

# UP & COMING WEEKLY

DAVID  
HINKAMP  
1986

**FREE**

F&B PUBLICATIONS  
VOLUME 24 ISSUE 36  
Sept. 11 - 17, 2019

Cumberland  
County's  
Community  
Newspaper

51<sup>st</sup>

*Cumberland County*  
GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP

- GARY MOORE 1985
- MIKE WILLIFORD 1995
- BILLY WEST 2010/2011
- BRIAN DREIER 2012
- GARY ROBINSON 2013/2015
- THOMAS OWEN 2016
- BILLY WEST 2017
- SPENCER OXENDINE 2018
- ANGELIQUE SEYMOUR

?

**2019**

51<sup>st</sup> Annual  
2019  
*Cumberland County*  
**GOLF**  
CHAMPIONSHIP  
SEPTEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup> - 15<sup>TH</sup>

*Gates Four*

STRYKER

**CFRT**  
CAPE FEAR REGIONAL THEATRE



presents  
'Mamma Mia!'



A special  
graduation  
at Cape Fear  
High School



Public input needed on  
Heritage Park's future

**CROWN**  
COMPLEX

GREATER FAYETTEVILLE  
**CHAMBER**

# New champions guaranteed in 51st CCGC

by EARL VAUGHAN JR.



SEPTEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup> - 15<sup>TH</sup>

One thing is certain about this year's 51st edition of the Cumberland County Golf Championship. New winners will be crowned in both the men's and women's divisions of the tournament. That's because last year's champions, Spencer Oxendine for the men and Angelique Spencer for the women, are competing at the college level. Congratulations to 2018 Cumberland County Golf Championship champion Spencer Oxendine, who has good reason for being unable to defend his title this year. Oxendine, a freshman on the golf team at North Carolina State, has earned a spot on the Wolfpack's traveling team in his first year playing golf there. Oxendine is at North Carolina State and Spencer at UNC-Pembroke. Both have commitments the weekend of the tournament, Sept. 13-15, that will prevent them from defending their titles.

But the golfers who were closest to them in the final scores all return to hopefully face a challenge that was denied last year's field when bad weather forced the tournament to be rescheduled and cut to two days.

This year's three-day event will open at Fort Bragg's Stryker Golf Course for the first time and conclude with two rounds at Gates Four Golf and Country Club. "Everybody is excited about going out to Stryker," said *Up & Coming Weekly* publisher Bill Bowman, the tournament's director since 2016. "It is going to be at Stryker this year, and we hope it will be at other courses next year."

Bowman said work is continuing to build participation in the women's division, which attracted eight participants last year.

To help boost the women's field, Bowman said play was cut to 36 holes again, while adding a separate age division for more experienced golfers and shortening some of the holes. "The important thing is we carry on the tradition of recognizing the best golfers in Cumberland County," he said. "I would say very few communities in the country can brag on the fact they've got a golf tournament that's 51 years old."



## Stryker

Stryker Golf Course professional Jeff Johnson said the Fayetteville community has always been welcome to play at the course on Fort Bragg, but adding it to the Cumberland County Golf Championship will make the course and its regular players feel like a part of the golfing



Stryker Golf Course has Bermuda greens, compared to bentgrass at Gates Four.

community in Fayetteville.

Johnson said he hopes the tournament will showcase the Stryker course and encourage people to play it and Fort Bragg's other course, Ryder.

For those not familiar with Stryker, the course is a 1946 Donald Ross layout that plays about 6,625 yards normally. It features Cumberland County's longest hole, the 625-yard par-five fourth hole, which Johnson said won't play that long for the tournament.

The biggest difference for golfers at Stryker will be the greens, which are Bermuda, compared to the bentgrass at Gates Four.

Johnson said the speed of the Stryker greens will be slower than what golfers experience at Gates Four. They will also have to take grain into consideration when chipping and putting.

For those who have never been to Stryker, Johnson said you head north on Bragg Boulevard and keep going until you dead end in the Stryker parking lot on your left.

There are no security gates to pass through to enter the course, Johnson said, as the Army intentionally left the golf course and the Fort Bragg Fairgrounds outside the containment area when security was tightened after 9/11.



## Gates Four

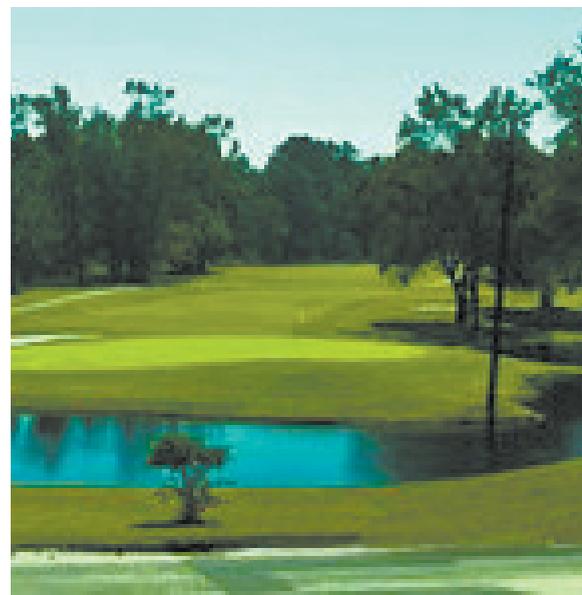
Gates Four general manager Kevin Lavertu agreed with Johnson that moving from the Bermuda to the bent grass greens at Gates Four

will require the players to make adjustments.

"More than 50% of the strokes in a round of golf are taken on the greens," Lavertu said. "The ball reaction speed of the greens and adjusting will be key."

He said the players who adjust the quickest will be the ones moving up the leaderboard.

After a hot July, Lavertu said Gates Four is in excellent shape for the tournament. He added the course has undergone few changes in recent years and has been kept in a maintaining mode. He's hopeful the course will be dryer and not as tough as it was for last year's tournament.



Gates Four is in excellent shape for the tournament.

"The course will play a little bit shorter day one and day two at both places," Lavertu said. "That's just a product of trying to set the same yardage at both courses for round one and two to get a good baseline of players."

Last year, Oxendine won the men's division with a two-day score of 74-72-146. Lavertu is hopeful this year's winner will be able to shoot from 6 to 8-under par if the weather is good.



Spencer Oxendine

## Men's Championship

Familiar names were among the top contenders for last year's men's title, and they will return again this season to see if they can continue to be among the best in the field.

Gary Robinson and Thomas Owen tied for second place behind Oxendine last year, both shooting a 151 total for the two-day tournament. Billy West was alone in fourth one shot



Thomas Owen

Photo credit: Carolinas Golf Association

back at 152.

Owen has finished second for two years in a row. If he has a concern about this year's tournament, it's his lack of familiarity with Stryker. "I haven't played Stryker since I was 10 or 12 years old," he said.

He likes the idea of competing on two different courses, calling it a tougher test that will see the best players rise to the top.

"Two different courses might test different parts of your game and how you can manage around a different golf course," he said. "It makes you make adjustments, and usually the better players make those adjustments."

Owen said he hopes to borrow a page from former champion Billy West, who consistently avoids making bad decisions early in the tournament.

"You begin conservative and make smart plays," Owen said, "not always whipping out your driver and trying to hit the miracle shot. Just kind of plug away being smart, and you'll find a chance to win."

Gary Robinson, like Owen, hasn't played Stryker recently, going back some 30 years to his college days at Fayetteville State. "I'm not familiar with the grass, but I'm familiar with the layout," he said. "Going from Gates Four to Stryker to Gates Four would be more of an adjustment than playing Stryker the first day."

He said it could be a challenge for people not familiar with Bermuda grass to make the switch from Stryker to Gates Four.

Robinson is normally upbeat about the county championship but said he's only played about four tournaments this year compared to 15 most years. "The hardest thing for me is when you're expected to do well," he said. "A lot of times when I'm not expecting things is when I do better."

Billy West has played amateur golf at the local, state and national level, but the Cumberland County Golf Championship remains his annual favorite. "At the gas station the next morning or at work, everybody is congratulating you or saying, sorry to see you lost by a couple of shots," West said. "I think that's one of the things that makes it special."

Now 45, West has been playing the CCGC since he was a teenager. He likes the challenge of playing on multiple courses over three days and thinks it produces the best champion.

He has played Stryker some but never in a tournament. "It's got some shorter holes," he said. "There are some places where it can be kind of tight off the tee, and you can get into trouble."

He said there's a definite contrast between this year's two courses. "At Gates Four, they've got larger greens, but they are kind of undulating, and they can do a lot with pin placements," he said. "With it being in September, hopefully we get a little cooler weather and the greens are a little firmer and faster."

He added putting and wedge play around the greens will be critical.

### Women's Championship

Toni Blackwell has enjoyed a brilliant high school career for the Cape Fear girls' golf team. With Angelique Spencer not playing in this year's tournament, Blackwell is the top player back from 2018.



Toni Blackwell

"I'm looking forward to playing with the different women," Blackwell said. "I get to learn from them and what they do. They enjoy the game."

While there are a few holes at Gates Four that can be challenging, Blackwell thinks she'll fare okay this year.

"I think I can win," she said. "I've got to play one hole at a time and stay focused."

Dee Dee Jarman thinks the addition of a senior division for women 50 and over is a positive for the tournament that will help draw players.

"Women's golf is declining in this region," she said. "It's just hard to find women to play golf. Hopefully, this will help the numbers."

Jarman said her game is not good right now, but she plans to play to support women's golf in the county. "It's all about keeping women involved in the game of golf," she said.

Patricia Joyce has been playing golf some 50 years she said, and winning also isn't her No. 1 concern. "I play golf for the camaraderie and the fun," she said. "I like to compete, but I like the socializing, too, and I think the other women do, too. It's a fun, fun time."

Joyce thinks the two-day format for women is good because the tournament is limited to the weekend and no one has to take time off from work.

She also was glad the holes were shortened at Gates Four.

Joyce said she's fairly consistent with her driver and irons but has problems with putting. "I'd like to break 90 both days," she said. "I think I've got a chance in both divisions."

Win or lose, Joyce will enjoy the weekend. "It's nice to meet people, see people and maybe make connections you'll play with down the line," she said.

For more information, call Bill Bowman at 910-391-3859 or visit <https://www.cumberland-countygolfclassic.com/>.



Gary Robinson



Billy West

**EARL VAUGHAN JR.**, Senior Staff Writer. COMMENTS? [EarlUCWS-ports@gmail.com](mailto:EarlUCWS-ports@gmail.com). 910-364-6638.

