

Three area residents win free trip to the U.S. Open

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A five-month gaming promotion has ended with three area residents winning all-expense paid trips to the U.S. Open which starts Thursday at Congressional in Bethesda, Md.

Len Kirtley, 73, Frank Richer, 86, and 70-year-old Pat Courtright were the grand prize winners of the Carson Nugget's Putt-Off on May 1. The group, who will be accompanied by Nugget general manager Star Anderson, leaves Tuesday. They will stay at the Hyatt Regency and be able to watch the tournament from Eagle hospitality suite.

All entrants in the put-off earned points throughout the five-month contest which was open to Prospector Club members only. For each 50 points earned in the gaming area, entrants received one drawing ticket. Drawings were held four times a day on Fridays and Saturdays, and two drawings were held every Sunday. Two winners were picked at each drawing.

Kirtley was supposed to go visit family in Florida, but that trip was put on hold when he was one of the winners of the event. He's going to take his brother, who lives in Michigan.

"I was going to take my wife, but she has a friend coming in for a visit," Kirtley said. "So I called my brother in Michigan and asked him if he wanted to go to the Open. He jumped at that. He doesn't like to fly, so we were given \$250 to cover his gas expenses."

Kirtley is an avid golf fan and golfer. He's attended the Reno-Tahoe Open and the Senior TPC in Dearborn, Mich.

"It used to be Tiger Woods," Kirtley said when asked who his favorite golfer was. "I may follow Dustin Johnson. He can really drive the ball."

Kirtley said he plays golf once a week, usually at Eagle Valley or Silver Oak.

Courtright, who still can't believe she won, said her trip will be a mini family reunion. Her son, Christopher, (1989 Carson High grad) is coming over from West Virginia. Christopher graduated from the Naval Academy and now works in law enforcement in West Virginia.

"He was all excited that I won," she said.

The U.S. Open will be the first tournament she's ever attended.

"I'm a golf fan and I've played golf," said Courtright, who has lived in Carson City for 33 years. "It's been a while since I played, but I watch golf on television all the time."

Courtright is taking a friend, Brenda Giurlini, to the tournament.

"She's not a golf fan at all," Courtright said. "She gave me some of her tickets to put in the barrel."

Richer won't be making the trip back East, however. Richer said his health isn't the best, so he gave the tickets to his grandson, Joe Polichio, a 1996 Carson High graduate.

"He (Polichio) was tickled to death to get the tickets, and I was tickled to death to have a grandson to give them to," Richer said.

Richer said he used to go charity tournaments in Las Vegas where he saw Phil Mickelson play, and when he lived in Washington he used to watch Fred Couples at charity events.

“I played golf for quite a while,” Richer said. “I stopped when I was 82. I’m still a pretty good putter.

“If I were 10 or 15 years younger, I definitely would have gone.”

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