

Third Time's a Charm

Twice Randy Towner, a former JCCC golfer and current PGA Class A Head Golf Professional at Alvamar Golf Club, tried to qualify

for the United States Senior Open Championship. Both attempts came up just shy, once by two strokes, the other by one. On June 14 at Oakwood Country Club in Kansas City, Kan., Towner proved true the adage, “third time’s a charm,” winning a local qualifier and earning a spot in the field for the U.S. Senior Open at Whistling Straits in Kohler, Wis., on July 5-8. Towner played with some of the game’s greatest players, including Tom Watson, Hale Irwin, Fuzzy Zoeller and Ben Crenshaw.

“This is very exciting,” Towner said prior to the tournament, “This is why you play golf – to get to play with the big boys. I am really looking forward to playing.”

Towner fired a round of 71 at Oakwood, placing first in the field of 57 participants. However, after eight holes, it appeared it would be a third failed attempt for Towner to realize his dream.

“I had been playing great golf before this event,” Towner said. “After the eighth hole I said to myself, ‘this is stupid, I’m better than this’, and I started making birdies.”

Towner birdied four of the next five holes, and finished with a strong back nine of 33. Towner’s round featured seven birdies, two bogeys, two double bogeys and seven pars.

Now in his 19th season at Alvamar Country Club in Lawrence, Towner hoped to play well enough to make the cut and play on the weekend, but his main expectation was to enjoy this opportunity.

“I just want to go there and relax, and have fun taking part in a major championship,” Towner said. “I have played in events against my peers, but never at this level. I am really excited to be a part of this championship.”

Towner had never played Whistling Straits, but got his first opportunity July 2, when players could play the first of three practice rounds before the event began July 5.

Towner’s first U.S.G.A. event got off to a strong start. He nearly made a 20-foot birdie putt on the first hole. Then on the second hole, a 554-yard par



five, Towner powered a 3-wood onto the green, 10 feet from the pin. His eagle attempt fell inches short of dropping, and he settled for a birdie, giving him a 1-under par score after two holes.

However, Whistling Straits got the best of Towner. He finished the first round with a 12-over par score of 84, and he matched that again in the second round, missing the cut. While he fell short of his goal to play on the weekend, Towner will always remember his experience playing on a national stage.

Towner was a member of JCCC’s first golf team in 1971-72 and was the team’s top player his freshman and sophomore seasons. In his two campaigns, Towner helped both teams qualify for the NJCAA National Tournament. His sophomore season, he placed 30th overall at nationals and fired a 72-hole score of 299 which included a 71 in the first round and a 72 in the final round. His 299 score was a school record until 2004, and his low round of 71 stood until 2005. 🌊

Randy Towner practices at Alvamar Golf Club, Lawrence, in anticipation of the U.S. Senior Open Championship.

