

# DOUBLE ISSUE!



## THE THONG ADJUSTER



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The unofficial online magazine of the Iron Thong Golf Gang

### Ronny 'I designed the Hawk' Copeland wins the 6th ITG Championship

Thirty-two Iron Thongers strode onto the rocky rough of The Hawk on March 7, but a few hours later there was only one standing -- Ronny Copeland!

His net 67 made him the Fall/Winter Champion of The Iron Thong Golf Gang.



Ronny Copeland, left, receives the Iron Thong Traveling Trophy from Jesse Flores, defending champion.

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### State of the Iron Thong

Thongers,

This is the first of what will be a series of reports to you on the current state of the Iron Thong. I'll send these out quarterly so you can see where we are and, hopefully, get an idea of where we're going.

So, here goes.

The state of the Iron Thong is excellent. We're expanding membership, playing new courses and setting up a logical system for signing up, picking courses, filling groupings, awarding prizes, gaining new members, and more.

We've been fortunate to have an active Board of Directors and officers. They've done a great job. Special kudos should go out to John Hernandez, our club secretary who



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Go to <http://www.IronThongGolf.com> to view the current issue.

Articles, including for sale items, can be submitted at any time. Send them to the editor at [stevevanwert@hughes.net](mailto:stevevanwert@hughes.net)

**Board  
of Directors:**  
John

Hernandez,  
Steve VanWert,  
Ron Boone,  
Jesse Flores,  
Mike Linares,  
Pete Cliburn

**2007 Iron Thong  
officers:**

**President:**  
Steve VanWert,  
**Vice-President:**  
Pete Cliburn,  
**Secretary:**  
John  
Hernandez,  
**Treasurer:**  
Mike Linares

does so much for our group, as do Mike Linares and Jesse Flores, both of whom are Board members. We're disappointed that Ron Boone, our out-going president, won't continue to lead us in the future, but he remains as a member of our Board. He'll be here to help guide us.

We recently elected new officers who are anxious to keep our success going. I'm honored to replace Ron as president. We elected Pete Cliburn as vice-president and retained John and Mike. I can promise you that this group is going to actively lead us. You can count on it.

To this end, we had an officer's and board meeting on April 2 to discuss quite a few things. I know John sent out a copy of our meeting minutes to everyone, but I thought I'd try to give you an idea as to how and why we made these decisions.

### **FINANCIALS**

As of this last Saturday, we had \$1,173 in our kitty. Nineteen of our members have paid \$20 in dues to be eligible for the September tournament. If you haven't paid, please get with Mike Linares or any officer and pay up. Thanks. This means that our pot for the next tournament will be the largest yet, thanks to our loyal members.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

At our meeting, the first item we discussed was finding ways to better communicate to and from our membership. We all agreed this is important, so we took a couple of steps.

First, we're creating a "poll" link on our homepage so we can ask members their opinions on a large spectrum of subjects. The first poll question has already been asked (What are your favorite courses?). Your response to this poll question and future questions will help us make decisions that will benefit all of us.

We're also setting up a link on our homepage that will enable members to contact the club president and board members directly with any questions or concerns they may have. This will be called "Ask the Pres" or something equally as dumb, but it will serve a useful purpose. This will be your chance to let me know how you feel – if you have a suggestion on rule changes, rule enforcements, courses to play, types

of games to play – anything. Even though your questions will go to the board members in-box, I will personally respond to every one. The best and most general ones will be printed on the homepage. More personal ones I will answer to you directly.

## **COMMITTEES**

We've been operating for the last couple of years with the officers and board members acting as our committees. We decided that our group has expanded enough for our members to join in the fun and be on a committee. We've identified four different committees, with an officer acting as chairman. We'd like volunteers to join each committee, so that each one has at least two members. According to our bylaws, the Club president is an ex-officio member of each committee, but without a vote. The committees are:

### ***Handicap Committee***

Chaired by John Hernandez, the Handicap Committee will remain up-to-date on all USGA rules. Each member will take the USGA Handicapping Test located on the USGA website. All questions and/or suggestions having to do with handicapping will be fielded by the Handicap Committee.

### ***Merchandise Committee***

Chaired by Mike Linares, the Merchandise Committee will select merchandise that we can purchase and let the general membership know what is available. These will be Iron Thong logo items such as hats, balls, towels, etc. Let Mike know what you'd like. This committee will also look into getting area golf businesses and courses to donate items for "goodie bags" for our tournaments. Also, this committee is looking into the possibility of convincing local golf clubs (especially our home course, The Hawk) into giving our members discounts on equipment purchased. If that happens, we'll issue Iron Thong ID Cards with our logo and the logo and name of the course, and what discounts are available. We'll let you know more about this later.

### ***Membership Committee***

Chaired by Ron Boone, this committee will be in charge of screening potential members. To this end, we've changed the procedure for someone to become a member. With our rapid expansion and the onset of people wanting to join who are not brought in by an existing member, we thought it was necessary to put some controls on who becomes an Iron Thonger.

From now on, a guest, whether brought in by an existing member or who contacted us through some other means, will play three rounds before deciding whether to join. After the third round, Ron and the other committee member(s) will speak to those members who played with the potential member and gather opinions as to whether he or she (that's right – we may have female members in the future!) will fit in with our club. That includes their willingness to abide by our overall philosophy of sharing good space with good people. If all agree that the new person will be a good addition to our group, then we'll accept the \$20 dues and the per-

son will be a member. The three rounds already played will count toward the new member's handicap.

### ***Rules Committee***

Chaired by Steve VanWert, this committee will be the final word on rules decisions. All members will take the USGA Rules Test and keep up-to-date with rule changes. All questions having to do with rules, including local exceptions will be answered by this committee.

### **TEE BOXES**

The question of which tee box to use keeps coming up again and again. It's not surprising considering the wide range of handicaps our members have. We discussed a number of options, including the "closest to 6500 yards" rule and made a decision to change the way we determine tee boxes. From now on, we will tee off from the tee box closest to a 70 course rating as determined by the scorecard. In most cases, this will not change what we've been doing at all, but some of the courses we play are much more difficult from 6500 yards than others. Those of us who hacked our way around Pine Forest a few months ago can attest to this. And look how difficult short little Landa Park has become! This new system takes into consideration the comparative difficulty of the course, rather than just their length.

Of course, if any member wants to play from a tee box further away, they can do so. John's computer program can make allowances when it figures out skins. And any women who play can tee off from the normal red tees reserved for women. But those are the only exceptions. No one can tee off from tees closer than those selected by course rating.

### **DUES**

We decided not to make any changes to our dues system – no inflation here! Dues will remain at \$40 a year, payable in two payments of \$20 due after each tournament. Our revenue stream is strong enough for now, so there's no need to increase dues.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

We currently stand at 43 members. In the last couple of months, we've added eight new members. At that rate, we'll hit our target membership of 50 pretty quickly, probably by next tournament. With this success, though, comes caution. I can tell you by experience that this is the best golf group I've ever been a member of, bar none. The "share good space" philosophy colors everything we do and every decision we make. But along with more members, there come more problems. Once we can guarantee 10-or-more foursomes, then it could conceivably be 1 ½ to 2 hours between when the first group comes in and the last group finishes. Do we wait all that time for the payoffs? Do we pay some and owe others? How will this affect the spirit of comradeship we all enjoy, sitting in the clubhouse, having lunch and a beer (or soda) or two? These are questions for our officers to consider in the future, and I assure you we know the day is coming!

We're supposed to hold a General Membership Meeting every October. To be honest, we've not done this in the past. This year we're going to try to make a general membership meeting part of an Iron Thong dinner, or perhaps, barbecue, where each Thonger can bring a spouse, significant other, or whatever. We'd like to be able to offset at least part of the dinner cost with club money. This is just in the planning stages. We'll let you know more later.

Speaking of members, we decided at the last officers meeting to invite Alexis Cliburn in as an Honorary Member. It was unanimous, and I think a great idea.

## **GROUPINGS**

Our present system of grouping players by the last net scores seems to be working pretty well. The end result is that golfers of varying handicaps get to play together. I'm glad to say that there isn't an Iron Thonger that I don't enjoy having in my group. I hope the rest of you feel the same way.

Now, I realize that some guys prefer other guys (wait, that didn't sound right). What I mean is that some guys like to play with certain other guys (wait, that's worse!) What I mean is that some players prefer to share a foursome with certain other players. They may have an individual bet going, or perhaps drove in together and have to leave early. There are lots of reasons. If this happens, just let me, or whoever is making up the groupings, know ahead of time. Put a note in the "remarks" section when you sign up or email me or John. Of course, if a member brings in a guest, we'll automatically put them in the same group.

## **MEMBER CONDUCT**

I've saved this for the last because it is such a serious topic. We're been really fortunate so far that all of our members (with a couple of rare exceptions) have eagerly lived up to our philosophy. But as we grow, member conduct could be a challenge.

According to our bylaws, the officers and board can reprimand a member for unacceptable conduct, which is the first step in removing that member from the club. Before that happens, we're setting up a process to nip the problem in the bud. If we receive complaints about a certain member not abiding by the rules (both ours and USGA), and we deem that there's some evidence to prove the allegations, then the club president will take that member aside and informally discuss the allegations, giving the member the opportunity to defend himself, or to agree to make changes in his behavior. If the member does not agree to change, or keeps doing the same things, then we can follow the bylaws and notify that member in writing of our displeasure and suspend him for 10 days. If he or she doesn't respond within that 10-day period satisfactorily, then we can vote to boot him from the club.

Obviously, we don't want this to happen. Tighter controls on adding new members will help, but we can all help keep this under control. If a situation occurs in a foursome that a member suspects is a rules violation or worse, just cheating, let the player know immediately. If an

agreement can't be reached within the group, then the player in question should drop another ball at the spot of the infraction and play two balls from there on that hole only. The Rules Committee will decide after the round which score to accept. If no one from the Rules Committee is present, then the other officers will decide on the spot what to do. Their decision is final.

If you don't want to confront the person, then let us know through the "Ask the Pres" website or email me directly (stevevanwert@hughes.net). Cheating isn't funny and it's not something we should ignore. It affects everyone because, in essence, all of our Saturday rounds are "mini-tournaments." Remember, making money isn't the reason we play and members don't cheat each other.

### THE BIG FINISH

That's all for now. I promise the next report will be shorter. In general, the state of the Iron Thong is excellent. Let's all do our best to keep it that way!  
See ya on Saturday!

Steve VanWert  
Iron Thong President

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## *The winners were . . .*



*Gary Crenshaw won low net in A Flight with a 70.*



*Ronny Copeland won low net in B Flight with a 67.*



*Mike Linares won low net in C Flight with a 69.*