



3rd U.S. Adaptive Open Championship – Inside the Field

July 8-10, 2024, Sand Creek Station, Newton, Kan.

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FIELD NOTES – Among the 96 golfers in the 2024 U.S. Adaptive Open field:

Oldest Competitors: Bruce Hooper (78), Dennis Walters (74)

Youngest Competitors: Ryder Barr (15), Russell Aide (17), Sophia Howard (17)

Average Age of Field: 36.4

Field breakdown by age:

15-20: 9 competitors

21-30: 24 competitors

31-40: 30 competitors

41-60: 27 competitors

60-81: 6 competitors

U.S. States Represented – There are 32 states represented in the 2024 U.S. Adaptive Open field:

Michigan (7), California (5), Tennessee (5), Arizona (4), Florida (4), Texas (4), Georgia (3), Indiana (3), Minnesota (3), Nebraska (3), North Carolina (3), Pennsylvania (3), Alabama (2), Idaho (2), Illinois (2), Maryland (2), New Jersey (2), New York (2), Oregon (2), Colorado (1), Connecticut (1), Hawaii (1), Kansas (1), Massachusetts (1), Missouri (1), Montana (1), Nevada (1), South Carolina (1), Utah (1), Virginia (1), Washington (1), Wisconsin (1)

International – There are 11 countries represented in the field:

United States (73), Canada (9), Australia (2), England (2), Republic of Ireland (2), Sweden (2), Argentina (1), Cameroon (1), Japan (1), Republic of Korea (1), Spain (1)

Players from Kansas (1): Kirk Holmberg (Hutchinson)

USGA Champions (4): Ryanne Jackson (2023 U.S. Adaptive Open), Kipp Popert (2023 U.S. Adaptive Open), Kim Moore (2022 U.S. Adaptive Open), Simon Lee (2022 U.S. Adaptive Open)

Current P.J. Boatwright Jr. Interns (2): Tyler Cashman (Golf Association of Philadelphia), Max Togisala (Utah Golf Association)

Bob Jones Award Winners: Dennis Walters (2018)

Player Profiles

Kurtis Barkley, 36, of Canada, won the 2022 and 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open male short stature category. Barkley, who was born with severe scoliosis, began to play golf at 3 years old. He regularly competes on the G4D (Golf for Disabled) Tour, a DP World Tour-sponsored, seven-event series that utilizes the same courses during the same weeks as the DP World Tour events.

Joakim Bjorkman, 34, of Sweden, was born with achondroplasia (short stature) and fell in love with golf while watching Tiger Woods compete in the 2000 Open Championship at St. Andrews. Bjorkman has established himself as a top professional in the disabled ranks, winning 35 titles around the world, including a Swedish Open Championship in 2016, four straight Italian Open Championships from 2015-2018 and a European Championship in 2006.

Amy Bockerstette, 25, of Phoenix, Ariz., who was born with Down syndrome, has a close relationship with 2019 U.S. Open champion Gary Woodland. Bockerstette founded the "I Got This" Foundation to provide golf instruction, playing opportunities and organized events for people with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities. She is also an active participant in LPGA*USGA Girls Golf.

Jack Bonifant, 34, of Kensington, Md., suffered a fractured skull at 6 weeks old that required nine hours of surgery and 10 years of rehabilitation, causing him to lose feeling on the entire left side of his body. Bonifant found inspiration from Jim Abbott, who was born without a right hand and pitched for 10 seasons in Major League Baseball. Bonifant earned a first-alternate spot in the 2021 U.S. Amateur Four-Ball Championship with partner Taso Sciliaris.

Kenny Bontz, 54, of Parrish, Fla., was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at age 11, and with Ewing sarcoma in his leg at 19 years old. Bontz underwent six knee replacements in nine years, leading him to choose amputation to get his life back after many years of opioid and alcohol addiction. He is a member of EDGA (formerly the European Disabled Golf Association).

Erik Bowen, 44, of Charlotte, N.C., is a double lower limb amputee, losing his feet due to strep and sepsis complications. He competed in qualifiers and championships for the Colorado Golf Association and Northern California Golf Association before the amputations. He is currently vice president of finance at Osiris Ventures.

Ryan Brenden, 48, of Pierce, Neb., was born with proximal femoral focal deficiency, a complex birth defect in which the upper part of the femur is either malformed or missing, and has worn a prosthesis since age 3. In 2018, he won the inaugural U.S. Disabled Open conducted by the U.S. Disabled Golf Association.

Mike Browne, 46, of England, won the 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open lower limb impairment category and capped off the year by winning the 2023 DP World G4D Tour. In 2011, Brown injured his left leg while serving in the British Army's Royal Artillery and made the decision to have it amputated following more than 30 operations. Browne was introduced to golf through the On Course Foundation, a charity which helps military personnel rehabilitate through golf.

Brandon Canesi, 32, of Northfield, N.J., is a golf shop supervisor at the Golf Academy of America in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Born without hands, Brandon designs and builds his own extended golf clubs that allow him to anchor under his arms. In 2022, he was a member of the USA team for The Cairns Cup, a Ryder Cup-style event for golfers with disabilities.

Luke Carroll, 18, of Old Hickory, Tenn., graduated high school last month. At age 10, he was diagnosed with transverse myelitis, a neurological disorder of the spinal cord. His great-grandfather, George Stinchcomb, was a golf instructor with Cleveland Metro Parks who shagged balls for Ben Hogan and also made custom golf clubs.

Tyler Cashman, 21, of Oldwick, N.J., placed second in the visual impairment category at the 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open. A rising senior at the University of Richmond, Tyler is also serving as a USGA P.J. Boatwright Jr. Intern with the Golf Association of Philadelphia this summer, where he is supporting the launch of the regional golf association's adaptive programs.

Amanda Cunha, 20, of Kaneohe, Hawaii, won the 2022 and 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open female vision impairment category. She currently plays for the University of Arizona para golf team. In 2021, she was diagnosed with a condition called Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy, which greatly impairs central vision, and was legally blind within three months of the onset of symptoms.

Abigail Davis, 22, of Houston, Texas, won the 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open female upper limb impairment category. Davis was born without a left hand as a result of Amniotic Band Syndrome (ABS) which restricted the limb's growth while in the womb. A collegiate golfer at University of Mary Hardin-Baylor where she completed her undergraduate studies in May, she is currently pursuing a master's degree in occupational therapy.

Mario Dino, 21, of Denver, Colo., was born with a form of cerebral palsy that restricts movements on the left side of his body. He is a member of the University of Redlands men's golf team. An accomplished golfer at Mullen High School in Denver, Dino competed in the state championship from 2017-20, finishing second and helping his team earn runner-up honors in his senior season.

Jesse Florkowski, 34, of Canada, was born without a right arm as a result of Amniotic Band Syndrome (ABS) and consistently ranks as one of the top one-armed golfers in the world. He was introduced to the game at a young age by his grandparents and is currently a Class 'A' Golf Professional at Connaught Golf Club in Alberta. Florkowski secured a spot in this year's championship by surviving a three-for-one playoff to clinch medalist honors at the Southern California qualifier.

Alex Fourie, 31, of Murfreesboro, Tenn., is a PGA professional who was born in Ukraine with a cleft lip, cleft palate and one arm. Fourie was adopted from a Ukrainian orphanage at age 7 by South African missionaries who were serving in Alabama, where he picked up the game just days after moving to his new home. Fourie now works in roof sales for a construction company and began fundraising to support Ukrainian orphans who have been displaced by Russian attacks.

Ann Hayes, 61, of Lee, Mass., won the 2022 and 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open female seated players impairment category. Hayes is a librarian who was paralyzed from the waist down in a mountain biking accident at age 44, two years after she took up golf. Nine months after the accident, Hayes was back on the course with the help of a SoloRider cart.

Ryanne Jackson, 26, of Seminole, Fla., earned the title of women's overall champion in last year's U.S. Adaptive Open, outlasting defending champion Kim Moore by five strokes. She also won the 2022 and 2023 neurological impairment category. Jackson was diagnosed with scapulothoracic muscular dystrophy as a college freshman following a decorated high school career in both basketball and golf. She and her two older sisters played college golf after being coached by their father at Northside Christian School, where he continues to lead the golf program. Jackson is a high school history teacher.

Kiefer Jones, 34, of Canada, won the 2022 and 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open vision impairment category. At 16 years old a virus attacked his optic nerve, which resulted in the loss of his central vision. A lifelong golfer, he was introduced to the game at two-years old by his father. Jones is a CPGA professional and has won the World Blind Golf Championship twice.

Brendan Lawlor, 32, of Republic of Ireland, was born with a rare bone disorder Ellis-Van Creveld Syndrome, characterized by a shorter stature and shorter limbs. Lawlor, the third-ranked player in the World Ranking for Golfers with Disability (WR4GD), made history by becoming the first disabled golfer to compete on the DP World Tour at the ISPS HANDA UK Championship in August 2020. He is making his U.S. Adaptive Open debut.

Simon Lee, 27, of Republic of Korea, won the 2022 and 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open men's intellectual impairment category. Lee earned the title of men's overall champion in the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open, surviving a two-hole aggregate playoff. He has competed in numerous events as a professional on the Korean PGA Tour. Lee was diagnosed with a form of autism that makes communicating particularly difficult. He is the son of a diplomat who served stints in Washington, D.C., and New York.

Evan Mathias, 28, of Indianapolis, Ind., won the 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open male multiple limb amputee category. He was born with congenital defects that led to amputation of both legs at 8 months old. Mathias first picked up a club at age 5 and has been playing ever since, including on the Marian University golf team from 2014-18. He has won multiple Georgia State Amputee championships and the 2019 ParaLong Drive Cup.

Kim Moore, 42, of Portage, Mich., went wire-to-wire to earn the title of women's overall champion in the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open. She was born without a right foot, a severely clubbed left foot and a slight case of spina bifida. She played four years of college golf at the University of Indianapolis, where she was ranked in the NCAA Division II top 10 as an individual and was all-conference all four years. She received the first-ever Kim Moore Spirit Award, which is given to one female golfer in each of three college divisions who exemplifies perseverance and high character. She is a PGA teaching professional and the head women's golf coach at Western Michigan University.

Issa Nlareb, 33, of Cameroon, suffered from bacterial meningitis in 2018 while competing at the Alps Tour's Ein Bay Open in Egypt. The prognosis led to the amputation of both legs and multiple fingers, yet he never lost his commitment to the game and regained his Alps Tour card in 2022. Issa was first exposed to golf as a child on his daily commutes through his neighborhood golf course to school. Following the loss of his mother at age 11, he found a second family at the golf facility, and was able to develop his skills while also serving as caddie.

Jake Olson, 27, of Huntington Beach, Calif., made history in 2017 at the University of Southern California as the first blind athlete to play in a NCAA football game. He had already developed a love for golf that eventually inspired him to play football in college. Olson graduated from USC in 2018 and continues to play golf competitively. In 2019, he won the United States Blind Golf Association national championship.

Chad Pfeifer, 42, of Nampa, Idaho, won the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open male lower limb impairment category. Pfeifer is no stranger to high-level competition. Since losing his left leg in 2007 in an explosion while serving for the U.S. Army in Iraq, he has become a mainstay on the adaptive golf circuit, winning multiple amputee titles.

Kipp Popert, 25, of England, earned the title of men's overall champion in last year's U.S. Adaptive Open, edging defending champion Simon Lee by one stroke. Popert has been playing golf since he was 3 years old and has become one of the world's best golfers with a disability. He was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at birth and has undergone several surgeries. In May, Popert held off Brendan Lawlor to win the 2024 G4D Open, propelling him to the top of the WR4GD rankings. In the past year, Popert has also won G4D Tour events at the BMW PGA Championship and Magical Kenya Open Presented by Absa.

Brandon Rowland, 43, of Jackson, Tenn., is a bi-lateral amputee, having lost both legs below the knee after being diagnosed with disseminated intravascular coagulation at a young age. While this will be Rowland's third USGA championship, he has caddied in the U.S. Amateur and in both local and final qualifying for the U.S. Open.

Mandi Sedlak, 44, of Kearney, Neb., is a decorated amateur adaptive athlete who captured the 2016 and 2017 Women's National Amputee Championships. Sedlak, who had her leg amputated below the knee at age 21, co-founded Women's Orthotics & Prosthetics and Prosthetic Healthcare Services with her husband.

Natasha Stasiuk, 26, of Canada, won the 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open women's intellectual impairment category. She is one of nine Canadians competing in the championship. She credits renowned golf coach Carrie Vaughn for inspiring her to stay in the game.

Jordan Thomas, 35, of Nashville, Tenn., won the 2022 U.S. Adaptive Open men's multiple limb amputee category. He is a double below-the-knee amputee due to a boating accident at age 16. While in the hospital recovering, he started the Jordan Thomas Foundation, a nonprofit that provides prosthetic devices for children.

Max Togisala, 20, of South Ogden, Utah, was paralyzed in a ski accident in February 2022. While he was a golfer prior to his accident, he had to relearn the game from a seated position. En route to winning the 2023 U.S. Adaptive Open seated players category, Togisala shot a 2-under-par 70 in the second round of last year's championship, which bettered by nine strokes the lowest round by a seated player in championship history. He is currently serving as a P.J. Boatwright intern with the Utah Golf Association.

Dennis Walters, 74, of Jupiter, Fla., was paralyzed in a golf cart accident at age 24. He played college golf at North Texas State University and finished 11th in the 1967 U.S. Amateur. Since 1977, Walters has hosted "The Dennis Walters Golf Show," a one-hour golf trick shot clinic, traveling over 3.5 million miles at over 3,000 performances. Walters is a member of The World Golf Hall of Fame, an Honorary Lifetime Member of The PGA of America and a Ben Hogan Award for Courage winner.