

Can Women's Amateur Championship be Saved?

Howard Ward/Golf Writer – The Pilot, Southern Pines, NC | Posted: Sunday, May 5, 2013

The verdict is still out on whether the troubled Moore County Women's Amateur Championship can be saved.

Three concerned women think it can be, and they're working hard to see their goal accomplished.

Franny Stewart, Bette Rycroft and Rita Roberts have joined forces to rescue the event, which despite its troubled past of low participation and dwindling interest has produced a long list of quality champions.

Included among those winners are six-time champion and Carolinas Golf Hall of Famer Patty Moore and two-time winner Dianne Yelovich. Other recent winners have been Lisa Chandler, Amanda D'Ostroph and Staci Creech.

One thing all these champions have in common is that they're either residents of Moore County or belong to a golf club here. And therein is where the biggest changes are being made to attract more entrants.

Last year's event, held at Woodlake County Club in Vass, drew less than 30 contestants. And despite a near flawless performance by the popular D'Ostroph in a final-day head-to-head shootout with Moore and defending champion Staci Creech, the future appeared bleak.

But not even the three would-be saviors realized just how bleak. They learned that when they called to volunteer their services for the tournament this year and learned there were no plans for one.

"We had all played in it last year and wanted to volunteer to work this time," Stewart said. "But we learned the board had been disbanded."

That proved a wake-up call for the dynamic trio, who decided to see if they could save the event they had enjoyed so much.

"I've played in it for six years," Stewart said. "I did it the first year in order to meet other women golfers, and I've played in it since just for the enjoyment."

It's a different scenario for Rycroft.

"I've been here for 13 years and last year was the first time I've played," she said. "I really enjoyed it and was disappointed to learn they weren't going to hold it again this year."

The three have worked out plans that they hope will not only save the championship, but make it larger and more competitive than ever.

"Actually, we're kind of modeling it after the Moore Men's Championship," Stewart said.

"We're opening it up to women outside Moore County, and we're combining with a charity.

"We're aware of how the men turned their championship around, and we're hoping we can do the same. We're opening it up to players 16 and over, and we're hoping to target nearby metropolitan areas such as Fayetteville, Greensboro, Raleigh-Durham and Charlotte.

"We're sending fliers and applications to clubs in those areas and trying to get the pros to post them. We know there will be some conflicts, but we've tried to be aware of Carolinas Golf

Association events. We just need to let women know about it. We're hoping they'll like the idea of the opportunity to play some of the great courses in our county and that we have great facilities and lodging, too."

The proposed dates for this year's championship are July 15-16, with the highly acclaimed Dan Maples-designed Little River Resort hosting it.

"The format will be the same," Stewart said, "with two days of flighted medal play."

"We just want to have an event where all women can play and participate in a competitive event," Rycroft said.

The tournament will raise funds for Friend to Friend, a Moore County nonprofit organization whose mission is to help survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault rebuild their lives. The Serenity House provides emergency shelter to women and children who are fleeing from abuse. To learn more about the organization visit the website www.moorefriends.org.

Sponsorships are available for \$150 per hole, tax deductible, with only one sign per tee.

A portion of the \$118 entry fee will also be donated to the charity. A practice round will be available at Little River for \$25.

Entry forms are available at local golf clubs and may be presented at Lori's 2 Golf Shoppe, 1680 N.C. 5, Unit 130, Aberdeen. For an application, visit the website www.LorisGolfShoppe2.com.

"We're hoping to get a larger committee," Stewart said. "There's just the three of us so far, but we've had some nice comments.

"If we can just get 50 or 60 players, we'll consider it a success. Then we'll get better."

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