

Introducing America's "Champions of Champions"

Coeur d'Alene Resort—home to the famous floating green—hosted private golf club champions from around the country.



Vince DePinto
2022 Overall
Men's Champion



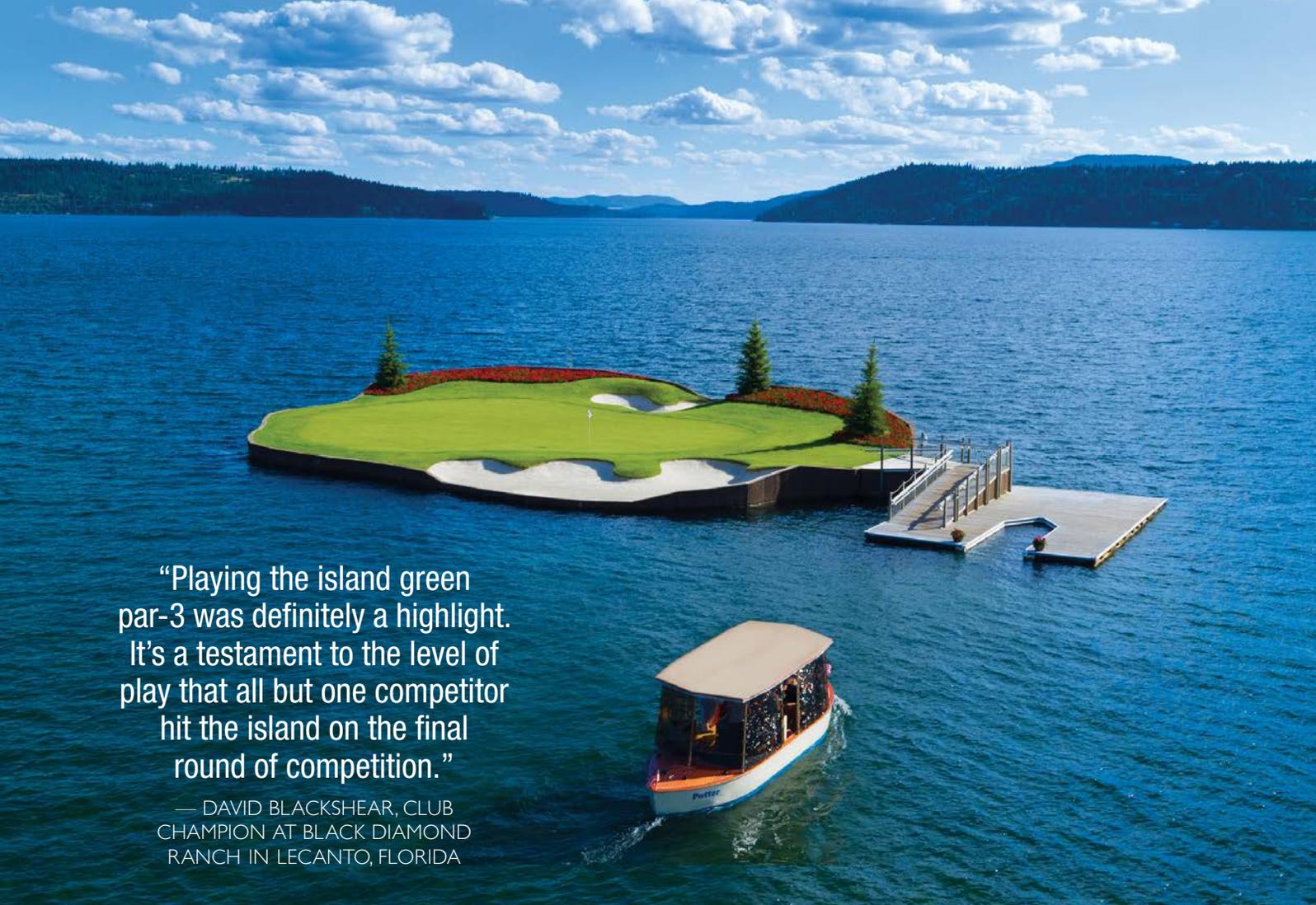
Janel Meyer
2022 Overall
Women's Champion



By Mark Pazdur, Tournament Director

COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO: Winning a private golf club championship is a feat that deserves to be celebrated. During the Executive Cup 2022 Challenge at the posh Coeur d'Alene Resort in Idaho, champions from around the country competed for "champion of champion" titles.

"The USGA has more than two million registered golfers in its Golf Handicap Information Network (GHIN)," explained Mark Pazdur, tournament director. "The average male handicap index is 14.2, and for women it's 27.5. Interestingly, there are roughly 35,000 amateur golfers with a plus handicap [below 0.0] who represent 1.85 percent of all male and 0.69 percent of all female golfers."

An aerial photograph of a floating golf green on a large blue lake. The green is a bright, well-maintained patch of grass with a white flag in the center. It is surrounded by a dark, low wall and has a concrete dock with a ramp leading to it. A small boat with a tan canopy is moving across the water towards the dock. The background shows a vast expanse of water and distant forested hills under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

“Playing the island green par-3 was definitely a highlight. It’s a testament to the level of play that all but one competitor hit the island on the final round of competition.”

— DAVID BLACKSHEAR, CLUB CHAMPION AT BLACK DIAMOND RANCH IN LECANTO, FLORIDA

The Coeur d’Alene Resort’s par-3 with a floating green garners attention. An old log boom, used to harbor timber near the shoreline, was the impetus behind its design. Stepping onto its tee box can prove intimidating. Case in point, the golf staff annually pulls 25,000 golf balls from the lake. Its distance from the tee, which changes every day, is controlled via an intricate underwater cable system. At approximately 15,000 square feet, the island may look intimidating, but it’s a deceptively large target. To finish the hole, players board the “putter” boat, an electric-powered shuttle, ferrying golfers to and from the island green. As you depart the island, the boat captain will leave you with a personalized certificate of achievement, commemorating the completion of one of the most memorable holes in golf.

“Clearly competition is tough, and it’s rarified air to earn a title of club champion, senior champion, or couples champion.”

CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS

Executive Cup was founded 21 years ago as a tournament, allowing private club champions from around the country the opportunity to compete for national titles. Over the past two decades, the tournament has traveled across 7,000 miles from the shores of Maui to the beaches of Puerto Vallarta to the lush tropics of Central Florida. The goal has not wavered since day one—to blend competition and camaraderie at some of the finest golf resorts around the world.

Eligibility for entry includes current champions, past club champions, senior champions, and couples champions. Trophies are awarded to male and female overall low gross champions; net and gross couples club cham-

pions; and age divisional net and gross titles for men and women under 60, 60-69, 70-79, and 80 and over.

This year’s competition was held at Coeur d’Alene Resort in Idaho, home to the famous floating green. “The resort is a must for every golf purist,” extolled Pazdur. “I agree wholeheartedly with *Golf Digest’s* critique: ‘Coeur d’Alene is what every resort should be. It’s not just upscale, it’s posh. You aren’t just pampered here, you’re spoiled. It’s not just an escape, it’s an experience.’”

DAY ONE: HORSE RACE SHOOTOUT

A Horse Race Shootout provides an interesting dynamic to judge one’s personality. “Several years ago during the Horse Race Shootout, we had a couple participate. The husband was a low single digit handicapper, and the wife had never broken 100,” said Pazdur. “The husband, first to hit, landed the ball just short of the green. The wife then promptly shanked the ball into the bunker.



The husband then made a nice recovery, with the ball stopping 10 feet from the hole. Two putts later, with a bogie on the scorecard, the couple failed to advance to the next hole. The husband turns to the wife and says, 'If we had a par, we would have continued on.' The wife quickly replied, 'You're the one who hit three shots, I only hit two!'

"This year we had nine teams participate in the optional early arrival, four hole, Horse Race Shootout. Congrats to David Blackshear, club champion at Black Diamond Ranch in Florida, and Bob Hope, club champion at Del Paso Country Club in California, for winning first place and \$300.

"I want to recognize Bob Hope, who first shot his age at 68," stated Pazdur. "Now, at 84 years old, he has lost count of how many times he has accomplished this incredible feat. Even more incredible, he beat his age in all three rounds at Coeur d'Alene Resort."

DAY TWO: COUPLES CHAMPIONSHIP, WELCOME CRUISE AND 100,000 AA MILES

Play was competitive with only several strokes separating the top couples teams.

"As a young adult, I attended the Colonial golf tournament in 1960," recalled Sam Boyd, club champion at Escondido in Texas. "It was a rainy day and I was standing in the gallery as a 'nobody' with an umbrella. Sam Snead suddenly approaches me for cover. His caddie was on the other side of the green, leaving Sam with only his wedge. He turns to me and said, 'Well, I guess I better hole this bunker shot since I don't have my putter.' And he did! Although I played well today, unfortunately I didn't hole out any bunker shots and we fell a couple shots out of contention, allowing my fellow members and friends to capture the trophy."

First place gross Couples Club Champions, with an impressive 72, were Janel and Brady Meyers, club champions at Escondido. But, The Lone Star State was not done shining. The first place net Couples Club Champions Rick and Mary Graves, with a stellar 64, also reside at Escondido.

After completion of play, competitors enjoyed a private dinner cruise and tour of the Hagadone Gardens and Estate (founder of Coeur d'Alene Resort). The estate maintains over 300,000 different plants overseen by an experienced team of seven botanists. As an added bonus, competitors were granted access to the Hagadone Garage to view its collection of vintage cars.



Club Champions competing in the optional, early arrival Horse Race Shootout.

“Our club has one of the lowest, if not the lowest aggregate membership handicaps in the nation. I must admit, there were some impressive players at Executive Cup.”

—VINCE DePINTO, CLUB CHAMPION AT THE COUNTRY CLUB OF COLORADO IN COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO



The annual American Airlines 100,000 frequent flier miles contest always draws great interest. This year’s question: How many years of experience does the entire team of 2022 forecaddies at Coeur d’Alene Resort have.

Players were stumped. Considering some caddies are in their first season and some have been here for decades, guesses ranged the gamut. One clue provided: The most senior caddie started in 1996, the same year the Dow Jones Industrial Average crossed 6,000.

Guesses ranged from a high of 2,750 years of experience to zero (the club champion probably mis-clubbed on the famous island green par-3). The runner-up, receiving no consolation prize, was Kyle Kerestes, currently a pilot for Republic Airlines (a regional carrier for American, Delta, and United). But, Kyle shouldn’t fret. The actual number of years of caddie experience for the 2022 season at Coeur d’Alene Resort is 597. The winner was Kyle’s wife, Jamie Kerestes,

club champion at Shannopin Country Club in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with her guess of 614 years of experience.

36 HOLES OF INDIVIDUAL PLAY

Competition was spirited for bragging rights of being crowned “champion of champions.”

“It’s been several years since I last competed,” praised Pat Gallagher, club champion at Pala Mesa Club in Fallbrook, California. “It’s a first-class event where promises made are promises kept.”

At the end of the first day of individual competition, Vince DePinto, club champion at The Palms in La Quinta, California, led the overall men’s division with a gross 78, and Janel Meyer, club champion at Escondido in Horseshoe Bay, Texas, was at the front of the pack for the women with a gross 78. Both grinded it out on day two, maintained their leads, and won their respective overall Executive Cup titles. ▶



Jamie Kerestes showing off her private parking space at her home club.



The Omni Homestead Resort Host to Executive Cup 2023 Challenge

Welcoming club champions to America's first resort.

By Mark Pazdur, Tournament Director

HOT SPRINGS, VIRGINIA: Over the course of America's 246-year history, 46 presidents have governed the land. Since opening as "America's First Resort" in 1766 (a decade before the signing of the Declaration of Independence), 23 presidents have visited The Homestead.

Surrounded by the Allegheny Mountains, the resort is an outdoor haven of activities, including 36 holes of golf,

horse rides (with equestrian facilities boarding more than 25 horses), and miles of hiking trails (including the popular Cascades Gorge Hike).

Regarded as one of the finest mountain courses in the country, The Cascades has the honor of being ranked among "America's 100 Greatest Public Golf Courses" by *Golf Digest*, and has the distinction as the host site

The Omni Homestead offers two of the finest mountain courses on the East Coast.

The appropriately named Old Course completed its first six holes in 1892 and is distinguished as home of the nation's oldest first tee in continuous use. The Omni Homestead has been named a "Top-10 Destination Resort in America" in *USA Today's* 10 Best Reader's Poll 2022.





launching Sam Snead's career.

"Where else can you walk in the footsteps of Sam Snead [always wearing his signature straw hat] and Babe Zaharias [winner of two gold medals at the 1932 Olympics]," questioned Mark Pazdur, director of Executive Cup. "I can't think of a more appropriate place for club champions from across North America to compete next September for 'champion of champions' titles. We will be some of the first guests to enjoy the resort's \$150 million restoration and partake in the centennial celebration of The Cascades."

MOUNTAIN MAJESTY

The Omni Homestead Resort is located in Bath County, Virginia, a region that is about the size of the Hawaiian Island of Kauai. "We really are a retreat from the ordinary," explained Mark Spadoni, managing director at the re-

sort. "Fully 50 percent of our surrounding land is federally protected, there isn't a stop light within the county, and our area's population tops out at 4,000 residents [compared to Kauai's 71,000 Kamaaina].

"During our restoration [not a renovation], great efforts were made to preserve the building's history. Everything from windows to carpets was painstakingly evaluated to preserve the resort's original sense of place. As a part of the Virginia Commonwealth, The Homestead is steeped in history," reported Spadoni. "For 150 years, before Camp David was built in Maryland, our resort served as an unofficial presidential retreat. It will not come as a surprise to most that we are designated a National Historic Landmark.

"Very few resorts can match our wealth of activities. We have created a Virginia Wine Experience Tasting Room and our movie theater is being transformed into a cabaret-style venue for live entertainment. After a day of competition, I invite you to relax in our Warm Springs Pools [formerly known as the Jefferson Pools] to rejuvenate your body and soul. The historic natural mineral pools are also in the midst of an upgrade that is a board-by-board project," added Spadoni. "The scope of work includes repairing the foundation of both bathhouses and replacing in kind the historic wood structure, windows, doors, siding, and roofing." ➤





Executive Cup Challenge

Hot Springs, Virginia • September 10-14, 2023

Arrive Sunday, Depart Thursday • A Four-Night, Three-Day Golf Tournament

Trophies will be awarded to male and female overall low gross champions, net and gross couples club champions, and age divisional net and gross titles for men and women under 60, 60-69, 70-79, and 80 and over.

Sunday, September 10: Arrival • Optional afternoon Horse Race Shootout

Monday, September 11: Full breakfast • Couples Club Championship • Hot lunch • Welcome Reception and Dinner

Tuesday, September 12: Full breakfast • Executive Cup Round #1 Individual Play • Hot lunch • Optional Evening Whiskey Tasting

Wednesday, September 13: Full breakfast • Executive Cup Final Round Individual Play • Hot lunch • Awards Reception and Dinner

Thursday, September 14: Full breakfast • Departure Day

PRICING: Single: \$4,268* • Double/one competitor: \$5,310* • Double/two competitors: \$6,191* • **EXTRA NIGHT:** \$400+ tax
*Tournament package pricing includes all taxes, resort fees, tips, and parking. Airfare is not included.

For more information, or to sign up, please contact Mark Pazdur at Mark@ExecutiveGolferMagazine.com or (949) 933-6478.

