



Member Profile

Gary Youngberg

Ames, Iowa, USA

Gary Youngberg didn't start playing golf until he was 14. He immediately developed a passion for the game and within a year or two, had played his first golf with hickories. Youngberg started collecting a few clubs here and there and while he didn't play them very often, he felt a connection to how golf was played 100 years earlier.

"Those of us who love hickory golf understand the challenges of the game but with those challenges come the joys of hitting one flush," he says. "There isn't a club for every shot so I truly enjoy manufacturing shots for various situations."

While in his twenties Youngberg joined the local country club and soon learned the older members had an annual hickory hacker tournament, even using sand tees. He began playing and "was totally hooked." Within 10 years, though, member attrition led to the event falling by the wayside. Not wanting to let it totally slip away, in 2012, with the support and encouragement of his wife and sons, Youngberg resurrected the event and the Ames Silversmithing Hickory Classic was born. Initially, 23 players participated but as Youngberg introduced more and more players to hickory golf, the event typically sees 60-65 players, topping out at 82 one year.

Youngberg and his wife, Karen, also a hickory player, have two adult sons who both play hickory golf as well. "With all three Youngberg males having single digit handicaps, matches are typically quite intense and truly enjoyable," Youngberg says. In addition to his own club's tournament, Youngberg enjoys, and has won, the Iowa Hickory Classic four times, the Heart of America event, and his own event four times with a winning score of 3 under 68 in 2018. He and his son, Kirk, plan on playing in the 2020 U.S. Hickory Open in Omaha, Neb.

How often do you play hickories?

I also play competitively with my modern clubs but I will play hickories about 50 percent of the time. I know some people struggle to move from one game to the other, but my swing is very smooth and made for hickory golf. I find myself being drawn more to the hickory game these days and find those involved in hickory golf most enjoyable company.

What's in your play set?

I have all commons for my play set. I'm always looking for clubs and about two years ago started doing some refurbishing on those that need it. I'm always looking for that club that feels better than the one in my bag and when it turns up, out goes one and in goes another! It's said that Bobby Jones selected his clubs by how they felt and typically had mismatched clubs in his bag. I love putting on some tunes as I work in the shop bringing the oldies but goodies back to life. It's my therapy!

Favorite club?

I have a common brassie I just love. I find it remarkably consistent and very solid. I also have a jigger I use all over the course, from 140 yards in or chipping around the green, it just feels good. I also bought an old putter from a gentleman I met at the Arizona Desert Hickory Classic that feels like "love" in my hands!



Gary Youngberg, Ames, Iowa's hickory leader, with wife Karen and sons Kyle, left, and Kirk.

What ball do you play?

I am sold on the Callaway Super Soft and play it with both my hickory clubs and my modern clubs.

Favorite course for hickories?

ANY course I'm playing!

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

How can the answer be anything but Francis Quimet? To take on, at 19 years of age and as an amateur, two giants of the day, Harry Vardon and Ted Ray, and win is perhaps the most compelling story I know. He not only beat them in an 18-hole playoff after being tied in regulation, he beat Vardon by 5 and Ray by 6! That is truly remarkable!!

Favorite thing about hickory golf?

I think my favorite thing about hickory golf is the simplicity of it all. You don't have a club for every shot like today's modern clubs but rather, you need to have the ability to manufacture shots for different circumstances. Give me a mashie and I'll show you five different shots and ways to hit 'em! I'm also blessed to have a wife and two sons who enjoy hickory golf nearly as much as I do.

Ideas to promote hickory golf?

First and foremost, I have been able to bring hickory golf to hundreds of people via the Ames Silversmithing Hickory Classic. It has been one of my biggest joys to see the event grow year after year with many asking where to buy clubs as well as learning about the history of the game. I've been privileged to refurbish and donate 10 sets of hickories to some very close friends who have supported my event from the beginning as well as a few who have a sharp and keen passion for the hickory game. In addition, whenever I'm playing my hickories, I always take the opportunity to share the history of hickory golf with those I meet as well as encourage them to hit a few with my clubs. I love being on the range with the high school or college players, introducing myself and letting them hit my clubs and experience hickory golf. I try to always have a common mashie with me that I can give to someone who expresses a real interest in the game and it's those smiles and expressions of thanks that make my day.