



*A view of Wilmington
Country Club's clubhouse
from the 18th hole.*

Wilmington Country Club To Host The 2022 BMW Championship

BY JOHN S. RILEY

» Many Delawareans are familiar with the Ed Oliver Golf Club in Wilmington, but few know about the club's namesake. Fewer still are aware of the former Wilmington Country Club caddie's connection to the BMW Championship, the prestigious PGA TOUR event set to visit Wilmington in August 2022.

As the third-oldest event on the PGA TOUR schedule, the BMW Championship dates back to 1899 when it debuted as the Western Open. That's what it was called in 1941 when, only weeks before the World War II draft pulled 25-year-old Ed "Porky" Oliver into the Army, the Wilmington native beat Ben Hogan and Byron Nelson at Phoenix Country Club in Phoenix, Arizona, for the title.

To attract the 1941 Western Open, business leaders who wanted to

raise Phoenix's national profile raised \$5,000. With great pride, the Arizona Republic headline announced: ARIZONA AWARDED ONE OF THE TOP SPORTS EVENTS IN THE COUNTRY.

Eighty-one years later, Delaware will be the center of the golf universe when the 2022 BMW Championship comes to the South Course at Wilmington Country Club. Renamed in 2007, when BMW became the sponsor, the BMW Championship is the penultimate event of the PGA TOUR's FedExCup Playoffs.

The field features the top 70 PGA TOUR players competing to win the J.K. Wadley trophy and a spot in the season-ending TOUR Championship. Past BMW Championship winners include the biggest names in golf, such as Jon Rahm, Justin Thomas, Dustin Johnson, Jason Day, Rory McIlroy, and Tiger Woods.

Some things have changed since 1941 – Oliver earned \$1,000 for his victory, while the purse for the 2020 BMW Championship was \$9.5 million – but the championship still puts a spotlight on its host city.

The average PGA TOUR event draws 25 million U.S. viewers, and broadcast and streaming coverage reaches up to one billion homes in 227 countries and territories. Wilmington and Delaware can expect millions of mentions leading up to the BMW Championship and immense media exposure during the event.

The BMW Championship should also provide a significant shot in the arm for the local economy, with an estimated \$30 million economic impact. Attendance for the week could reach 140,000, with spectators absorbing thousands of hotel nights, filling restaurants, and creating



Ed "Porky" Oliver is the only Delawarean to ever win this championship.

additional tourism opportunities.

This will be Delaware's first PGA TOUR event, and there are multiple opportunities to watch the world's best players take on one of the country's finest golf courses. Ticket information will be available later in the year, and more than 2,000 members of the community will have a chance to volunteer during championship week.

Corporate hospitality options offering a unique way to experience the championship are already selling quickly. To learn more, visit bmwchampionship.com/2022-hospitality.

Just as in Oliver's day, all proceeds from the BMW Championship will benefit the Evans Scholars Foundation and its mission of awarding full tuition and housing scholarships to youth caddies. Since 2007, the BMW Championship has raised more than \$35 million for caddie scholarships, helping send more than 3,000 caddies to college.

COMMITTEE SPOTLIGHT:

Environmental Committee BY TYLER MICIK

Members of the State Chamber's Environmental Committee met in early March to discuss a series of amendments proposed by DNREC to the Brownfields Development Agreement (BDA). The Delaware Brownfields statute was originally enacted in the early 1990s and was among the first statutes of its kind in the country. The goal was to promote the redevelopment of historically contaminated and abandoned sites, which had a stigma of being difficult to redevelop due to potential environmental contamination and liability concerns. The Brownfields statute protects developers from being liable for existing environmental contamination at a site, and the program does not require the brownfield's developers to perform a cleanup unless or until they decided to proceed with development activities at a site.

Since then, by all accounts the program has been a tremendous success. Various sites across the state have benefited from the program, including the University of Delaware's STAR Campus and many of the riverfront development sites in Wilmington.

After DNREC proposed amendments to the BDA, the State Chamber advocated against revisions in the language of the agreement that would impose greater liability on brownfields developers than provided in the original statute, potentially deterring the development of abandoned sites. The State Chamber's recommendations were taken into consideration and the problematic revisions were altered.

This is good news for brownfields developers because it continues the liability protections contemplated by the original brownfield's legislation. It's also good news for economic development, since the Brownfields program allows redevelopment of abandoned and underutilized sites around the state.

The Environmental Committee also submitted comments on DNREC's proposal to increase Natural Minor (Reg. 1102) permitting fees. The proposal would increase costs on smaller emitters like dry cleaners. While the State Chamber is supportive of an increase, the Chamber has concerns about raising fees at this time. Several local dry cleaners have been forced to close or reduce their hours during the COVID-19 pandemic because more people are working from home and not using their services. Similarly, other industries reduced work schedules or rolled back hours. The State Chamber suggested delaying an increase until 2022 or beyond to support businesses struggling to recover post-pandemic.

Want to join the conversation and influence policy decisions that help shape the future of Delaware? Contact **Tyler Micik** at tmicik@dscc.com or (302) 576-6590.

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