



# 59<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BOBCAT NORTH DAKOTA OPEN

THE FARGO COUNTRY CLUB



**MARK  
JOHNSON**  
*Tournament Director*

Mark Johnson's love of golf began around the age of six years old. Growing up in a golfing family, with parents who were avid players and coaches, it was only natural that golf would become an integral part of his life. His parents exposing him to the sport at such an early age set the stage for what would become a lifelong love of the game.

With an established foundation in golf, he knew he wanted to pursue a career in the PGA as a part of golf facility management. After completing a business management degree, Mark entered the PGA apprentice program. This marked the beginning of his formal journey into the professional golfing world. His years of hard work and dedication led to full membership in the PGA by 1995 after gaining valuable experience in various positions, including managing golf courses and serving as a golf professional.

Mark got involved with the Bobcat Open as a participant, but his role has evolved over the years. His first experience as tournament director for the Bobcat Open came in 2006, marking the beginning of his tenure overseeing this successful event. He brought in unique insights both as a player and a professional, striving to create an experience that would resonate with amateurs and professional golfers alike. He has learned strategies to attract sponsors and players to this event and credits the uniqueness of the event to its success. The combination of a high-quality golf course, well-organized event management and support of sponsors like Bobcat has propelled this event to soaring heights.

The Bobcat Open stands out for its ability to cater to different skill levels. Careful attention is paid to course set up, ensuring that it is both challenging and enjoyable. While professionals are encouraged to demonstrate their prowess by going low, the course setup is designed to create a fair and fun competition for all players.

Beyond the competition itself, the Bobcat Open holds deep ties to the community. With The Village Family Service Center as its charity partner, the event has generated over a million dollars since its inception in 1983, thanks to Bobcat's partnership with the event. Financial support directly impacts families and individuals in need. "The tournament is really about golf, but if we can do something good in the community with it, that's very rewarding," Mark says. "When you have the three entities come together, the country club, Bobcat and The Village, that's a powerful team to be able to do some good in our community."

Mark loves the opportunity to connect with players, both old and new, and says the event acts as a focal point for the golfing community to bring together generations of players who share a passion for the game. When asked for advice for aspiring golfers, Mark emphasized dedication, hard work and believing in oneself. Golf, like life, comes with challenges, but perseverance and self-confidence can make a world of difference.

## Message from Dave Schultz

*Head Golf Professional & Director of Club Operations*

Hello everyone, and welcome to the Fargo Country Club and the 59th Annual Bobcat North Dakota Open. It is a privilege for the FCC to host this outstanding event, and we are proud to be part of an event that does so much good for the local community. The connection with The Village Family Service Center makes this weekend special and impactful. Year after year, this showcase event allows those amateurs who love to compete to do so alongside some of the country's best golfers. Best of luck to all playing, and welcome to the Fargo Country Club!



# GARY JOHNSON

*Honorary Chairman*



This year, Gary Johnson is taking the spotlight as the esteemed honorary chair for the Bobcat ND Open. Gary is the mastermind behind Johnson Financial Inc., a thriving accounting firm right here in Fargo, North Dakota. Gary's passion for golf and an opportunity to support the community have earned him this recognition, and he is both honored and pleasantly surprised. He loves that this event not only offers four days of enjoyable golf but also serves as a platform to give back to The Village Family Service Center to make a positive impact on the community.

Gary has been a part of this tournament for around 20 years, stating that he started golfing in it around the time he got his Fargo Country Club membership in 1999. He has enjoyed golfing the Bobcat Open and the cherished memories that come with it so much that it has turned into a family affair, with multiple generations participating.

The memories he has made at this tournament, on this course, are truly unforgettable – each shot, each victory and even a hilarious mishap that Gary loves to share. Imagine this, Gary playing side by side with pro golfer John Carlson, and boom! A wild shot ricochets off of a tree and gives John an unexpected tap square to the forehead. No worries though, because true champions don't back down – Carlson went on to birdie that hole, leaving Gary astonished and chuckling at the same time.

As the years have rolled on, this tournament has given Gary the chance of

a lifetime – rubbing shoulders with some big names in golf. One year, Gary was paired with Andre Metzger, pro golfer turned friend right here on the greens of the Fargo Country Club at the Bobcat Open. He found that life has a funny way of connecting people. Turns out Andre's host family for a tournament taking place in Minot, North Dakota, was none other than Gary's cousin.

Throughout the years, participating in this tournament has offered Gary the opportunity to meet and play alongside and build relationships with some of the great pros in the golfing world. He shared that Andre Metzger has become a friend through this tournament and realized just how small of a world it is.

Gary's role as honorary chair of the Bobcat Open is more than just a title – it's a reflection of his experience, passion and genuine love for the game. He's not just swinging clubs; he's swinging for a cause that has become a cherished family tradition that brings people together to support the community they love.

So, as the anticipation builds, get your golf shoes ready, your spirits high and your hearts open. The Bobcat Open promises another fantastic few days of golf and an unforgettable tournament that will leave a lasting mark on everyone involved.

## AMY OLSON

Amy Olson is an Oxbow, North Dakota, native who has found success in both amateur and professional golf careers. She has shown great dedication to the sport of golf since she began playing at the age of two. In 2022, she played in 23 events and made 11 cuts. 2023 began with a thrilling announcement on her husband Grant's birthday when they announced they were expecting a baby in September 2023. A pregnancy wasn't going to stop her from the game she loved, however. She was bound and determined to play in the 2023 U.S. Women's Open at Pebble Beach. She played a 36-hole qualifier in Mendota Heights, Minnesota, all while growing a baby. She medaled in the qualifier, finishing two strokes better than her competitors, and secured her spot at the 78th U.S. Women's Open. What a story that will be to pass on to baby Olson in the future, and what an exciting opportunity to inspire other moms-to-be out there to keep pursuing their passions.



# MICHAEL MATTIACE

*Defending Champion*

At the tender age of 10, Michael Mattiace discovered his passion for golf. Growing up in a family of golf enthusiasts, it was only natural to be drawn to the game. Despite being a promising baseball player, his grandfather's wisdom and "ultimatum" played a pivotal role in guiding him toward golf. His grandfather told him that he needed to decide if he was going to play golf or baseball because if he continued with baseball, it was going to have a negative impact on his golf swing. So Mike, with a little persuasion, made the decision to switch sports and begin his journey toward competitive golf.

After several years of honing his skills on the course, Mike made the bold decision to turn professional and give it his all for the next three to five years. Supported by his family and inspired by his uncle, a seasoned professional golfer, he embarked on the path to pro himself. He has faced the pressure and nerves that come with high-stakes tournaments. Sharing his experience at the Bobcat Open last year, where he clinched a significant victory, was a highlight of 2022. He credits playing enough golf and being in those crucial situations to have helped him overcome his nerves and focus on the game in front of him.

2022 has been a mix of achievements and challenges for Mike, acknowledging that qualifying for the Korn Ferry Tour and participating in U.S. Open Qualifiers have been some of his standout accomplishments. Despite the ups and downs of the last year, he believes he is on the cusp of a breakthrough and is excited about what lies ahead.



When it comes to navigating sticky situations on the course, Mike confidently relies on his trusty putter. He is known for his exceptional putting skills and shared how he often manages to make critical par saves and 20- to 30-foot putts, giving him a competitive edge in challenging situations. Speaking of competitive edge, Mike is a fiercely competitive player and enjoys his healthy rivalries with friends, including his pro golfer wife. However, he also finds value in playing golf for leisure, particularly during golf trips with loved ones, where camaraderie and relaxation take precedence over the competitive aspect of the game.

The journey of Mike Mattiace is a testament to the passion, dedication and resilience required to succeed in the competitive world of golf. From discovering his love for the sport as a young child to facing challenges and enjoying victories big and small as a professional golfer, he has embraced the lessons that golf has taught him, and he carries its values into his everyday life. We wish him continued success on his pro golf journey.

# JOSH PERSONS

Golf is a sport that has captured the hearts of many over the years, and for Josh Persons, it has become a lifelong passion. From childhood to the world of golf to hitting nine hole-in-ones, Josh's journey is both inspiring and insightful.

Some kids just take to golf naturally. Josh was one of those kids. His father started bringing him golfing around the age of five, and he was hooked. He attributes his early exposure to the game and his competitive nature and the unique avenue for competition that made the allure of golf a lasting passion. The Bobcat ND Open tournament has been a favorite of Josh's. Having played in it multiple times as a student, an amateur and a professional, it offers a fun level of competition for all. Playing on your home course also has its advantages and makes for a fun and engaging event.

Playing through high school and college, Josh honed his skills and passion for the game and eventually found himself playing the Korn Ferry Tour in 2015. His desire to pursue golf on a professional level was fueled by the determination to see just how far he could go in a sport he loved. However, as life often does, priorities shift and plans change. After encountering a challenging period toward the end of his professional playing days, he made the decision to embark on a different career journey and is now working at Vaaler Insurance in Fargo.



For Josh, the mental aspect of golf has evolved. While once facing intense pressure while playing professionally, the transition back to playing as an amateur has brought back a sense of balance and enjoyment into the game. Today, he approaches his game with a competitive spirit, striving to do his best, but settles into enjoying the game as his livelihood no longer depends on it. He now approaches tournaments with a deeper appreciation for the game and faces less pressure.

Josh's Insight: "Golf is more than just a sport; it imparts numerous life lessons," Josh said. "Many virtues can be acquired through this game, including respect, honesty, integrity, and the ability to handle both victories and defeats with grace. Golf can shape your character and provide holistic education beyond the greens."



# VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

## ROB WALETZKO

We appreciate the hard work and dedication of our volunteers who show up to make this event possible and keep the operations for the Bobcat Open running smoothly, making it such a fun event for our golfers. We want to take the time to recognize a faithful volunteer who continues to show up year after year and encourages others to join him. This year, it is our privilege to announce the 2023 Bobcat Open's Volunteer of the Year Award recipient, Rob Waletzko.

Rob got involved with the Bobcat ND Open about 14 years ago with two friends from the Gwinner Bobcat plant. They historically take the morning shift, leaving Lisbon, North Dakota, at about 6 o'clock in the morning to get to the Fargo Country Club to start their duties. You can typically find him volunteering at the "lowly job of ball spotter," as he calls it, but says that it's a more complex job than it sounds, especially since he's usually covering holes by the river.

"Get out and just give it a try," Rob said of volunteering at the Bobcat Open. "It might be intimidating because it's golf, and it can be an intimidating sport, but it's an opportunity to network with fellow Bobcat employees that you don't typically get to see, and it helps build a great workplace culture."

Rob's volunteering goes beyond the Bobcat Open, as he volunteers for the local fire department, city council, and parish council at his church and helps with an adaptive program for handicapped kids. He cites his mom as being his inspiration for getting involved in the community. "I think sometimes people have the perception that community is something that's provided for them," Rob said. "I think really, it's on the people of the community to really make the community what they want it to be."

Volunteering can be mundane work like Rob's "lowly job of ball spotter," or it can be hard physical work. But when you take the time to put in the effort, like Rob, our community is better because of it. The Bobcat Open is a fundraiser for The Village Family Services, which strives to meet the community's needs and enhance overall well-being with innovative service and integrated care models. That includes counseling for mental health, in-home family therapy, addiction treatment, mentoring, debt management, adoption and pregnancy options counseling.



### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

As a part of the 2023 Bobcat ND Open, the Fargo Country Club has arranged a special event showcasing the E Kern-Swanson Memorial Golf Collection, dedicated to the memories of Carl E Kern Jr. and Leland Swanson Sr., both avid golfers and longtime FCC members.

Enjoy viewing a collection of iconic items, including Arnold Palmer's Old Faithful Putter, and an opportunity to attempt making a 30-foot putt (with Old Faithful), proceeds benefiting The Village.

**Friday, August 25, from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.**  
**in the FCC clubhouse and on the putting green**

