

Tom: Hello, this is Pod for the Course, and I am Tom Cade, the director of communications for Washington Golf. And this year, 2022, is the Centennial celebration year of Washington Golf. It was founded in 1922, when the very first Washington State Amateur was held at Yakima Country Club, which at the time was a nine-hole golf course.

And so this year we're having some good conversations with people who have been involved with golf in the state for a long time, and today we're happy to have with us Durell Billy, and Durell is on the Washington Golf board of directors. He is the president of the Atlantic Pacific National Golf Club, and he's also on the Washington Golf Centennial Committee. And he goes by the nickname Billy Bogey, you'll find him on pretty much every social media platform, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, et cetera, et cetera, Billy Bogey. So Durell Billy, thanks so much for coming on with us today.

Durell Billy: Oh, thank you, Tom. Thank you for having me on Pod for the Course. I'm happy to be here. Thank you for that introduction.

Tom: So I'm going to start from the very beginning, Durell. Everybody has a story about how they got into the game of golf, and everyone's story is different. So what is your story?

Durell Billy: My story is a simple one. I was going to be the butt of the joke of a couple of buddies of mine. There were some friends of mine that we played a lot of basketball together, and one Sunday morning they showed up at the house unannounced, knocked on the door and said, "You're going to play golf with us." And like a good friend, "Hey, I'm up for a good adventure, let's go." And I've always wanted to play golf, and so there was zero hesitation with me. Left the house, I don't remember what I had on, I hope it was a collared shirt, so I think I was appropriate, but they took me to what's no longer here, which is a big disappointment. They took me to PLU golf course, the nine-hole golf course at Pacific Lutheran College.

Tom: Yeah.

Durell Billy: And I still remember... no driving range, no chipping area, no putting, right in the pro shop, rented some clubs, and I was out on the golf course. That was my introduction to golf. I believe I had a McGregor three-iron and I took a couple whacks at it, and missed it a few times, but I finally connected, as there are probably three or four groups behind us just dreading that they had to follow this newbie on the golf course. So that was my introduction, as they say, baptism by fire by some friends, and the exploding golf ball, the whole nine yards. So that was my introduction, Tom.

Tom: How old were you at the time?

Durell Billy: Oh, I think I was 30. I was 30 years old.

Tom: So, you went all in. I mean, you just went all in for this game. So from that introduction of baptism by fire there at the PLU golf course with the rented clubs, I mean, something clicked in you somehow, somewhere.

Durel Billy: Yeah, you're absolutely right. And I did go all in, and that's how I was introduced. It was just like "Here, you're going on a golf course." And I believe that was on a Sunday. The next time I saw my buddies, we were at Brookdale golf course, again, my second time, I just thought, this is the way you do it. You go on the golf course. I bought golf clubs, I had a black leather bag, I had on black Nike shoes, I had on a black Nike hat.

I went to, I think it was Sports Authority at the time or something, and just went all out. I just bought things that I thought I needed, and I just wanted to do it. I wanted to play. And I believe just the competitor in me, and from playing a lot of basketball, and I was tired of basketball. I was done with basketball, and just playing that nine holes that day, and the game really just kicking my butt, I said, "You know what, I'm going to try this. I'm going to get better at this." And my friends aren't going to laugh at me anymore. And so my motivation was to outplay those guys, and I just embraced the game, and I just went after it. My second round was at Brookdale and I mean, sadly enough, both golf courses aren't around anymore. So I think it was just the challenge of it, Tom. Like most others, they get bit by the bug, and that was me.

Tom: Yeah, well at age 30, you're not a kid. So at that time was there, I mean, what was it like to... Golf has its own set of etiquette and rules, and you go into pro shop, "How do I get a bucket of balls? What is that? Why do I need a glove on my hand?" All kinds of stuff to figure out. Did you just kind of work your way through that day by day, or figure it out day by day, or what?

Durel Billy: Well, some great questions that you've asked. If it wasn't for my friends taking me to, say, PLU, that was a place they felt comfortable. And so they felt comfortable there, they looked like me, I felt comfortable there. And so our next round was at Brookdale. So they felt comfortable, I felt comfortable. And so I just walked into the shop, alongside them, and I did what they did, because they showed me the ropes, if you will. And then I just kind of went on my own, and I bounced around between Brookdale, PLU, and Meadow Park golf course, because that's where I felt welcome. And I just kind of stumbled through it, if you will. I made some bad purchases, like a chipper, for around the greens because I couldn't chip.

And so I just kind of figured it out, if you will. And I was just determined, and I can't tell you, other than just I wanted to do it, I wanted to play, and I didn't care what it took, and I just did it. And so it was almost as if I was, I guess for lack of a better word, I was meant to do it. And so there was nothing stopping me. So I just figured it out, and I just got lucky. I just got lucky being in the right state, the right time, and at 30, and having the right friends introduce me, and go to the right facilities. I just got lucky.

Tom: So the Atlantic Pacific National Golf Club, how did you get involved with them to start with?

Durel Billy: So Atlantic Pacific National, or AP National, was a group of friends that played all over, military friends, ex-military friends, retired, active. At the time I lived in the Puyallup area, and I had friends that lived all the way in Bellingham, I had friends in Portland, and all around, and we were all at different stages with our family and careers, et cetera. And most of the guys could only play on weekends. And so a group of friends would make a tee time at one course up north, but then there'd be others that wanted to play that were down south, and quite frankly, I got tired of saying no. And because then you have to go the next weekend, and as you know, living here in Washington, as I like to call it, South Alaska, where we live, our season is short. And once a weekend is gone, when are you going to be able to get together with your buddies again?

So myself and another buddy, Gerald McClendon, Gerald Boyd, and a couple others, we decided to start our own golf club, and we called it Atlantic Pacific National for our group of guys, and it was kind of with the planning for the future, that there's a lot of guys in the military that aren't originally from here, and they leave, they leave the state. And so we figured if they go to another state, they can still use the name. Say they go to New Jersey, what have you, they could start their own version of Atlantic Pacific National, and have their own group of friends out there.

And so that's kind of where it started, and it was just bringing all these friends together who wanted to play, and that way we could create more tee times, if you will have more guys, two, three groups, four groups, and play for trophies, things like that. And that's where the idea came from, and it was just getting all of us together, in one place, on one day, that we could look forward to put on the calendar. And we would see each other's faces, give each other a hard time, play for a couple of nickels, and a trophy, and bragging rights. And that's where the idea of Atlantic Pacific National came from.

Tom: So, you started the club?

Durel Billy: I started the club in 2013. I started in 2013 with a few friends of mine, and yeah, so this is what, the ninth year, next year will be 10 years for us. And being part of the Washington State Golf Association, it's been a tremendous honor to be a part of the golf association, and to have our club with the association. And at one point we had over a hundred members in our golf club. And I'll tell you one of the big things where we have a lot of our friends that join, friends and families, I like to say is, we have a club championship at the end of the year. And the winner of our club championship has the honor to go and represent us, Atlantic Pacific National, in the WA Golf tournament of champions.

I believe that's March of every year?

Tom: Correct.

Durel Billy: March or April of every year.

Tom: Yeah.

Durel Billy: At The Home Course, and to have our club champion play against Riverbend's club champions, or country clubs, club champions, all the great champions in Washington. It's a tremendous honor, and it's one of the really cool things that I'm proud to be a part of, is to create an opportunity where a player can go and measure their game against some of the other great champions of other golf clubs.

Tom: So not only playing golf for yourself, but you really, as I understand it from knowing you, you really got into the history of the game as well, yes?

Durel Billy: That'd be correct. I wouldn't call myself a historian by any means. I don't have the archives of memory like yourself and others, but I do appreciate the history. Absolutely.

Tom: Well, you've taken a few steps further than I ever did. You started running some Hickory events, is that right?

Durel Billy: That is correct. That was also the same year, it was 2013, when I found out really what Hickory golf was. And the Hickory events were a result of creating a calendar events for our AP National Golf Club in 2013. And my goal was to just create a fun event at the end of the year, that was not a hit and giggle event, but just a fun, cool event for bonding, if you will.

And I started to do some research on Hickory golf, and as I was doing research on tournaments, fun tournaments, for the players, for the members, if you will, and during that research, I was looking up 1913, that era around that time, because it was the year 2013. So it just kept popping up in my head. And I came across, obviously, the "greatest game ever played," Francis Ouimet and Eddie Lowery, I mean, obviously the U.S. Open just played in Brookline just recently, which gives me goosebumps to think about that. But during that research I found out more about Hickory. I learned about a gentleman named John Shippen, who happened to be the first American born golf professional who played in a U.S. Open in 1895, 1896, which is crazy to think about, who also happened to be African American.

And that just blew me away. It just blew me away. And so from that, I just was, I mean, excuse the expression, I was just hell-bent to find Hickory clubs, and play Hickory clubs, and know what that was like, and to create an event around that, around Hickory golf. And we had a phenomenal event at The Home Course, October in 2013, we had about 20-something players playing Hickory golf, in the fog, at The Home Course, wearing knickers. And it was the most tremendous

thing I'd ever been a part of at that time. And again, it's just kind of like hitting the club for the first time at PLU, that McGregor three-iron, and it was the same thing with Hickory golf. And so I started doing Hickory events, and here we are now in 2022, still playing Hickory, and still love it. Yeah. It's phenomenal. The game is phenomenal, as you know.

Tom: So the Washington Hickory open, did you start that, or did you conduct that the first time?

Durel Billy: So the year, I want to say now the Washington State Hickory Open was an event... You'll have to forgive me, I don't remember the gentleman's name right now, but he was a member of the golf collector society. And I believe he ran a chapter here in Washington in the early '90s, I believe. And he did a Hickory event at Allenmore GC, and then I believe Mr. Colin Gants from Jefferson Park, or rather from West Seattle GC, held a Washington state type open.

And I believe it was in the 1990s was the last one. And so when I came along and started playing Hickory, I revitalized a version of the Washington State Hickory Open, and that was in 2014, and that was at The Home Course. So I didn't start that event, I just brought it back to life, if you will, and tried to honor past winners. And then obviously give an opportunity for other Hickory players, and new Hickory players, to come and have their chance at a Washington State Hickory Open. So that was in 2014. So yeah, I do not get credit for starting that event, I think I would just get the credit of bringing it back to life, if you will.

Tom: Reviving it. Sure.

Durel Billy: Yeah, absolutely.

Tom: Well, this Hickory interest has remained with you, is that correct? I mean, you still play sometimes with Hickory clubs, and Hickory events, and wear the clothes and the knickers, is that right?

Durel Billy: A hundred percent. I still do. I still love to play it. I don't play it as much as I have in the past, but I still love it. I still host really small events, but there are the Northwest Hickory group that started the same year as our AP National group, they host some Hickory events. They do a great job of doing tournaments and things like that. They have a Pacific Northwest championship, they also are helping with the Vintage Hickory Invitational, an event at Meadow Park, that happens the first weekend in May, which happens to be World Hickory Day, is another day that's kind of observed around the world that I started in 2016.

So yeah, Hickory is still very strong in me. It's still something I truly, truly love, and love to play, and love to participate in. And I try to, any chance I get, put a Hickory club in someone's hand, so they can know what it's like and what it feels like. I mean, with our Centennial coming up September 25th, there will be some Hickory clubs there, Hickory players, and I hope folks will come out for the

Centennial. I don't want to move too far ahead, but I hope they will come out, and try some Hickory clubs, and see Hickory players if they've never seen Hickory players before. There's an opportunity for them to participate, hold clubs, and have some of that history in their hands later this year.

Tom: Just to interject here. So what Durel's referring to is September 25th of this year, at The Home Course down in DuPont, Washington. There's going to be the Centennial celebration for Washington Golf. It's going to be a day of golf, play golf, you can play Hickory clubs, if you want to, test them out, there's going to be food, and other activities. So again, that's September 25th. So maybe mark that on your calendar. Durel, for you personally, how has this been? I mean, you're a bit of a Renaissance man when it comes to golf. I've known that you've even created some cartoon characters for kids, centered around golf, and I think they were called hero kids, or something like that. Is that right?

Durel Billy: That's correct. Good memory. Yep.

Tom: You even created some apparel for them, if I remember right. So this journey for you has been significant. My impression is that it has been a significant journey for you, this golf situation.

Durel Billy: Yeah, you're absolutely right. Yes. Going back to... I mean, as I said earlier, I felt like when I first started to play, and I got involved, I felt there was nothing that was going to stop me from being in the game. And I didn't know what it was, I didn't know what the hold was, and as I sit here and have this conversation with you, I still don't know exactly what it is, what the hold is that golf has on me. But it has been a journey, it's been a wonderful journey. And I love the creative aspect of golf, and I love just the people, the doors it opens, the opportunity, the courses, the history, the apparel, the creativity on and off the course, you name it. As you mentioned, the golf kids were Hero Golf Kids.

And the HERO is short for Honor, Education, and Respect Others. The inspiration for that was another golf friend who, unfortunately, has passed away. It's been about 13 years now. His middle name was H, so his name was John H. Moore, and as he was going through a tough time, it was a tough time for all of us that loved John, I took an H in his name, and I wrote down what he meant to me. And it was, he was a hero to me. And every time I went to the golf course, and I practiced, and I tried to get better, it was about playing that man. And I couldn't wait. We had a little standing \$5 bet for low gross, and we would play dollar skins, whatever it was.

But my whole mission in life was to play him and beat him. And at the end of it, I wanted him to be proud of me, and he was my guy. And the H, going back to it, was his middle name was Henry, and hero. And then I came up with the acronym, Honor, Education, Respect Others, because he was the epitome of just character and what golf meant. And he was the guy that would help. He would have a tournament, tee time at 6:30 in the morning, he'd get off work, go to the

driving range, and someone would be struggling, he would help them until sundown, and never even hit his own golf balls. He would help that person. That's who that guy was. And so hero, Hero Golf Kids, it started with that particular person.

And for me, I wanted to help other people. I wanted to help other kids. And so I created the Golf Kids, and some of the names, that's where my name Billy Bogey comes from, so I figured one of the characters had to have one of the most common names in golf was bogey. So I didn't want it to be Tom Bogey or someone else. So like, "Hey, why'd you name him Tom? Make him the Bogey guy." So I decided to take that weight of bogey on myself, so there was Billy Bogey, and Sandy Par, and Chip Green and some other ones. And so yeah, I started that, and a little clothing line, and I'll tell you, Tom, that clothing line went into, I couldn't be thankful enough, they were in Puetz Golf.

Puetz Golf was one of the main stores that brought in that clothing line, and they said it was one of the fastest selling clothing lines they've ever had, and it was just t-shirts at the time. And they did really well, they did really well. So yeah, that's one of the creative outlets that seems like a lifetime ago, but they're still alive, they're still alive. So I appreciate you bringing that up, I haven't thought about them in a bit, so I'm kind of going down memory lane here with you a little bit. So I appreciate you remembering that and yeah, hopefully we can talk about that again on another day.

Tom: With this being the Centennial year for Washington Golf, for you, as a golfer, and as a sort of a history buff of some kind, and an interest in the traditions of the game, what does 100 years mean to you when you go out there and tee it up with your friends?

Durel Billy: Well, when I really think about it, when most people think of the history of golf, the first thing they do is they go across the pond. They're thinking Scotland, they're thinking Ireland, they're thinking other places, and it's forgotten how long some of these golf courses around here have been around, and how tall these trees are, and how firm fairways and things are, just how long it takes for a golf course to really mature, and a hundred years, I mean, in the Pacific Northwest, I'm thinking, just going back to 1913, when the greatest game ever played when Harry Vardon and Ted Ray were at that end of the country in Massachusetts, they were all the way out here. They came and played Tacoma Country and Golf Club and played against, I believe, Jim Barnes, and then the head pro from Seattle at the time.

Tom: Johnstone. Yeah.

Durel Billy: Robert Johnstone. That's right. Just that alone, it just means something. And what Washington Golf has been able to do, and even Pacific Northwest Golf Association, hosting championships, and all the great champions that have come through Washington state, it's tremendous. And prior to playing Hickory,

I'll be honest with you, I wouldn't have noticed, or really cared for what 1922 meant, for the logo, or when Washington Golf was established.

Or Tacoma Country and Golf Club being founded in 1894, is another example. A hundred years to be around and helping amateur golf, and helping grow the game the best that they knew how at the time, it's tremendous. It's a tremendous accomplishment for these golf association, especially our golf association, to be around for a hundred years. And I'm particularly proud to be a part of Washington Golf, and be a current sitting board member, to hear what's going on, to think of ways to help grow the game, and obviously be a part of the Centennial committee, and help other golfers know more about what Washington Golf actually does, the championships and things of that nature.

I really don't think the regular golfer really, really understands how impactful the golf association is to this region, and has been now for a hundred years. So yeah, I'm extremely grateful to be a part of it, and it means a lot. It means a lot.

Tom: So just to segue a little bit here, you mentioned John Shippen and also your friend who passed away 13 years ago. Who have been your other inspirations and heroes in the game? You, personally.

Durel Billy: Hmm. Well, here's a big one – my daughter, Hannah. She really didn't want to play golf when she was younger, and one Father's Day, so I'm going to go back to 2013 again, and 2013 is a really big year for me. And that was the year my daughter Hannah caddied for me in our AP National U.S. Open. And after the round... So it was her ninth grade year, she was going into the 10th grade. She was a sophomore going to Rogers High School. And she caddied for me, and after the round I asked her, I said, "Hey kid, what'd you learn today?" And she said, "Dad, I think I want to learn how to play." And you could knock me over with a feather. So my daughter wants to play.

And so she was a lefty prior, and it was hard to find equipment for her. Any case, she started to play. Tom, we worked all the rest of June, July, and then August was tryouts. She made the team, and then she played all three years. She went to qualifiers, things like that. So she was a huge inspiration to me, because as you know, this game is extremely tough. It's extremely tough to get new people to play, and for my daughter to have the courage to go and play, and when you tee it up, you're on an island, so no one can help you. It's you, the ball, the tee box, the fairway, that's it.

And so that one, right, she really was the big inspiration for a long time, because that kid just got out there and got after it. So she was a huge inspiration. And I mean, again, obviously, as I said, John, huge inspiration and motivation, he still is. And I would say, obviously Tiger is a big one for me, like he is for a lot of the generation, and generations to come.

Some of these junior golfers that were very little, Grayson Giboney, for example, young men that just grinded it out, and played a lot, and now playing college golf in Idaho. Those are inspirations to me. These are people I can reach out and touch, have conversations with. They inspire me. They just love the game, and they appreciate the game for what it is.

Tom: Golf, they say, is a game for a lifetime, something you can play for your whole life. I know that you're very active on social media. I see you out there a lot under, again, the moniker of Billy Bogey. Is this something that you see yourself just continue to do in some form or another? Being around the game?

Durel Billy: Absolutely. Sometimes I think about say, oh man, why do I do this? As far as sharing, because I share swing videos, I'll do some funny clips, and I'll talk about an incident I had on the golf course with someone. I have a series called The Bogey Chronicles when I just talk about what happens on the golf course, my experiences, the funny ones, and not long ago I had a not so good one, with a couple of friends, with not so kind words. But I see myself sharing my golf experience as it happened through my eyes, through my lens. And I absolutely see myself in the capacity of being around golf and sharing, and I don't know, for lack of a better word, influencing.

I don't like to sell anything, but I do like to promote things that I use personally, and that I love. And so whenever I can share some golf content, a great hole at Riverbend, or number 15 at Chambers Bay, or a tee shot, or a miraculous recovery, and hopefully one day I can film a hole in one. I still don't have one.

Tom: I do.

Durel Billy: I'm still not in that club. So I do want to share, I want to share the game. I want to be a vehicle for others. I still get a lot of inquiries on how do I get Hickory clubs, or how do I get involved? I get tons and tons of messages like that, and I love just being a facilitator via social media, using that platform to reach out to people that otherwise I never would've met. So yeah, I hope to go to some U.S. Opens, go to a few more Masters, share those experiences, connect with people, and continue to share via social media. I think it's the best way to reach golfers worldwide. So yeah, I absolutely see myself doing more of it, and connecting, and sharing, if you will, so.

Tom: Yeah. Okay.

Durel Billy: But I do have a question for you. That hole in one you had at Sahalee Country Club, where is that golf ball?

Tom: Well, after that hole, it was my very first and only hole in one after I think it was, let's see, almost 50 years of playing golf.

Durel Billy: Wow.

Tom: It was at the number four North at Sahalee, on the North course. The little par three there, and I actually played two more holes after that, with that golf ball, and someone said to me "You should be saving that golf ball. You shouldn't risk losing it." And I said "You're probably right." So I stuck it in my pocket, and it's now on my window sill, in my office, at my house. So there it is.

Durel Billy: Yeah. Awesome. Love it.

Tom: Yeah.

Durel Billy: Some guys, they walk off and they're a wreck for the rest of the day, and some forget the golf ball, and kind of like you, you kept playing with yours, guys are like, "I'm going to keep playing with this ball because it's lucky."

Tom: Yeah.

Durel Billy: I've heard stories where guys have lost it, you know?

Tom: Well, as you know of Sahalee, there's lots of places to lose a golf ball out there. So after a couple holes, I figured, well, I'll put this in my pocket now.

Durel Billy: Good call. Yeah. Good call there.

Tom: Today we had with us Durel Billy, and Durel again is the president of Atlantic Pacific National Golf Club. He's on the board of directors for Washington Golf, and also on the Centennial committee for Washington Golf. Again, this is the 100 year anniversary for Washington Golf, this year, 2022. And Durel Billy, you will find him very active on social media, with the handle of Billy Bogey. And if you want to find out everything there is to know about golf, I think you just follow Billy Bogey around and he'll not steer you too far wrong. Durel, thanks so much for joining us today on Pod for the Course. I appreciate you coming on.

Durel Billy: Thank you so much for having me, it was a pleasure. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and hopefully we get to tee it up soon.

Tom: Yeah.

Durel Billy: So one last thing. I'm doing a Billy Bogey show. I'd love to have you on and just walk and play nine holes with you one day.

Tom: Well let's figure out a time and a date, and we'll do it.

Durel Billy: Awesome. Thanks man. Thanks again for having me on. I appreciate you so much.

Tom: You bet, Durel. Thanks again.