

Cotton pickings: Annual Bayou DeSiard golf tourney to draw prestigious international field

By Keith Prince • kprince@thenewsstar.com • June 23, 2008

One of the most prestigious sporting events in Louisiana over the past 60 years, the W.E. Cole Cotton States Invitational Golf Tournament takes center stage at Bayou DeSiard Country Club beginning Wednesday.

Complete with an all-star list of champions starting with famed PGA Tour star Don January in 1951, this tournament annually draws an outstanding field.

Hal Sutton (1976) and Homero Blancos (1962, 1963, 1964) both claimed titles, and pro stars David Toms, Bill Rogers and Dr. Gil Morgan also took their shots in the tournament.

The Cotton States also produced an outstanding group of local champions including lefty Bob Cooper, the most recent Monroe winner.

Cooper turned the trick in 1999 when he was 43, becoming the oldest champion in tournament history.

After winning the state senior amateur title last year, Cooper is again entered in the Cotton States.

Other local/area winners include Brian Frazier (1997), Doug Farr (1991), Tom Bryant (1981), Paul Jones, Jr. (1980), Terry Peddy (1979), Robert Shelton (1970), Wayne Peddy (1968), Clayton Cole (1965), Jack Rivers (1959) and Bill Jones, who took the title in 1949 when the event was still called the Bayou DeSiard Labor Day Golf Tournament.

This year's tournament again features an outstanding field with 144 golfers, most of whom are top collegiate players from around the nation.

Play gets underway with an 18-hole qualifier on Wednesday.

Only 64 golfers will survive the qualifying round, and that group will begin a single elimination match play contest that runs Thursday through Saturday.

"The tournament seems to be growing in stature each year, and we have a tremendous field this year," said Bayou DeSiard pro John Pruitt.



Bob Cooper lines up a shot in 2001, two years after winning the Cotton States tournament. (News-Star file photo)

"We've have been busy the past several days as some players have come in for an early practice session and most of the others have called for tee times early in the week to get in a practice round," he added.

This year's tournament includes players from over 50 colleges and features players from five continents and seven countries, including the United States.

Australia, New Zealand, Scotland and South Africa will all have a player in the tournament while American golfers will be here from 16 states.

The Cotton States is now considered among the nation's elite amateur events. The tournament is included in the Golfweek/Titleist tournament rankings, which recently joined the Scratch Players World Amateur Ranking (SPWAR), considered the most accurate and comprehensive of all world amateur golf ranking systems.

SPWAR ranks over 1,500 amateur events worldwide in their database and there are over 5,300 world amateur golfers who have earned points somewhere in the world the last two years through tournaments.

Currently the Cotton States is ranked number 48 among U.S. amateur golf tournaments, ahead of the U.S. Senior Amateur, the NCAA Division II and Division III events and both the NAIA and National Junior College national championship events.

All tournament play is open to the public free of charge.