

# United States Deaf Golf Championships

Since 1980 the top deaf golfers in the country have met to contest the United States Deaf Golf Championships. This year the 22nd championship, presented by the United States Deaf Golf Association (USDGA), will be played from July 16-20 at Far Oaks Golf Club. The Deaf Championships are the biggest prize on the tournament calendar in the Deaf Community and is the major title most coveted by all deaf golfers.

The Far Oaks course designed by Belleville, Ill. native and local resident, 1968 Masters Champion Bob Goalby, opened in 1999 and has a rating of 73.3 and a slope of 141 from the back tees. For the championship, the zozyia grass fairways and bent grass greens can be stretched to 7,083 yards for the men and will test the best deaf golfers from across the United States. The championship will be contested over 72 holes and will determine the national champion deaf golfer for Men, Women and Seniors. For the tournament, the nine's will be reversed, with the front nine serving as the closing holes. "The last four holes on the front nine are as exciting a stretch of holes as you can ask for to end the tournament," said USDGA Tournament Director Rob Strano. "We will shorten the current 7th hole, our 16th, to a drivable par 4 to give the players a risk/reward opportunity to reach the water guarded green with their tee shot. And of course, the last hole, the water guarded par 5, will be a great chance for an eagle or for disaster," Strano added.

Since 1999, the Deaf National title has been awarded at a biennial competition. Prior to that, the tournament was known as the National Deaf Golf Championship. The first tournament was played in 1980 at Meadow Wood Golf Club in Denver, CO with local deaf golfer Joel Jordan

edging Jim Hynes of Maryland. The defending Men's champion is Doren Granberry from California, who won in a playoff over Missouri native and 7 time National Champion Bill Roberts. Both will be at Far Oaks and will be joined by one of the longest drivers in deaf golf, World Men's Deaf Champion, Brandon Babineaux of Texas. Roberts was victorious the last time the event was held in St. Louis, the 1997 championship, at the historic Normandie Park Golf Club. Roberts is the most decorated deaf golfer in the United States with a record 7 national titles. Granberry is second with 4 titles. Also, this event marks the final qualifying tournament for the 2008 World Deaf Golf Championships. At the end of the competition the team for the 2008 WDGC in Australia will be selected and announced.

In 2007, the event will have a new field composition with the introduction of exemptions to the winners of all the regional and state tournaments in the country. This will bring the strongest competition to St. Louis for the US Deaf Golf Championships. National media will also be on hand to see who prevails at Far Oaks with TV Worldwide providing webcasts every day. Regional media also will provide coverage for the championships. Sponsors include Michelob Ultra, Enterprise rent-a-car, The Tourism Bureau of Southwestern Illinois, Belleville News Democrat, Strano and Associates GMAC Real Estate and PowerAde. Spectators are welcome all four days of the championships. Admission is free.

