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MISSISSIPPI GOLF HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2021 INDUCTION CEREMONY DATE ANNOUNCED

Celebration of Golf and Hall of Fame Dinner to be held March 12, 2022 at Country Club of Jackson

(Pearl, MS) The Mississippi Golf Association is honored to announce that four individuals have been selected to be inducted into the third class of the Mississippi Golf Hall of Fame. The Mississippi Golf Hall of Fame celebrated its inaugural class in January of 2019 as it inducted James Carpenter, Cissy Gallagher, Ken Lindsay, Mike Taylor, and Robbie Webb, Sr. In 2020, the second class of the Mississippi Golf Hall of Fame was inducted which included Eddie Merrins, Pete Brown, Mary Mills, Sam Hall, and Johnny Pott.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony of the 2021 class had to be postponed earlier this year but the Mississippi Golf Association is extremely excited to announce that a date has finally been set to honor this wonderful 2021 Class! We look forward to the Celebration of Golf and Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony which will be held on March 12, 2022 at the Country Club of Jackson. We hope that everyone will be able to join us for the Celebration of Golf Dinner as we will remember the tremendous year of golf for Mississippi, recognize our 2021 Champions and Players of the Year, award the Robbie Webb Award for Outstanding Contributions to Junior Golf, and unveil our 2021 Class of the Mississippi Golf Hall of Fame.

The Mississippi Golf Hall of Fame looks to recognize those individuals who have made a profound impact on the game of golf in the Magnolia State and feel the class of 2021 embodies the core values and honorable traditions of the game of golf. The Mississippi Golf Association and Golf Hall of Fame are honored to announce the class of 2021.

Ben Nelson



Ben F. Nelson, Jr. was born in Canton, MS where he grew up playing golf at Canton Country Club under golf professionals Leo Silva and Robbie Webb. Nelson graduated from Canton High School in 1962 and furthered his education at Mississippi State University where he was a member of the golf team and graduated in 1966. Following graduation, Nelson became an Assistant Golf Professional under Johnny Stahl at Vicksburg Country Club from 1967-1968, and in 1969 became the Head Golf Professional at Live Oaks Golf Club in Jackson, MS; he became a partner in 1982 and continued to hold both positions through 1987. During his time as a Head Golf Professional, Nelson served on the Board of the Gulf States Section of the PGA of America as Secretary from 1974-1975, Treasurer from 1976-1977, and President from 1978-1980. In 1979, Nelson was awarded the Gulf States Section, PGA of America Professional of the Year, and was the recipient of the PGA of America Professional Development Award in 1980 & 1983. In 1985, Nelson was instrumental in working to bring the PGA of America and Mississippi State University together to form the Professional Golf Management Program which is the second oldest program in the country. Nelson's success in golf administration led him to becoming a major part of the PGA TOUR beginning in 1987. Nelson served as a PGA TOUR Rules Official from 1987-1993 followed by serving as a PGA TOUR Tournament Director for 10 years spanning from 1993-2003. Nelson then moved over to the PGA Champions Tour where he served as a Tournament Director from 2005-2008. During this time Nelson officiated over 40 major golf championships including The Masters, U.S. Open, The Open Championship, The PGA Championship, The Player's Championship, The Ryder Cup, and The President's Cup where he was instrumental in helping to design and implement the format of The President's Cup and served as the Tournament Director from its inception until 2003. In addition to Nelson's achievement on the PGA Tour and PGA Champions Tour, in 2001 he became partner in Ben Nelson Golf and Outdoor which covers Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and western Tennessee. In 1995 Nelson was inducted into the Mississippi State University Athletic Hall of Fame, and in 2003 was inducted into the Gulf States Section, PGA of America, Hall of Fame

Lou Weddington Hart



Lou Weddington Hart was born in Meridian, MS on June 7, 1952. Hart was raised in Meridian where she attended Meridian High School from 1967-1970. Following high school, Hart continued her education and golf career at Meridian Junior College from 1970-1972 where she was the first woman to compete on the men's golf team. During her time at Meridian Junior College, Hart won her first of nine Mississippi Women's State Amateurs in 1970, a title she defended in 1971. She was a member of the undefeated junior college golf team in 1972, and was the recipient of the H.M. Ivy Award as a top student. Garnering recognition for her superb golf talent, Hart was awarded a scholarship to Florida State University where she attended from 1972-1974. During her time at Florida State, Hart continued her dominance of the Mississippi Women's State Amateur as she defended her title once again in 1972 & 1973. Following her collegiate career, Hart began working at Holiday Inn South from 1976-1981 and was recognized as the Sales Director of the Year in 1978-1979. From 1981-1982, Hart worked at the Country Club of Jackson before landing at Northwood Country Club and Meridian Community College where she coached from 1993-2006 and collected 7 NJCAA Region 23 Titles, a Runner-Up and 3rd Place finish in the NJCAA National Championship, and 3 MACJC State Championships. Hart was a 7-time Region 23 Coach of the Year and during her tenure coached 12 NJCAA All Americans including 5 First Team honorees and 4 NJCAA Academic All Americans. As a golfer, Hart is one of Mississippi's most decorated amateurs. Beyond her record 9 Mississippi Women's State Amateur Titles, Hart captured 6 Mississippi Women's Senior Amateur Titles, and 5 Mississippi Women's Four-Ball Titles. She was a 10-time member of the MS team in the Southeastern Women's Amateur Team Championship and garnered National recognition as she was a Quarterfinalist at the Women's Southern Amateur in 1978. Hart qualified for the USGA National Amateur in 1979, was both medalist and qualifier for the US Women's Mid-Amateur in 1987 and 1991, and competed in 5 USGA Senior Women's Amateurs where she made match play all 5 times. Throughout her life Hart was a valued and active member of her community and of Northwood Country Club. She was a two-time President of the MWGA (Mississippi Women's Golf Association), Secretary of NJCAA Golf Coaches Association, and in 2003 was recognized by the MWGA for her contributions to golf in Mississippi. Lou Weddington Hart was a charter member (2002) of the Meridian College Hall of Fame, charter member (2007) of the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior College Sports Hall of Fame, and in 2007 was inducted into the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame where she joined her father, H.G. Weddington, as the only father/daughter members. In 2015, Hart was also inducted into the National Junior College Golf Coaches Hall of Fame.

Randy Watkins



Randy Watkins was born on September 18, 1961 in Atlanta, Ga. Raised in Jackson, Ms. he graduated from Manhattan Academy where he was the MVP of the golf team 4 straight years. In 1977, at the age of 15, he won the PGA National Junior Championship played at Walt Disney World resort in Orlando. He was named an AJGA All American in 1978 and selected to play on the 1st PGA Junior Ryder Cup Team in 1979. The US Team was victorious over the European and South American Teams played in Caracas, Venezuela. Turning down Scholarship offers from, Georgia, Florida, Texas, North Carolina, and South Carolina Watkins signed with the Ole Miss Rebels in 1979. He was the MVP for 3 of his 4 years, won the Individual SEC Championship in 1982, was 1st Team All-SEC in 1982 and 1983 and was an NCAA All American in 1982. After college, Watkins qualified for the PGA TOUR on his 1st attempt by finishing T24th in the finals played at TPC Sawgrass in December of 1983. Watkins played in more than 40 PGA TOUR events in 1984-1985 and his highest finishes were T-7th in the 1984 Quad Cities Open and T-5th in the 1985 Magnolia Classic. He also was the 1st Mississippian to ever lead a round in the Magnolia Classic when he opened with a 65 in round one in 1985. Watkins also won the 1992 MPGA Invitational at Clarksdale Country Club. Watkins was honored as the recipient of the MGA's Robbie Webb Award in 2006 for his continued contributions to Junior golf in Mississippi. He was inducted into the Ole Miss Sports Hall of Fame in 1996 and will be inducted into the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame in 2021. Watkins also served as Tournament Director for the PGA TOUR's Viking Classic from 2005-2011. He currently owns and operates 3 courses in the Jackson Metro area under the Randy Watkins Golf Group umbrella.

Jim Gallagher, Jr.



James Thomas Gallagher, Jr. was born on March 24, 1961 in Johnstown, PA. Shortly after his birth his family moved to Marion, IN where Gallagher grew up and attended Marion High School from which he graduated in 1979. Following high school, Gallagher signed to play golf for the University of Tennessee where he was a member of the 1980 SEC Championship Team, named to the All SEC Team in 1980 & 1982, and was honorable mention for All-American in those same years. While attending the University of Tennessee, Gallagher also captured victories at the 1982 and 1983 Indiana Amateur Championship and the 1983 Indiana State Open (as an amateur). In August of 1983, Gallagher turned Professional and qualified for the PGA TOUR where he competed full time until 2000 before playing a very reduced schedule in 2001. His Professional wins include the 1985 Magnolia Classic (now the Sanderson Farms Championship), 1985 Charley Pride Classic, 1990 Gerald Ford Invitational, 1990 Greater Milwaukee Open, 1993 Anheuser Bush Classic, 1993 Tour Championship, and the 1995 Kmart Greater Greensboro Open and Fedex St. Jude Classic. Gallagher was the member of the 1991 Four Tours World Championship USA victorious team, a member of the 1993 Ryder Cup USA victorious team, and a member of the 1994 President's Cup USA victorious team. Outside of the ropes, Gallagher has been a constant in support of growing the game. In 1984 he assisted PGA Section Professionals with the Dr. Pepper Junior Clinics, he helped support what is now the Sanderson Farms Championship, and helped promote junior golf and The First Tee of Central Mississippi. In 1989, Gallagher moved to Greenwood, MS where he still currently resides to this day with his family. Since his time competing, Gallagher worked as a golf analyst for the USA Network from 2002-2006 as well as a golf analyst for ESPN, NBC, and CBS golf coverage. Currently Gallagher serves as a golf analyst for the Golf Channel, a position he has now enjoyed for seven years. Gallagher was inducted into the Indiana Golf Association/PGA Hall of Fame in 1994, and the University of Tennessee Athletic Department Hall of Fame in 2016.

For more information on the Mississippi Golf Hall of Fame and the Class of 2021 please visit the Mississippi Golf Association online at www.missgolf.org. Table Sponsors and tickets will be available for purchase online through the MGA beginning in November.

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