

KENTUCKY GOLF HALL OF FAME

# Tom Cooksey



2016  
Nomination

# Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame

## 2016 Nomination Form

### NOMINEE'S NAME

Cooksey Tom \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name First Name Nickname (if applicable) Middle Initial

### NOMINEE'S DATE OF BIRTH

1943 August 20  
Year Month Day

### RESIDENCE

Years Kentucky Resident (minimum 5 years required) 68 year in KY

### Current Residence

9417 Mendel Springer Rd. Ashland, KY 41102  
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

Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame | Golf House Kentucky | 1116 Elmore Just Drive, Louisville, KY 40245

# **Tom Cooksey**

## **Biographical Resume**

Name: Tom Cooksey  
DOB: August 20, 1943  
Address: 9417 Meade Springer Road  
Ashland, KY 41102  
Years Resident of Kentucky: 68

### **Highlights in Key Areas**

#### **Contribution/Promotion of the Game**

1976 - Attended his first KGA-PGA National Rules Seminar, one of the 20 odd such rules schools he has done in his career. In the 40 years that elapsed since then, Tom has officiated on all levels of golf in many locations, both in Kentucky and throughout the United States.

1986 - Appointed to the Kentucky Golf Association Board of Directors, serving that organization for the past 30 years.

2005 - Elevated to the position of the KGA's Director of Section 9 (Eastern Kentucky) a position he still holds.

2007 - Appointed and elected to the KGA's Executive Board as Treasurer, serving for two years in that position, as well as two years each as Secretary and Vice President.

2013 - Became President of the KGA, serving two year term. His major achievements included:

- \*Obtaining 501c3 tax status from the Internal Revenue Service, an act which allowed the KGA to offer tax exemptions to sponsors that were not available before.

- \*Working with leaders of the Kentucky Senior Golf Association to reunify the KGA and KSGA under the banner of the KGA, a move that allows the staff of Golf House Kentucky to maximize services and other resources.

2016 - Worked with the leadership of the KPGA to solidify by formal agreement a financial plan that will allow the KGA greater opportunity to expand services to its members in the future.

#### **Junior Golf**

1984 - Took over the Tri-State Junior Golf Association, covering areas of Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky, implementing a 501c3 fund raising system. Ran the tour for four years, hosting 32 events and serving an average of 400 players per year.

1984 - Joined with the American Junior Golf Association and founded the AJGA Bluegrass Junior at Bellefonte Country Club in Ashland. One of only 19 events the first year, the 2016 event was one of 115 nationwide. Developed the Junior-Am, a fund raising golf event featuring teams of amateurs and a junior player, which has been copied and utilized by the AJGA in tournaments.

2004 - Appointed to the USGA Junior Championship Committee, serving on the national board for ten years.

2008 - Founded the Eastern Kentucky Junior Golf Association, serving junior players from the 13 eastern most counties in the state. Used the 501c3 system to raise sponsorships and developed a new revenue sharing program with area high schools. Tom donated \$5 per

ing program with area high schools. Tom donated \$5 per participant back to their high school golf program, an amount that totaled more than \$18,000 over five years. Also created a "Just Fore Fun" day for autistic children and their parents, a program where all participants got a picnic and awards.

### **Special Awards**

1997 - Received the "Digger Smith Award" from the AJGA, a lifetime achievement award given for Outstanding Service to Junior Golf.

2006 - Received "Most Outstanding Golf Official" award from the KHSAA for the 2005-2006 season.

2007 - Received the "J. W. Janes Award" from the KGA, in effect a lifetime achievement award for contributions to amateur golf.

PO Box 1252  
Morehead, KY 40351

Golf House Kentucky  
Attention: Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame  
1116 Elmore Just Drive  
Louisville, KY 40245

June 23, 2016

Dear Selection Committee Members:

Please accept this letter and included documents as nomination of Tom Cooksey of Ashland for election to the Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame. In two specific areas identified on the nomination form, Contribution/Promotion of the Game and Contribution to Junior Golf, Tom's record is second to none.

First, in the area of Contribution and Promotion of the Game, Tom has served as a Rules Official in all areas of golf since his first attendance at a national rules seminar in 1976. For the next 40 years, he has officiated on all levels of golf from junior to professional and from states from nearly coast to coast.

In addition, Tom has been a member of the Kentucky Golf Association Board of Directors for the past 30 years. In 2005 he was elevated to the position of Director of Section 9 which was followed closely by appointment and election to the organizations executive board in 2007. The eight years as an executive culminated with his service as president of the organization in 2013-14, serving as president of the KGA-PGA in 2015.

Two major achievements of his presidency were the application for, and receipt of, 501c3 tax status from the IRS for the KGA, allowing the organization to seek out more sources of outside sponsorship revenue and, working with leaders of the Kentucky Senior Golf Association, worked to reunify the KGA and KSGA under the banner of the KGA. Both moves have allowed the KGA and Golf House Kentucky staff to better maximize its personnel and resources.

In a major recent move, Tom worked closely with the leadership of the KPGA to help advance and solidify by formal agreement the relationship between the KGA and KPGA. In an unprecedented arrangement signed in early 2016 by the two organizations, the KGA obtained the financial means to move successfully forward into the future.

Tom's work with junior golf may well exceed his many successes in promotion of the game. Recognized on the highest levels of golf, Tom served on the USGA Junior Championship Committee from 2004 to 2014. But he is proudest of his service to juniors on the local and regional level.

The year 1984 was big for Tom in two areas of junior golf, as he and a partner took over a struggling area junior tour, re-launching it under the name Tri-State Junior Golf Association. Structuring it as a 501c3 organization and gaining funding accordingly, players from Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia came out in numbers as eight tournaments per summer averaged 400 players per season. Tom returned the organization to the original founder in 1988 and the tour is still functioning 28 years later.

Also in 1984, Tom got involved with a relatively new junior organization with headquarters in Georgia, the American Junior Golf Association. That year, he founded the AJGA Bluegrass Junior at Bellefonte Country Club in Ashland, one of only 19 events sponsored by the organization that season. This year's Bluegrass was one of 115 run by the AJGA in 2016.

The 2016 event, which featured 144 players from eight foreign countries and 23 states, was the 33<sup>rd</sup> in a proud history and is the longest running tournament of the AJGA schedule. One of the major innovations of the tournament was a fund raising event called the Junior Am, where teams of amateur players paid entry fees to play with one junior in the group. The first year's event raised \$7,000 and became an AJGA model for events throughout the country.

Tom's final creation in the area of junior golf tours came in 2008, when he launched the Eastern Kentucky Junior Golf Association. Using his same 501c3 model, he raised money and conducted competitions through the 13 easternmost counties in Kentucky. In fact, only juniors who resided in those counties were eligible to participate.

Some of the venues used currently saw their first junior events with Tom's tour. The EKJGA also founded a "Just Fore Fun" day for children with Autism. One day each summer, the kids got to hit practice balls at a driving range and play nine holes with their parents. A picnic and awards for all participants followed. In 2013, Tom turned the operation of the EKJGA to the umbrella of the Kentucky PGA Junior Tour.

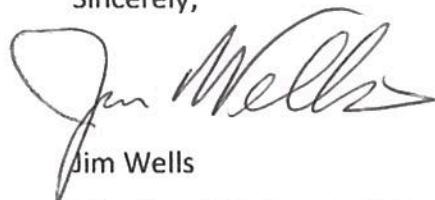
Some of the awards Tom has received include the 1997 Digger Smith Award from the AJGA, a lifetime achievement award given for Outstanding Service to Junior Golf, and the J. W. Janes Award from the KGA in 2007, also in effect a lifetime achievement award for service to amateur golf in Kentucky.

His officiating was also recognized by the Kentucky High School Athletic Association as he received the "Most Outstanding Golf Official" award for the 2005-2006 academic year.

Tom's love of, and contribution to, golf should be obvious. Even more obvious should be his understanding of the importance of obtaining outside funding sources for golf associations, in some cases some 30 years before anyone else had the idea to do so.

As hindsight is always 20-20, only time will tell how big the actions taken by the KGA and KGA-PGA were that occurred during Tom's presidency. Even with his financial and administrative contributions to the game, Tom's love of junior golf has made the golfing life in Kentucky far better than it ever would have been.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Wells". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

Jim Wells

Member, KGA Board of Directors

GOLF HOUSE KENTUCKY  
KENTUCKY GOLF HALL OF FAME  
1116 ELMORE JUST DRIVE  
LOUISVILLE, KY. 40245

DEAR COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

PLEASE ACCEPT THIS LETTER NOMINATING TOM COOKSEY  
INTO THE KENTUCKY GOLF HALL OF FAME.

I HAVE KNOWN TOM FOR 40 YRS AND WE HAVE  
WORKED TOGETHER MANY TIMES IN PROMOTING GOLF IN  
EASTERN KENTUCKY.

A SHORT LIST OF TOM'S CONTRIBUTIONS:

- STARTED TRI-STATE JR GOLF ASSOC. - 1984 (KY-OHIO-WY)
- FOUNDED THE AJGA BLUEGRASS JUNIOR AT BELLEFONTE CO  
IN 1984. (STILL GOING STRONG AFTER 32 YRS)
- STARTED FUND RAISING EVENT CALLED JR-AM. PLAYER  
PAY ENTRY FEE TO PLAY WITH ONE JUNIOR IN THE EVENT.  
THIS WAS ADOPTED AND IS BEING USED BY THE AJGA  
NATIONWIDE.
- STARTED EASTERN KENTUCKY JR. GOLF ASSOC. IN 2008
- FOUNDED 'JUST FORE FUN DAY' FOR KIDS WITH AUTISM.  
KIDS HIT BALLS AT DRIVING RANGE THEN PLAY 9-HOLES  
WITH PARENTS.
- DIGGER SMITH AWARD FROM AJGA FOR LIFETIME SERVICE - 1997
- THE J.W. JAMES AWARD FROM KGA - SERVICE TO AM. GOLF IN K
- ONE OF THE TOP RULES OFFICIAL FOR 40 YRS.

THESE ARE JUST SOME OF TOM'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY PROFESSIONAL IN RUNNING  
GOLF TOURNAMENTS AND ALSO AS A TOP RULES OFFICIAL.

IN CLOSING I WOULD LIKE TO SAY TOM COOKSEY  
GAVE MUCH OF HIS LIFE IN MAKING GOLF BETTER FOR  
EVERYONE.

HE WILL BE AN ASSET TO HAVE IN THE  
KENTUCKY GOLF HALL OF FAME.

SINCERELY,  
JACK FREEMAN  
LIFE MEMBER PGA  
(RETIRED FROM BELLEFONTE CC - 35 YRS)



*Developing Golf's  
Next Generation*

# American Junior Golf Association

1980 SPORTS CLUB DRIVE • BRASELTON, GA 30517 • (770) 868-4200 • AJGA.ORG • A 501(c)(3) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

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Atlanta, Georgia

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Stephen A. Hamblin  
Milton, Georgia

June 22, 2016

Golf House Kentucky  
1116 Elmore Just Drive  
Louisville, Kentucky 40245

ATTENTION: Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my sincere honor and pleasure to offer my personal endorsement for Mr. Tom Cooksey's induction into the Kentucky Hall of Fame.

Tom has been a huge advocate of junior golf for over 32 years and was instrumental in bringing a national junior golf tournament to the Bellefonte Country Club in Ashland, Kentucky for the American Junior Golf Association. He served as our Tournament Chairman for sixteen years and was a tireless worker; spending countless hours in planning the event each year, as well as spearheading all the fundraising for the event. In 1997 he was awarded the Digger Smith Award for his long-time service and dedication to junior golf, the AJGA's highest honor.

Tom was also instrumental in establishing the Tri-State Golf Tour in 1984 which served juniors in Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia. He also formed the Eastern Kentucky Junior Golf Tour in 2008. This Tour served 13 counties in Eastern Kentucky and consolidated with the Kentucky Golf Association in 2013.

For his commitment to junior golf, I offer my support for his induction into the Kentucky Hall of Fame. Thank you for allowing me to present this letter of recommendation on Mr. Tom Cooksey's behalf.

Sincerely,

Stephen A. Hamblin, PGA  
Executive Director

SAH/mat



NATIONAL SPONSOR



Golf House Kentucky  
Attention: Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame  
1116 Elmore Just Drive  
Louisville, KY 40245

Dear Selection Committee Members:

It is with great respect I write this letter of nomination for Tom Cooksey of Ashland for election to the Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame. In two specific areas identified on the nomination form, Contribution/Promotion of the Game and Contribution to Junior Golf, Tom's record is second to none.

In the area of Contribution and Promotion of the Game, Tom has served as a Rules Official in all areas of golf for many years. He has officiated on all levels of golf from junior to professional and from states from nearly coast to coast, also for many years.

Tom has also been a member of the Kentucky Golf Association Board of Directors for the past 30 years. His service as president of the KGA in 2013-14 and as president of the KGA-PGA in 2015 was outstanding!

Two major achievements of his presidency were the application for, and receipt of, 501c3 tax status from the IRS for the KGA, allowing the organization to seek out more sources of outside sponsorship revenue and, working with leaders of the Kentucky Senior Golf Association to reunify the KGA and KSGA under the banner of the KGA.

Tom's work with junior golf may well exceed his many successes in promotion of the game. His work with juniors has been recognized on the highest levels of golf, as he served on the USGA Junior Championship Committee from 2004 to 2014. But he is proudest of his service to juniors on the local and regional level.

The year 1984 was big for Tom in the area of junior golf, as he and a partner took over a struggling junior tour, relaunching it under the name Tri-State Junior Golf Association. Structuring it as a 501c3 organization, funding was generated and players from Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia came out in strong numbers. After four years, Tom returned the organization to the original founder in 1988. The tour is still playing this year at some of the same venues.

Tom's final creation in the area of junior golf tours came in 2008, when he launched the Eastern Kentucky Junior Golf Association. Using his same 501c3 model, he raised money and conducted competitions through the 14 easternmost counties in Eastern Kentucky. In fact, only juniors who resided in those counties were eligible to participate.

In 2013, Tom turned the operation of the EKJGA to the umbrella of the Kentucky PGA Junior Tour. Some of the venues used saw their first junior events with Tom's tour. The EKJGA also founded a Just Fore Fun

day for children with Autism. One day each summer, the kids got to hit balls at a driving range and play nine holes with their parents. A picnic and awards for all participants followed.

Some of the awards Tom has received include the 1997 Digger Smith Award from the AJGA, a lifetime achievement award given for Outstanding Service to Junior Golf, and the J.W. Janes Award from the KGA, also in effect a lifetime achievement award for service to amateur golf in Kentucky.

Tom's love of, and contribution to golf should be obvious. Even more obvious should be Tom's understanding of the importance of obtaining outside funding sources for golf associations, in some cases some 30 years before anyone else.

It is without reservation I strongly recommend Tom Cooksey for election to the Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wayne M. Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Wayne" being the most prominent part.

Wayne Martin

[martinwm30@gmail.com](mailto:martinwm30@gmail.com)

859-312-7750

June 29, 2016

TO: Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame Committee

FROM: Ernie Denham

I would like to take this opportunity to write this letter of recommendation in support of Tom Cooksey as a 2016 candidate for induction into Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame.

Tom has been an active member of Kentucky Golf Association Board of Directors for a number of years and has made a major contribution to golf in Kentucky in a number of areas. He has been a very active Section 9 Director and has recently served as President of the Kentucky Golf Association. I served as Executive Director for the Kentucky Golf Association and Kentucky Section PGA from 1977-1988 and had the pleasure of working with Tom on a number of projects during that period.

Tom founded the Eastern Kentucky Junior Golf Association and ran the EKJGA Tour for a number of years, providing competitive opportunities for a large number of junior golfers in Eastern Kentucky and was instrumental in helping a number of young men and young women improve their golfing skills thanks to his tour and earn college scholarships.

Tom was very instrumental in getting the American Junior Golf Association to locate one of their events at Bellefonte Country Club in Ashland and last month's edition of the Natural Resources Partners Bluegrass Junior Championship at Bellefonte was won by Billy Basham, a recent St. Xavier High School graduate, who will be among the favorites in the 2016 Kentucky State Amateur Championship to be played at Bellefonte CC on July 12-14. Tom Cooksey was also a major player in getting Clark's Pump-N-Shop Marathon to sponsor the Kentucky State Amateur Championship for the past three years.

I have known Tom for over 40 years and highly recommend Tom Cooksey for induction into the Kentucky Golf Hall of Fame and am honored to have this opportunity to recommend Tom for this much deserved honor.

Sincerely,

Ernie Denham, Director of Golf/Men's Golf Coach  
Bellarmine University

# **“Cooksey back, says thanks”**

The Daily Independent June 21, 2007

**By: Rocky Stanley, Sports Editor**

Ashland's Tom Cooksey returned to his familiar role Wednesday as Senior Rules Official for the AJGA tournament.

Cooksey spent Monday and Tuesday in Lexington officiating at the Women's Amateur Public Links Championship at Kearney Hill Links. Three years ago, Cooksey made a commitment to work that tournament not knowing that it would conflict with the dates for the 2007 Bluegrass Junior.

He officiated the stroke-play portion of the Women's Amateur Public Links as the field was narrowed from 156 players, to 64 for match play. On Wednesday morning, Cooksey was back home for the start of another Bluegrass Junior at Bellefonte Country Club.

“I wanted to be here,” he said. “This tournament is very important to me and has been for 24 years.”

Cooksey was instrumental in bringing the Bluegrass Junior to Bellefonte in 1984 after the tournament had one-year stays in Lexington and Richmond, Ky.

On Monday, the tournament committee initiated a Pat and Tom Cooksey Award for the low qualifier who elects to compete in the event. The award was a surprise to Tom and his wife. Pat, who shuttles players on the 15<sup>th</sup> hole, was kept in the dark about the new award until shortly before she presented it to J.P. Newsome of Robinson Creek, Ky.

Tom Cooksey got word about the award later Monday via a telephone call from Pat. “Honestly, I'm very flattered they would do that,” he said. I'm especially thankful they would include my wife. She's been very big part of this for 24 years with me.”

# **“Cooksey working final Bluegrass Junior”**

*Long time official to retire after 30 years with AJGA tournament*

The Daily Independent, June 10, 2013

**By Rocky Stanley, Sports Editor**

For 30 years, the man behind one of the American Junior Golf Association's early era tournaments has remained a working fixture with the Natural Resource Partners Bluegrass Junior. Tom Cooksey feels like it's time to finally take a step back after this week's tournament.

It was Cooksey's idea to bring the event to Bellefonte Country Club in 1984. He spent the first 16 years as tournament chairman, and continues in his capacity as highly respected senior rules official.

“I will be 70 in August,” said Cooksey, who is dealing with two troublesome knees. “I’ve thought this through and it’s time. Thirty (years) is a lot to give to one thing.”

Not that he plans to drop out of sight during future Bluegrass Juniors. The 54-hole tournament annually attracts up-and-coming players from more than two dozen states and other countries.

“Will I be here next year?” Cooksey said one day last week. “Probably, watching the kids and enjoying the event. I can walk around with my wife and grandson.”

The 2013 tournament opens Wednesday. An 18-hole qualifier is set for this morning.

“To have Tom be around 30 years, you really don’t see that with other events,” said Jordan Schneider, AJGA Tournament Director.

Sixth-year NRP Bluegrass Junior chairman Jeff Conley called Cooksey the face of the tournament spanning its three decades. “Tom is the golf tournament as far as I’m concerned,” Conley said. “He’s been the face of it no matter whether it’s as rules official or chairman. He’s somebody that people contact a lot of times before they contact me.”

Conley said it’s hard to imagine the idea of Cooksey being completely away from the event. “He will be around,” Conley said. “Myself, I confide in Tom whenever a situation occurs. He’s stood in our shoes and experienced probably everything, so I like to bounce things off him. Tom’s door is always open to me. He’s always helpful and responsive.”

Cooksey's name is synonymous with golf in Kentucky. He's president of the Kentucky Golf Association through 2014, after which he will assume the office of KGA-PGA president.

The retired air-traffic controller also serves as executive director of the Eastern Kentucky Junior Golf Association, through which he conducts a series of tournaments each summer.

“All he does for youth golf is amazing,” Conley said. “Tom is pretty humble. He likes to work behind the scenes. Any accolades he receives, he deserves.”

Cooksey has always considered it more of a team effort because of his wife, Pat. The Cookseys began a tradition of husband-wife teams sharing Bluegrass Junior chairman duties that continues today with Jeff and Barbara Conley. “There’s no way in the world I could have done any of this for 30 years without Pat’s support, Tom said. “She did anything... everything I needed her to do. I can’t tell you the number of times she helped me behind the scenes.”

Originally, the AJGA entered Kentucky with tournaments in Lexington (1981) and Richmond (1982).

When Cooksey found out there was no Kentucky event on the calendar for the following year, he worked with Bellefonte Country Club member Tom Rupert to see if the Bluegrass Junior could find a home at BCC.

Cooksey was not a club member, but both men had sons playing junior golf at the time. Tommy Rupert became Bluegrass Junior 11-14 age group champion in 1985, while Ben Cooksey also enjoyed success on the junior level and went on to play at the University of Louisville.

Tom Rupert and Cooksey served as co-chairman during the early years before it became a solo act. “Others (club members) were helping me,” Cooksey said.

That arrangement lasted about 12 years before Cooksey handed the job over to Bill and Mary Jo Thompson. Kevin and Tammy Wall followed and Natural Resource Partners became the title sponsor 10 years ago.

Now, the tournament is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Cooksey is preparing for a different type exit from the tournament he holds dear. “It really is hard to let go,” he said. Fourteen years ago it was like I was giving up my baby.” But at that time I realized if the tournament was going to grow, and get better, it would need to be in the hands of the Bellefonte Country Club membership. They couldn’t have been kinder or nicer, but getting the leadership into their hands is best thing that could have happened. You see it now.”

The NRP Bluegrass Junior is one of the most decorated tournaments on the AJGA schedule, receiving the Charitable Giving award the past two years. It was selected 2009 Tournament of the Year and has also been recognized with Junior Am and volunteer awards though the years. “The Volunteer award is because of the club getting behind the tournament,” Cooksey said.

He's a man with a special passion for the sport. "Golf is a much deeper thing to me than a game," said Cooksey, who holds to the belief that golf and its rules promote such qualities as courtesy, honor, integrity and respect.

"I would like to think that over the course of 30 years, the kids that have played here have learned those values and its made them better people," he said.

## **“Cooksey tribute”**

The Daily Independent, June 13, 2013

**By: Rocky Stanley, Sports Editor**

Nick Carter, president and chief operating officer of Natural Resource Partners, presented Tom Cooksey with framed artwork of Bellefonte Country Club's signature No. 15 hole during the tournament cookout Wednesday night.

The event is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Cooksey played a huge role in bringing the event to Ashland in 1984, and then served as Tournament Chairman for the first 16 years as well as Senior Rules Official throughout. Cooksey, who will be 70 in August, is working the tournament for the final time.

Tom and his wife, Pat, a longtime volunteer at the Bluegrass Junior, received a standing ovation from players and their parents as well as AJGA and local staff.