

New Kids on the Block

The MGA welcomes two new courses to its schedule while returning favorites play host for this season's championships **BY BILLY CONDON**

Excitement and eager anticipation has been growing all winter among tournament players and participants regarding the venues for this year's Metropolitan Golf Association major championships. The host clubs will provide not only the high level of competition these championships present every year, but challenges never before seen, as two of the venues are brand new to the MGA championship circuit.

Bayonne Golf Club, with its links-inspired design and views of the nearby ports and the Manhattan skyline, will be an outstanding venue for competitors in the MGA Mid-Amateur.

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Below: Friar's Head hosts its first MGA event when the Met Amateur visits in August.

Right: 2007 Senior Amateur champion Jay Blumenfeld displays the championship hardware.

The MGA is extremely pleased to bring prestigious events to Friar's Head in Riverhead N.Y., and Bayonne Golf Club in Bayonne, N.J. Created by Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore, one of today's top design duos, Friar's Head incorporates natural terrain with challenging golf holes. The Crenshaw/Coore design will prove a stern test for players in this year's Met Amateur, which will be played August 7-10. Defending champion Greg Rohlf of Winged Foot will look to top the field once again. Friar's Head developer and former Met Amateur champion Ken Bakst, along with a host of talented collegiate players, will be among the top contenders.

The other rookie course, Bayonne, was designed by successful golf developer Eric Bergstol and will play host to the second MGA Mid-Amateur October 6 & 7. Bayonne which has garnered plenty of attention for its eye-popping views of New York Harbor, provides as true a links experience as a player can get on this side of the pond. Entry information and qualifications for all MGA championships can be found at www.mgagolf.org.

As is customary with MGA championships, the tournament venues are some of the most

prestigious clubs in the tri-state area. The Ike Championship, to be held June 23 & 24, will be played at highly regarded Mountain Ridge Country Club in West Caldwell, New Jersey. Designer Donald Ross is responsible for the

Pull open for 2008 schedule ----->



Left: The formidable layout at Hollywood features deep bunkers and difficult greens.
Below: The Met Open visits the Country Club of Fairfield, a historic layout with several holes near the Connecticut coastline.

subtleties and difficult greens that characterize Mountain Ridge to this day, and why the club is worthy of its top-20 ranking on the Met Area's "Top 50 Courses" (*The Met Golfer*, April/May '07). Last year's winner, George Zahringer of Deepdale, is no stranger to hoisting a MGA championship trophy, and looks to win his second MGA major at Mountain Ridge ('85 Met Open). This comes after Zahringer won a record tenth MGA Jerry Courville Sr. Player of the Year Award in 2007. Zahringer, regarded by some as the best amateur this region has ever seen, has won 35 Met Area titles since 1979, a record sure to remain "Tiger-proof."

August will bring the Met Open and an outstanding field of professionals and amateurs to the Nutmeg State. The Country Club of Fairfield will host the Met Open August 19-21, preceded by the MGA/MetLife Caddie Scholarship Pro-Am on August 18. Host of the 1985, 1991 and 2002 Met PGA section championship, the Country Club of Fairfield offers players and spectators spectacular views of Long Island Sound. Frank Bensel of Century finished atop the packed leaderboard last year after a thrilling birdie-birdie finish at Meadow Brook, where seven players finished within two strokes of him.

Many of the area's young guns look to build their championship credentials in '08. A three-time winner of Met Area events, including the 2005 Ike, Andrew Giuliani of Van Cortlandt Park is a good bet to continue his string of successful MGA seasons. Another player gaining experience and momentum is Kevin Foley of Neshanic Valley, Penn State's



sophomore phenom who is looking to enter the MGA winners circle for the first time.

Other notable courses featured on this year's schedule are Wee Burn Country Club in Darien, Conn., for the Senior Amateur, Metedeconk National Golf Club in Jackson, N.J., for the Father & Son Championship, Richter Park in Danbury, Conn., for the MGA/MetLife Public Links and Bethpage State Park's Red Course in Farmingdale, N.Y. for the Women's Public Links. The high-level competition and exciting finishes will be the stories to watch throughout the season.

Follow all of the tournament action on www.mgagolf.org, which has live scoring for select championships and regular updates on all MGA events. ■



MAIN: ROBERT WALKER; TOP: JOHN DETEMPLE

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