



Member Profile

Pehr Thermaenius

Täby, Sweden

Pehr Thermaenius grew up in Örebro, half way between Stockholm and Gothenburg in Sweden. When his father joined his curling friends in the golf club in 1956 he took Pehr along to the Lanna course of Örebro Golfklubb. Pehr got down to 5 handicap and competed in the district championship, but never became anything like a crack player.

When his and wife, Agneta's, daughter, Maja, was born in 1976, there was very little time to play. His game just got worse and he stopped playing. Seventeen years later, it was daughter Maja who wanted to play golf and brought her mother and father back into the game.

Pehr did not abandon golf altogether during those 17 years. He studied the history of the game and assembled a small golf library. He also was always ready to listen when his father, Bengt, called to give a detailed account of his latest round, thus taking some strain off his mother. Pehr also inspired his father to take an interest in the history of golf. Bengt was invited by the R&A secretary, Michael Bonallack, to come and study the club's most treasured clubs. During a week in the clubhouse smoking room Bengt measured and photographed the clubs in detail. He then made miniature replicas, some of which are now on display in one of the glass tables in the Trophy room.

Pehr was introduced to hickory golf in 1995 by Archie Baird in Gullane, Scotland. At the time, he was not aware of any other hickory golfers in Sweden. Then in the autumn of 1997, by pure chance, Pehr was drawn to play Jörgen Linse at a meeting of the Swedish Society of Golf Historians. And Jörgen had brought a set of hickories. The two men left Pehr's steel clubs in the clubhouse and played a match with Jörgen's clubs. As they parted that evening they said to each other: Let us start a hickory championship. Which they did.

In 2009, when the Swedish Hickory Championship was played at the Falsterbo links in southern Sweden, 187 players entered. Among them were the players from Europe and the U.S. who had played for the Hickory Grail before the Championship.

Pehr's proudest moment in golf came in 1998 when he won the first Swedish Hickory Championship. He admits that only 18 players took part, but he also points out that his winning margin was six strokes and that the runner up was a Swedish PGA professional. So he does not hesitate to enjoy his win to this day.

Pehr is a journalist and has spent his working life in newspapers, editing and reporting. He is now retired, but constantly looks for freelance work. He and Agneta live in Täby, just north of Stockholm, some five good hickory drives from their two children, Maja and Johan, and five grandchildren. Both Agneta (twice) and Maja (three times) have won the Swedish Hickory Championship. The eldest grandchild is Ellen, who will be six years in October 2012. She has played golf since May. Not with hickories, yet, but eventually.

How often do you play hickories?

Time is short, so I do not play many full rounds, but I practice in the evenings, as often as I can.

What's in your play set?

Brassie – a neat club with a small club head that I got from Chris Homer a few years ago. It has no visible markings.

Stewart driving iron – renovated by Ralph Livingston, that Tad Moore found for me in 2000. I wrote to Tad about our Championship, which had been held on the little links course at Viken, in southern Sweden. A good westerly breeze from the sea had sent several of my balls over the stone-walls on the lee side of the course. You need a driving iron, Tad wrote back. One day in the winter the receptionist in the newspaper office where I worked called me to say: "There is a parcel for you." And there was my driving iron.

Spalding mid iron – It also has a "3" stamped in it, so I guess it is a young club. This is one of the club heads that were in a plastic bag that Archie Baird in Gullane, Scotland, gave me in 1995. I then made a shaft and used it when I played my first championship in Scotland the following year.

Stewart iron – This has no club name stamped on it. I call it my "Best Friend."

Gibson of Kinghorn Mashie – with a diamond back that fills me with confidence when I take out the club. This is another club head from Archie's plastic bag. It now has its third shaft. The first shaft broke one week before the first Swedish Hickory Championship in 1998. I managed to make a new shaft in time and the mashie helped me win the Championship.

Nicoll mashie niblick – Another club head out of Archie's plastic bag. This was the first shaft that I made.

Niblick – A rustless club with a sharp front edge and practically no sole. It is stamped for Douglas Brasier, one of the first English professionals who came to Sweden in the 1920s. He brought these clubs together with a few other English professionals in Sweden. I got it in a trade with George Deverall, veteran professional at Djursholms Golfklubb near Stockholm. The shaft had been sawn off, probably because someone needed a dowel to lengthen a steel shaft, George told me. In return for the club head I made a shaft for George's favourite putter. Then I made a shaft for the niblick and burnt ski tar into the wood. This brought out the grain beautifully. My niblick plays superbly out of sand, but it is easy to fluff a shot off soggy turf.



Pehr's favourite golf picture of himself is 15 years old. It shows him hitting a mashie to the 17th green in the Swedish Hickory Championship in 1998, which he won. Picture by Anders Janson.

Spalding Schenectady putter – Tad found this club for me. It putts so well that I hesitate to tell you about it. I fear the powers of golf might punish me for being over confident.

Favorite club?

My "Best Friend" is my best friend.

What ball do you play?

Mostly Strata Tour Professional 90 or Titleist Solo.

Favorite course for hickories?

There are three – Gullane No 3, Djursholm's new nine hole course, and Viken links, near Helsingborg on the southern tip of Sweden.

Favorite hickory tournament?

The hickory championships in Sweden and Scotland. Unfortunately there is no longer a foursomes competition in the morning before the Scottish. I also much enjoy team matches.

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

Alan Robertson and John H. Taylor are my heroes in the history of golf. The great matches are thrilling, like the four-some in 1849, when Alan and Tom Morris beat the Dunn brothers in North Berwick. What drama!

Best thing about hickory golf?

The spark of enjoyment that flashes through your body on the rare occasion of a hit off the meat. And meeting all the other players who enjoy the same thing.

Ideas to promote SoHG, hickory golf?

We should let the golfing world know what we have to offer: The good golf that can save the game. The problem with golf today is that it is too complicated and takes too much time. We can demonstrate the good golf to Stableford players with laser rangefinders and grotesque bags on three-wheel carts. The good golf is a foursome match, carrying a small bag with a few clubs over your shoulder.

Most recent book on golf that you read?

Stockholms äldsta golfbanor (Stockholm's oldest golf courses) by Hemming Sten, published in 1989. I will use material from the book in a booklet to be published in connection with the centenary of the Råsunda course. It was laid out in 1912 for Stockholms Golfklubb by George Roberts from Hoylake. The club played at Råsunda until 1926. The ground is now a public park named The Golf Meadows. Six of the original ten holes will be open for play for two days. On the 2 September the Swedish Society of Golf Historians will play a match with hickories against Stockholms Golfklubb. Write to me at pehr.thermaenius@gmail.com if you would like to join our team.

Note: Pehr is editor of the yearbook of the Swedish Society of Golf Historians.