

John Deere Classic Great Golf Moments



**Steve Stricker's
2010 winning score
of 26-under par
broke the
John Deere Classic
scoring record
by four strokes.**

JOHN DEERE ANCHORS PGA TOUR IN THE QUAD CITIES

In the year 2000, the new Tournament Players Club Deere Run in Silvis, Ill. provided the launching pad that propelled the John Deere Classic into a new millennium. Built to give the Quad Cities' PGA TOUR stop some newly-minted credibility and exposure, Deere Run opened 29 years after big time pro golf debuted in the Quad Cities in 1971. The opening of the new course signified a new and unusual era of stability for the oft-struggling tournament. Now sponsored by and titled for John Deere, the area's international corporate bedrock, the tournament soon would become the envy of stability for other Tour events. Indeed, professional golf in the Quad Cities had come a long, sometimes difficult way to such a bright future.

Professional golf got its start in the Quad Cities some 40 years ago, when a group of founding members of the new Crow Valley Country Club

in Bettendorf, Iowa thought bringing a PGA TOUR event to town might be a good way to promote their new private golf club. Longtime local tournament godfather Whitey Barnard and the late Bob Fry, former Davenport, Iowa municipal head professional, put the wheels in motion for what would become the 1971 Quad Cities Open.

"We weren't organized," said Barnard, who died mere months prior to Deere Run's June 2000 grand opening. "We were just a bunch of guys who wanted a golf tournament. We hired Bob Fry as our pro and said 'Let's do it.'" And so they did.

The first Quad-Cities Open teed off on Sept. 16, 1971 as a satellite tournament, sanctioned not by the PGA Tour but by the Chicago District Golf Association.

The CDGA, though, was involved at the behest of then PGA Tour commissioner Joe Dey, who also encouraged the Western Golf Association and the USGA to lend a hand to the fledgling event.

"The PGA let us know they wanted us to succeed," Barnard later remembered.

At the '71 tournament, a journeyman pro named Deane Beman, who would later succeed Dey as commissioner, won the event and \$5,000, topping fellow PGA Tour member Dow Finsterwald by two shots at Crow Valley.

But Beman wasn't finished with the Quad Cities. Dey and the Tour had liked what they'd seen in '71 so much that they made the QCO a full-fledged PGA Tour event the very next year. And in 1972, Beman again prevailed at Crow Valley, nipping a kid named Tom Watson by two strokes and taking home \$20,000 in official PGA Tour winnings.

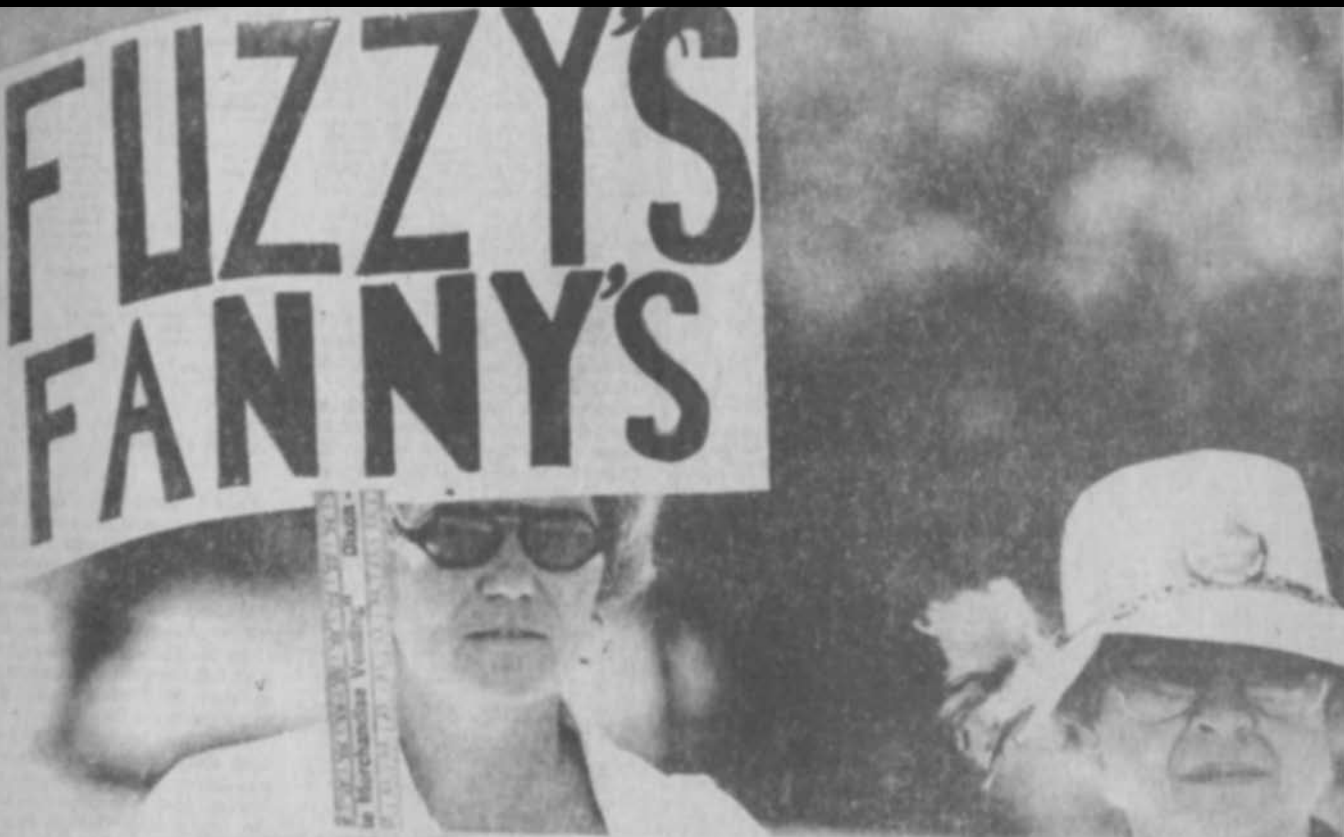
"They were looking down the road and they liked the Quad-Cities," Barnard said later when asked to explain how a major-league sport like the PGA Tour landed in a small Midwestern market like the Quad-Cities. "Even then, they had a plan as to how they wanted the Tour to look. Communities were being drawn into the PGA Tour web."

That the Quad-Cities remains in the PGA Tour web well into the Tiger Woods era is a story of luck, pluck, fortuitous timing, and never-say-die determination. It also is a tale of vision.

"I always thought there was a place for something major like a golf tournament in the Quad-Cities," Fry, that first Crow pro, said in 1990. "I must have been right. It's still there."

In 1973, Beman finished sixth at the QCO behind southpaw victor Sam Adams and abandoned his brief playing career to succeed Dey as commissioner of the Tour. Beman's ascension was fortuitous, to say the least, for the Quad Cities event, which would forever hold a special place in his heart as well as his trophy case. The winner of the first two Quad-Cities tournaments frequently was a friend of the event through many of the turbulent years that followed.

Cheered on by the Fuzzy's Fannies Fan Club, tour rookie Fuzzy Zoeller birdied his last 8 holes in the 1976 opening round, matching a still-standing PGA Tour record.



At the 2010 John Deere Classic, Paul Goydos became only the fourth player in PGA TOUR history to shoot a 59 in tournament play.

The turbulence started almost immediately. In 1974, Beman scheduled the QCO the same week as the British Open, which turned out to be both a blessing and a curse.

A blessing because the Tour needed to offer a sanctioned mid-July stateside option to its many members who weren't exempt for the British and who didn't have the time, cash or inclination to travel across the Atlantic to try and qualify. This was a key reason Beman often bent over backwards to help keep the QCO afloat through challenging times. The curse was that established stars who did play the British Open didn't have an opportunity to play in the Quad Cities.

Beman admitted to a particular affection for the event. "Since I was only on Tour six years and won five tournaments, two of them there, I feel pretty special about it," Beman said.

Beman proved his affection in 1975 when the original tournament organizers were ready to pull the plug. Crow Valley no longer needed the tournament. Hardee's Restaurants, a key early

sponsor, no longer could afford it. And the Tour was insisting on a \$125,000 purse - \$25,000 more than the year before - a figure the organizing committee found daunting.

On April 20 of that year, a press conference was called at the studios of WQAD-TV in Moline where Barnard and his team planned to distribute a press release announcing the end of the tournament. But the Quint-Cities Council of Jaycees, a group of local tournament supporters, stopped the press conference minutes before it began and set the tournament on an entirely new path.

First, the Jaycees moved the event to Oakwood Country Club in Coal Valley, Ill., another relatively new golf course. Next, TV star Ed McMahon, who at the time was the emcee of Johnny Carson's wildly popular Tonight Show, was recruited to be the event's official host. Finally, Beman allowed a one-time purse of only \$75,000. The '75 event went on and Roger Maltbie, now a network golf commentator, won it. He had no problem cashing his \$15,000 winner's check.

Four more Ed McMahon Jaycee's Quad-Cities Opens followed. And with Carson's second banana enticing first-flight pro-am attractions like Jerry Lewis, Bob Hope, Mickey Rooney and Telly Savalas to the nation's midsection, the 1975-1979 tournaments were among the most star-studded events in tourney history.

McMahon's tenure - and the tournament's strong Hollywood connection - ended in 1980, and soon the QCO board of governors found itself in precarious financial straits. In October 1983, an audit found the tournament was \$140,000 in debt, partially as a result of losses that began accruing when the 1978 pro-am was rained out.

It didn't matter that future PGA Tour stars like D.A. Weibring, Payne Stewart and Scott Hoch won the tournament in the late '70s and early '80s. Over a six-year period, it lost money in five.

Things were so bad that the tournament board of directors declared a do-or-die fund drive to save the 1984 event. Again, the community came through with \$149,000 to save it from extinction.

A year later, though, Beman and the Tour insisted that the '84 event's well-below-average purse of \$200,000 grow by \$100,000.

Again, the end of the Q-C tourney was a possibility. In fact, Chattanooga, Tenn., like an undertaker with a hearse, was parked at the door, waiting to scoop up the July 1985 spot on the PGA Tour calendar.

With golf caps in hand, though, the tournament board appealed to various local cities and communities for tax donations to save a civic asset. Four came through - Rock Island, Moline, Coal Valley and Milan - but the board was \$16,000 shy of what was needed to bump the purse to \$300,000.

Beman and the Tour again stepped in and filled in the blank. "It had been a good tournament when times were good and we feel a greater responsibility than other sports to stick with an event you have and make it work," Beman said.

The tournament would need that kind of help again, but not for another nine years.

Vijay Singh won the 2003 John Deere Classic. The victory vaulted the No. 2-ranked Singh into first place in the race for the TOUR's leading money winner – a race he eventually won.



1982 Champion Payne Stewart posted the first of his 11 career victories, including the 1991 and 1999 U.S. Opens. His Quad City victory was especially memorable to him because it was the only time his father saw him win. It also was the first time he wore his trademark knickers in all four rounds of a PGA Tour event.

In 1986, the tournament picked up its first full-fledged title sponsor and became known as the Hardee's Golf Classic. The company had a long history with the tournament dating from its inception.

The first sponsors of the Quad-Cities Open were three men from Kewanee who owned nine Quad-Cities area Hardee's franchises, then a fledgling fast-food enterprise. "Brick" Lundberg, Ted Vlahos and Dr. L.T. Boley attached their names to a \$150,000 note that helped bankroll the 1973 and 1974 Hardee's Quad-Cities Opens.

Health problems and a tightening fast-food economy forced the three Hardee's franchisees to give up that sponsorship in 1975, but Jim Jensen, then a manager of the Lundberg-owned Hardee's Restaurant in Bettendorf, never forgot the name of that first title sponsor.

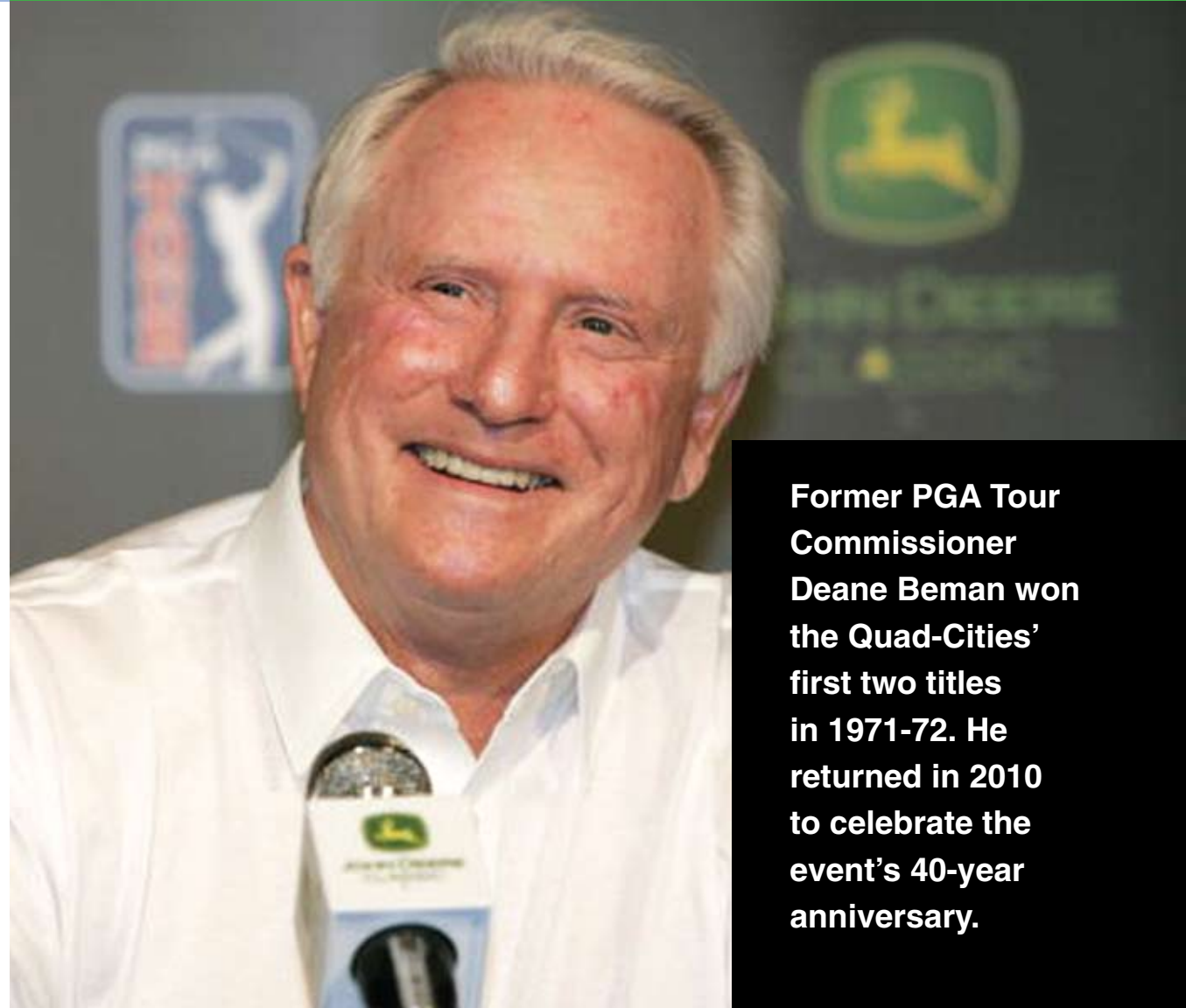
A decade later, Jensen, who had become president of a Midwestern consortium of Hardee's franchisees, saw a competitor's coupon on the back of his ticket to the

1985 tournament. He quickly assured that would not happen again by signing on as title sponsor.

The Hardee's Golf Classic was born in 1986 and lasted through 1994. The first HGC featured a \$400,000 purse and was seen throughout the Midwest and southeast on a regionally syndicated television network that was flag-shipped by WQAD in Moline.

By 1989, the pros were playing at Oakwood for \$700,000 and Ted Turner's WTBS cable superstation was supplying the television coverage. Curt Byrum's win wasn't the big news that year, though. Early in the week, Jensen and tournament directors announced that the 1990 tournament would feature a \$1 million purse and take place in September – out from under the British Open.

From 1990 through 1994, the finest fields in tournament history came to Oakwood. But the event lost its summertime festival feel and cold and rainy weather dampened enthusiasm.



Former PGA Tour Commissioner Deane Beman won the Quad-Cities' first two titles in 1971-72. He returned in 2010 to celebrate the event's 40-year anniversary.



In 1996, Tiger Woods took his first lead on the PGA Tour with a 2nd-round 64 and led into the final round. Woods quadruple-bogeyed the 4th hole at Oakwood Country Club to fall out of contention. Woods tied for fifth, two shots behind winner Ed Fiori.

When Hardee's sponsorship ended with the 1994 tournament, the search for a new title sponsor became dire.

As fate would have it, however, the PGA TOUR introduced the Presidents Cup competition in 1994. Beman's successor, Tim Finchem, needed to find an existing Tour event willing to accept dates opposite both that mega-team event and the hugely successful Ryder Cup. Faced with the possibility of extinction, the Quad-Cities tourney raised its hand.

By agreeing to take a back seat each fall to the two bi-annual events, the Quad Cities tournament received funding from the Tour, which provided tournament officials with a four-year window of opportunity to seek out a new sponsor.

That didn't feel like such a great deal in September of 1995, when D.A. Weibring became the tournament's only three-time winner in the only rain-shortened, three-round event in tourney history.

But one year later, it was the Presidents Cup that, improbably, found itself taking a backseat to the 1996 Quad-City Classic, where a 20-year-old rookie named Tiger Woods appeared to be on the brink of his first PGA Tour victory. More than a dozen national golf writers abandoned coverage of Presidents Cup near Washington D.C. and flew to Moline on Sept. 15 to see him close the deal.

Woods didn't win the '96 Classic - a quadruple bogey on Oakwood's fourth hole saw to that - but he caused quite a stir nonetheless. It was Woods' third event as a professional and the first PGA Tour event he ever led. Excited crowds joined the national media to witness what many thought would be history in the making. Instead, journeyman pro Ed Fiori went on to defeat Woods.

While Woods grabbed the headlines that week, history of a different kind was being made behind the scenes at Oakwood. There, as rain washed out the afternoon portion of the Wednesday pro-am, Weibring met with representatives of the tournament

D.A. Weibring is the only three-time tournament champion. Weibring was design consultant for TPC Deere Run, ranked by Golf Digest, among the "Top 100 public courses in the nation."



and Moline-based Deere & Company to discuss the possibility of building a lavish new golf course on a company-owned former horse farm in Silvis, Ill.

Finally, on April 2, 1997, after nearly a year's worth of high level negotiations, PGA TOUR commissioner Finchem and Deere chairman and CEO Hans Becherer announced plans to build the Tournament Players Club Deere Run on the Friendship Farms property owned since 1928 by the ancestors of company-founder John Deere.

As a key element of the agreement, Deere became the official golf course equipment supplier of the TPC network as well as becoming title sponsor of the John Deere Classic.

"Our title sponsorship of the John Deere Classic offers us unique set of business opportunities," said Robert Lane, former chairman of Deere & Company. "At the same time, it enables Deere to contribute significantly to the improvement of the Quad Cities area by stimulating economic

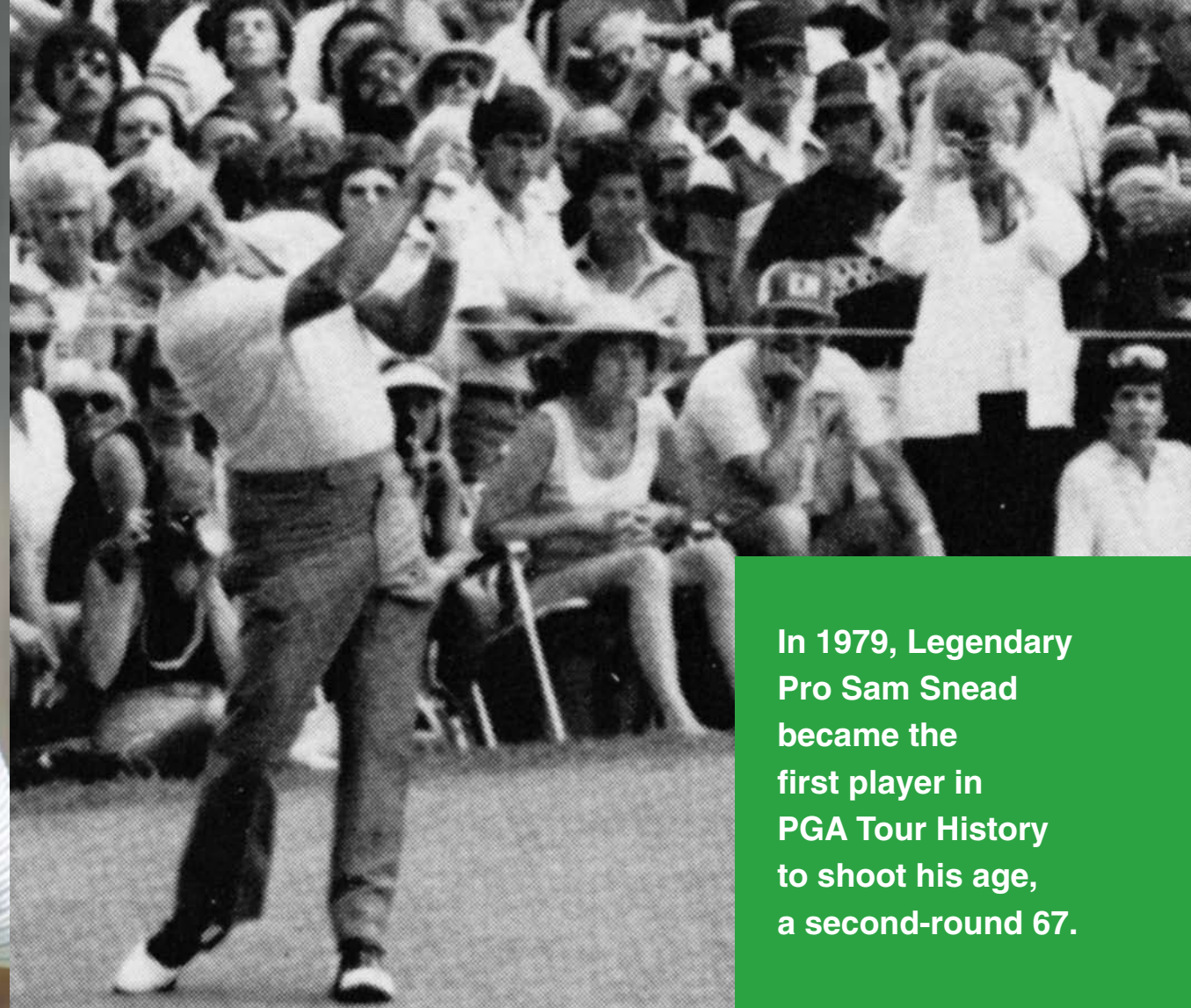
activity and helping to generate charitable contributions for local non-profit organizations that are the backbone of our community."

Deere uses its various sponsorship benefits to expand and deepen relationships with prospective and current business partners while increasing worldwide consumer awareness of its esteemed brand and products through international television, radio, print and internet exposure.

Meanwhile, the Quad Cities and surrounding communities benefit from the charitable programs made possible by the tournament. In the year 2009 alone, some 500 local charities benefited to the tune of \$4.63 million.

Additionally, the tournament annually has a direct and indirect economic impact of an estimated \$25 million on the Quad Cities economy, according to a recent study conducted by the Quad City Convention Bureau.

**Sean O'Hair 1st time
Victory at the 2005
John Deere Classic
Catapulted him to
PGA Tour Rookie
of the Year Honors.**



**In 1979, Legendary
Pro Sam Snead
became the
first player in
PGA Tour History
to shoot his age,
a second-round 67.**

At the core of Deere's title sponsorship is a long-term, financially sound, mutually beneficial business partnership between Deere & Company and the PGA Tour. Key elements of Deere & Company's initial contract with the Tour were:

Deere & Company assumes title sponsor of the Tour's Quad City event through the year 2006. For the first time, the tournament would receive network TV exposure. Deere becomes the "Official Golf Course Equipment Supplier of the PGA TOUR" with the aim of boosting the already strong performance of its Golf & Turf Division. The Tour agrees to lease Deere's full range of golf and turf equipment - along with utility vehicles and selected construction equipment - to maintain each of the Tour's 25 owned-and-operated Tournament Players Club courses.

As courses are added to the TPC network, each new course will be groomed with John Deere equipment. The initial nine-year title sponsorship agreement - since extended through 2016 - revolved around three consecutive three-year equipment leases underwritten by John Deere Credit Company and paid for by TPC network courses. Deere entered the golf course equipment business 1986 and utilizes its PGA TOUR relationship to solidify and build on its market leadership.

Deere donated 385 acres of scenic company-owned land near company headquarters in Moline for construction of the Tournament Players Club Deere Run. A public daily fee facility that also offers membership privileges, the TPC Deere Run became the site of the John Deere Classic starting in year 2000. The PGA TOUR designs, constructs and operates the TPC Deere Run. D.A. Weibring, three-time champion at the Quad City tournament, served as player design consultant,

and worked closely with golf course architect Chris Gray of PGA TOUR Design Services. Unlike most other courses in the TPC network, Deere Run does not have a residential component.

Deere's title sponsorship agreement not only is one of the longest on the Tour, its unique elements represent an evolution of the traditional forms of sports sponsorship.

"The days of corporations paying out millions of dollars merely to display their logos and invite some customers to play in a pro-am are long gone," said Sean Brenner, managing editor of the Chicago-based IEG Sponsorship Report, which tracks the sports marketing industry.

"The integrated sponsorship arrangement between Deere & Company and the PGA TOUR is a new kind of sports marketing partnership that provides concrete economic benefits to both parties while offering traditional sponsor benefits, such as hospitality, television and promotional opportunities," Brenner said.

"Because the sponsorship is structured to capitalize on unique aspects of Deere's core business, the company and the golf tournament will be truly linked," Brenner said.

Deere recently extended its title sponsorship and its golf course equipment licensing agreement through 2016. Agreements extended through 2016 make Deere the Tour's "Official Golf Course Equipment Leasing Company," the "Official Landscape Products Supplier," and "Official Irrigation Supplier."

For a tournament that has such a rich history of turbulence, Deere provides the solid foundation it will need if it is to grow bigger and better in the years to come.