

THE USGA RETURNS TO OLYMPIC, 2015

by Max Rausch || Photo by Ether Ling

For first time in twenty years the USGA is adding a new Championship and The Olympic Club will be the first club to host it. The inaugural U.S. Amateur Four-Ball Championship will be the 10th USGA event hosted by The Olympic Club.

“We are beyond delighted and excited that The Olympic Club will be hosting the inaugural Four-Ball Championship,” USGA Executive Director Mike Davis told the Olympian.

“When we were thinking about this championship one of the things we really wanted to do was really come out with a splash and maximize the ‘wow’ factor. So, what better place to do it then a club that treasures amateur sports and has hosted U.S. Opens. We couldn’t be happier.”

Play will begin on April 30th, 2015 with 128 two-player teams competing in 36 holes of stroke-play qualifying on both the Lake and Ocean Courses. The top 32 teams will advance to the championship’s match-play bracket—hosted exclusively on the Lake Course—with champions crowned on Wednesday May 6th. Bandon Dunes (Ore.) will host the inaugural U.S. Women’s Amateur Four-Ball on the same dates.

In order to be eligible to compete men must have a handicap not exceeding 5.4, 14.4 for women. Partners need not be from the same club.

While the Lake Course’s history of Championship Golf needs no introduction this will mark the first time the Ocean Course (new or old) has been used in USGA play and the USGA is very excited about the possibilities it offers.

“When the USGA came out [to survey the course] they were very impressed with the Ocean course and excited





about how it was set up and how it would challenge the players,” Olympic Club Championship Committee Chair Pat Cornett said.

When asked, Davis was eager to elaborate on this sentiment.

“The Ocean Course is a great test of golf,” said Davis “It’s bouncy, it gets wind and has elevation change. The two courses really make a great one-two punch.”

The Olympic Club earned the honor of hosting the inaugural Championship thanks in large part to the efforts of Cornett, one of the club’s most accomplished amateur golfers and who has competed in 61 USGA events. As the Chair of the Championship Committee, she has tirelessly and successfully advocated for the Club to host the first ever US Amateur Four-Ball Championship.

“We were approached at the annual meeting with the USGA in early 2013, they wanted an amazing venue and had in their minds a select number of courses,” said Cornett. “I think Olympic was certainly near the top of the list.”

Due to the format’s immense popularity, adding a team event has been a passion project of Davis’ ever since he became executive director of the USGA in March of 2011 following David Fay’s retirement.

“When we looked at state golf associations the most popular event is usually a four-ball championship,” said Davis. “When you go out and play with your friends casually the game of choice is usually a four-ball match play. So the fact that there was no national championship seemed odd.”

Qualifying for the 2015 event will begin in late August of this year and if early registration numbers are any indication, the addition of more team events may be in the offing. As of Sunday May 12th, nearly a full year before the first tee shots are to be struck, 44 of 51 sectional qualifying sites are at least 80% booked.

According to both Cornett and Davis the team format will broaden the scope of players in the event and present a variety of unique strategic challenges - from assembly of partnerships to course management - not found in individual events.

“I know when I teamed up my girls for the (2012) Curtis Cup, my thought was always to pair a conservative with an aggressive player said Cornett. That way I would know one would hold par and the other could be able to be really aggressive out there.”

As for what it will take to win at Olympic Club, Cornett says the victors will need to be “a birdie machine out there.”