

Perseverance Pays Off for Jason Regan

by Melanie Bonds

I had just stepped into the Anaheim Convention Center on Thursday morning when I ran into Steve Johnson, former superintendent at Capstone Club, Tuscaloosa, AL. “Hey, did you see this!” Steve said, holding a copy of the Golf Industry Show’s *Showtime* and grinning. For there on the front cover was the announcement that Jason Regan of Selma Country Club had won the 2007 GCSAA National Championship at the Pete Dye Challenge Course at Mission Hills Country Club in Palm Springs, California. Regan fired a 1-under-par 71 in the final round to beat the favorite, second round leader, Paul Jett, CGCS of Pinehurst, NC.

Everywhere I went the rest of the day, people from Alabama were talking about Regan’s feat, delighted with his victory. And while much of the tournament hype focused on Jett because of his four previous second-place finishes, Regan was not a newcomer to the competition. He has competed in the championship eight times. Twice he was in the last group of the final round, but did not play well. This February Regan’s performance was one of grace under pressure. He progressively improved his position as the tournament wore on and he was the only player under par in the final round.

Regan said, “After the second round I was within four shots so I felt like I had a chance to win. I played well the first day, but scored eight on the last hole. That was frustrating. That’s the way the course challenged you. If you hit a wayward drive you could easily make a big number. During my practice rounds, I had played the eighteenth hole from the back tee, but when I got to the eighteenth tee during the first round they had moved us up one tee. I still

decided to hit a driver. I believe it would have been fine if I had been on the back tee, but unfortunately it was too much club. It hit the cart path and bounced out of bounds. I shot 72 in the second round and finished strong, birdying 17 and 18 to finish. That was a huge confidence booster going into the third round.”

“One thing I did differently during this Tournament is that I went early enough to play two practice rounds. That really helped. It enabled me to become more familiar with the golf course. There were a lot of hazards on the course so it was important to get in the extra practice rounds.”

Asked what he liked about the course, Regan responded like a true golfer, “I played so good I liked everything about the course.”

Originally, Pete Dye designed the course with waste bunkers. (For those not in the golfing know, a waste bunker is not played as a hazard; you can ground your club.) As they built houses around the golf course the owners wanted water front property so the waste bunkers were converted to water. Thirteen out of eighteen holes on the course have water.

“Visually off the tee it was quite intimidating, I was driving the ball well throughout the Tournament, and hitting my three wood well so I was able to keep it in play and that helped a lot.”

Jason said he liked being in the second to last group.



Jason rallied from four back to win Championship

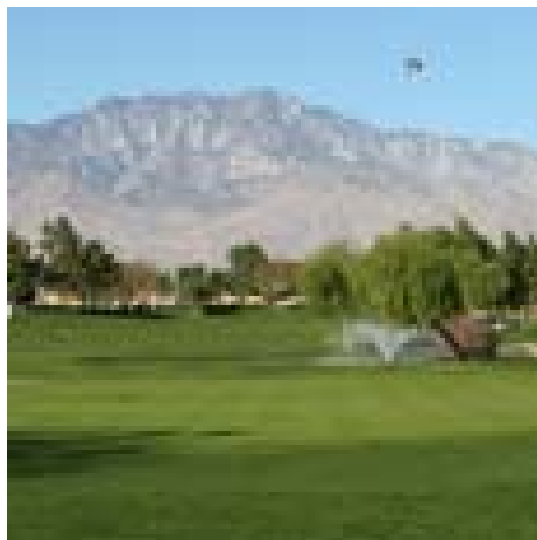
“There is more pressure in the final group. I didn’t feel as if I had as much pressure because I was trying to come from behind.” The last round didn’t start off well. I bogeyed two out of the first three holes. Paul Jett was one under through his first three holes so I was eight shots back with 15 holes to play. I birdied four, five and nine to get to one under on the front nine, and was leading after the front nine but I didn’t know. I asked a GCSAA staffer who was leading on the twelfth hole, and he said he would find out and let me know. He came back on 13 tee and handed me a piece of paper with the scores and said, “You’re leading.” It shocked me for a minute. At the time, I still had five holes to play. I knew then it was important for me to stay in the same routine I had been in all week.”

“Fortunately I was able to hang on and win. I was proud of myself that I handled the pressure and played well. It was an awesome experience. I still can’t believe I won.”

In order to prepare himself for the GCSAA competition, Regan has tried to play in more tournaments in the last three to four years. "I've played in a lot of Alabama Golf Association events in the last couple of years to help familiarize myself again with tournament pressure and conditions. Playing in these tournaments helps you to handle tournament pressure."

"Growing up I played college golf, and I played all the time. I was used to competing in college and having to post my score. After graduating, when I had to go to work, I might only play once a week. The last two to three years I've been getting used to playing in Tournaments again."

"Selma Country Club has been great at supporting me in playing golf. I think there are many benefits to the membership in having a playing Golf Course Superintendent. It allows the super to know exactly what the playing conditions are like, and when to make changes to management practices. They support me in other tournaments as well as Club sponsored tournaments."



Pete Dye Challenge Course at Mission Hills

Regan holds the record for winning the Alabama GCSAA Championship Tournament. He won in 1998, 1999, 2001 and 2003. We hope Jason will compete at Moore's Mill this October.

Regan started playing golf when he was about six years old and has played the game most of his life. He played in high school

and got a golf scholarship to North West Junior College in Phil Campbell, Alabama. After two years he transferred to the University of North Alabama (a Division 2 school) and walked on the golf team. In the Spring of 1992 he was an All Gulf South conference team member.

Jason is thankful for the support of his family, especially his wife, Valerie. "As we all know Superintendent's schedules are anything but predictable, and Valerie has always been there to support me. I wouldn't be where I am today without her support."

Jason and Valerie have a son, Thomas, who is six and a little girl, Kate, who turned one in March. Jason grew up in Tusculumbia, Alabama and his parents still live in that area. He has two brothers in Georgia. His family, as well as this Association and the entire Alabama golfing community are very proud of Jason's accomplishment!

Photos courtesy of The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America