2nd U.S. Adaptive Open – Inside the Field

July 10-12, 2023, Pinehurst Resort & C.C. (Course No. 6)
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FIELD NOTES – Among the 96 golfers in the 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open field, there are:

Oldest Competitors: Bruce Hooper (77, born 6/20/1946), Linda Port (75, born 1/19/1948), Dennis Walters (73, born 9/14/1949)

Youngest Competitors: Russell Aide (16, born 6/1/2007), Sophia Howard (16, 10/7/2006), Luke Carroll (17, 7/13/2005)

Average Age of Field: 38.1

Field breakdown by age:
15-20: 9 competitors
21-30: 26 competitors
31-40: 21 competitors
41-60: 31 competitors
60-81: 9 competitors

U.S. States Represented – There are 30 states represented in the 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open field:

Florida (11), Arizona (6), Alabama (4), Michigan (4), Pennsylvania (4), California (3), Idaho (3), North Carolina (3), Texas (3), Colorado (2), Indiana (2), Kansas (2), Kentucky (2), Maryland (2), Nebraska (2), New York (2), Tennessee (2), Arkansas (1), Connecticut (1), Georgia (1), Hawaii (1), Illinois (1), Massachusetts (1), Missouri (1), New Jersey (1), Nevada (1), Oregon (1), Utah (1), Virginia (1), Washington (1)

International – There are 11 countries represented in the field:

United States (70), Canada (9), Republic of Korea (4), Japan (3), England (2), Ireland (2), Sweden (2), Argentina (1), Belgium (1), Denmark (1), South Africa (1)

Players from North Carolina: (3): Conor Ennis (Wake Forest), Steven Pennell (West Jefferson), Eliseo Villanueva (Fayetteville)

USGA Champions (2): Kim Moore (2022 U.S. Adaptive Open), Simon Lee (2022 U.S. Adaptive Open)

Bob Jones Award Winners: Dennis Walters (2018)

There is one LPGA*USGA Girls Golf participant in the field: Amy Bockerstette

One player will celebrate a birthday during the championship: Trevor Stephens will turn 38 on July 12

Player Profiles

Kurtis Barkley, 35, of Canada, won the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open male short stature flight. Barkley, who was born with severe scoliosis, began to play golf at 3 years old. He regularly competes on the G4D (Golf for Disabled) Tour, a DP World Tour-sponsored, seven-event tour that utilizes the same courses during the same tournament weeks as the DP World Tour event. He is one of 22 players in the field with a Handicap Index® better than 0.

Adam Benza, 36, of Hellertown, Pa., lost his leg to Ewing's sarcoma at age 9. Along with fellow Adaptive Open competitor Chad Pfeifer, Benza started a foundation called Moving Foreward that includes several other highly skilled adaptive golfers. Three-time USGA champion Jordan Spieth, whose parents also attended Benza's alma mater, Saucon Valley High School, made the first contribution.

Chris Biggins, 31, of Birmingham, Ala., was born with cerebral palsy, a disability that affects his legs and lower back. He is a PGA professional who currently works as the director of player development at The Country Club of Birmingham. His +1.9 Handicap Index is one of the best in the field.

Joakim Bjorkman, 33, of Sweden, was born with achondroplasia (short stature) and fell in love with golf while watching Tiger Woods compete during the 2000 Open Championship at St. Andrews. Bjorkman has established himself as a top professional in the disabled ranks, winning 35 titles around the world, including a Swedish Open Championship in 2016, four straight Italian Open Championships from 2015-2018 and a European Championship in 2006.

Amy Bockerstette, 24, of Phoenix, Ariz., who was born with Down syndrome, has a close relationship with 2019 U.S. Open champion Gary Woodland. Bockerstette founded the "I Got This" Foundation to provide golf instruction, playing opportunities and organized events for people with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities. She is also an active participant in LPGA*USGA Girls Golf.

Jack Bonifant, 33, of Kensington, Md., suffered a fractured skull at 6 weeks old that required nine hours of surgery and 10 years of rehabilitation and caused him to lose feeling on the entire left side of his body. Bonifant found inspiration from Jim Abbott, who was born without a right hand and pitched for 10 seasons in Major League Baseball. Bonifant earned a first-alternate spot in the 2021 U.S. Amateur Four-Ball Championship with partner Taso Scilaris.

Kenny Bontz, 53, of Parrish, Fla., was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at age 11, and with Ewing sarcoma in his leg at 19 years old. Bontz underwent six knee replacements in nine years, leading him to choose amputation to get his life back after many years of opioid and alcohol addiction. He is a member of the EDGA (formerly the European Disabled Golf Association).

Erik Bowen, 43, of Oakland, Calif., is a double lower limb amputee, losing his feet due to strep and sepsis complications. He competed in qualifiers and championships for the Colorado Golf Association and Northern California Golf Association before the amputations. This is his first USGA championship. He is currently vice president of finance at Osiris Ventures.

Grace Anne Braxton, 51, of Fredericksburg, Va., won the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open female intellectual impairment category. She is a member of the 2022 class of the Virginia State Golf Association Hall of Fame. At age 8, she became involved in Special Olympics and has competed on the global stage,

including finishing second at the 2019 Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi. She was a member of Team USA for the 2019 Solheim Diversity Cup and won the 2021 U.S. Disabled Golf Association Women's Championship.

Ryan Brenden, 47, of Pierce, Neb., was born with proximal femoral focal deficiency, a complex birth defect in which the upper part of the femur is either malformed or missing, and has worn a prosthesis since age 3. In 2018, he won the inaugural U.S. Disabled Open conducted by the U.S. Disabled Golf Association. His 0.4 Handicap Index is one of the best in the field.

Brandon Canesi, 31, of Doral, Fla., is a golf shop supervisor at the Golf Academy of America in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Born without hands, Brandon designs and builds his own extended golf clubs that allow him to anchor under his arms. In 2022, he was a member of the USA team for The Cairns Cup, a Ryder Cup-style event for golfers with disabilities.

Luke Carroll, 17, of Old Hickory, Tenn., will graduate high school in 2024. At age 10, he was diagnosed with transverse myelitis, a neurological disorder of the spinal cord. His great-grandfather, George Stinchcomb, was a golf instructor with Cleveland Metro Parks who shagged balls for Ben Hogan and also made custom golf clubs.

Mario Dino, 20, of Denver, Colo., was born with a form of cerebral palsy that restricts movements on the left side of his body. He is a member of the University of Redlands men's golf team. An accomplished golfer at Mullen High School in Denver, Dino competed in the state championship from 2017-20, finishing second and helping his team earn runner-up honors in his senior season.

Alex Fourie, 30, of Knoxville, Tenn., is a PGA professional who was born in Ukraine with a cleft lip, cleft palate and one arm. Fourie was adopted from a Ukrainian orphanage at age 7 by South African missionaries who were serving in Alabama, where he picked up the game just days after moving to his new home. Fourie now works in roof sales for a construction company and recently began fundraising to support Ukrainian orphans who have been displaced by Russian attacks.

Ken Green, 64, of West Palm Beach, Fla., is a professional golfer who has played on the PGA Tour, the Nationwide Tour and PGA Tour Champions. He won five PGA Tour events between 1985 and 1989 and played on the 1989 USA Ryder Cup Team. In 2009, he lost his leg in an RV accident, and since has suffered from a nerve disorder known as complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS). In 2008, he began competing on PGA Tour Champions, with his last start coming in 2019.

Ann Hayes, 60, of Lee, Mass., won the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open female seated players impairment categorye. Hayes is a librarian who was paralyzed from the waist down in a mountain biking accident at age 44, two years after she took up golf. Nine months after the accident, Hayes was back on the course with the help of a SoloRider cart. She will compete in the seated players category with a 22.9 Handicap Index.

Ryanne Jackson, 25, of St. Petersburg, Fla., won the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open female neurological impairment category. Jackson was diagnosed with scapuloperoneal muscular dystrophy as a college freshman following a decorated high school career in both basketball and golf. She and her two older sisters played college golf after being coached by their father at Northside Christian School, where he continues to lead the golf program. A high school history teacher, Jackson carries a 4.7 Handicap Index.

Lucas Jones, 28, of Louisville, Ky., played high school basketball until a diagnosis of Ewing sarcoma prevented him from participating in contact sports. Treatment for the rare bone cancer caused his right leg to become 3 inches shorter than his left. Jones went on to play golf at Bellarmine University, where he's now an assistant golf coach. He was introduced to the game by Cooper Musselman, for whom he caddied two years on PGA Tour Canada. He was also coached while a youngster by Mike Thomas, father of two-time major champion Justin Thomas.

Simon Lee, 26, of Republic of Korea, survived a two-hole aggregate playoff to earn the title of men's overall champion in last year's inaugural U.S. Adaptive Open. He has competed in numerous events as a professional on the Korean PGA Tour and returns this year with the best Handicap Index in the field with a plus 3.7. Lee was diagnosed with a form of autism that makes communicating particularly difficult. He is the son of a diplomat who served stints in Washington, D.C., and New York.

Michael Madsen, 42, of Meridian, Idaho, picked up golf during a two-year religious mission in Orlando and found work on a golf course greenkeeping crew when he returned to Idaho. He was diagnosed with osteosarcoma in his left tibia, and when the cancer returned six years after multiple surgeries, his leg was amputated. Madsen carries a +0.6 Handicap Index.

Evan Mathias, 27, of Indianapolis, Ind., was born with congenital defects that led to amputation of both legs at 8 months old. Mathias first picked up a club at age 5 and has been playing since, including on the Marian University golf team from 2014-18. He has won multiple Georgia State Amputee championships and the 2019 ParaLong Drive Cup.

Kim Moore, 42, of Portage, Mich., went wire-to-wire to earn the title of women's overall champion in last year's inaugural U.S. Adaptive Open. She was born without a right foot, a severely clubbed left foot and a slight case of spina bifida**.** She played four years of college golf at the University of Indianapolis, where she was ranked in the NCAA Division II top 10 as an individual and was all-conference all four years. She received the first-ever Kim Moore Spirit Award, which was named after her and is given to one female golfer in each of three college divisions who exemplifies perseverance and high character. She is a PGA teaching professional and the head women's golf coach at Western Michigan University.

Chad Pfeifer, 41, of Caldwell, Idaho, won the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open male leg impairment category. Pfeifer is no stranger to high-level competition. Since losing his left leg in 2007 in an explosion while serving for the U.S. Army in Iraq, he has become a mainstay on the adaptive golf circuit, winning multiple amputee titles.

Kipp Popert, 25, of England, won the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open male neurological impairment category. Popert has been playing golf since he was 3 years and has become one of the world's best golfers with a disability. He was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at birth and has undergone several surgeries. In May of 2022, Popert won the Golf for the Disabled (G4D) Tour Betfred British Masters. In 2021, he won the European Disabled Golf Association (EDGA) Hero Open and finished third at the EDGA Dubai Finale.

Brandon Rowland, 42, of Jackson, Tenn., is a bi-lateral knee amputee, having lost both legs below the knee after being diagnosed with disseminated intervascular coagulation at a young age. While this will be Rowland's second USGA championship, he has caddied in the U.S. Amateur and in both local and final qualifying for the U.S. Open.

Mandi Sedlak, 43, of Kearney, Neb., is a decorated amateur adaptive athlete who captured the 2016 and 2017 Women's National Amputee Championships. Sedlak, who had her leg amputated below the knee at age 21, co-founded Women's Orthotics & Prosthetics and Prosthetic Healthcare Services with her husband.

Natasha Stasiuk, 25, of Canada, is one of nine Canadians competing in the championship. Stasiuk is an amateur competing in the intellectual disability category who carries a 4.2 Handicap Index. She credits renowned golf coach Carrie Vaughn for inspiring her to stay in the game.

Conor Stone, 28, of Ireland, won the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open male arm impairment category. Stone was diagnosed with scoliosis as a teenager and underwent a 15-hour operation to have his spine corrected, leaving him almost no rotation or flexibility. He recently competed in the Pas de Calais Paragolf Open on the European Disabled Golf Association (EDGA) Tour. He also represented Ireland in the European Team Championship for Golfers with Disability.

Kevin Valentine, 49, of Winter Garden, Fla., lost his left leg below the knee following a golf career at Oakland University in Rochester, Mich. Valentine is the lead pastor at Kensington Church Orlando as well as the chaplain for the Orlando Magic of the NBA. He has competed in several U.S. Amateur and U.S. Mid-Amateur qualifiers.