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For the Curtis Cup, a long drive toward recognition

By Joe Juliano
Inquirer Staff Writer

The Curtis Cup, a competition among the top amateurs in women's golf, finds itself lost in the shadow of the Ryder Cup, the international team competition for male professionals, and the Walker Cup, the men's amateur counterpart.

U.S. team member Carol Semple Thompson of Sewickley, Pa., an 11-time Pennsylvania state amateur champion, and her teammates are hoping to increase the Curtis Cup's visibility behind the Ryder Cup and the Walker Cup.

"I really don't feel the run-of-the-mill person interested in golf still knows about the Curtis Cup," said Thompson, 41, who will be playing in her sixth Curtis Cup competition, when the United States faces Great Britain/Ireland on July 28 and 29 at Somerset Hills Country Club in Bernardsville, N.J.

"That's always disappointing to me, as is the recognition, but that's true of women's amateur golf in general.

"The USGA [United States Golf Association] has done a good job of trying to get the information out to the clubs and golf courses. We're trying to get everybody's attention on this, but it's sort of an uphill battle."

Each Curtis Cup team is made up of eight players. The teams will play 18 matches — three foursomes and six singles during each of the competition's two days.

The U.S. team will be trying to break a couple of dubious streaks. Although it leads the overall series with 19 wins, 4 losses and 2 ties, the United States has lost the last two matches — at Prairie Dunes, Kan., in 1986 and Sandwich, England, in 1988.

In addition, the Americans have not fared well lately in international competition. The Walker Cup and Ryder Cup were both won by the other side last year.

"Their level of golf has improved tremendously," Thompson said of the European players. "We used to have no problems winning. But two years ago, they beat us and that was kind of a shock to me. This year, we're working very hard to prepare.

"I think there's extra pressure on us to regain the Curtis Cup. But we have a lot of talent with young, fresh and eager players."

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While women's amateur golf tries to make inroads into the consciousness of the American golfing public, women's professional golf appears to be on the upswing.

Just seven days before its first $1 million tournament, the Mazda LPGA Championship, which, coincidentally, will be going on the same weekend as the Curtis Cup, the LPGA has announced the addition of two international events.

A match-play competition between the LPGA and the Women's Professional Golf European Tour will be held the week of Nov. 12 at Lake Nona, Fla. The event, named the Solheim Cup and sponsored by Karsten Manufacturing Corp., will take place every two years, like the Ryder Cup for men.

The LPGA World Match Play Championship, featuring the 24 top money-winners on the U.S. tour and the top eight in Japan, will be held for the first time from Dec. 6 to 9 in Princeville, Hawaii.

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For the start of its third season of operation, Stone Harbor Golf Club made some changes on four holes.

But only the most hardy regulars at the Cape May Court House layout would be able to notice them.

"And that's the way we like it," said club president Gordon Shaffner. "We didn't really trumpet the changes in our newsletters this spring. A golf course like this has to evolve, and it's evolving. We found the way it was built in spots isn't necessarily the same way it was designed."

For the record, the changes have come at the second, third, sixth and 14th holes, with improvement in the landing areas for tee shots. That is particularly important on Nos. 2 and 6, where water prominently comes into play.

The course, designed by world renowned architect Desmond Muirhead, has taken its share of criticism. Its odd-shaped bunkers, island fairway and island green prompted a Golf Digest article last fall that called Stone Harbor "what amounts to a miniature golf course on a grand scale" and "totally artificial."

"We felt they took some unfair shots," Shaffner said. "This is not an easy course. We know we're going to get critiqued and criticized. But a course like this is young. It hasn't aged like the better courses up here. During our amateur tournament [in May], we got nothing but rave reviews."

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The final 36 holes of qualifying for the British Open, which were contested Sunday and Monday, turned up some interesting and familiar names among the non-qualifiers.

Among those who didn't make it were PGA tour commissioner Deane Beman, 1990 U.S. Open contender Billy Ray Brown and Gary Nicklaus and Jack Nicklaus 2d, sons of Jack Nicklaus.

Also missing the cut were ABC-TV commentators Jerry Pate and Ed Sneed, giving Tom Weiskopf (CBS) the distinction of being the only broadcaster in the field. Johnny Miller (NBC), like Weiskopf, has an exemption as a past champion, but did not enter this year's Open.

Associated Press

Ben Crenshaw watches Watson's drive during a practice round.

Can Watson win a sixth Open?

BRITISH OPEN, from 1-E

ing I won't win again. I came close at Troon. I got very excited there and I'm excited right now."

Last year, at Royal Troon in Scotland, Watson was 1 shot out of the lead after three rounds and in contention with nine holes to play. But he could not make enough birdies down the stretch and finished 2 strokes out of the three-way playoff that was won by Mark Calcavecchia.

In trying once again to tie the British Open record of six championships held by Harry Vardon, Watson has returned to the site of perhaps his most crushing defeat — in an Open or anywhere else — in 1984.

It was at the legendary Road Hole — the 461-yard, par-4 17th — where Watson hit his wind-blown approach shot over the road and against the wall in the final round. He made a bogey there to fall out of a tie for the lead and ended up losing to Seve Ballesteros.

"I played the risky shot, but I was more or less forced to do it," Watson said. "My ball was on the upslope and I couldn't hit the ball low enough. It didn't give me any option. On a flat lie, I would probably have played a 3-iron instead of a 2-iron. But I hit a bad shot and put it to the right."

Since that disappointment, Watson has won only the 1987 Nabisco Championship. Last year was arguably his worst since joining the tour, with just two top-10 finishes in 18 events and his lowest money-winning finish (80th) since his first year as a pro.

He has already done better this year, with five finishes in the top 10, including an encouraging seventh-place tie at the Masters. But he suffered a devastating setback last month when he butchered the back nine of his final round at the Western Open to drop out of contention, ending up seventh.

"It's disappointing that I haven't won," Watson said. "I haven't had any real good chances except for the Western. But the year is not over and I'm looking forward to playing this week."

Although this is Watson's first visit to St. Andrews since 1984, he remains a master at playing links courses, as evidenced by his Open victories at Carnoustie (1975), Turnberry (1977), Muirfield (1980) and Royal Troon (1982) in Scotland and Royal Birkdale (1983) in England.

"I think it's most difficult to know and understand Open courses because of the blindness and of the misdirection inherent in the course," he said. "At first I didn't understand it. I didn't like it. Now I love it. We don't build courses like this today."

In trying once again to tie the British Open record of six championships held by Harry Vardon, Watson has returned to the site of perhaps his most crushing defeat.

The weather at St. Andrews remained delightful yesterday, with sunshine, a light breeze and temperatures in the 70s. Clouds are expected to roll in today, but the forecast for the weekend is no rain and light winds.

Watson would like it to be as difficult as possible.

"You haven't seen the true side of the course yet," he said. "For me, it's like going into an exam and bringing the formula for a problem, but you're still waiting for the question.

"Where do I play my shot to a hole if the wind is blowing downwind. How do I do this or that? We haven't been examined yet. We haven't had that pop quiz. But it will come. It's waiting for us."

Few expect Watson to win with guys like Calcavecchia, Nick Faldo, Greg Norman and Ian Woosnam — winner of the last two stops on the European tour — in the Old Course lecture hall.

But then again, not many people gave Irwin a chance to win the U.S. Open, did they?

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No one can accuse the stately folks of the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of not having a sense of humor, judging by the draw for the opening two rounds.

Ballesteros is playing with Watson, the man he defeated in 1984, and Nick Price, whom he bested in 1988. Faldo is in the same group as Scott Hoch, just 15 months after Faldo beat him in a playoff in the Masters. Norman has drawn Bob Tway and Robert Gamez, two who have defeated him with miracle finishes.

"Believe it or not, it was a straight draw," said Michael Bonallack, secretary of the R&A, "although there certainly do appear to be a number of coincidences."

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Lee Trevino, a two-time Open champion who is considered a master of the bump-and-run shot so important on the Old Course, said yesterday that he believed he had no chance to win.

"I'm no threat to anybody," said Trevino, the runaway money leader on the Senior PGA tour. "This is a young man's game on a links course. If the wind blows, I consider myself a pretty fair wind player. But if it doesn't, you can go in high and that gives the others an advantage."

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Other seniors in the field are Jack Nicklaus, Bob Charles, Gary Player and Arnold Palmer. Player is competing in his 36th consecutive British Open. Palmer is playing in his last, 30 years after his first one, which was also at St. Andrews. . . . The prize money is 825,000 pounds, which translates to about $1.5 million. The winner will receive 85,000 pounds (about $154,000).

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Oakley retains Phila. Open title

By Mayer Brandschain
Special to The Inquirer

Pete Oakley of the Shawnee Country Club in Milford, Del., finished with a 3-under-par 36-hole score of 137 on Merion's famous East Course yesterday to win the Philadelphia Open Golf Championship for the second straight year.

Oakley ran neck-and-neck with Jim Masserio, the 1985 and 1988 champion from Aronimink, in the morning round, each tying for first place at 2-under-par 68. Oakley shot 35-33 and Masserio 34-34. Oakley held on to his position in the afternoon with a 1-under-par 69, but Masserio, a former Pennsylvania Open and Philadelphia PGA champion, rose to 71 for a second-place finish of 139.

An amateur, Bill Kennedy, the recent runner-up for the Philadelphia Amateur Championship, finished third with 70-73—143, and another amateur, Robin McCool of Saucon Valley, was fourth with 73-71-144.

The results

Pete Oakley, Shawnee	68-69—137
Jim Masserio, Aronimink	68-71—139
a-Bill Kennedy, Cedrbk	70-73—143
Robin McCool, Cedarbrook	73-71—144
a-George Marucci, P.Val.	74-71—145
Ed Dougherty, Edgmont	72-73—145
Harold Perry, Knntt Sqr.	74-73—147
Stu Ingraham, Wnborough	74-73—147
Miguel Biamon, Whtmrsh Val.	75-72—147
Wayne Phillips, Lehigh	74-74—148
Rick Osberg, Wynsborough	75-73—148
a-Duke Delcher, A.C.	72-76—148
Ed Sabo, Laurel Creek	71-77—148
Russ Davis, Atlantic City	70-78—148
Brian Kelly, Plymouth	74-75—149
Tony Perla, Edgmont	75-74—149
Tim Lindemann, Phila. Crkt.	75-75—150
John Kulhamer, White Deer	74-76—150
Mike Moses, Eagle Lodge	72-78 150
John Allen, Sunnybrook	70-81—151
a-Bill McGuinness, Tavistock	76-75—151
Jim Muething, Pine Valley	76-76—152
George Forster, Radnor Val.	73-80—153
a-Gordon Brewer, Huntingdon Val.	74-79—153
a-Tom Paul, Gulph Mills	82-71—153

a-amateur

Phila. Women

Cathy Gitzendanner, a Penn State player from Whitford, advanced to the semifinals of the Philadelphia Women's Golf Championship with a 1-up victory over Bonnie George of Philmont yesterday at the Huntingdon Valley Country Club.

Gitzendanner, a former runner-up for the Philadelphia junior title, scored a birdie 4 on the 18th to win as George missed a putt from 20 feet.

The others reaching the semifinals were Nancy Porter of Merion and Michele Gallagher of Sandy Run, who meet this morning, and medalist Leslie Smith of Tavistock, who plays Gitzendanner.

The results

Championship flight quarterfinals: Michele Gallagher, Sandy Run, def. Charlotte Balick, Brandywine, 2 and 1; Nancy Porter, Merion, def. Lorann Minka, DuPont, 6 and 5; Leslie Smith, Tavistock, def. Gail Brown, Coatesville, 3 and 2; Cathy Gitzendanner, Whitford, def. Bonnie George, Philmont, 1 up.

First flight quarterfinals: Jan Albert def. Loraine Connolly, 3 and 2; Nancy Flickstein def. Erma Keyes, 2 up; Lisa Forlini def. Margaret Young, 2 up; Sheila Selby def. Mary Jo McWilliams, 3 and 2.

Second flight quarterfinals: Nell Grim def. Connie McGhee, 2 and 1; Lyn Kurz def. Love Marshall, 2 and 1; Kathleen Pounds def. Susan Krancer, 5 and 3; Dorothy Pedrick def. Ruth Scott, 3 and 2.

COLLEGES

Orange Bowl is interested in Metro Conference plans

By Tim Panaccio
Inquirer Staff Writer

There's a new player in the Metro Conference expansion talks — the Orange Bowl.

Orange Bowl president Art Hertz attended Tuesday's Metro Conference meeting in Atlanta and told the representatives of the 16 schools involved that his bowl would be interested in having the Metro champion be an annual participant in the New Year's game in Miami.

"We told them that we could not guarantee anything at this point but that we're interested," Hertz said yesterday from Miami. "You look at the broad geography these schools would cover and the markets they represent, and you can see just how attractive this conference would be."

The Metro, which conducts competition in all major men's and women's sports except football, has eight members — Cincinnati, Florida State, Louisville, Memphis State, South Carolina, Southern Mississippi, Tulane and Virginia Tech. The league's expansion plan calls for including football and for adding Miami (Fla.), Rutgers, Temple and West Virginia to compete in all sports, and Boston College, East Carolina, Pitt and Syracuse for football only.

The conference has set Oct. 15 as a deadline for acquiring an "agreement in principle" from the 16 schools, Metro commissioner Ralph McFillen said.

Hertz said the Orange Bowl's contracts with the Big Eight Conference, whose champion receives an automatic berth in the game, and with NBC will expire on Jan. 1, 1995.

The purse for this year's game, between Notre Dame and Colorado, was $4.2 million. The Metro is proposing that individual schools would retain 90 percent of any bowl revenues, with 10 percent going to the conference. Most major conferences require that a greater portion of bowl revenues be shared.

Hertz did not offer any specific bowl arrangement to the attendees, but said his executive committee would consider having the Metro Conference representative meet the Big Eight champion, a team from another conference or a major independent.

In Philadelpia, Temple President Peter J. Liacouras said yesterday that his biggest task in presenting the Metro Conference proposal to the university's board of trustees was convincing its members that Temple had something in common with the other schools other than sports.

"Of the 16 schools, 12 are state schools," said Liacouras. "When you get 12 state schools, it's not as disparate as it may seem. These are all comprehensive academic institutions. There is more compatibility than you think."

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