

Faces of the Phoenix Open

Written by Written by Nichole Brophy / Photographed by Cassandra Tomei
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With half a million fans navigating the Waste Management Phoenix Open, Jan. 31 to Feb. 6, five tournament insiders give us a look at how it all comes together.



Mike McQuaid Title: Tournament Chairman **Favorite Local Course:** Arizona Country Club **Preferred 19th Hole:** The Vig **PGA Tour Pro to Follow:** Charley Hoffman **Handicap:** 10.7

Having spent upwards of 40 hours per week on the Waste Management Phoenix Open since the 2010 event concluded, Tournament Chairman Mike McQuaid knows the ins and outs of "The Greatest Show on Grass." "I really get to see all the hard work that is put into the tournament," McQuaid says. "From volunteers to vendors to all the money the Thunderbirds raise, I get to see that all firsthand."

While a tournament that caters to more than half a million spectators has many moving parts, for McQuaid, the most rewarding pieces revolve around the event's charitable contributions. "I'm involved in the day-to-day so I get to see how the money we've raised positively affects the community and all the local charities," McQuaid says.

As a member of the well-known Phoenix Thunderbirds, McQuaid's year-long reign as chairman involved acting as a liaison between the Thunderbirds and the title sponsor, Waste Management. "As tournament chairman, you are the face of the Thunderbirds, representing the 54 active Thunderbirds and more than 220 lifebirds," say McQuaid, who practices commercial real estate.

One aspect McQuaid says will enhance the gallery experience at the 2011 Phoenix Open is the addition of a new viewing location on the 17th hole. Previously accessible only to corporate ticket holders, the location now allows the general public to view play on hole 17 and approach shots into the 18th green. Additional dining and entertainment will also be present on this stretch of the course. "We are creating a festival area where people can enjoy themselves while taking a break from the golf and grabbing a bite to eat," McQuaid says.



David Rauch Title: Big Chief of the Phoenix Thunderbirds **Favorite Local Course:** Paradise Valley Country Club **Preferred 19th Hole:** The Men's Grill at Phoenix Country Club **PGA Tour Pro to Follow:** Rickie Fowler **Handicap:** 8

As the Big Chief of the Thunderbirds, David Rauch not only runs the organization but also oversees its charitable aspects. Typically, more than 100 charities benefit from the Thunderbirds' efforts each year and their primary means for raising funds is the Waste Management Phoenix Open. Fund-raising efforts through the Phoenix Open have resulted in more than \$70 million in the organization's 75-year history with \$40 million of that since 2000. "Everything that we do from the success of the tournament to the amount of money we give away all comes out of the incredible community support that we get from Phoenix and the Valley," Rauch says.

Throughout tournament week, numerous charity events take place on the grounds of the Phoenix Open. From Dream Day, a golf clinic for school children, to a Special Olympics putting competition, philanthropic events are held nearly each day leading up to the first round.

For Rauch, Wednesday's Shot at Glory fund-raiser is a highlight at the famed 16th hole at TPC Scottsdale. Participants range from PGA Tour players and Hollywood celebs to sports stars and local community members. (Winners get funds donated to their favorite charity.)

"The year that I chaired the Shot at Glory, we did it on Thursday night after the first round concluded," says Rauch, who is also an attorney with Snell & Wilmer.

"The very first person to hit was [Olympic swimmer] Amanda Beard. She stood up to hit the first shot and shanked it. There was a Buick parked on the hole, and she actually hit the Buick. It was hilarious. It got everything off to a great start."



Jeff Plotts Title: Director of Golf Course Maintenance at TPC Scottsdale **Favorite Local Course:** Champions Course at TPC Scottsdale **Preferred 19th Hole:** Earls **PGA Tour Pro to Follow:** John Daly **Handicap:** 12

"I've been involved with professional golf my whole career," says Jeff Plotts, who has been director of golf course maintenance at TPC Scottsdale for six years. "[During] my first Phoenix Open, my bosses were trying to prepare me for how large the crowds are but the reality is that you can't prepare for it—you just have to go through it. I first realized how huge it was on the Saturday of my first tournament. We try to have golf finished by 4 p.m. because that is 6 p.m. on the East Coast for TV purposes. It was about quarter of five and a guy was lying in the rough and he rolled over and asked, 'Hey, excuse me, when is golf going to come through here?' And I said 'It'll probably be about 9:30 tomorrow morning. Golf is done for the day.' And he went 'oh, alright' and rolled back over. I realized at that moment that this tournament is not all about

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golf. There are a lot of other factors that go into it.”

During the tournament week, Plotts and his groundskeeping staff of 65, made up of TPC greenskeepers and volunteers, prepare the course for one of the largest events on the PGA Tour. However, the immaculate course conditions seen by spectators and experienced by the players are a result of hard work by Plotts and his team months before the tournament rolls around. “We always say that we begin prepping the course for the next tournament at the end of the previous one,” Plotts says. “The Saturday of the tournament, we have a meeting where we discuss all of the things that have taken place during the set up of that week so that we can have a better plan going into the next year.”



Michael Bartell Title: Operations Manager for Waste Management Favorite Local Course: TPC Scottsdale and Grayhawk PGA Tour Pro to Follow: Phil Mickelson

Ever wonder how a tournament that caters to half a million fans manages to stay spick-and-span throughout the week? Thank Michael Bartell. As operations manager for Waste Management, Bartell oversees all aspects of waste collection at Phoenix’s darling golf event. “My day normally starts about 5 a.m. [when] we get the crews together and have about 191 laborers on our peak day,” Bartell says. “In addition to Waste Management, we have a great partnership with Keep Phoenix Beautiful and volunteers who will come out and be ‘recycle ambassadors.’ These ambassadors are there to assist spectators in their recycling efforts.”

Solar-powered trash compactors, reuse of greywater and collection trucks that reduce carbon emissions are all aspects that help make the Phoenix Open one of the greenest stops on the PGA Tour.

Bartell says fans can get involved in many ways to ensure the tournament grounds remain enjoyable for all. Of particular note are Green Opps Reverse Vending Machines that are scattered around the course. “It’s the same idea of going to a vending machine to purchase a soda except in reverse,” Bartell says. “It’s a vending machine where you take an already consumed bottle or can, and it will issue out a coupon that people can use for discounts at vendors around the course.”



Bill Grove Title: General Manager at TPC Scottsdale Favorite Local Course: TPC Scottsdale Preferred 19th Hole: The Grill at TPC Scottsdale PGA Tour Pro to Follow: All the local players Handicap: Scratch

Having been the General Manager at TPC Scottsdale for 17 years, Bill Grove has seen his share of professional golf. A scratch golfer in his own right, Grove probably knows the course at TPC Scottsdale better than anyone. “One of my favorite places is the mound that separates the 8th green from the 11th hole,” he says. “In reality, there are so many great locations to see great golf and no one is around. But then, of course, there are places like the 16 hole, which are incredible and one of a kind.”

Since local Tour players are no strangers to TPC Scottsdale throughout the year, Grove says he practices and works on his game each day because “you never know who you’re going to get to play with, and I don’t want to embarrass myself.”

Naturally, Grove says the atmosphere at TPC Scottsdale in the months leading up to the Phoenix Open is hectic. “Craziness, organized craziness is actually what it is,” Grove says. “From vendors, sponsors, PGA Tour entities, everyone’s running around, but they all have a purpose or plan.”

Grove says he has many memorable moments from past tournaments but his favorite is seeing new winners break through at the Waste Management Phoenix Open. “It’s really special when you see a player who has worked so hard succeed at our event,” he says. “Each year, we just look forward to the opportunity to do it again.”