ferry Tour to get rolling this month. At this pace, the KF crowd may not see much of him again.

**2** All this fuss about rolling back distance – needed in the big time so courses don't get obsolete – shouldn't apply to the rest of the golf world. Which is to say, us.

Do you hit it too far? Apply too much backspin? Make too many birdies? Didn't think so. **Rory McIlroy** doesn't either. He sees the need for different equipment rules for pros and the commoners.

"I like the idea of bifurcation, because the golf that I play and the golf you play – no offense – (is) completely different," McIlroy said in Scottsdale. "For 99 percent of golfers out there, golf courses aren't too short. The ball doesn't go too far for 99 percent of golfers. So I would be in favor of a set of parameters for the pros and another one for the amateurs."

Some say that bifurcation would be bad for golf, causing strife among the ruling bodies – the USGA makes the rules and everyone else follows them – and the equipment manufacturers.



Bill Ibrahim / Southwest PGA

**HAPPY QUALIFIER** Nick Hardy hugs a good friend after the playoff success.

The hunch here is the opposite. A rollback would force the equipment firms to roll out entire new lines of clubs, and presumably, balls. They would huff and puff and then cash in.

And if bifurcation comes to be, with the buying public getting one standard and the pros limited to equipment that would produce less distance, the companies would still be ahead.

They could have their pros test the goodies we could buy and make commercials touting them, saying, "I'd like to use this club in tournaments, but I can't. But you can, and chase yardage and your dreams."

How to decide who can play what? The USGA would probably say pros and high-index amateurs – say, anyone eligible to qualify for the U.S. Open or U.S. Women's Open – couldn't use general-public clubs in competition. The pro tours would likely say the same thing for their competitions. **More on P. 2**

## The Week Ahead

### Illinois

#### CDGA

CDGA Mid-Amateur Qualifying, Maple Meadows, April 26

#### Illinois PGA

IPGA Las Vegas Pro-Am starts March 22

### National

#### PGA Tour

AT&T Pebble Beach, CBS/GC

#### LPGA

Gainbridge starts Feb. 25, GC

#### Korn Ferry

Suncoast Classic starts Feb. 18

#### Champions

Cologuard Classic starts Feb. 26, GC

### International

#### European Tour

WGC at the Concession starts Feb. 25, GC

## Tour Guide

How Illinois bred and connected players fared last week:

### Phoenix Open

|                 |      |              |
|-----------------|------|--------------|
| Steve Stricker  | T- 4 | \$307,208.33 |
| Kevin Streelman | T-22 | \$ 64,422.50 |
| Nick Hardy      | T-42 | \$ 23,852.75 |

### A Monday feature returns

The *Golf In Chicago* website that preceded ILLINOIS GOLFER ran *The Opening 9* occasionally in 2012, with IG renewing it as *The Morning Nine* in 2014. It's high time we brought it back, with news and views we hope won't make you snooze. It will run weekly in season – except when we have a regular issue – and occasionally out of season when there's news worth reporting and commenting on. As in this week. – **Tim Cronin**

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Which means many amateurs would end up with two sets of equipment – which the companies would love.

**3** Speaking of Phoenix, let's not forget **Kevin Streelman**. The Winfield native also showed well, finishing tied for 22nd and collecting \$64,422.50. He and Hardy were tied after 36 holes at 7-under 135, then Streelman scored 69-69 on the weekend in a home game for him. He lives near **TPC Scottsdale**.

Streelman has been on Tour since 2008, and has quietly – sometimes too quietly for his tastes – put together a fine career. He hasn't won a major – his best finish is tying for 12th in The Masters and the PGA – but he's won twice and earned more than \$21.9 million on the Tour. (Trivia that could win you a bar bet: He's actually won at **Augusta National** – the 2015 Par-3 Contest.)

And let us forget, that Wisconsin native and Fighting Illini alum, **Steve Stricker**, nearly stole the show, tying for fourth and cashing over \$300,000.

**4** It's over at **Lansing Country Club**, which has been all but shuttered for several years.

In late December, Saxon Partners closed on the purchase of the property that straddles the Illinois-Indiana line, and intends to use the 59 acres in the Hoosier state for a \$160 million technology hub with a medical focus. Some 2,500 are expected to work there.

Saxon's **Gary Warfel** called it "a highly desirable location," *The Times of Northwest Indiana* reported.

That portion of the property is in Munster and encompasses the newer nine holes of the course, a full-size nine that went with the original near-pitch-and-putt nine on the Illinois side to create one of the odder 18s around.

That 40 acres will remain as green space, though not as a golf course. Saxon has approached the Cook County Forest Preserve District to see if any existing trails can be connected to it.

**5** Something for the place that has everything: **Chicago Golf Club** has been added to the National Register of Historic Places, a list maintained by the National Park Service. Chicago Golf moved to its current site in Wheaton in 1895, and one wing of the original club-

house remains. Olympia Fields Country Club is also on the prestigious list.

**6** The Rockford Park District has closed **Elliot Golf Course**, even though it lost the least money in 2020, the *Rockford Register Star* reported last Wednesday.

Elliot lost \$752,916 in the last decade, the park district said, noting Elliot's play had dropped annually since 1999.

The *Register Star* reported **Aldeen**, the district's premier course, had needed \$2.3 million in subsidies since 1999, while **Ingersoll** needed \$1.3 million and the nine-hole **Sinnissippi** layout needed \$493,000 in tax help.

The park district, which says closing Elliot will save \$400,000 in 2021, opened the 6,433-yard par-72 layout for two "last swing" days in early December, with temperatures in the 50s. Designed by **Larry Packard** and later revised by **Bob Lohmann**, it opened in 1968.

**7** What's in a name? "Oak" is, if you're running the Northbrook Park District. The new name of **Sportsman's Golf Course**, which has been called that since it was formed in 1929, is **Heritage Oaks Golf Club**.

Why? Marketing. A Chicago branding firm was brought in to ask focus groups what the course should be called.

Like **Waveland-as-Marovitz**, people will still call it Sportsman's.

**8** That there's no love lost between **Patrick Reed** and his cohorts on the circuit isn't news. What is news is someone putting it on the record, as **Xander Schauffele** did in San Diego after Reed's latest rules dustup.

"I mean, he did everything by the book according to the official and everyone stood by there," Schauffele said. "Obviously the talk amongst the boys isn't great, I guess, but he's protected by the Tour and that's all that matters, I guess."

Wouldn't Reed and Schauffele be a fun pairing down the line?

**9** Last week's announcement that the Obama Presidential Center cleared the last hurdle and will be built in Jackson Park on Chicago's south side will renew speculation regarding the proposed consolidation of the adjacent **Jackson Park** and **South Shore** golf courses,

designed by Illinois Golf Hall of Famer Tom Bendelow about a century ago, into one 18-hole layout, plus a family golf learning area.

The plan, by **Beau Welling** of **Tiger Woods'** design firm, has been reworked over the years, but still has one difficult-to-overcome flaw: how to get from Jackson Park to South Shore's lakefront area without spending millions for an underpass adjacent to Lake Michigan.

That's a major problem. In January 2018, Chicago Park District Superintendent **Mike Kelly** said the course and all the attendant infrastructure – underpasses included – would cost about \$60 million. The Chicago Parks Golf Alliance is supposed to raise \$24 million for the course construction and an operating fund to run the rebuilt layout, while Chicago and potentially state taxpayers would be on the hook for the rest. The non-profit CPGA's latest available tax form, for 2018, shows assets of just over \$202,000. Supposedly, more is promised, but that's what was in the bank.

Things are at a standstill, and not just because of the pandemic. The CPGA website hasn't been updated since the middle of 2019.

Originally, the rest of the taxpayer-funded construction was supposed to be \$6 million. In 2018, it ballooned to \$36 million, with Kelly properly adding in the cost of underpasses and road reconstruction to the project. (There are other costs in Jackson Park that have been tied to the Obama Center.)

Today's cost to reduce 27 holes to 18? Who knows? We know this, however: The plan for the First Tee to headquarter there is gone. That youth golf operation broke ground at another Chicago Park District-controlled layout, Marovitz Golf Course – Waveland, that is – last month for its Chicago home, including a small outdoor practice facility.

If anything does happen at Jackson Park and South Shore, the regulars who have played there for years will have at least a year without their hangout. It takes at least a year to build a golf course, usually longer including grow-in. The original hope was to break ground in 2017.

Don't hold your breath.