



Member Profile

Summer 2021

Joey Piatek

Munster, Ind., USA

“Golf has always been in my family,” says Joey Piatek. “My dad, Joe, was a 5th

grade teacher, but all summer he would give golf lessons at a par 3 golf course, which is where my brother and I learned to play at a young age.”

The Piatek brothers and their dad would play all kinds of formats, starting with three-man scrambles, then best ball matches, and by middle school they were playing golf in all kinds of weather including in the snow on a nine hole par 36 course that their father laid out over the top of the par 3 course.

Joey began to compete more broadly and eventually his mother was driving him throughout Indiana for junior tournaments in the summers.

“Living in northwest Indiana, we often had snowy winters, wet springs, and hot, humid summers so we got used to playing in all kinds of conditions,” Joey recalls. “It’s a lot like hickory golf in that a good player can find a way to get around the course in all kinds of conditions with all kinds of clubs and shots. It makes it fun and interesting.”

On the Munster High School boys golf team, Joey was named Indiana All-State. Later, at DePauw University (Div. III), he was an All-America Scholar, four-year letterman, and two-year captain of the golf team. He won individual titles at the Conference Championship his sophomore year and Depauw’s home tournament his senior year.

Today, Joey works as a fixed income trader at an investment company in Chicago and has an MBA from the University of Chicago.

He lives in Munster, Ind., with his wife, Michelle, a nurse anesthetist, and their son who will be four in October and twin daughters who will be two in September. Joey and Michelle met in 7th grade and they are both graduates of Munster High School.

“I consider my dad teaching me to play golf as one of the best gifts I have ever received,” he says. “Hopefully I can pass it along to my kids, too. Also, just maybe I can return the favor and get my dad into hickory golf.”

How were you introduced to hickory golf?

My dad seems to have all kinds of clubs appear out of nowhere. He had given me two or three hickories as well as some antique clubs of various ages. It really started when my father-in-law gave me a Spence and Gourlay putter that somebody was getting rid of. That really got me thinking that if I just find one or two more clubs, I can try to play with these.

How often do you play hickories?

Probably 20-25% of the time.

What’s in your play set?

It’s still under construction, and may always be:

Tad Moore Tom Morris Model 1930 Brassie (14 degrees)
MacGregor Popular Approach Cleek (18 degrees)
Alex Taylor Mid Iron (22 degrees)
Burke Jigger (28 degrees)
Wilson Gene Sarazen Mashie (35 degrees)
Burke’s Pride Mashie-Niblick (45 degrees)
Louisville Golf Stewart Maiden Niblick (56 degrees)
BV style J.B. Halley brass putter

Favorite club?

I have hit a lot of good shots with my Alex Taylor mid iron and I really like the trajectory. That was the first club that I restored myself so it’s rewarding to be able to play with it. Now, there’s not one club I own that I haven’t done something to, whether it be re-pinning, gripping, whipping, or swing weight adjustment.



Golfing since he was a youngster, Joey Piatek finds hickory golf allows him to explore more of the game’s shot-making challenges.

What ball do you play?

I have gotten used to the Callaway Supersoft. I like the roll I can get on the longer clubs, and short irons land softly.

Favorite course for hickories?

I have always had a soft spot for Golden Age “small town country clubs,” but I also enjoy anything with hilly open ground, mounds, and wind. It’s fun to plan and execute not only the flight of a shot but also the bounce and the roll, just like how it was done a long time ago in Scotland.

Favorite hickory tournament?

I played my first ever hickory event this year, the 2021 Mid-American Hickory Open at Soangetaha Country Club. I couldn’t have asked for a better introduction to hickory tournament golf. I hope to play many more tournaments, probably primarily in the states bordering Lake Michigan.

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

I think Walter Hagen gets overshadowed a little bit by the amazing accomplishments of Bobby Jones from 1923-1930. To me, golf, especially hickory golf, is not about being perfect, it’s about being honest with yourself, accepting mistakes, and being able to recover from them. I think Walter Hagen played that way, and it made him a very tough match play golfer.

Best thing about hickory golf?

I love all things golf-related and hickory golf provides another way to enjoy the game on courses/tees that I wouldn’t play with my modern clubs. I see it as an essential way to play for anybody who wants to become a complete player. I love hitting all of the creative recovery shots around greens and planning out a hole in order to avoid the big mistakes. Plus, it’s fun to find a new club and unlock its potential.

Ideas to promote hickory golf?

A lot of people I talk to are fascinated by hickory golf, but it really takes putting the ego aside to really get into it. One thing I often hear is something along the lines that “modern golf is hard enough.” Once a player abandons the idea of a “good score” and can enjoy the challenge of playing the best you can using your mind and skills, it is very rewarding. Still, it’s a tough sell for my friends who can hit a 460cc driver over 300 yards, and it may remain a tough sell for some time. I think offering rentals at the multitude of hickory events across the country is a great idea.

Most recent book on golf that you read?

The most recent golf book I have read was Scotland’s Gift Golf, by C.B. Macdonald. But I also should mention The Story of American Golf by Herbert Warren Wind. Reading that was the final nudge for me to get out and try hickories for the first time in late 2019. I also enjoyed reading George Peper’s Two Years in St. Andrews and Tommy’s Honor by Kevin Cook.

Anything else?

Indiana, especially Northwest Indiana, lives up to its name as “The Crossroads of America,” so if anybody is passing through and wants to play some hickory golf, don’t hesitate to contact me.