



A Shared Love

The CDGA, CDGA Foundation and millions worldwide are bonded by the game of golf's enduring attributes **BYAL REID**

With the arrival of the 2024 summer golf season throughout the Chicago District, which marks the 110th anniversary of the CDGA and 80th anniversary of the CDGA Foundation, I recently reflected on my introduction to golf and why I enjoy this time of year.

Golf is a sport that has captured the hearts of millions by offering a unique blend of challenge, camaraderie and serenity. The game of golf has resulted in so many memories for me, from playing some of the best golf courses to witnessing the greatest golfers of our generation. Whether you are playing with friends, family or fellow golfers, the social aspect of golf is delightful. Conversations flow as you walk the fairways, share stories and enjoy the game together.

Whether you are enjoying the challenge of improving your swing, the beauty of the green fairways or the company of fellow golfers, there is no shortage of reasons to love this sport. The next time you tee off, remember that your love for golf is shared by millions around the world.

My journey as a golfer started while I was a graduate student on a public municipal nine-hole, 4,600-yard course in Pittsburgh called Schenley Park. My roommate at the time had played collegiate golf at Wake Forest University, so he thought I might be able to transfer my love for baseball into an appreciation for the game of golf. My first impressions of golf were that I thought the game was too expensive given the cost for tee times, the necessary equipment and the access it required to play and socialize at country clubs.

I recall my first greens fee at Schenley Park was \$4, which was affordable even for a graduate student. The equipment I used my first round amounted to a mismatched set of woods and irons that were likely used in the first U.S. Open. I thought it would be easier to hit a stationary golf ball versus a moving fast-ball. However, I quickly learned how mistaken I was, as I watched my friend effortlessly hit all the golf shots while I managed to dribble the ball down the fairway for the duration of the round. I recall my first score was approximately 75 for nine holes – ouch.

My first round in Pittsburgh was not my first

general exposure to the game, as I grew up in Georgia and was intrigued by the annual buzz each spring around the Masters Tournament in Augusta. I noticed the annual pilgrimage to witness the blooming azaleas as well as the golf greats such as Palmer, Nicklaus and Trevino. Despite living near a public golf course, I could not understand why golfers would spend hours in the blistering Georgia heat wearing awful clothing like plaid shirts and slacks accompanied by a floppy hat. However, I began to get more interested in the game as the likes of Lee Elder and Calvin Peete joined the Masters field of participants. Like so many, my interest in golf grew exponentially with the emergence of Tiger Woods on the PGA Tour. Tiger's participation on the PGA Tour increased the TV viewership and tournament attendance for minority communities, youth and women, as I also followed the game more intensively. Hence, I pivoted from spending my summers participating in softball leagues to becoming a weekend golf warrior.

As a CDGA Blue Coat and President of the CDGA Foundation, I have grown to appreciate the opportunities the Association provides for youth, disabled persons and veterans to participate in golf. I have personally enjoyed supporting the CDGA's Sunshine Programs while working with the Maine-Niles Association of Special Recreation (M-NASR) program. I look forward to the interactions with the participants during the spring, summer and fall sessions.

I am also extremely excited about the inaugural Chicago Adaptive Open that the CDGA will host at Cog Hill Golf & Country Club June 29-30. Adaptive golf allows people with disabilities to play the game based on their abilities, using modified rules or equipment. It is a rewarding way to promote inclusivity and share the love of golf with everyone.

The CDGA actively works to create opportunities for golfers of all ages, skill levels and genders. The CDGA's commitment to making golf accessible contributes to the growth of the sport. So, whether you are enjoying the challenge of improving your swing, the beauty of the green fairways or the company of fellow golfers, there is no shortage of reasons to love this sport.

The next time you tee off, remember that your love for golf is shared by millions around the world. ●

Al Reid was elected CDGA Foundation President in December of 2023. He is a member of The Glen Club and has been a CDGA Blue Coat since 2015.