

# Steve Hudson named state Player of Year

## Jasper golfer edges out college players for award

Charles R. Watts

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Jasper's Steve Hudson is the Alabama Golf Association's 2009 Player of the Year. (Photo by Johnathan Bentley)

Like fine wine, Steve Hudson's golf game gets better with age.

The 51-year old Jasper native was named as the 2009 Player of the Year by the Alabama Golf Association.

Hudson nipped the University of Alabama's Scott Strohmeier and Auburn's Will McCurdy by 10 slim points.

Buford McCarty, longtime Executive Director of the Alabama Golf Association explained the points system used to determine the Player of the Year.

"The points system is designed to reward consistent play over the course of the year and even though Steve only won once (The Commodore Cup at North River Golf Club) he played a lot and placed highly consistently enough to win this year's award."

Hudson grew up in Jasper playing golf at Musgrove Country Club where his father Travis was the long time golf professional and mentor to sons Tab and Steve along with younger brother Philip.

Asked about his recent accomplishments Steve Hudson was typically low key.

"Of course it feels really good to compete and to win," said Hudson a member of the University of Alabama 1979 SEC Championship squad..

"In 2008 I qualified again for the USGA Mid-Am and went to up there and didn't play as well as I should have. The highlight of that year was qualifying for the British Mid-Amateur Championship and reaching the quarterfinals of that international event. So I knew I was playing good going into last year."

Hudson won the first event of the year, the Commodore Cup at North river Yacht Club in Tuscaloosa.

“That was good to start out the year with a win which did loads for my confidence going into the rest of the schedule.”

The rest of the schedule included second-place finishes at the Selma Country Club Invitational and a tie for second at the Bernard Weinstein Invitational in Jasper where Hudson is a past champion. A near miss at the State Amateur Championship saw Hudson eventually finish third after looking at a decent chance to win. He finished up the season’s long consistent play with a tie for fifth at the prestigious Country Club of Birmingham Invitational which features top ranked amateurs from across the United States.

“I was very consistent playing around par golf most of the time and this enabled me to rack up a lot of top five finishes and accumulate enough points to win Player of the Year,” said Hudson.

In addition to all the statewide accomplishments, Hudson also joined forces with former University of Alabama teammate Kelly Miller to win the prestigious Chesapeake Cup at Caves Valley Golf Club in Virginia, another event that draws a national field.

Hudson is one of only five golfers to win Player of the Year multiple times. Other multiple winners are: Will Swift (three times), and Eric Hamilton, Joey Holley and Talbert Griffin (all twice).

Steve followed in his older brother Tab’s footsteps often competing with and against his older brother. Tab was justifiably proud of younger brother Steve’s accomplishments over the last year.

“I am extremely proud of what Steve accomplished this past year,” said Tab Hudson. “As someone whose game has suffered like my own has from neglect, it was great to see Steve continue to work at it and battle some minor injuries and play as well as he did. It is a tremendous accomplishment for someone who is technically a senior to finish ahead of the “limber backs” who generally dominate golf in Alabama and elsewhere.”

Hudson reached a turning point following the a close loss at the Alabama State Amateur. When he was frustrated and at his lowest point, he turned to a familiar figure for help and guidance. That figure was University of Alabama football coach Nick Saban who Steve occasionally tutors in the finer points of golf.

“In the old days,” said Tab, “Steve would have had daddy to turn to for help, guidance and inspiration. Since daddy is no longer here, Steve reached out to coach Saban who talked to Steve about perseverance and grinding it out and finishing the process he had begun. Those words struck a chord with Steve and soon enough he was right back where

he was and even better and was able to finish off the season well enough to be named Player of the Year.”

“A lot of us are proud of Steve and what he was able to do this year, Coach Saban, myself, but no one would have been any prouder than daddy would have been.”

Hudson’s recent run of stellar play began with his qualifying for the 2007 USGA Mid Amateur at Bandon Dunes Resort in Bandon, Oregon. Although a bad draw, where weather was concerned, hampered Hudson’s efforts to make the match play part of that national event, the fire had been lit and Hudson’s top notch play continues to this day.

Looking ahead to 2010, Steve Hudson hopes to continue his recent good play.

“I’d like to win a state event and it would be great to play in a U.S. Senior Open. My father, Travis, played in the very first one at Winged Foot in New York in 1980. He finished in the top 20 and that was really the event which was a springboard to what is now the Champions Tour.

“And I think where golf is concerned in 2010,” said Hudson, “I’d like to do some shifting away from individual accomplishments to giving something back to the game which has been so good to me. Maybe involvement in some Junior Golf program that gives kids a chance at the same experiences I enjoyed growing up.”

That would be an action that would once again be vintage Hudson.