

MEXICAN-AMERICAN GOLF TOURNAMENT TO CELEBRATE 50TH ANNUAL EVENT

An event took place in 1973, that would be repeated for the next 49 years . . . with 2022 marking the 50th anniversary of the annual Scholarship Golf Tournament, which is presented by the Latin-Anglo Alliance Foundation.

The first competition was held at Lincoln Park on September 30, 1973 with many supporters of Mesa College (then known as Mesa Junior College), lawyers, businessmen and included the (then) GJ Chief of Police Karl Johnson.

A total of 22 golfers traversed the Lincoln Park Golf Course on a bright Fall day, in what was labeled a 'blind bogey' and low gross affair. A total of \$310.00 was raised.

The name of the contest was: The Mexican American Scholarship Fund Invitational Golf Tournament. The name was later changed to the Mesa Junior College Mexican American Invitational Golf Tournament. The title was rather lengthy and the name changed many times over the years, but it was always known as a scholarship fund raiser for the Mexican-American community.

Actually, the tourney was the brainchild of Ray Coca, a former athlete and City of Grand Junction employee, who was an advocate for education within the Latino citizenry.

Coca's plan behind the golf tournament was to: 1. Provide scholarship funds for local Latino's to attend college; 2. Encourage Latino adults to become active in the game of golf and hopefully introduce their children to the game; 3. Open up the doors for the Latino families to help raise funds for scholarships, become knowledgeable of the game of golf (at the time, very few were participating at the two courses—Lincoln Park and the Bookcliff Country Club) and influence the youth to attend college.

Twenty years after the 1973 tourney was held, a noticeable difference was seen in the Grand Junction area courses as to the number of Latino golfers.

Coca was the one directing traffic in 1973 but he was flanked by Fred Lopez and Larry Larry Marquez who made up the first golf committee.

As the years turned into decades, many changes were made in the tournament but the basic format continued on. The novice participants understood the complexities of the game and the 'blind bogey' evolved into a scramble, the low gross was phased out and it became more of a team concept.

The tournament was organized and basically ran by the three-man committee plus many volunteers who did a lot of leg work. The committee was responsible for all the registrations, recruited the sponsors for prizes, dealt with the media, handed out the trophies, delivered the prize money and recorded the results plus recruited the scholarship recipients.

Of course, unlike the current tourney, there was not a lavish luncheon which now includes tortilla's and green chili!

Eventually, the entire tournament was handed over to the Latin-Anglo Alliance and it thrived . . . into an elaborate, well organized affair that features many prizes, money for scholarships, great food and a chance to win \$10,000.00 for a hole-in-one!

It has continued to be family friendly and welcomes golfers of all skill levels. The basic philosophy of raising funds to advance a student's educational experience is still the theme. Over the past 30 years, the LAA Foundation has awarded over \$300,000.00 to more than 300 students that exhibited skill to pursue a college education, but lacked the resources. Recipients have attended prestigious schools such as Stanford and Ivy League colleges but many have opted to stay local and attend Colorado Mesa University.

The upcoming 2022 tourney is reputed to be one of the biggest and the best, set for Saturday, September 17, at 9 am on Fruita's Adobe Creek Golf Course. Entry fee will be \$90.00 per individual (\$100 if paid after September 1) and teams will be in groups of four, with typical scramble rules plus Mulligans will be for sale.

Green fees, cart and lunch will be included in the entry fee, along with many prizes and plenty of swag.

All former scholarship winners are encouraged to participate in the 50th, or help at the actual event. Also, the golfers who have played in the early days of the golf tournament are cordially invited to participate in the upcoming annual event.

TO: Paul Cain

FROM: Ray Coca

DATE: May 18, 2022

CONCERNING: The Wrestling Champs Journal

After our last discussion, I polled each Dist. 51 school personally and discovered that there was not any Journals left over, after the wrestling season ended.

Upon explaining why I needed more Journals, with Josh King of Central High School, he offered a solution to have more printed. Of course the Committee of the Colorado Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame (CCNWHOF) wanted to have the Journals available at the upcoming awards ceremony, where over 400 people would be in attendance (May 7, 2022 in Colorado Springs).

Consequently, Josh asked us if he could have more Journals printed. He felt the need to retain the same quality in the reprinting because the Journal represents Dist. 51 schools and athletes. Robert Garcia and I completely agreed. We met with Josh (3-9-22) and gave him the thumb drive for the process.

I believed it was imperative to have the Journals available at the Chapter's annual awards, because the heart of the wrestling community was represented and it will be a positive light on the Western Slope and of course on Dist. 51 Schools as well.

Robert and I view this venture as a team effort and of course . . . the Media Award would not have been possible if we did not work hand-in-hand to create and publish the Journal.

In reviewing the mission statement of the CCNWHOF, it reads: "Preserve the sports history, recognize extraordinary individual achievements and inspire future generations to lofty goals."

Incidentally, the Western Slope was well represented at the awards banquet, as six individuals were honored. They were: Coach Dave Uhrig, Gunnison; Coach Travis Mercado and wrestler Jayleen Sekona, both of CMU; Ray Coca and Robert Garcia of Grand Junction, Media Award Award winners.

We did have a few Journals left over after the banquet and we were thinking about giving them out at the Warrior Classic and maybe for the Grand Junction girls wrestling team, if they travel to any tournaments.