

THE CHAMPIONS OF BOGEY GOLF

by Delaney Cha

GOLF IS HARD. You think you have it all figured out, then you have a bad round and the dream of joining the Tour is over. Maybe it's time to stop swinging for the exceptional and start aiming for the unexceptional. Welcome to the Mediocre Golf Association (MGA): a league made for you by people who play like you.

In 2024, Tim Brennan and Mike Conklin, current members of the Kent Island Mediocre Golf Association Chapter, will run the new Lower Shore MGA Chapter.

"Mediocre is good for us," said Brennan. "The MGA is really for the weekend to everyday golfer. If you're too good, you really don't want to join because you won't win that much."

While Maryland currently has two MGA chapters (one in Baltimore and one on Kent Island), the decision to create a new chapter on the Lower Shore made sense to Brennan and Conklin.

"We were a part of the Kent Island Chapter, but sometimes it would be an hour to an hour twenty-minute drive to join in," said Conklin. "After a round of golf, that drive would be a lot to handle."

"We're starting one in the Salisbury area because we didn't want to drive that far. We talked to a few friends down on the lower shore and they were all interested in having a chapter over here," said Brennan. "We'll be able to bring more people to play in our chapter by the location. It would help expand the chapter even further, from Salisbury to Ocean City and even to the Delaware Beaches."

"People who are even vacationing in Ocean City can participate in our tournaments if they belong to other chapters around the country," added Conklin. "I went on a trip a few weeks ago and I was able to play with a chapter out of Augusta, Georgia. I played in theirs because I couldn't play here."

By adding a new chapter, Brennan and Conklin can continue to host the eight mandatory tournaments that are required for chapters to run across the country at prime courses in the Mid-Atlantic. The location is a haven for mediocre golfers to test their skills on incredible Lower Shore courses.

But how do you maintain a level of mediocrity? What is considered mediocre?

"The ideal score in the eyes of the MGA is a 90 on a normal par 72 course," said Brennan. "No one gets shots taken off because it's all handicapped. If you're a 52 handicap player, you don't get shots taken off; you only get shots added to your score if you're a good player and your handicap is under 18."

Brennan continues, "My MGA handicap right now is a 10, so if I play in a tournament, I get 8 shots added to my score. If your handicap is 18 and above, then you play your gross score."

The main goal of the MGA is to not get disqualified from tournaments. If a player shoots anywhere in the 70s or low 80s, they are disqualified from that event. Prizes are awarded to the winner of the tournament, whoever comes in the middle of the pack, and penalties for those who are disqualified.

"The winner usually gets one of those big cardboard checks, and they usually are only winnings of \$0.59 or some other ridiculous amount," said Brennan.

"The winner isn't the only person who gets a prize," said Conklin. "If you're in the middle of the pack, you get the most mediocre award. If you're last, you get the red key which means you get to play up a tee at the next tournament. The person who won has to play back a tee. It really tries to even everything out. It gives everyone an advantage."

But like every other sport, the more someone practices, the better someone can get. So what do you do if you get too good to play mediocre golf?

"You can still play. You can play as a guest or you can get disqualified every week. Some mainly play for the social aspect. On the whim that you don't play well, your score will count," said Conklin.

"It's a lot of fun because it can be as serious or relaxed as you want it to be. We have guys who come out who just wanna drink and play and have fun. If they score well great, if not whatever," said Brennan. "Then some others take it more seriously, grind away at it, and want to win. So it is as serious or laid back as you want it to be. But we do play by USGA rules. There's no gimmies."

With over 100 chapters spread across the United States, Canada, and Australia, all chapters are required to host the same eight events starting in March. There is usually one event per month, parodied after a famous PGA tournament. The

first tournament is always the "Rebel Beach AM-AM" (titled after the Pebble Beach Pro-Am) and is a two-person team tournament. The season ends in November with the Mediocre Golf World Championships located in Las Vegas.

The joys of mediocre golf also help build community and camaraderie within the sport.

"It's really a great way to meet people. I moved here and I only knew one person I worked with who played golf, and I played with him until he moved. So I didn't know a whole lot of people," said Brennan. "I ended up raising one of my kids to play, so I could have someone to play with. But then I met Mike who lived in Salisbury like me, and other people in the Kent Island chapter and now look what happened."

"All of the guys I met in the Kent Island chapter, I wouldn't have known them," said Conklin. "Now there's 20 guys I have something in common with. And even if we're not playing in a tournament, if someone is in the area, we will meet up and play a round together."

It's also important to Brennan and Conklin to keep it cost-effective and as inexpensive as possible.

"Our base membership is \$45 for the year, and then you pay per tournament," said Brennan. "If you show up, you pay. If you don't you don't. Our goal is to keep everything under \$100 for a tournament."

"The fees for each tournament pay for the cost to play, the cart, and a new set of golf balls. If you want to walk the course instead of using a cart, you can, but it would still be the same price," said Conklin.

The celebration of bogey golf is integral to the mission of the Mediocre Golf Association.

"Bogey golf is probably 95% of golfers. You watch the men and the women on TV on the weekends always shooting par or under and that's not us. My goal is to get disqualified from a couple of events. To shoot in the 70s? That would be great," said Brennan.

"I just want to win one," said Conklin.

If you are interested in joining the Lower Shore MGA Chapter or have any questions, feel free to reach out to Tim or Mike. Email lowershoremga@gmail.com, find the chapter on Facebook and Instagram @LowerShoreMGA, or visit the MGA website at www.mgatour.com.

Schedule for 2024 Season (Courses TBD)

MARCH - REBEL BEACH AM-AM

APRIL - THE BASTARDS

MAY - THE MGA

JUNE - F.U. OPEN

JULY - BRATISH OPEN

AUGUST - FORE! CHAMPIONSHIP

SEPTEMBER - DOUCHE BAG INVITATIONAL

OCTOBER - THE LAST GASP

(Press Release on page 17)

