

June 11-16 at Exmoor

# Women's Western Am attracts stellar field including talented Wongluekiet sisters and a solid mixture of local stars and collegiates

By Colleen Dennis  
Chicagoland Golf Managing Editor

**T**wo of the most heralded marquee names in golf are coming together this June 11-16 to produce the prestigious Women's Western Golf Association's 101st National Amateur Championship.

Host to this event will be the 105 year-old Exmoor CC in Highland Park. The two organizations have a history which dates back 98 years, and this will be the 10th time Exmoor has hosted a WWGA championship.

In fact, it was a notable Exmoor member, W.A. Alexander, who in 1901 conceptualized the idea of a Women's Western Amateur Championship. In 1921, Alexander presented the WWGA with the Alexander Cup, named in honor of his wife. Mrs. Alexander was the first president (1903-1904) of the WWGA.

Since then, the trophy has passed through the hands of many of the greatest names in golf such as: Patty Berg, Dorothy "Dot" Germain, Catherine Lacoste, Louise Suggs, Phyllis Otto, Barbara McIntire, Jane Bastanchury, Betty Jameson, Marion Miley, Patricia Lesser, JoAnne Gunderson, Debbie Massey, Beth Daniel, Nancy Lopez, Christie Kerr, Grace Park and Kellee Booth.

The course was designed by Herbert J. Tweedie, who also designed Flossmoor CC, last year's venue, as well as Midlothian Ridge and Glen View Club. He also redesigned Onwentsia.

This year Exmoor will be set up to challenge 131 of the top women amateurs who make their homes in faraway places as Korea, Brazil, and Canada. The front nine will be set at 3,194 yards and the back at 3,143 for a stern test of 6,337 yards at par 72.

Players from Illinois (listed with their current GHIN handicap index) accepted in this year's Championship include Elizabeth Burden, Lake Bluff (0.0), last year's Illinois Women's Open runnerup; Shannon Byrne, Arlington Heights (0.9); Abby Derman, Lake Forest (3.1); Kelly Dillon, Naperville (1.0); Emily Gilley, Flossmoor (0.7), the defending IWO

champion; Carli Gregorin, Waukegan (3.6); Beth Hermes, Dixon, (+0.1); Marla Jemsek-Weeks, Lemont, (0.0); Sarah Johnson, St. Charles (0.7); Hana Kim, Evanston (+1.6); Donna Marden, Schaumburg (3.6); Char McLear, Barrington (1.4); Laura Myerscough, Charleston (1.0); Danaka Piltingsrud, Glencoe (1.0); Kerry Postillion, Burr Ridge (+0.5); Meredith Ward, Crystal Lake (+1.0); and Salley Wessels, Mt. Morris (1.6).

Other entries of note are: the 15 year-old Wongluekiet twins, Aree Song and Naree Song. Currently, the sisters are living in Bradenton, Fla., where they attend the David Leadbetter Golf Academy. The girls have been on the greens since the age of seven and have won more than half of the tournaments they entered, although recently, they failed to qualify for the U.S. Women's Open scheduled to be played at the end of this month. (Taking their place in a similar age category is 13 year-old Morgan Pressel of Boca Raton, Fla.)

Last year's champion Meredith Duncan of Shreveport, La., will return to defend her title; Candy Hannemann from Rio de Janeiro, a senior at Duke University and three-time consecutive WWGA Junior Champion (1995-1997) who matched records set by Nancy Lopez in 1974 of three wins in a row will be another strong contender; Jimin Kang of Edmonds, Wash., 1998 WWGA Junior Finalist; Kim Kouwabunpat, Upland, Calif., and the lowest index of the field is Jennifer Perri, Eden Prairie, Minn., who carries a +3.1. The highest handicap in 2000 was 4.0 as compared to this year's 3.6 GHIN.

June 11-12 will be qualifying days, with the entire field playing 18 holes of stroke play each day.

June 13-14 will begin the match play, championship quarterfinals will be held in the morning on June 15 and championship semifinals will be held in the afternoon. The championship finals begin at 7:30 a.m. on June 16. Spectators are not only welcome, but enthusiastically sought and admission is free. During the tournament, daily results will be published on the WWGA website at [www.wwga.org](http://www.wwga.org).

The WWGA has come a long way since its formation — from its original tournament, which was limited to those play-



Meredith Duncan of Shreveport, La., received the W.A. Alexander Cup as champion of the 100th Women's Western Golf Association National Amateur Championship last year at Flossmoor CC.

(Photo by Bob Wagner)

ers from the Chicagoland area — to three nationally recognized competitions. The WWGA Amateur tournament is the oldest, most consecutively-played women's championship. Not even two world wars kept it from being played.

Today, the WWGA is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, with over 550 member clubs radiating throughout the United States and reaching over 50,000 women nationwide.

As an outgrowth of the WWGA, the Women's Western Golf Foundation was formed in 1971. This charitable trust was created to receive and distribute funds to advance women in scholastic achievement by promoting education with financial assistance to inadequately-funded college women's golf programs and by offering scholarships to deserving and worthy women students of high academic achievement and involvement or interest in the sport of golf. The recipients need not have an extraordinary scorecard to be eligible.

There are 73 scholars receiving \$2,000 each for the 2000-2001 academic year. Since its inception, the Foundation's total grants exceed \$1.8 million distributed to more than 300 students. The foundation is supported by state and district golf associations, member clubs of the WWGA, a "Foundation Scholarship Day" event and many corporate and individual contributors.