



Member Profile

Rick Woeckener

Fredericksburg, Va.

Rick Woeckener, 42, was born in New Brunswick, N.J. and moved to the Miami area of Florida with his family in 1976. "I grew up with the Country Club of Miami West Course in my back yard," he says. The youngest of three, he began playing golf at age 6, with his father, Ed, teaching the basics of swing, etiquette, rules and "how to play quickly and not hold anyone up on the course."

Rick began playing competitively through the junior golf program of the Dade Amateur Golf Association based at Melreese Golf Course in Miami. "Living on a world class Robert Trent Jones-designed course gave me a great place to work on my game," he says.

A summer membership for kids was just \$50, so Rick played as much as he could, about 45 holes a day, he says. "Fortunately, we had a swimming pool at the house, which was great after a hot, humid day in south Florida."

Rick was captain of his American Senior High golf team that played 9-hole stroke matches against other schools and such players as future PGA veterans Briny Baird and Dudley Hart. He later played for Florida International University.

After college he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, serving three years at Camp Pendelton. "I played on the base golf team and won the 1995 All-Marine West Coast Regional Championship," he says.

"My dad introduced me to hickories in 2006 after getting involved in the Society of Hickory Golfers in 2004. In spring of 2007, dad hosted a hickory tournament at Country Club of Asheville, which I won, shooting 73-79. After that, I was 'infected' with the hickory golf bug and started playing hickory golf most of the time. I have competed at Mid-Pines three times and managed to win the U.S. Hickory Open last year on my first try at Mimosa Hills."

In 2011, Rick decided to take on the challenge of the SoHG's inaugural Championship Series (CS). He has competed at the Southern Hickory 4-ball, the U.S. Hickory Open and the Heart of America. As of this writing, he plans to play at Mid-Pines in November, the fourth leg of the CS. He stands a good chance of taking the title.

And for next year?

"Maybe some gutty golf," he says.

How often do you play hickories?

Most of the time. I only play with the modern set a couple of weeks in the spring and fall. I try to play two to three rounds a week when the weather and daylight savings time permits.

What's in your play set?

Driver – JH Kirkwood (Australia), 11 degrees
Brassie – Chas H. Watts, 13 degrees
Cleek – Eric Edwards, 20 degrees
Strong Mid-Iron – MacGregor (Dayton, Ohio)
Weak Mid-Iron – Thomas Wilson (Chicago)
Strong Mashie – Davega-Wicklowlow
7 Iron – Chas Heaney Kro-Flite
Weak Mashie – Aero-Rustless
9 Iron – Spalding Kro-Flite
Strong Niblick – T. Stewart (St. Andrews)
Weak Niblick – J. Hagen (NY)
Putter – Burke Standard small mallet

Favorite club?

A Stewart niblick.

What ball do you play?

Taylor Made TP black or Pro VI.

Favorite course for hickories?

Sewell's Point Golf Course, Norfolk, Va.



Marine Corps veteran and hickory golf champion Rick Woeckener has been a competitive player since a youngster in Miami, Fla. Introduced to hickories in 2006 by his father, Ed, Rick says there are few things that feel as pure as a well-struck hickory shot.

Favorite hickory tournament?

U.S. Hickory Open

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

Harry Vardon was such a legend and an innovator. The grip, the plus fours and the British Open record that will probably never be equaled. Of course, Bobby Jones and the golden age of hickory golf of the '20s and '30s are most interesting. So many colorful players like Walter Hagen and Gene Sarazen make that period in golf history one of the best.

Best thing about hickory golf?

Getting out to the course in the late afternoon when it is peaceful. Hitting that perfect, solid drive with a hickory club, knowing that there is nothing in golf that will ever feel this pure.

Ideas to promote SoHG, hickory golf?

Keep supporting the SoHG. They do so much to promote the game. If we could all recruit a couple of new players each month during the season, think how fast we could grow. Also, developing a "hickory demo day" program at clubs throughout the country with the help of Louisville Golf and Tad Moore Golf. This would expose potential new hickory players to the SoHG and "infect" a lot of people with the hickory bug.

Most recent book on golf that you read?

Right now I am reading "OPEN" by John Feinstein.