

Sports

Nissequogue Country Club hosts MGA championship

By ANTHONY LIFRIERI

Nissequogue Golf Club hosted the 95th Met Junior sponsored by Met Life, with Scott Kim of River Edge, New Jersey winning the tournament, Tuesday, July 17 through Friday, July 20. This year's Met, which also served as its 100th anniversary, is also the oldest junior golf championship in the country.

The Met is one of the major tournaments of the Metropolitan Golf Association (MGA), which includes the best golfers in the tri-state area. This brought some of the region's premier talent to Nissequogue Golf Club for the tournament.

Qualifying for the tournament is an accomplishment in itself. 250 golfers signed up for four qualifying rounds, which whittled the field down to 64, according to Lou Cutolo, foundation manager at the MGA.

The field of 64 match play tournament also included two players from the local area. 19th seeded Matt Galindo, of Smithtown, played 46th seeded Gilbert Chang, of Nesconset, in a first round match-up. Chang won the match, six and four, then won his second round match, one up, to advance to the sweet 16. Although Chang would fall five and three in the third round match-up, he still held his own against top players.

"I've been running the juniors' for ten years now and I've seen the quality of play increase," Cutolo said. "Out of the field of 64, at least 50 are two handicap or better. There are even a couple of plus handicaps."

Running this year's tournament was a pleasure for the MGA, and needed little in the way of time and resources to prepare, according to Cutolo and Nissequogue Golf Club general manager Barry Chandler. "We worked closely with the golf superintendent," Cutolo said. "We don't ask any club to do anything outside of its normal set up. The course is in good shape so there wasn't a lot to do to get ready."

The MGA reaches out to courses that are members of the association to host its tournaments. "We're always looking for new courses to hold our championships, Cutolo said. "We've done a few events here, and it's a great venue."

The course, a 6,602 yard, par 72, is one of the main reasons the MGA held the tournament at Nissequogue. "It's a great golf course," Cutolo said. "It's a hidden gem on the north shore."

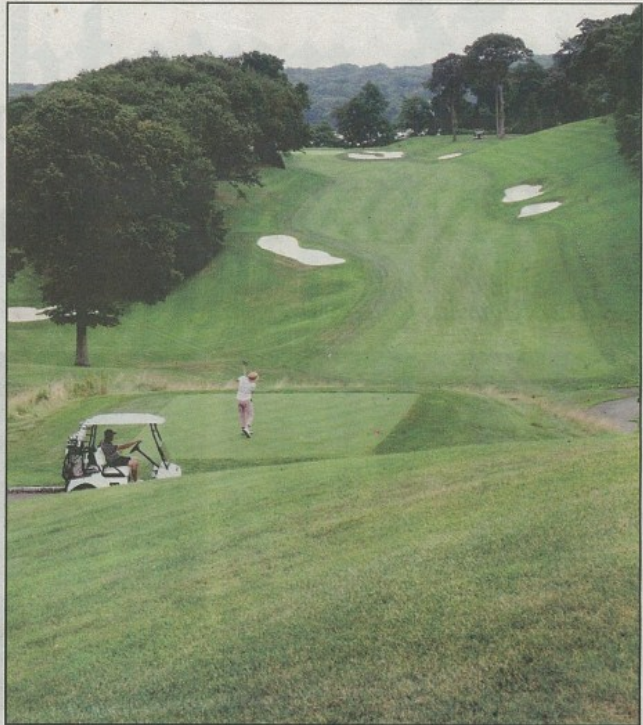
The course's hardest hole is the seventh, a 517 yard par five. However, the course also features other signature holes like the 207 yard par three 17th, which features a breathtaking view of Stony Brook Harbor from the tee, and an island green connected to the rest of the course by two bridges.

The course's location, stunning views and layouts are reasons why the MGA chose Nissequogue Golf Club, according to Chandler. Chandler had experience preparing for major tournaments, and was a key figure

behind the scenes during the 2006 US Open at the Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, New York.

Cutolo thought this year's Met was a success. "Everything was great except for the weather," Cutolo said. "The course was playing great and the kids were enjoying it. The tournament is played in match play, and certain courses lend more to it than others. There are a lot of reachable par fives and good par fours for golfers to take advantage of. There are also some tough par fours where they have to hang on and hope for the best."

Met Life, the sponsor of the tournament also lent a helping hand. "The MGA has had a relationship with Met Life for 35 years," Cutolo said. "They're a big supporter of local golf including its charitable foundations, which grants access to golf for young people. It's growing the talented youth in the area."



Nissequogue Country Club golf course holes 10 (above) and 17 (below) provided the challenge for the MGA championship.

The MGA also received a great deal of support from the course's frequenters. "The interest of the members is

fantastic," Cutolo said. "We want to thank the membership for how interested they were in the event."

The Nissequogue golf course and its members was also happy to host the MGA. "We were thrilled to do it," Chandler said. "For us it was an honor"

