



Member Profile

Jim Clawson

Charlottesville, Va., USA

The dapper fellow in the black kilt, white dress shirt and the engaging smile is from the strong hickory-playing state of Virginia. But Jim Clawson started on his golf career in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

“In my 14th summer my mom remarried, moved to a new city in Idaho, got a new job and dropped me off at the golf course for ‘baby sitting’,” he says.

That was an Elks Club kids program and Jim did pretty well, playing in the championship match, but losing in the end. “I still remember each hole well.”

He would also play varsity basketball in high school and for nearly 30 years afterward, recreationally. Not content with hoops and the occasional golf round, Jim earned a 2nd-degree black belt in taekwondo and was the running back and middle linebacker on a city championship-winning little league football team.

Jim was born in 1947 in Mackay, Idaho (pop. 250). The family moved to Boise six years later, and then on to Idaho Falls where he attended high school. He majored in Japanese at Stanford, then took an MBA at Brigham Young University in marketing, followed by a DBA from Harvard Business School.

The author of 17 books and some 300 papers (see his web page at <http://faculty.darden.virginia.edu/clawsonj/index.htm> for the entire curriculum vitae), Jim plans to retire in May from his current post as the Johnson & Higgins Professor of Business Administration at the Darden Graduate School of Business – Univ. of Virginia.

Just how did Prof. Clawson come to the iron and the wood shaft?

“Hickory golf was introduced to me in my 55th year by Tanner Stewart at Mid-Pines. After the event, I was 3 miles on my way home when I turned around, went back to the pro shop and bought a set of Tad Moore Star OAs; they looked like works of art to me.

“That first year (2007) I went to Oakhurst and followed Randy Jensen and Jay Harris for their championship round. It was a revelation watching them play and realizing that one could actually tinker with original clubs, adjusting loft, lie, grips, and swing weights. I’d assembled moderns before, and that insight tripled my enjoyment. Plus, Rob Alschwede introduced me to kilts. I was hooked.”

Since then, Jim says he’s attended as many hickory tournaments as his busy academic and consulting schedule would allow. He finds the auld golf particularly attractive and has played in the National Hickory Championship four times and at Foxburg twice. “I had teaching conflicts last year, but not this year,” he says. “I’m going back to both the NHC and Foxburg. I can’t wait!”

“I find hickory competition thrilling, satisfying, fun, collegial and often frustrating. I love the people, the period dress, and the challenge.”

Jim says he’s looking forward to the freedom that retirement will bring, especially to enjoy more hickory golf events.

Jim and his wife, Susan, have been married for 37 years and have four children. They make Charlottesville, Va. their home.

How often do you play hickories?

It’s about 50/50 for me. I love moderns, hickories, and ancients!

What’s in your play set?

I like variety and tinkering. My Star OAs are my main set,, but I rotate with iron sets of Stewarts, Kroydens, and mutts.

Fancy Face driver – Louisville Golf
Bulldog
SM niblick
Putter – Brazilian heartwood 1925 HB replica

Gutty play set:
Mike Just long nose play club
Stewart long iron
Stewart lofter
Niblick – Tad Moore
Samuel Ryder wooden putter – Louisville Golf



Jim Clawson in full kilt and ready for action at the 2011 U.S. Hickory Open at French Lick, Ind.

Adding, experimenting, tinkering; it’s addictive. I like the feel of Jay Harris’ method of gripping: rough side out, overlapping.

Favorite club?

A Mike Just Oakhurst long nose play club driver that was refurbished by Paul Dietz. Her name is “Blondie,” a nickname I got from a Scottish caddie. The grip is from an hide that came from an elk my dad shot in Idaho in 1955.

What ball do you play?

ProVI’s mostly, and lately, Dave Brown’s replicas.

Favorite course for hickories?

All of them; I like variety! Cruden Bay, Royal County Down, Old Course, Pine Needles, Mid Pines, Foxburg, Highland Park (Southern 4-Ball, No. 7, arrgggh!), and Mimosa Hills.

Favorite hickory tournament?

Each, like the members, has its own personality – Oakhurst, Foxburg, Mid Pines, Southern 4-Ball, Niagara, USHO. I loved the Mountain Valley Hickory Open at Pinehurst No. 3 last year.

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

Golf Channel is on all the time. Golf Digest, Golf, and Wee Nip lying all around. I admire Harry Vardon a lot.

Best thing about hickory golf?

I love the players. What a diverse, idiosyncratic, engaging, fun group! Duffers, pros, straight-laced and partiers, characters all. The people in hickory golf are wonderful.

Ideas to promote hickory golf?

The state chapters are the building blocks. Lang Willie (N.C.), Skip Platt (Va.) and other state group leaders are great role models. Plus, keep it “local,” and not too much like USGA. This is fun, not a business or a career.

Most recent book on golf that you read?

I’m reading Freddie Couples’ “Total Shotmaking” now.