

KENTUCKY GOLF HALL OF FAME

# Martha Leach



## 2015 Nomination

# Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame

## *2015 Nomination Form*

### NOMINEE'S NAME

Leach	Martha		S
Last Name	First Name	Nickname (if applicable)	Middle Initial

### NOMINEE'S DATE OF BIRTH

1961	December	19
Year	Month	Day

### RESIDENCE

Years Kentucky Resident (minimum 5 years required) 19

Current Residence			
1571 Jolee Dr.	Hebron	KY	41048
Address	City	State	Zip

### STATUS

- ☒ Amateur
- ☐ Professional
- ☐ Deceased (please provide date of death \_\_\_\_\_)

### KEY AREAS (check all that are applicable)

- ☒ Playing Achievements
- ☒ Contribution/Promotion of the Game
- ☐ Contribution to Junior Golf
- ☐ Teaching of the game
- ☐ Golf Course Architecture
- ☐ Turf Grass Research
- ☐ Golf Course Management/Maintenance
- ☐ National Recognition

### SUPPORTING MATERIALS

#### Required

- ✓ One page type written biography of nominee
- ✓ Two (2) Letters of Nomination

#### Suggested

- ✓ Newspaper articles
- ✓ Photographs



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**Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame Nomination Letter**  
**Nominee : Martha S Leach**

I am endorsing the nomination of Martha Leach, of Hebron, KY, to the Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame. Her playing achievements and contribution to amateur golf afford her the right for induction.

Martha played Division I golf for the University of Georgia. She has played in 55+ USGA Championships. She won the 2009 US Women's Mid Am Championship and has made the semis and finals in countless other championships. In 2015 Martha and her daughter, Madison, were the only Mother/Daughter team to qualify for the USGA Women's Four-Ball Championship in the country.

With as amazing a playing career as she has had it is her character, on and off of the golf course, which makes her such an asset to the game of golf....especially amateur golf. She is the *Poster Child* of amateur golf....attitude, poise, appearance and obvious love of this great game emanates from her at all times. If amateur golfers, young and old, could spend time shadowing Martha they would see the respect for the body of golf that one would hope to carry on forever.

Martha has managed a career, being a wife and a mother and still found a way to keep the game she cares so dearly close to her. The level of play and time dedicated to the game is a testament to her love of amateur golf.

I greatly appreciate your time and consideration for this nomination.

Sincerely Yours,

Ben Kuhn  
Head Golf Professional  
Traditions Golf Club

6/23/2015

To: KY Golf Hall of Fame Committee

From: Ralph Landrum

Dear Committee:

Please use this note as a letter of recommendation that Martha Leach become a member of the KY Golf Hall of Fame.

Martha has a long playing career that includes playing in a remarkable 55 USGA Championships. Martha also won the 2009 USGA Women's Mid-Am Championship.

In this day and age where just about all golfers of her ability turn professional, Martha has remained a true amateur. She has created this incredible amateur golf career while being a championship Mother and Wife.

I hope you will place Martha in the KY Golf Hall of Fame. Her career has flown under the radar but I consider her to have one of the great amateur careers of any golfer from the great state of Kentucky.

Thanks!

Be good:

Ralph Landrum

PGA Master Professional

Member of the KY Golf Hall of Fame



Martha Stacy Leach  
1571 Jolee Drive  
Hebron, KY 41048

## AWARDS AND HONORS

### UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION AWARDS

- 2013 USGA Women's Mid-Amateur, Quarterfinalist
- 2012 and 1999 USGA State Team Representative, Kentucky
- 2011 USGA Women's Mid-Amateur, Runner-up
- 2009 USGA Women's Mid-Amateur, Champion
- 2000 USGA Women's Mid-Amateur, Semi-finalist
- 1998 USGA Women's Mid-Amateur, Semi-finalist
- 1996 USGA World Team, Alternate
- 1996 USGA Women's Amateur, Quarterfinalist
- 1995 USGA Women's Amateur, Quarterfinalist
- 1994 and 1979 USGA Women's Open, Participant
- 1994 USGA Curtis Cup, Alternate
- 1994 USGA Women's Mid-Amateur, Semi-finalist
- 1992 USGA Women's Mid-Amateur, Quarterfinalist
- 1991 USGA Women's Amateur, Semi-finalist
- 1978 USGA Girls' Junior, Quarterfinalist
- Played in over 56 USGA Championships

### NATIONAL AMATEUR AWARDS

- 2010 Dougherty Invitational, Semi-finalist
- 2009 Sally Invitational, 6<sup>th</sup> place
- 2001 Sally Invitational, Runner-up
- 2001 Trans National, Semi-finalist
- 2000 North-South, Semi-finalist
- 1998 Southern Amateur, Quarter-finalist
- 1996 Trans National, Quarter-finalist
- 1996 Women's Western, Semi-finalist
- 1979 Bermuda Amateur, Champion

### STATE AMATEUR AWARDS

- 2011 Kentucky State Open, 3<sup>rd</sup> place
- 1993 Texas Ladies' Match Play, Runner-up
- 1992 Texas Women's Amateur, Champion
- 1978 Georgia State Girl's Junior, Champion

### COLLEGE AWARDS

- 1983 Member of NCAA team, 3<sup>rd</sup> place

- 1983 Member of SEC team, Champion
- 1983 SEC All-Conference
- 1980 WSIC Champion
- 1980-1983 Lettered University of Georgia
- 1979-1983 Full grant-in-aid University of Georgia

#### NATIONAL AMATEUR RANKINGS

- March 2010 Ranked 20<sup>th</sup> in US by Golf Week
- 2001 Ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in US by Golf Digest
- 1978 AJGA First Team All-American

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## An Interview With Champion Martha Leach

RHONDA GLENN: Ladies and gentlemen, our 2009 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur champion. Congratulations, Martha.

MARTHA LEACH: Thank you, Rhonda.

RHONDA GLENN: I know you have tried to do this year after year for many years. What does it feel like?

MARTHA LEACH: You know, I really don't know what it feels like. Right now it's pretty surreal. I'm thrilled. I'm just so-- you know, I'm just like, okay. (Laughter.)

RHONDA GLENN: Tired?

MARTHA LEACH: No. No, I'm not. I'll probably crash. I mean, of course my daughter Madison called this morning and she's like, Mom, how did you sleep? Not very good. (Laughter.)

RHONDA GLENN: Were you up last night?

MARTHA LEACH: Oh, Rhonda, have you ever played a final? I didn't know what to think. I was tossing. You know you roll over and you think, oh.

I did have a saying all week. Even my husband doesn't know. From the very beginning of the tournament I said, "I am not afraid to win." I said it a hundred times on every hole.

If I turned over at night, I would say it to myself. Because I have demons like anybody else. I mean, before a shot, it wasn't like I was trying to place the shot, but I would say, "I am not afraid to win." I said it a lot. I really did.

So I was pretty good about my attitude. I think one time this week I really got down on myself. I mean, really down. You know how it sometimes go.

You know, but I remembered the saying. Sometimes I forget things. That was my big, big thing this week.

RHONDA GLENN: Yesterday you said you were not hitting the ball as you wanted to and that you were scattering your shots, spraying the ball somewhat. You hit the ball well today. What changed?

MARTHA LEACH: It was a great lie from the very beginning (indiscernible) the bunker and stuff like that. You know, I mean, coming in I didn't put pressure on myself. You know, I'm not playing tomorrow. This tournament ends today. I may never get another chance to play in the final of a U.S. event.

You know, self-talk. You know, "I am not afraid to win" and just go from there.

RHONDA GLENN: Questions.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

MARTHA LEACH: Yeah, somewhere around there. Seems like 45. I don't know. This is my 21st one. I know that. 21 is my lucky number.

RHONDA GLENN: Has it always been?

MARTHA LEACH: Yeah.

RHONDA GLENN: How so?

MARTHA LEACH: My birthday is September 21st, so I've always loved 21. So I had a pretty good feeling about that. I like the fact that we're back in Florida, the area where it first all began for me in the mid-amateur. I like the fact that, you know -- I was telling one of reporters earlier that our daughter got married on July 31st, and two days later after that, my husband and I, we went to go see Fred Funk win the Seniors.

We're friends with them, and I walked with Sharon. He was winning, and when was lifting the trophy, I was like, I want one of these. I want to get one before I'm in the seniors. I want to win a tournament.

So, you know, I did -- John has worked with me, you know, since we've been married. We worked on some swing changes, and I didn't do them all this week because the stress of the tournament. You just gotta get into the hole.

But I did commit myself to practice one hour a day on putting. I think I only took two days off. But I really did work on my putting, and it really did pay off for me this week. I made a lot of putts.

**Q. In all the championships you've played in, is there a point where you told yourself, I can win one of these?**

MARTHA LEACH: I never-- even though I said to myself, "I am not afraid if win," you never know. I mean, I could have not made that putt yesterday on the last hole, gone and lost in a playoff and the momentum could have changed. There are so many variables in match play, and you just never know.

Like on 16, I'm telling myself, "I'm one-up, and I need to go two up." I don't want to just wish it in there. But that was my philosophy. I'm just always looking forward that way.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

MARTHA LEACH: I would say I was 105 yards to the hole in an awful lie and missed the fairway. I was in the deep bermuda rough. And so I really -- I said 9-iron, and I hit a great shot and made about 10-footer.

I hit my best club probably all week. I hit a good next shot. Third shot hit it into the bunker on Friday, so then I bladed it. She was having her trouble, too. She was four on the green, and she was -- I had to hit it out of the bunker again. I made about a 15-footer and she lipped hers. I was really lucky there.

RHONDA GLENN: Okay. You said you bladed it into another bunker.

MARTHA LEACH: Into another bunker.

RHONDA GLENN: (No microphone.)

MARTHA LEACH: I drove it in the bunker, and then I had to hit a 7-iron out. Laid up and made bogey.

RHONDA GLENN: A birdie on 10. How in the world did you birdie 10? That is the hardest hole of the week.

MARTHA LEACH: I think I birdied it two times this week maybe. You know what, I don't know. You know what, I doubled it during qualifying or the day I shot 71 I double it. So I mean, I really don't know. I like that hole.

RHONDA GLENN: Was your driver in the fairway?

MARTHA LEACH: Yeah, it was.

RHONDA GLENN: What did you hit?

MARTHA LEACH: I hit 5-iron. It was 162 yards, and it was into the wind. So I just kind of did a little knock down.

RHONDA GLENN: How long was it?

MARTHA LEACH: Four feet.

## Championship Facts

### U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur

**PAR AND YARDAGE** – Golden Hills Golf and Turf Club will play at 6,173 yards and a par of 35-37—72 for stroke-play rounds. For match play, the course will play at 6,193 yards.

**COURSE SETUP** – The USGA Course Rating® for the U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur at Golden Hills Golf and Turf Club is 76.5 and USGA Slope Rating® is 134.

**Tees, fairways, approaches and collars, height of grass** – 0.425 inches

**Putting greens** – 0.120 inches with a speed of 10.5 to 11 feet on the USGA Stimpmeter.

**Intermediate Rough** – 0.75 inches (6-foot width)

**First Cut, Primary Rough** – 1.5 inches (15- to 20-foot width)

**Second Cut, Primary Rough** – 2.5 inches

**ARCHITECTS** – Golden Hills Golf and Turf Club was designed by Charles Pace and Lee Popple and opened in 1964. The course was redesigned by Rees Jones in 2005.

**THE USGA AND FLORIDA** – The 2009 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship will be the 17th USGA championship conducted in the state of Florida. It will be the seventh national women's championship and the third U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur to be conducted in the state of Florida. In 1988, the championship was held at Amelia Island Plantation in Amelia Island, and in 1992 it was played at Old Marsh Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens.

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RHONDA GLENN: And then bogey on 14, (indiscernible) (laughter.) Missed the green.

MARTHA LEACH: I missed the green, but I had a good bunker shot. And I'm telling you, that is a hard pin placement they had there.

RHONDA GLENN: Then on 15, Laura hit her shot within inches, and you had (no microphone.) So you went two up with three to play. You birdied 16. What a way to finish.

MARTHA LEACH: It was a great way to finish. You know, I have been working on my 60-yard shot. I had, believe it or not, it was at 59 and a half. Pretty close to 60. So I hit a great shot.

I was a little bit worried, because Mary Jane Hiestand was over on the right about flag high. I'm looking over there, and she's not (indiscernible), so I'm like worried.

I found out she was texting somebody. I was like, oh.

RHONDA GLENN: How long was that putt?

MARTHA LEACH: I would say that was like three and a half, four feet.

**Q. I figured there was probably only eight feet between the bunker and the flag. Were you going for that particular path?**

MARTHA LEACH: Yes. I remember that -- I can't remember. It was either a qualifying round or one day we had the flag a little bit further back, I never really saw that when I played at practice rounds.

I remember it was a little bit flatter and it had more room than it looks because of the bunker. But I knew I had like at least like seven feet, so I hit a really good (indiscernible.)

**Q. (No microphone.)**

MARTHA LEACH: You know, I look at it-- okay, this is one ever things I'm thinking. It's nice. I'm thinking in the 21 years that I have played in this tournament, you average 400 entries have been sent in. 8400 women have played in this tournament, and there have only been 23 champions. And there's been a lot of double winners.

And so I'm just kind of like, Wow. What are your odds? I mean, as I said yesterday, this year I was either gonna win the lottery or win the mid-am. (Laughter.) I did. And I said, Damn, I won't be winning any money.

RHONDA GLENN: Which would you rather win?

MARTHA LEACH: Right now? I won this. Why can't have both? (Laughter.)

**Q. Is it special going into the record books (indiscernible)?**

MARTHA LEACH: Yeah, it is special.

RHONDA GLENN: There is only one other sister act that ever won USGA championships.

MARTHA LEACH: You know, it is special. I talk to her a lot on the phone. Last night when I was talking to her, she said, God, are you sitting on the phone? I said, No, it's one of those days.

I'm thrilled with all the phone calls and stuff, but, you know, she was just telling me, Enjoy yourself. And then she started talking about -- she asked about how I was hitting. I said, I'm not really sure (indiscernible).

Then she started giving like a little bit of her way of thinking of golf, and I'm trying to do a new more of advanced golf outlook. Not taking anything away. I'm like, Let's not talk about the golf.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

MARTHA LEACH: Oh, it's special. But it means more to me because -- it just means a lot. I love her. But I have a lot of other siblings I love, too. She just happens to be a great golfer.

But I'm always amazed at how -- I mean, we laugh sometimes. Like it could be women's or men's and we are just like, Oh, my God, I can't believe I won any of these.

And I'm sure it's hard. I mean, it's kind of stressful for a loved one to be watching you.

RHONDA GLENN: How stressful was it for you?

MARTHA LEACH: I'm as tight as tick. What are you talking about? I mean, I'm like -- John was giving me some shoulder rubs. I mean, my shoulder is tight.

But, you know, for the most part, my thing was I kept saying to myself, "I am not afraid to win." That was my have motto all week. You weren't here when I said it. I didn't even tell you. You know, this is my thing, my battle, so it's for my mind.

But, you know, I did it.

**Q. Now that you've won one of those things, has your perception changed?**

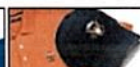
MARTHA LEACH: Well, I knew it would always be difficult. Robin Burke and I had a conversation. You know, I miss seeing her at tournaments and stuff like that.

I'm just like you know what, it's hard to win. She's been at finals of the Amateur back in like '95 or something like that. We just say it is so hard to win. You have to have so many things going for you. You need your opponent to make a mistake, too.

That's awful to say. I will never pull against somebody. It's all up to me. If it goes in, it goes in. If the other person makes it on top of me, so be it. They hit a better shot than I.

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## Martha Leach wins U.S. Women's Mid Amateur title

By [Andy Marks](#)

Staff writer

Published: Thursday, October 8, 2009 at 12:47 p.m.

Martha Leach was looking at about 8 total feet of space between the back right pin placement on Golden Hills' 16th green and one of famed course designer Rees Jones' notoriously brutal greenside bunkers.

Sitting in the center of the fairway, Leach had just seen a hole shaved off her U.S. Women's Mid Amateur lead moments earlier when Laura Coble stayed alive by planting a pitching wedge an inch from the 15th pin.



BRUCE ACKERMAN/OCALA  
STAR-BANNER

Martha Leach won the U.S. Women's Mid Amateur Championship on Thursday.

Leach, who has entered 45 USGA championships without a win, knew this was no time for passive play.

She reached for her 60-degree wedge, the very club she had been practicing with extensively for the past month, and let it fly. Her ball towered over the green, then touched down hole high, spun backward, and stopped.

Three feet. Match.

A championship shot, struck by a USGA national champion.

Martha Leach, 47, pumped her fist and shouted "yes!"

It was the crowning moment for a lifelong golfer who said she hadn't won a tournament in 17 years. The younger sister of three-time U.S. Women's Open champion Hollis Stacy, Leach finally had a title to call her own.

Leach was 8 years old and living in Georgia when Stacy won her first USGA championship.

"I really believed that USGA stood for 'Us, Georgia,' she laughed.

Leach, who now lives in Hebron, Ky., trailed briefly when Coble, on the sixth fairway, chipped up to a foot. Leach answered with an impressive tree-clearing shot from the rough at No. 7 that led to a match-squaring par.

Another dynamite approach at the 10th gave the Leach the lead for good.

Coble, 45, a six-time Georgia State Amateur champion, tried to start a rally out of a three-down hole with her dynamic birdie at the 15th, but Leach wouldn't let her former Georgia Bulldog teammate off the hook.

"I knew she was playing great and I knew I had to keep making birdies or better," said Coble, who lives in Augusta, Ga. "That's what you have to do to beat someone of her caliber. I didn't feel crazy nervous or anything. I felt good all day, I was just a little bit off."

Leach's championship round, which she won 3 and 2, was played at an even-par clip through 16 holes. She had three birdies and three bogeys, while Coble had two birdies and five bogies.

Leach's win wrapped up a week-long event that, by all accounts, succeeded.

At Leach's trophy ceremony, Golden Hills Golf and Turf Club owner Bernadette Castro lauded the fan interest — with spectators peaking at more than 100 in numbers at certain holes on the final day — as "the largest galleries ever to watch a final match for a Women's Mid Amateur Championship."

Castro was equally pleased with her club's performance during its debut in a national spotlight.

"A winning team," she said, "that stands ready for the next USGA championship."

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## Leach Claims Title

In a matchup between two former collegiate teammates, Martha Leach defeated Laura Coble 3 and 2

October 8, 2009

OCALA, Fla. (AP) -- Martha Stacy Leach won the U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur on Thursday to join sister Hollis Stacy as a U.S. Golf Association champion, beating former Georgia teammate Laura Coble 3 and 2 at Golden Hills Golf and Turf Club.

The 47-year-old Leach, the Savannah, Ga., player who now lives in Hebron, Ky., and Stacy are only the second sisters to win USGA titles.

"It's special," said Leach, making her 22nd start in the tournament for players 25 and older. "It just means a lot. I love her, but I have a lot of other siblings I love, too. Hollis just happens to be a great golfer."

Stacy won six USGA titles, taking the U.S. Girls' Junior in 1969-71 and the U.S. Women's Open in 1977, '78 and '84. U.S. Women's Amateur champions Harriot Curtis (1906) and Margaret Curtis (1907, '11, '12) are the only other sisters to win USGA titles.

"I'm so proud of my little sister," Stacy said. "She has a heart as big as the state of Georgia."



Leach made a 15-foot birdie putt on the par-4 10th hole to take a 1-up lead and took a three-hole lead with pars on 12 and 14.

The 45-year-old Coble, from Augusta, Ga., hit a wedge to inches for a birdie on the par-5 15th to cut her deficit to two holes, but Leach hit a 60-yard wedge shot to 3½ feet on the par-5 16th and made the birdie putt to end the match.

"It was a great way to finish," Leach said. "I'm thinking in the 21 years I've played in this, an average 400 entries have been sent in, 8,400 women have played and there have only been 23 champions. And there have been a lot of double winners. What are your odds of winning this? This year I was either going to win the lottery or win the Women's Mid-Am. I did). And I said, 'Damn, I won't be winning any money.' "

With the usual match-play concessions, Leach was even par for 16 holes and Coble was 3-over par.

"I was just a little bit off today with my swing, putting, and just couldn't get it all together," Coble said, "I'm disappointed that I didn't win, but I had a great week."

**Keywords:** GOLF, GOLF WORLD, PGA TOUR, USGA, U.S. WOMEN'S MID-AMATEUR, U.S. MID-AMATEUR, MARTHA LEACH, LAURA COBLE

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## Leach, Gerstle debut at Women's Four-Ball, just in time for Mother's Day



**By Beth Ann Nichols**

Sunday, May 10, 2015

BANDON, Ore. – People said to Martha Leach, “But Martha, you could win if you played with someone else.” Leach, 53, the 2009 U.S. Mid-Amateur champion playing in her 55th U.S. Golf Association event, didn’t want to play with someone else. She wanted to compete alongside her only child, Madison Gerstle, on Mother’s Day at the inaugural U.S. Women’s Amateur Four-Ball. They were the only mother-daughter team in the field.

“No one deserves it more than her,” said Leach, “after being dragged around the world. Our vacations were my golf trips.”

Gerstle, 28, didn’t even realize people took any other kind of vacation until she got to college. Not that she minded following mom.

Despite having six-time USGA champion Hollis Stacy as an aunt and Leach as her mom, Gerstle wasn’t interested in going down that road. She was more into team sports, playing basketball and soccer through high school. She quit golf at age 9 and didn’t take it up again until she was 25.

“There was never any pressure put on me by my mother or my aunt,” said Gerstle, “but it was a lot of pressure to live up to having multiple USGA champions in the family.”

Gerstle picked a fine venue in Pacific Dunes to begin her USGA career. She even knocked in a 3-foot par putt on the 16th hole – when her mom was out of the hole with a lost ball – and drained a 30-foot, downhill slider for par on the 18th.

“My Mother’s Day gift,” said Leach.

They live 45 minutes apart. Leach in Hebron, Ky., where her husband, John, is director of golf at Traditions Golf Club. Gerstle works in corporate finance in Cincinnati. They were still hitting



off mats when they arrived in Bandon.

Both had their husbands on the bag. Nate, a roughly 25-handicapper, didn't know enough to help guide his wife around her first links experience. Stacy told Gerstle to ask the USGA if her father, Leach's caddie, could give her advice. (The answer was yes.)

There was a lot to learn. Gerstle had never even seen a tight lie before this week. Even Leach struggled.

"I've been around golf a long time," said Leach, "and I'm hitting shots I've never seen before."

They missed the cut, shooting rounds of 77-74 to finish at 7-over 151.

But for the first time Gerstle was able to feel what her mother has felt all these years. She dealt with nerves, watched her mom's ball land in five divots in the second round and came to a better understanding of the game's highs and lows.

"It exceeded my expectations," said Gerstle. "It definitely whetted the appetite for competitive golf, that's for sure. I might try to win the club championship first, before I try my next national championship."

As for Leach, she took to paraphrasing Bob Rotella in describing what she felt about watching her daughter compete for the first time in a game that captured her heart.

"This game is rich of sweet moments," Leach said. "(Madison) had a bunch of those. And that's all you can ever ask for in golf.



U.S. WOMEN'S AMATEUR

# In five different decades, Leach has loved the U.S. Women's Amateur

AUGUST 05, 2012

By Rhonda Glenn, USGA



***Martha Leach, with her caddie-husband John watching, just turned 50 and will be eligible for the USGA Senior Women's Amateur in September. (Steven Gibbons/USGA)***



young players posed with its stately prize, the Robert Cox Trophy.

Take my picture! they called, giggling and grinning as their relatives snapped shots.

Look at them, said Martha Leach. They're so *excited*.

Leach, 50, has walked past that trophy in five different decades. Since the 1970s, Leach has stared at it, appreciated it, coveted it and, as the years have rolled by, has begun to stroll past it with barely a glance, fairly sure that the Cox Trophy, in its gleaming splendor, would never be hers.

This week, at The Country Club, she is giving it yet another try.

It was 1978 when Martha Stacy played in her first U.S. Women's Amateur at the age of 16. Jimmy Carter was president of the United States. Affirmed won the Kentucky Derby. The first mobile phone was introduced and gasoline was 63 cents per gallon.

In 1978, most of the current contestants, whose average age is a bit over 20, had not yet been born. A few of the *parents* here hadn't been born. This week, the lockers on either side of Martha's locker belong to Bronte Law and Alison Lee. They are 17 years old. Leach's daughter, Madison, is 25.

Martha Leach prepared for this championship with what she calls a lack of preparation. Her life is busy. She's married, has many friends and works in real estate.

If I get 30 minutes of practice a day, I am very fortunate, she said. A goal will be to make it to match play. It's been a long time and I've not played a lot of golf. But how do you tell someone to have low expectations? Whether it's making dinner or whatever, you do





Leach doesn't look as if she is 50 years older than most of the contestants. Her skin is unlined and her eyes are expressive. When she strides through the clubhouse wearing a baseball cap, she looks contemporary.

I have some ailments, she said. They're not life-threatening, but I have aches and pains.

Martha Stacy Leach has seen a lot of changes in championship golf in the last five decades. The competition is unbelievable, so it's really good there, Leach said. But I feel that there's now a dollar sign in golf, so it is not as good there. In equipment, I can't compare the 1970s at all. I used to use a 4-wood from 160 yards. Today, I use a 5-iron or maybe a 6. And golf courses are in better condition.

This week, seemingly every player has a parent in tow. That too, Leach says, is a change.

My mom would put me on a plane to a tournament in the 1970s and when I got there, we'd go to private housing provided by the club, she remembers. We traveled alone, but we'd meet up with other players and we were well taken care of.

Leach thinks that golf swings, with the exceptions of the great players of earlier times, have improved overall. She knows what she is talking about. Leach occupies the rarified air of the championship strata, having won the 2009 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur. That week, her older sister, Hollis Stacy, was calling Golden Hills Golf & Turf Club in Ocala, Fla., twice a day for updates.

Stacy bubbled with enthusiasm for her sister.





golf instructor who died in 1995 at age 90) died, Martha went to his house, knocked on the door and told Helen, his widow, 'Helen, I am here to help you put up your Christmas decorations.' Now, who else would do that?

At the Stacy household, 10 children made it a crowded upbringing. We competed for hot-water showers, or a place to eat breakfast, Martha said, so I am innately competitive.

It's worth noting that in 1978, when Martha played in her first U.S. Women's Amateur, Hollis had just won her second U.S. Women's Open. Hollis now owns six USGA championship titles and was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in May. She selected Martha to present her at the induction ceremonies.

I was so nervous! Martha remembered. These other players had famous presenters, like (television producer) Terry Jastrow for Peter Allis, and I was just Hollis' sister! After it was over I said to a relative, 'Did you see all of those other presenters?'

### **A Place of Her Own**

Martha is hitting balls on the practice tee under the eye of John Leach, her husband, coach, caddie and best friend.

Up and down the line, the other players hit shots. *Slam! Crash!* They hold nothing back. Leach is not among the longest hitters here, but she is long enough and her golf swing is a tribute to both the past and present, although it does not much resemble the swing of Hollis.

In Hollis' greatest years, the 1970s and '80s, you could tell who it was from two fairways away. Her swing was natural, graceful, built on timing rather than power. As Hollis strolled along, she swung



What timing it was. If Martha has a more modern sort of swing, it still seems as if good rhythm and timing run in the family.

Martha's husband, John, used to make the four-hour drive from Austin to Fort Worth just to watch Ben Hogan practice. John is a superb teacher who has helped Fred Funk, Chip Beck, Gene Sauers and other playing professionals. John helped Martha to update her swing. At the same time, however, Martha has retained her natural grace. Like her competitiveness, this may also be innate.

And yet, ask Martha Leach to describe her greatest achievement and she will not name the 2009 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship that she won. Instead, she refers to raising a daughter who is responsible, loving and a great person.

Leach has made her own way. It's my life choice and I've been happy with it, she said. If she has any regrets, it is that she was overlooked for the USA Curtis Cup team, although she was once named an alternate.

What Leach most enjoys about golf, however, has nothing to do with holing a putt to win. Instead, she treasures her lifetime of amateur golf, treasures playing a variety of good courses and thinking of the people who may have walked there, treasures playing golf with the same friends who stood by her for her daughter's wedding.

The words 'champion' and 'winner' are fleeting, good for one year, at best, Martha said, but as an *amateur* your longevity is lifetime. I do admit I miss the romance in golf. Golf (today) is fast, far and in the 'now' moment. It took me 34 years to win a USGA event and, in those years, I fell in and out of love with golf millions of



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Martha Leach is not the oldest player here. Brenda Pictor, at the age of 56, has that honor. Leach qualified for the Women's Amateur by finishing as runner-up in the 2011 Women's Mid-Amateur. At 50, she is eligible for the USGA Senior Women's Amateur for the first time. It will be played in September.

I've entered, she said. Right now, I plan to play.

The Women's Amateur, with its lack of age restrictions, is her favorite championship. She frequently reminds the young players to thank club members and volunteers.

Amateur golf, Leach believes, is a privilege. She should know. In her fifth decade at this championship, she still chases the dream.

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