

As president of the board for the SOHG for 2025 and 2026, one of the duties that I get to perform is to honor a member with the Mike Brown Award. This is our version of a lifetime achievement award. Every year since 2010, the members of the Society of Hickory Golfers put forth nominations for a member who has made significant contributions to hickory golf. This year, the nominations were due in June, and the year's recipient was selected by a committee of three, which includes me and two prior Mike Brown Award recipients. The recipients each year has their name engraved on a plaque that sits at Mid Pines and features Mike's favorite club, a Stewart Mongrel Mashie.

Though I never had the honor to meet the man whom this award is named for, his legend of respect, dedication, and passion lives on through this award. Mike Brown award recipients all exemplify three important factors including: Respect for the traditions of hickory golf; Dedication to growing the game of hickory golf; and Passion for promoting lasting friendships through hickory golf.

It has been said about Mike, that once you met him, you gained a friend for life. He was knowledgeable about the history, he wanted to maintain the traditions of the old game, but he also worked to introduce it to new players. I think that description perfectly fits our 2025 Mike Brown Award honoree.

While we usually present this special award at the U.S. Hickory Open, as it represents everything the Society stands for, this year will be a little different, because this year's recipient cannot attend the USHO. But he is here today.

He has been a leader of the Wisconsin Hickory group for many years. He has run many large tournaments, including the Wisconsin Hickory Open and the U.S. Hickory Open, and has a knack for creating a buzz for everything he is involved with, including the various events at Kohler and throughout Wisconsin. As a player, his achievements are numerous. Among his titles are the 2019 USHO Senior Division at Belvedere; the 2021 USHO Senior Reserve at Gearhart; as well as victories at the Wisconsin Hickory Open Seniors, the Michiana Hickory Open, the Keeper of the Spirit, the Mid-American Hickory Open, and others I'm sure I'm missing.

Beyond hickory tournaments, he is prolific at finding, acquiring, and restoring his beloved Tom Stewart clubs. He has a knack for finding that perfect club to get somebody started, or to fill a gap in their set. He has gotten many people started in hickory golf and helped many others learn the tricks to keep their clubs maintained.

Every time I see him, he asks about me and my family first, golf second. That's the kind of person he is. He is one who earns your trust and respect from a quiet, confident strength, and an easy ability to do the right thing without having to think about it. He knows that hickory golf is more than just a game we play. It's a game that connects us socially and enriches all our lives.

It has been said: He is that friend with whom it is a pleasure to enjoy a round of golf. He is ever positive, always encouraging, quick to appreciate a good shot, and yet, somehow never fails to get in a humorous dig. One thing that endears him to his Wisconsin friends is his strong dislike of seeing his friends with an empty glass.

So, on behalf of the Society of Hickory Golfers, and for all the above reasons, but most importantly for his friendship and for truly being a class act, I'm very proud to present the 2025 Mike Brown Award to Bill "Ernie" Ernst.