LIBERTY CORNER, N.J. (Feb. 5, 2024) – The USGA has announced the recipients of its Annual Awards, honoring three individuals for their significant contributions for the good of the game in the areas of volunteerism, turfgrass advancement and golf literature.

E. Lee Coble, of Richmond, Va., is the recipient of this year's Joe Dey Award for his decades-long service to golf and for fostering a more inclusive game. Bob Farren, director of golf course management at Pinehurst Resort & Country Club, is the Green Section Award honoree for serving as a leader in sustainable golf course maintenance practices. "Serving Herself: The Life and Times of Althea Gibson," by Ashley Brown, Ph.D., has been selected as the winner of the USGA's Herbert Warren Wind Award.

"This year we celebrate barrier-breakers, innovators and individuals who have witnessed – and overcome – great challenges in their respective fields of the game," said Mike Whan, CEO of the USGA. "We recognize the incredible accomplishments of Lee, Bob and Ashley and are thrilled to have them as our Annual Award honorees this year."

The USGA will recognize the recipients at its Annual Awards Dinner in Nashville, Tenn., on Saturday, March 2, during the organization's Annual Meeting.

Joe Dey Award – E. Lee Coble

Lee Coble's lifelong love of golf has led to decades of service to the game, sharing his knowledge, his time and his boundless energy to community golf initiatives. His volunteer resume includes serving as the 34th president of the Virginia State Golf Association (VSGA) as well as mentorship and fundraising for numerous junior programs while advocating for accessibility for everyone, including Hook A Kid on Golf, The First Tee of Richmond and Chesterfield County, and the VSGA Foundation's Robins Junior Programs at Independence Golf Club.

A longstanding USGA Committee member, Coble's entry into the game came as an 11-year-old, caddieing at a nine-hole, racially segregated course in rural Mebane, N.C. That's where he grew his desire to play and perseverance to overcome obstacles – values that would guide him on his lifelong journey from being denied a spot on his high school golf team to becoming the first African American to lead the VSGA. Coble currently serves as the head golf coach at Virginia Union University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Richmond, Va., a commitment driven by his desire to grow the game and be a positive force for the next generation.

Presented annually by the USGA since 1996, the award is named for Joseph C. Dey Jr., the USGA's executive director from 1934-1968, who was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1975 and devoted his life in service to the game.

USGA Green Section Award – Bob Farren, CGCS

A highly regarded leader in golf course management, Robert Farren Jr. began his storied 45-year career in golf course management in 1979. Three years later, he joined Pinehurst Resort & Country Club and advanced to his current role as director of golf course management in 2001. Since that time, Farren has been a principal force behind a dedicated effort to restore Pinehurst's historic course architecture while advancing the environmental and economic sustainability of its now 11-course footprint.

Those efforts have included reducing more than 40 acres of irrigated turf in favor of signature sandscapes that feature native wiregrass, converting greens and fairways to more drought-tolerant turfgrasses, eliminating resource-intensive overseeding throughout the property, and championing training for his team. He was also a principal founding partner of the Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Program, launched in the Pinehurst area last year with the USGA and Sandhills Community College to provide education and mentorship for golf course maintenance workers. Through Farren's tenure, Pinehurst has become a beacon for innovation and a successful testing ground for advanced, data-driven maintenance practices and on-course learning for superintendents, agronomists and others.

Among the 11 USGA championships Farren has worked at Pinehurst, one of his team's most significant agronomic

accomplishments was in delivering a consistent playing experience for the unprecedented back-to-back 2014 U.S. Open and U.S. Women's Open in consecutive weeks on Pinehurst's iconic Course No. 2.

Presented annually since 1961, the USGA Green Section Award honors distinguished service to golf through an individual's work with turfgrass.

Herbert Warren Wind Award – Ashley Brown, Ph.D.: "Serving Herself: The Life and Times of Althea Gibson"

This compelling biography explores Gibson's relentless drive to become the best athlete in not just one, but two competitive sports – and her incredible journey that would eventually break the color barrier in both. Brown, who picked up the game of golf in her 20s, draws on her historical expertise and lifelong love for the sport to tell the story of Gibson's wholehearted pursuit of excellence, first in tennis where she became a paid professional in 1959 and then in golf, becoming the LPGA Tour's first Black player.

Through this insightful look at the cultural influences that shaped women's sports in the 1950s and beyond, Brown shows us a trailblazer who put herself and her ambitions first, to show the world how much she loved being an athlete. That same drive carried through the rest of Gibson's life, propelling her to obtain her college degree after initially leaving school at age 14, to pursue careers in the music and movie industries, and to later advocate for education, physical fitness and youth development through participation in sports, as the book chronicles in vivid and inspiring detail.

Brown is the Allan H. Selig chair in the history of sport and society and an assistant professor of history at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

The Herbert Warren Wind Award recognizes and honors outstanding contributions to golf literature. Brown's book will be on display at the USGA Golf Museum and Library, home to the world's largest collection of golf books and periodicals, with more than 100,000 individual volumes.

In addition to Brown, Coble and Farren, the USGA recognizes 10 Ike Grainger Award recipients, presented to those who have reached a 25-year milestone in volunteerism with the USGA. This year's recipients include Barbara Barrow of San Diego, Calif.; Steve Block of Bethesda, Md.; Scott Brooks of Wichita, Kan.; Sandy Dowling of Osterville, Mass.; Larry Kniseley of Daphne, Ala.; Ellen O'Hara of Mesa, Ariz.; Thomas Schmidt of Brookfield, Wis.; Leslie Schupak of Orlando, Fla.; Leslie Sirbaugh of Jacksonville, Fla.; and Thomas Snell of Diamondhead, Miss.

The USGA's Bob Jones Award recipient will be announced at a later date and celebrated during U.S. Open week in Pinehurst this June.

For more information and a list of past recipients of the USGA's Annual Awards, see usga.org/awards-and-honors.html.

To access images of this year's honorees, please click here.

About the USGA

The USGA is a mission-based golf organization whose purpose is to unify the golf community through handicapping and grassroots programs; to showcase the game's best talent through the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and 13 other national championships and our museum; to provide unbiased global governance with The R&A through the playing, equipment and Amateur Status rules; and to advance issues important to golf's future, with a focus on driving sustainability, accessibility and inclusion. As a nonprofit association, our work and our team are driven to act for the good of the game. For more, visit usga.org.
