



U.S. Senior Challenge

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Shaw Pritchett leads Alabama-Georgia team to U.S. Senior Challenge win

Posted: Thursday, May 1, 2025

By: Julie Williams

Shaw Pritchett recognizes that his U.S. Senior Challenge-winning foursome may look, on the outside, like a bit of a mishmash. The team, captained by Pritchett's good golf buddy Michael Arasin, from Auburn, Alabama, included players from both sides of the Georgia-Alabama line. Montgomery, Alabama, resident Pritchett hadn't even met one of them, Georgian Danny Nelson, until the practice round at Hobe Sound (Florida) Golf Club this week.

"Maybe it was a little bit of a hodgepodge of putting a team together," said the newly-55 Pritchett, "but it was nice that it worked out." Three of the four members roomed together in an AirBNB for the week and generally enjoyed the rare team event in senior amateur golf. And that produced good results for all.

Pritchett, who has won the Alabama Senior Amateur the past two years, got the recruiting call from Arasin early in the season to play the national senior team event that rotates to venues around the country. And Pritchett turned out to be a good recruit: He contributed a score each round in the play-four-count-three format.

In fact, Pritchett very nearly locked up individual honors in the Senior division. With consistent rounds of 73-75-74, Pritchett finished just one shot behind winner Charlie Stevens of Wichita, Kansas.

Pritchett stayed in the game even as winds picked up in the final two rounds and wreaked havoc on a difficult Hobe Sound layout that features several sandy, native areas.



“I think each day the pin positions got a lot harder,” Pritchett said. “Today they were really, really hard and then the other thing, probably the second and third day, the wind blew about 15 mph consistently, the whole time. It was a grind out there the last two days, just to get the ball in the hole. You hit one in the middle of the fairway and normally you say I’ve got this, this should be an easy par, let me go find a birdie. That was just not happening on this golf course.”

One key indicator of strength of venue stands out on the U.S. Senior Challenge leaderboard: The amount of scoring fluctuation among the top players in the field.

Arasin, a talented player who perennially contends in senior amateur tournaments, backed up opening rounds of 72-73 with a final-round 80 and finished T-5 in the Senior division. Stan Humphries, who had been a key player on the Louisiana team that had a six-shot second-round lead, logged rounds of 71-74-83 and was T-11.

Hobe Sound is a private course that doesn’t often open its doors to national events, and Pritchett found the conditioning excellent though the challenge constant.

“I cannot say enough about the conditioning,” he said. “The holes were really challenging, pretty much every hole was a challenge. You didn’t really have a breather on the entire course.”

Thanks in part to Pritchett’s consistent play, the Alabama-Georgia team finished at 25 over and just one shot ahead of the Louisiana team captained by Grady Brame, who posted a final-round 73 that was one of the best rounds of the day. It just wasn’t quite enough to keep his team in the lead spot, though it did secure Brame a top-5 finish in the Senior division.

Team Michigan finished third two shots behind Louisiana and the Florida team captained by William Boockford, which had led after the first round, finished fourth 10 shots behind that. Led by Charlie Stevens, the Senior division medalist, Team Kansas rounded out the top 5.

Donny Phillips of Suwanee, Georgia, claimed the Super Senior division title in a playoff with Memphis resident David Apperson after both finished at 14 over. Chris Hall of Acworth, Georgia, the final member of the winning Georgia-Alabama team, was fourth in that division. Lee Sandlin of Dallas won the Legend division title at 4 over, which was three shots better than Boockford, of nearby Tequesta, Florida. Gary Jeffreys, of El Paso, Texas, was the top Super Legend player at 14 over. That was five shots better than Skip Tellefsen of Jupiter, Florida.

Team Florida takes the early lead at U.S. Senior Challenge

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By: Julie Williams

With a local in the lead at the U.S. Senior Challenge, it's no wonder a Florida squad is also setting the pace in the team competition. Thanks in part to Hobe Sound, Florida, resident Rich Buckner's four birdies on the opening day of the senior team event at Hobe Sound Golf Club, his Florida four-man team has a two-shot lead after the first round.

The U.S. Senior Challenge is a unique – and rare – team event in senior amateur golf. Players compete as part of four-man teams representing their home state or region. While one team champion is crowned, individual champions will be named in each of the four age divisions: senior, super senior, legends and super legends. World Amateur Golf Ranking points are also awarded.

Buckner, winner of last year's Florida Azalea Senior and also a past champion of Golfweek's Senior Tournament of Champions, fared well enough with his 2-under 70 to lead the Senior division individually while also playing the lead role for his team.

To help matters, teammate William Boockford of Tequesta, Florida, the team captain, contributed a 1-over 73 and leads the Legends division. Boockford won the Legends division at the Golfweek Senior Tournament of Champions in December.



The U.S. Senior Challenge features a play-four-count-three format, and Doug Clapp contributed the third score – a 3-over 75 – for the leading Florida team that left them with a combined score of 2 over. That was two better than the Michael Arasin-captained team from Alabama and Georgia. Arasin's even-par 72 left him part of a tie for fifth in the Senior division.

A team from Louisiana, captained by Grady Brame, is third at 6 over. Teams from Kansas and Michigan are tied for fourth another shot back.

Hobe Sound, a private golf club in South Florida, rarely opens its doors to outside events, so the venue certainly upped the intrigue for the U.S. Senior Challenge – both in terms of exclusivity and challenge. Hobe Sound underwent a 2019 redesign by Tom Fazio II and as part of that renovation, several native, sandy areas were restored. Those areas, plus undulating greens, can present a challenge for players.

“We’re on a sand ridge that runs through this area – through several prominent golf courses up here,” general manager Jason Hayes said before the tournament. “So we have a lot of areas of those exposed native areas, of native sand, which can be very challenging if (players) don’t find the fairway because they’re in soft, sugar sand.”

Mike Quinlan named Challenge Man of the Year for his role in elevating U.S. Senior Challenge

Posted: Saturday, April 19, 2025

By: Julie Williams

From the many chapters of Mike Quinlan’s golfing life came this realization for Quinlan: The game has always endured within his family. As he was set to receive the Challenge Man of the Year award later this month, Quinlan relayed memories of his relationship with golf while looking at a photo of his father, standing together with his buddies on the golf course.

“The things that he gave to me now carried on,” Quinlan said, detailing how golf became the family game among his wife and children, too. “...Everybody at one time or another held a golf club in their hand and loved the game the same way I do.”



Quinlan, 72, has made contributions back to the game in many arenas, perhaps most notably serving as the current president of the Sun Country Amateur Golf Association as well as the President and Executive Director of the U.S. Senior Challenge organization, which annually runs a state team competition for senior amateurs with a college golf-like scoring component. That tournament will be played April 28-30 at Hobe Sound (Florida) Country Club.

Quinlan has been a part of the latter organization nearly 15 years and has played a substantial role in infusing the event with some much-needed energy. Notably, Quinlan helped get the Sun Country Golf Association on board to run the events – a concept he had seen several Allied Golf Associations around the country putting into practice with national events run in their state. Quinlan also helped forge a partnership with Golfweek four years ago.

Despite his long association with the tournament, Quinlan still was taken aback when the U.S. Senior Challenge Board of Directors brought up his name for the Challenge Man of the Year award.

“I was humbled and really excited and a little bit embarrassed because I’m the executive director, so it seems like a rigged deal,” Quinlan joked.

Quinlan lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and plays out of Albuquerque Country Club (where earlier this month he made his eighth career hole-in-one). His beginning in the game, however, dates to his native Omaha, Nebraska, where his father coaxed him onto the golf course with Cokes and Snickers candy bars. After short stints as an arborist and a small-business owner, Quinlan returned to school then moved to Albuquerque in 1981 for a job with Sandia National Laboratories.

Work and fatherhood forced Quinlan to put golf aside until his 40s, when he began to pursue it competitively.

“After consistently losing to a good friend for several years every weekend, my game improved significantly,” Quinlan said. “After lots of local success I qualified for the 2002 U.S. Senior Open – an amazing and humbling experience. I played in the group directly in front of Tom Watson, Fuzzy Zoeller and Jim Thorpe. Thousands of fans on every hole was a different forum for sure.

“My three brothers were quick to comfort me by saying they were sure I would have played better a few groups back since no one would be watching.”

Quinlan’s competitive career also included two U.S. Senior Amateurs and a U.S. Mid-Amateur. He qualified for the latter at the age of 56.

Now in his early 70s, Quinlan has turned over U.S. Senior Amateur qualifying to “the youngsters” of the senior circuit but enjoys competing in the Legends division in national senior amateur events.

“The enjoyment is still every bit there and I love the competition and it’s just been great – a big part of my life and I love passing it on to others,” Quinlan said. “It’s really helped every aspect of my life, I think, the game of golf and the principles and values associated with it.”

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Outside of two-man best-ball tournaments, there aren't many opportunities for an amateur to compete in a team event. That's what makes the U.S. Senior Challenge, a national senior team event happening this week at Hobe Sound (Florida) Golf Club, so unique.

The tournament, which dates to the mid-1980s, ends up feeling a lot like a college golf tournament. State teams are made up of four individuals, with the best three scores counting toward the team total in each of three rounds. While one team champion is crowned, individual champions will be named in each of four age divisions: senior, super senior, legends and super legends. World Amateur Golf Ranking points are also awarded.

Hobe Sound, a private golf club in South Florida, rarely opens its doors to outside events, so the venue certainly upped the intrigue for the U.S. Senior Challenge.

“We do select them very carefully,” general manager Jason Hayes said, “and our interest with this was we just felt that bringing some of the best senior amateurs to the club and putting our course to the test was something that was very interesting to us.”

Hobe Sound underwent a 2019 redesign by Tom Fazio II and as part of that renovation, several native, sandy areas were restored.

“We’re on a sand ridge that runs through this area – through several prominent golf courses up here,” Hayes said. “So we have a lot of areas of those exposed native areas, of native sand, which can be very challenging if (players) don’t find the fairway because they’re in soft, sugar sand.”

The renovation also opened up the golf course more than it had been previously, which brings the elements into play.

“If it gets windy, due to how open the golf course is, it can get pretty challenging,” Hayes said.

The other challenge lies in undulating greens that, at tournament speed, can be tricky for any level of player.

Hobe Sound really gets interesting, Hayes said, on the back nine – especially by No. 13.

“You have a couple long par 3s and some challenging holes there with very large native areas to navigate,” Hayes said.

Hobe Sound was certainly a draw for the U.S. Senior Challenge field, particularly East Coast teams. The tournament typically bounces around the country giving teams made up of players from the same state the opportunity to travel together and to feel a regional advantage when the tournament comes to their area of the country.

“As we move, there’s a core of about eight to 10 teams that no matter where we bring the event, they will travel with us,” said Mike Quinlan, president and executive director of the U.S. Senior Challenge organization.

Each year before the tournament, a Challenge Man of the Year is named in an effort to recognize a person whose life has been exemplary in family, business, and golf. This year, Quinlan was that man. The 72-year-old from Albuquerque, New Mexico, who also currently serves as the president of the Sun Country Amateur Golf Association, has done much to elevate the U.S. Senior Challenge into a national event, largely by drawing in the help of other associations. The Sun Country Amateur Golf Association, in cooperation with the U.S. Senior Challenge Board of Directors and Golfweek, handles tournament operations.



“The partnership we created four years ago has really blossomed to the point where this year is the first time the tournament has completely filled since probably 2009,” Quinlan said.

“We have 26 teams, from all over the country, and it’s just – really looking forward to this year’s event because it’s a wonderful venue that we were very fortunate to be able to partner with. Great time of year in Florida and it should be really an exciting event.” Those 26 teams are made up of 104 players, with 22 states represented. Before this year, no more than 18 teams had ever competed in an event.

In this year’s field, the farthest player will come from Seattle. That’s another interesting wrinkle to the U.S. Senior Challenge: The majority of teams are formed by a state captain representing participating states, but in some cases, teams may not meet until they show up for the practice round. That’s because individuals who are not part of their state’s team can also compete in the tournament, and organizers work to group them into teams from the same state, when possible, or regionally.

A team winner and runner-up will be crowned as well as an individual champion for each age division. The 54-hole event begins April 28.

