



Member Profile

Ray DeRoche

Neenah, Wisc., USA

Ray DeRoche is a native of Neenah, Wisc. who has spent most of his life in the area.

"I was always involved in sports," he says. "Typically, whatever the sport of the season was – baseball, basketball, football, soccer, and even rugby."

Hoops became a favorite, though, and Ray served as a basketball referee for more than 15 years, up to and including high school varsity games.

"I played golf for a couple years in my early teens and occasionally until I hit my mid-30s," he says. "But, after my fourth knee surgery I was told I should not be playing any sport that involved a court or a field. This is when I started playing golf a little more regularly. I became a member at Ridgeway CC in Neenah where I was introduced to hickory golf by some great friends – Joe Guerard, Ken Holtz, Ernie Ernst, and Jim "Doc" Eike.

"Thousands of dollars later, I have a set of clubs that continues to grow."

Ray credits hickory golf as being "one the best things I have ever done."

"It has allowed me to meet some fantastic people and to play some amazing courses along the way. The people involved with hickory golf are simply wonderful and I cherish the relationships that have developed because of this crazy sport."

Ray, who owns Custom Printing and Mailing in Neenah, was introduced to the business in 1984, "right in the middle of the Trivial Pursuit craze," he says. "There was a company here in the Fox Valley that was tasked with completing all of that game's card questions and answers. I think every printer around was helping."

New Year's Eve in 2017 was a special one for Ray, who that night married "the love of my life, Debra Knaack."

With Deb's encouragement, Ray says he looks forward to more experiences and events with the Society of Hickory Golfers.

"I really can't say enough about the people who help promote and organize all the fantastic events that we have the ability to experience through SoHG," he says. "Thank you to all who participate."

How often do you play hickories?

It's about 75 percent of the golf I play.

What's in your play set?

Josh Taylor brassie
Jeff Taylor spoon
Stewart 1, 3, and 4 irons
Stewart mashies
Stewart spade mashie
Stewart mashie niblick
Stewart niblick
George Nicoll mashie niblick
J & A Simpson jigger
Frank Bennett mashie niblick sand iron
Dropem #8 putter



Ray and Debra DeRoche celebrate their wedding on New Year's Eve 2017. At right, Ray escapes the bonds of a sandy trap.



Favorite course for hickories?

The Lawsonia Golf Links in Green Lake, Wisc.

Favorite hickory tournament?

Besides our own Wisconsin Hickory Open, it would be the Belvedere Hickory Open in Charlevoix, Mich.

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

I have really enjoyed learning about Francis Ouimet, largely through the book, The Francis Ouimet Story.

Best thing about hickory golf?

That would be the people I have met through the sport and continue to have the opportunity to play golf with.

Ideas to promote hickory golf?

We need to keep doing what we are doing and promote and encourage regional hickory golf groups.