

## Welcome return: Cotton States is back at Bayou DeSiard

Amateur golfers from around the globe will for the first time in two years take their swings at the W.E. Cole Cotton States golf tournament this week at Bayou DeSiard Country Club. The Cotton States, which began in 1949, skipped 2009 as a result of a six-month, \$1.6 million enhancement project on the course. And local golfer and club member Roy Holloway said it was well worth the wait.

"I played in two U.S. Senior Amateurs and made the cut, played in the British Senior Amateur in England and played in three Canadian Senior Amateurs, so I've been around," Holloway said Monday afternoon following a practice round. "This is going to be fun." Holloway said he hopes the new course, which added 350 yards to extend to 7,234, will better prepare him for other competitions. "I'm going to play the Senior Porter Cup at Niagara Falls, and it's a longer course — a lot of five-iron, six-iron shots that I needed to work on — so I decided to play here," he said.

That extra difficulty is exactly what tournament chairman Lewis Young hopes the new course offers. "Golfers these days hit the ball so far it was making the course almost obsolete, so we wanted to make it a little more difficult," Young said. "We wanted to add some bunkers to the course. Like our signature hole No. 3 is a par-5 — we added some church-pew bunkers down the left side that really added difficulty." Locals such as Holloway will compete with golfers from around the country, as well as from Australia, Germany, New Zealand, South Africa and Thailand in a tournament that has featured the likes of Hal Sutton and David Toms among a long list of past participants.

Tournament co-chairman Stewart Causey hopes the Cotton States, a competition which can earn golfers points in the Scratch Players World Amateur Rankings, will quickly return to the prominence it has built during its long history. "We're excited," he said. "It's a rebuilding year because we took a year off for reconstruction, but it's going to be a good final. We're going to do well and try to grow the strength of the field over the next few years and get it back."

If Holloway's judgment is accurate, it won't take long. "Being away a year, people forget — these young kids have short memories," Holloway said. "But in the next couple years, you'll see the best players in the world come here after they get it going again, and these kids will tell people about what a great golf course this is." Causey said former Louisiana Tech golfer Matt Harvey, Oklahoma University redshirt freshman William Kropp and University of New Orleans junior Ken Looper could be among this year's top contenders.

Louisiana College golfer Caleb Stark, a West Monroe native, said he's looking forward to opportunity to test his game against the opponents — and the course. "It makes you hit good tee balls off the box. If you don't, you're in trouble," Stark said. "This is a very prestigious tournament here in the Southern states. This is my first time to play it, and I'm very glad I'm in it and hope I can play well."

Golfers will open with 36 holes of qualifying play — 18 today and 18 Wednesday — before the top 64 players begin a two-match-per-day schedule Thursday until a champion is named on Saturday.