

PGA Pro at Whitewater

PGA Pro Makes New Home In Thunder Bay at Whitewater

by Scott A. Sumner

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Golfers of Thunder Bay are fortunate to have former PGA Tour player Jim Jamieson as Director of Golf at the new Whitewater Golf Club. It was fun to sit down with Jim and find out about his history, professional career, teaching approach and thoughts on the Whitewater course.

"I was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan and raised in Molene, Illinois, home of the John Deere Classic that will be played this week on the PGA Tour. I started that tournament in 1969 with a \$25,000 purse," said Jim Jamieson. "We have to come up with \$50,000. - \$25,000 for the purse and \$25,000 for expenses. Now it has involved into a major event." Jamieson hasn't played the Quad Cities since 1997 when Tiger played there his first year. "It was spectacular. We sold it out in a hour when they found out Tiger was playing." notes Jamieson.

"I started golfing when I was 7. We lived a block and 1/2 from Oakwood Country Club, a nine hole course. Where I was going to grade school, it was right on the fifth fairway, so I would caddie with my dad and play on weekends with him. Eventually we joined Short Hills Country Club in the next town which had a pro and that's how I started golfing," notes Jamieson. "I could break 80 when I was 10 years old and was a good athlete who played football and basketball. I worked at it because I had good timing. I knew at 15 I wanted to be a touring pro and received a full scholarship at Oklahoma State University." Jamieson played there



and was an all American, in the NCCAA championship Division 1. The Oklahoma State area is home to current PGA Tour players Bob Tway, Scott Verplank and Danny Edwards who play at Oak Tree as well as Senior players Doug Tewell and Gil Morgan. "We won the the Big 8 every year and were 1st once and 2nd twice in the NCCAA. I was all Amercian twice." states Jamieson who had a good collegite career.

Jim Jamieson went to Vietnam for 1 year as well as another couple years in the service before starting on the PGA Tour in 1970. He qualified in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida where there were

220 guys for 35 spots. Jamieson finished 17th. "I was fortunate to keep my card and I made the top 60 two years in a row. 1972 was my best year," said Jamieson who played from 1970 to 1978 in about 180 PGA Tour events. "I won three tournaments. My best year was 1972 where I finished 5th in the Masters, 2nd in the PGA, won the Western was 2nd at Arnolds tournament and 2nd at the Southern. That year I made \$150,000. If I was to duplicate that this year (2004) I would probably make about \$2.5 million. When I won the Western I won \$50,000. Yesterday Steve Ames won close to \$900,000."

Life on the PGA tour was a lot of travelling for Jim Jamieson. "I always flew to the west coast because I was with Chrysler. They gave us a car to use. I lived in Florida near Tarpon Springs. We always had a car there as well. I enjoy people, so I always did the outings and all the charities. You played on Wednesday Pro Ams. On Sunday nights you would be picked up to go Des Moines, Iowa for a big tournament run by Ruan a large trucking company," notes Jamieson. "The owners wife had MS so Hale Irwin and I did that. On Monday night we'd be picked up by some other jet to take us Sioux Falls, South Dakota to do another Charity and then fly back to Chicago to play the Western. We did that for a stretch of about six weeks, so it was fun."



"It was tremendous life until I broke my hand in 1977, and it ended my career. I fell down three little steps in a hotel in Phoenix, Arizona. I tried to catch myself backwards and broke my thumb and all away across my hand. It's real swollen today. It hurts today. The guy set it wrong by putting the cast on too tight and it was set wrong," states Jamieson. "I should of had it rebroken. When I went down to Iowa City to play a highly skilled doctor said it should be broken and reset right now but I couldn't afford to take six months off. I should of done it."

After the injury Jamieson became the Director of Golf at the Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. That's where Sam Snead was also their Director of Golf for so long. "I was there when we hosted the Ryder Cup Matches in 1979. I worked there in the summers and down at the Atlantis Country Club in Atlantis, Florida a suburb of West Palm Beach in the winters." notes Jamieson. "Next I went to work at Port Clinton, Ohio for the Stouffer family. We built Windberry, an Arnold Palmer designed golf course. From there I owned two of my own golf courses for about 6 years. I sold those and move to Arizona to work for a young man who caddied for me on the tour at the John Jacobs schools for awhile. I met all the guys from Thunder Bay who game down to my golf school. Last year we had about 40 people



from Thunder Bay."

For about 5 years Jim Jamieson has been an instructor. "It is a lot of fun helping people improve their golf and that's how I came here. I came up April and October of last year to take a look at the course after hearing about it from the Thunder Bay people at my school in Arizona. In April they were starting to break ground. I came back in October and Silvio and I designed the learning centre together," smiles Jamieson. "Then we taught Silvio how to play golf. We just kind of negotiated a contract to come up and teach. It's been fun, I enjoy it. The weather has not been good but the golf course has been in great shape. Jeff and his crew have done a wonderful job. It's going to be awesome. I enjoy the course because you have to hit every club in your bag. You must drive the ball well and have a good short game. You have to think you way around this golf course. The holes that we aren't playing yet are the ones that will eat them up. Numbers 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 will be extremely difficult. When they open up 4, 5, 6 its going to be a great track."

"I've met Tom McBroom quite a while ago and I'm impressed with his routing, his drainage, everything he does with a golf course. The greens are kind of subtle, they aren't very undulating, but when you get them up to 10 or 11 they will be difficult to play. You have to put the ball in the right position on certain greens," notes Jamieson. "In September it should be great, it's getting great now. I went down to 18 as you walked in today and its amazing. The fairway almost looks like a green and the green is just beautiful. If we could ever get just 10 good days of weather. The course will be ready when we open 18 holes on July 15, 2004. It will be rough in some spots but overall it will be a wonderful golf course."

Jamieson has 1, 2 and 3 day golf schools, in the morning at 9am and at 5:30 pm. There are individual lessons as well. "The schools in the morning are 4 hours, so I put them on video the first hour, then show them what they are doing wrong and how we are going to correct it. Next we do 1 hour full swing, 1 hour short game, chipping and pitching and another full swing session. Then we have lunch and go back out and do sand and putting. For those that don't belong to Whitewater it also includes a round of golf," notes Jamieson. "In the morning for a non member it is \$199.00. In the evening it is \$179.00. I think you learn more in a golf school when you cover everything. Most people need a little fix or tweaking to get started. We have up to 8 as a maximum number of students in any session. We have a hockey camp this week with the kids - golf in the morning and hockey in the afternoon for a week. I have 5 women on Wednesday and some individuals. As the weather gets better and we get open to the public I'm sure well do very well."

Whitewater has a tremendous golf training facility. The first thing you see is a big green on your left. They'll be no putting there, just chipping, pitching and sand. You'll see a lot sand between both tees. There you can work on your sand iron shots as well as fairway bunkers. Then when you walk up on the tee you work on your pitching like on a par 4 or 5. There will be greens surrounded with sand. We also have a fairway going down there so you work on your driving. It's really like being on course where you can think about hitting different shots, instead of just getting up and hitting it. It gives you actual playing conditions where you are able to think and practice the worst part of your game. Most people don't work on what they do poorly. They work on what they do best and that's why they are only one dimensional," siad Jamieson. "We have two tees on the forward side and a beautiful big tee on the back where we can host our schools, private outings or people who want to have cocktail parties back there."

"When you start practice you should loosen up a little. Hit a few little short shots with some sand irons and then take this first little green out here about 100 yards and hit a few sand wedges, pitching wedges and get some feel for the golf shots you are going to be faced with in the course of the round," notes Jamieson. "Right away most people want to take their driver out. You might hit 9 drivers in a round, but you will hit many puts and wedge shots. If you had a hour to practice you should always first putt for 20 minutes, then chip pitch and hit sand shots for 20

minutes and finally go over to the range and hit some full shots. That would be the sequence.

Always start with putting. 75% of the game is played from 100 yards on in, but most people don't want to practice the short game because it is no fun. They just want to hit balls. When they come up and hit two great shots that's when their brain leaves their body, they have no idea how to finish the hole. As a touring pro, your long game will leave you but your short game never will. If you have some semblance of a short game, that short game will always be with you. It's fun to play and teach people how to play golf correctly, if they have never been taught the procedure to become a better player. People are really starving for attention and want to get better. They can see after a four hour golf school session they mainly pick up their short game, and get better."

"In 1973 at the Masters in the final round I played in the last group with JC Snead. Jack Nicklaus was right in front of us. They say the tournament doesn't start until the final nine on Sunday and that is correct. So many things go through your mind. I think I could of won had I not been thinking so much about the rewards of winning. The guys that win all the time don't think about the money and that's what happened. My mind started to wonder, although I was still in it and only lost by 2 shots after being tied for the lead at the start of Sunday. I did real well, and am real proud of myself but as I reflected back if I would have been a little more focussed," states Jamieson. "You know you talk to the galleries. You really have to have tunnel vision, where you block all that stuff out. But yet again that is my personality. It was wonderful as I was a new guy in town, with a mixed set of clubs and a different kind of body build. When I go back to Augusta a lot those same people remember who you are and can almost tell you every shot you hit. It was a real thrill, because being raised in Molene, that was the start of our golf season. Then to qualify for it and get in and to almost win the Masters, win the Western Open and play in the World Cup with Tom Weiskoff in Melbourne, Australia and represent your country was fabulous."

Make the trip to Whitewater and meet Jim Jamieson. He will help your golf game.
