



**Member Profile**  
**Andrea Hodel**  
 Southern Pines, N.C., USA

It was the movie *The Greatest Game Ever Played*, that got Andrea Hodel interested in hickory golf. "I just thought it was awesome," she says. As it happened, this was 2013 and the Mid Pines Hickory Open was going on. "I went over to see what they were doing and they were playing with hickory clubs and then I wanted to play with them, too."

As Andrea, a former professional golfer, had no hickory clubs, she attended the Mullock's auction that was held during the Mid Pines tournament that year, and wound up purchasing a set of clubs with a fine pedigree.

"They were auctioning clubs from the late Ralph Livingston's collection and some of them were from the movie I just saw, for which Mr. Livingston was the club consultant," she says. "The bidding got crazy for the set used by the (Harry) Vardon character, but I stayed with it for the set used by the (Francis) Ouimet character and ended up getting them."

They apparently fit her game pretty well as she played in the Mid Pines event in 2014 (photo at right) and won her division.

Though she was born in New Jersey, Andrea grew up in parts south, way south, in Venezuela for about a year, then six years in Puerto Rico. "My dad was an electrical engineer and got jobs in these countries," she says. "My mom and I went, too."

While in Fajardo, Puerto Rico, her dad joined a local Navy club to play golf and taught Andrea, who was then 11, how to play. "I just played out of his bag, then got an old set of men's clubs, then got my own. It just progressed. Soon, it became a family thing and my mom started playing, too."

The family then moved to Birmingham, Mich., where her dad worked for Burroughs Corp. The company had a recreational center for employees called Burroughs Farms. She was able to work on her game on the site's golf course.

When it came time to choose a college, a counselor suggested Andrea apply for a Title IX golf scholarship. From several possibilities, she selected Florida International University in Miami and would study under Coach Mary Dageadt, who coached LPGA star Pat Bradley and would later be elected to the LPGA's teaching hall of fame.

After college, Andrea tried to make a go of the women's mini tours. "I drove cross-county, from tournament to tournament with no cell phone, only a car atlas, and about 40 other girls," she recalls. "We had the first wave of girls from Europe and Australia trying their hand at professional golf."

Though there wasn't a lot of money to be made, Andrea said she learned a lot on those trips, about how to handle herself on her own. "We had no traveling entourage like they do today, with trainers, coaches, psychologists and all that," she says. "We were on our own. I just played with whomever I was paired with and learned from them. That was it."

Andrea would spend time in Arizona as a student of LPGA Master Instructor, Joanne Winter, who earlier was one of the 60 original members of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League of the mid- to late-1940s and early 1950s. Playing for the Racine Belles, Winter was a three-time All-Star and twice a member of the Championship Team.

"Winter was amazing," Andrea says. "She had me stay at her house and helped me vastly improve my short game. When I later tried to pay her for all the time she gave me, she refused most of it, saying it was too much! Can you imagine a modern swing coach doing that today?"

Despite her best efforts to make it work, Andrea realized a full-time golf career would not work out and began to look for other opportunities. A friend pointed out that the Hillsborough County sheriff's department in Tampa was looking for deputies. She was already familiar with the area from her golf mini tour stops.

"The organization was interested in college-educated women," she says, "I was only 24 and thought I'd give it a try. The pay and benefits were good."

She was hired and spent six years in correctional work and four more on street patrols. "Starting with my hospital-ity background and going into correctional work, you really learned how to talk to people," Andrea says. "That helped on street patrols, too, as did my earlier experiences on the mini tours."

"It's true, golf is like life and really prepares you for things. That's one reason why I'm so supportive of programs like the First Tee, which teaches kids how to handle themselves in a variety of circumstances."

After 10 years in law enforcement, Andrea wanted a change. She returned to New Jersey to help her mother with her grandmother and while there earned a certification for paralegal work, specializing in wills, trust, and probate. She later joined Wyndham World Wide and spent eight years with the company as a paralegal specializing in reviewing marketing materials for all of the hotel groups.

Upon retirement from this segment of her career, Andrea moved to Southern Pines and, as well as learning about hickory golf, has found new enjoyment in restoring older, period golf bags.

"Nobody is saving these and they are part of the story, too," she says. "I like doing it and it makes people happy. My house right now is busting for room as I have about 70 bags in there."

Up to now, Andrea has only played in the Mid Pines Hickory Open, but she hopes to do a few more in 2016, perhaps the U.S. Hickory Open in Wisconsin.

**How often do you play hickories?**

About 85 percent of the time. I just get more satisfaction from playing them. It's like they say, "Instead of remembering my bad shots, I only think of the good shots I had." It's golf like I remember it, growing up.



**Andrea Hodel with a medal she won in the 2014 Mid Pines Tournament, first in the ladies division.**

**What's in your play set?**

Right now, I'm playing originals except for my driver and sand wedge. Those originals were purchased from a golf auction from the Ralph Livingston's estate. It is the set used by the Francis Ouimet character in the movie, *The Greatest Game*, for which Mr. Livingston was the club consultant. The irons are all Tom Stewart originals. It is fun to watch the movie and look for the clubs. My putter is a Ray Mills, which was developed by Ted Ray and a gentleman named Mills. My driver is a Jeanie Deans by Mike Just and I use a reproduction George Nicoll Howitzer sand wedge from Tad Moore.

**Favorite club?**

My putter, hands down. The Ray Mills.

**What ball do you play?**

I use the Callaway Supersoft. I have used reproduction balls and they are good, however, their covers are not very durable. They are fun to play in bad weather though, because the ball goes all over the place and it is fun to hit them into the wind and watch them come back at you. Just like the old days...

**Favorite course for hickories?**

Mid Pines because you can hit every kind of shot there and the fact that I am a member there doesn't hurt either. Southern Pines Golf Course is awesome, needs some maintenance but the bones are still there.

**Favorite hickory tournament?**

I haven't played in too many, but my favorite is the Mid Pines Hickory Open. I am hoping to play in the World Hickory Open this year. My group, the Carolina Hickory Golf Association, has a tournament every year called, "The Haggis Cup." It's where everyone is handicapped and it's match play, which I love. You play in foursomes and every 9 holes you play a new match. It's cool because you really get to know everyone in your foursome and I'm not limited to just playing with women, in fact, I am the only woman in the tournament. I think match play should be played more.

**Any particular player or aspect of golf history you especially enjoy?**

When I started playing hickories, I found you needed a bag to put your clubs in. I saw that most of the players used reproduction bags, which can be quite pricey. I investigated online and saw that people were selling vintage golf bags, usually in very rough shape, but no one was restoring them like they were restoring the clubs. The original bags are very interesting because they came in many different colors and configurations, unlike the reproductions today. I was having a knee operation and needed a hobby, while I recuperated, that would make me stay off of the course and stay happy, so I started buying these bags and restoring them. As far as I know, I am the only one who is doing this so far. They really come out well and are very playable. I have sold quite a few. I call my endeavor, "Too Olde Bags."

**Best thing about hickory golf?**

I would have to say the best thing is the camaraderie among players. I am an only child who wanted an older brother and I finally got my wish. I have around 40 older brothers here.

**Ideas to promote hickory golf?**

I know many of the guys, like Jay Harris and Bill Engelson, would like to see more ladies participate. I would, too. However, there are a couple of issues that need to be addressed to make this work. Most ladies don't want to buy clubs unless they know they will like them. When I buy some of these old bags, sometimes there are old hickory clubs in them. I offer them up to any ladies who want to try out hickories by playing them. Second issue is the length of the course for these ladies. Playing from the ladies tees of most courses is too long for them playing hickories. Any par four over 300 yards is too far and a par three over 140 yards. The guys set up the course for the senior men. Well, we have the same thing going on with the ladies. Take some tee markers and throw them out in the fairway. The ladies will come.

**Most recent book on golf that you read?**

The Greatest Game, by Mark Frost.