

Former State Amateur champ becomes 4th female inductee

Waynick is chosen for local golf hall of fame

The Roanoke Valley Golf Hall of Fame honors Liz Waynick, who reached the third round of the 1976 U.S. Women's Amateur.

By RANDY KING
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Liz Waynick, one of the best women's players ever to come out of Southwest Virginia, is the newest member of the Roanoke Valley Golf Hall of Fame.

Waynick, 42, who won five City-County titles and the 1981 Women's State Amateur before turning professional in 1983, will be formally inducted as the Hall of Fame's 27th member at the organization's November banquet.

"I didn't know what to say when [HOF executive director] Ned Baber called and gave me the news. It was real flattering," said Waynick, speaking via telephone from her Scottsdale, Ariz., home.

Waynick becomes the hall's fourth female inductee, joining the late Peggy Nunniger (1980 inductee), the late Audrey Nagum (1991) and Dot Bolling (2000).

When she started tagging along with her father, John, to the Roanoke Country Club practice range in the late 1960s, Waynick never realized that the game of golf would become such a huge part of her life.

"I remember going with my father and he would hit balls and I would pick them up," Waynick said. "He just started me out. He cut down this little putter for me and put some loft on it. I used that as my club and I would go out there and just whack the balls."

Waynick, a 1978 Patrick Henry High School graduate, quickly became the best player in Roanoke. In 1976, at age 16, Waynick beat current LPGA pro Cindy Hill before losing to Nancy Lopez in the third round of match play in the U.S. Women's Amateur in Sacramento, Calif. She won back-to-back State Junior Amateur titles in 1976-77, lapping the field by eight shots in '76 and six strokes in '77.

She won her five City-County championships by the time she was 20. At 21, she captured her biggest crown, downing Waynesboro's Kathy Ayers 2 and 1 at The Homestead to win the State Am.

After graduating from the University of Miami in 1982, Waynick turned pro and spent the next 2½ years on the Florida mini-tours in hopes of one day graduating to the LPGA Tour. Like so many others before and since, Waynick eventually had to face a harsh reality.

"As you go out in the world you realize that 'Hey, I'm special here,' but I might not be so special in other places," Waynick said. "There's more out there than just Roanoke. As I got a little bit older, I realized this is really harder than I thought and there are a lot of people who play golf well."

"I had some fun, but finally I realized I needed to be a responsible adult and get a real job."

Waynick headed west in her car in 1985. She soon landed an assistant pro's job at Briarwood Country Club in Sun City West, Ariz. A year later, Briarwood fired its head pro and appointed Waynick to the position following a members' petition

campaign.

In late 1993, Waynick made another upward move when he she was named head pro at Desert Mountain's Renegade Course, one of four Jack Nicklaus-designed layouts at the ritzy Arizona resort.

Waynick climbed the golf ladder again in 1998, when she was named director of golf at the revered Pumpkin Ridge Club in Cornelius, Ore.

"I probably had — female or male — one of the top 20 jobs in the country," she said.

The job's demands and hours, however, took their toll. Waynick resigned 14 months ago to return to Scottsdale, where she is selling real estate.

"The higher I got on the ladder, the less time I had to live my life," Waynick said. "My life centered around golf and my job. I didn't have much of a balance and it just wore on me."

Waynick, who is still a PGA member and works on the Southwest U.S. Section rules committee, said she is playing more golf than ever now.

"I'm still a bad putter," she said,

laughing.

Waynick credited her parents — John and Mozelle — for supporting her along her long-running golf path.

"My parents weren't pushy. . . . They never said, 'You have to do this or do that,'" Waynick said. "I think that's so positive in any development of a child. I had choices and they were just very supportive of whatever I did."

Unfortunately, John Waynick suffered a major stroke a couple years ago. He remains paralyzed on his right side and is confined to a wheelchair.

"The first thought that came to my mind when I heard about this was, 'I wish my father was able to be there,'" Waynick said. "He can be there in body, but he won't be there in mind."

"I'm just so sorry that John can't be there to realize the dream with Liz," Mozelle Waynick said. "He would have been so proud. He taught her all she knew."

Randy King can be reached at 981-3126 or randyk@roanoke.com



Waynick