

California's Team for the 2015 USGA State Team Championship

By: Nicole Schroeder

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With another USGA championship right around the corner, teams are being set for the 2015 USGA State Team Championship. This year's competition will be played in Cape Girardeau, Mo. at Dalhousie Golf Club, which is scheduled to take place on September 10-12, 2015.

The USGA Men's and Women's State Team Championships grew out of the celebration of the USGA's centennial in 1995 and have since been held biennially. Starting in 2010, the Men's State Team has been conducted in even-numbered years and the Women's State Team in odd-numbered years.



The 10th hole Dalhousie Golf Club in Cape Girardeau, MO

The championships are open to players from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. State associations may use any criteria of their choosing in selecting their teams, which comprise three amateur, non-college golfers.

California's team is set to comprise of Lynne Cowan, Sara Banke, and Caryn Wilson. A point system is used to determine representatives for the California USGA Women's State Team. Points are earned over a two-year period by participating in the CWC. All points are deleted after the team has been announced and all players begin a new two-year cycle with zero points. To be eligible for the State Team a player must be a female amateur golfer who is a resident of the State of California. College players are restricted by NCAA rules from participating.

The team consists of three players; alternates are also appointed. Players are selected by point totals and eligibility. Ineligible players are removed from the finishing list before points are awarded. All ties are broken by a card match as recommended by the USGA before points are awarded. If ties occur, combine the points designated for the places tied, then divide equally and distribute.

Lynne Cowan will be the most experienced of the three. Lynne began playing golf at age 12 as a family sport. Cowan played on the boys' team at Pinole Valley High School before playing for Contra Costa Community College. After graduating from San Jose State University in 1985, she has played in over 20 USGA Championships where her best finish came in 2008 as a semi-finalist in the Women's Mid-Amateur. Also, in the USGA State Team Championship Cowan has competed for California in 2001, 2011, and 2013 and in 1995 she served as an alternate.

Regarding this year's championship Lynne had this to say, "I love being able to represent my state in a team setting because that's something you don't usually do in an individual sport like golf. I've heard great things about this golf course and I can't wait to see it for myself! Also, I think we'll have a great opportunity to be a good contender this year with a very solid team."



(From Left to Right) Sara Banke, Lynne Cowan, Caryn Wilson, and Captain WSCGA President Judy Altschuler

Another team member, Sara Banke, winner of the 2014 California Women's Championship, is the youngest member of this year's team. Danville native, Banke played both softball and golf at Monte Vista High before going on to compete for University of California Irvine. Banke's most recent win came at the San Francisco City Amateur Championship. Banke's next step is to try to qualify for the LPGA tour! She said, "I have been working hard since I graduated in 2014 to

try and qualify for the LPGA Tour. With Q School right around the corner, I have been practicing day in and day out in addition to continuing to compete in top amateur golf tournaments. My greatest motivator is being able to golf for a living! I think being able to actually provide a living for myself by doing something I love has always been all the motivation I need."

Sara is very excited about the upcoming championship and had this to say about it, "For me it is so exciting to have just been chosen to play in a USGA Championship! It will be fun too to go back and play in a "team golf" format like I did in college. From what I have heard from other players who have played in this championship, it is a really special event. It's truly an honor to represent the state of California! I think it is neat being the youngest player! I have always felt as though I have taken a "journeyman" approach to the game which is why I have given myself some time to thoroughly prepare before taking the next step into playing professional golf. Being that I did not turn pro right away like many of my peers, I have garnered this opportunity and am thrilled to play with extremely talented veterans to this championship! It will definitely be a learning experience.

The final member of the California Team, Caryn Wilson, has experience competing at a high level, but this particular championship is something new for her! Wilson has competed in 3 U.S. Opens...but she didn't play golf in all of them. There are only two women in sports history who have competed in U.S. Opens in both Tennis and Golf, and Caryn Wilson is the second female to ever do that, after Althea Gibson. Tennis was her first sport, playing at Stanford on a tennis scholarship and playing professionally. She only picked up golf at the age of 30, a natural born athlete she is. Wilson turned professional in 1999, competed on various mini-tours, and was a member of the LPGA tour in 2000 and 2005. She said, "In 2010 I decided to retire from competitive golf, and did not play at all for three years until my husband encouraged me to apply for amateur reinstatement so I could play for fun."

Regarding this championship Wilson said, "I have to admit that I did not know anything about the USGA State event until it was announced at the completion of the California Women's Championship at Ojai this month!...I am very excited and honored to be named to our team. Being part of a team event in an individual sport will be a lot of fun!"