

# These Linksters Enjoy Taking Golf Back a Bit

*They take pride in playing the game as it was intended...with hickory clubs.*



By Bill Ernst, Neenah, Wisconsin

"HAND ME my brassie."

Most caddies would hesitate when hearing this—or "Gimme my spoon." But it's common jargon when the Wisconsin Hickory Golfers tee it up.

A growing number of these nostalgic purists are joining the fold every season. These golfers, like the smiling group above, have been turning out in full fashion—knickers, flat caps, ties and argyle stockings—at five separate events this summer, topped off with a biggie set for September.

That's when they're proudly hosting the U.S. Hickory Open at Lawsonia Links in Green Lake. Low-handicap wood-shaft lovers from across the country will vie for vintage prizes, based on pride more than the purse.

Nationally, the Society of Hickory Golfers has an estimated 500 members. The notable difference at their spirited events is not only the clubs and the duds, but the *sound*. Spectators near the tee box at the Lawsonia event will hear more *thud* than the *ping* or *whack* they're accustomed to.

So, what's the lure that keeps the number of "hickory hackers" growing? Jim Koss of Green Bay, who abandoned his modern Titleists last year and began playing hickories exclusively, explains it this way:

"Although it may be difficult to understand, playing the game as it was intended is a whole lot more fun when the personal challenge is not to beat the other players, but to win a few holes against the course architect—with clubs that were prominent when the course was designed."

Other enthusiasts find it more challenging. Some players even use authentic replica balls made by a company in Omaha.

"For me, hickory golf is more enjoyable because it forces players to give more thought to which club and what shot will work best, rather than just 'bomb and chip,'" says Jim Eike of Neenah. "Hickories bring back the games of the past and the strategy the designer intended."

"Some hickory players are collectors with a wealth of knowledge of the history of the sport. But most of us just enjoy playing with the clubs."

The Wisconsin group not only welcomes golfers to their events, they even supply them with clubs and advice. No

wonder their numbers are growing.

Most of the tournaments sponsor a club swap/trade show that's open to the public. Some of the equipment on display is 80 to 120 years old.

## Lawsonia's a Perfect Site

The Lawsonia Links Course was chosen for this year's U.S. Hickory Open for a number of reasons. The first links-style course built in Wisconsin, it's distinguished by few trees, steep-faced bunkers and distinctive land contours—similar to links courses in Scotland.

Before the designers, William Langford and Theodore Moreau, started work on the course in 1928, they traveled to Scotland to sketch and photograph famous holes at other links courses.

The resulting course is still unique today. It features multitiered greens, some 90 bunkers and deep rough atop a windswept plateau next to Green Lake, the state's deepest inland lake at 237 feet.

The course became so renowned in its early years that it attracted the top golfers. Three of golf's greatest names—Ben Hogan, Sam Snead and Byron Nelson—played in the Little Lawsonia Open during the 1930s.

A host of hickory enthusiasts will gath-

er there this Sept. 22-24, and spectators are welcome to come and take in this golfing experience from the past.

For more information, check out the club's Web site, [hickorykummelcup.com](http://hickorykummelcup.com).

## Try Naming These Clubs

HICKORY GOLFERS love using the clubs' old-time names when talking to caddies. It keeps a bit of the "blast from the past" in the game.

So, let's see how many of these names from golf's ancestors you can match with current clubs. Which of the following names refer to the: 3-wood...fairway wood...5-iron...chipping iron...9-iron or wedge?

(A) Niblick (B) Spoon (C) Mashie  
(D) Brassie (E) Jigger

We're turning the answers upside down—there's no "gimme" here. And are you aware in Scotland they call a "gimme" a "lemme"? As in "Lemme see you make it."

(A) 9-iron or wedge (B) Fairway wood  
(C) 5-iron (D) 3-wood (E) Chipping iron



## Boxcars Buried at Lawsonia?

FOR YEARS, players at the Lawsonia Links Course have been intrigued by rumors that when this course was built, railroad boxcars were buried here and there to add height to some of the greens and fairways.

We decided to check this out—is it rumor or fact?

So we contacted Tom Spaulding, who was the pro at Lawsonia during the 1960s and '70s, and Gene Haas, one of Wisconsin's top golf historians.

Spaulding confirmed that a boxcar was buried under the par-3 No. 7 green (see inset above right). Early during his tenure, he'd had a chance to speak with some of the construction workers, and they talked in detail about placing the railroad car there.

"If you look at the green, it's easy to believe and to understand why," says Haas. "The green is narrow, front to back, and the right side has a sharp, vertical edge. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, to keep that soil in place without

some sort of 'retaining form'. So a railroad car was probably perfect to provide that holding platform, then it was covered with ample sod to give it a natural look."

Haas assumes the car was filled with stone or gravel so it wouldn't collapse later. If so, it worked—it has now held its shape and challenged golfers for almost 90 years. "Just getting on that green and staying on it is no easy task," Haas adds.

As for boxcars buried in other parts of the course, that may be more rumor than fact. But Spaulding did point out that another boxcar was buried under the tee of the practice range and it's still there.

"It's pretty obvious if you take a close look at that tee area," he says. "It's as steep and high as the edge of that No. 7 green."

At least golfers who are confounded by that par-3 hole have an excuse. You ever try to get a wedge to land and stick on top of a railroad car?

