

# Wheeler memorial at No. 7 tee a new course staple

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[ST. CHARLES](#) – Bill Ogiego fields numerous phone calls at work every day, greeting each one with similar cheer.

“Pottawatomie Golf Course, this is Bill,” the club’s veteran assistant pro begins. “How may I help you?”

Ogiego usually doesn’t break stride as he marks a tee time or checks Pottawatomie’s tournament schedule. One occasional conversation starter, however, makes continuing in such a manner tough.

April 22 will mark one year since longtime former club pro Jim Wheeler died at 68, a loss that stirred the Tri-Cities golf community but may have missed reaching a few distant corners.

“We’re still talking to people about it every once in awhile, you know,” Ogiego said. “Especially a lot of people that haven’t been here in awhile and a, ‘Where is he?’ type of thing.”

On the course itself, a memorial to Wheeler, the Pottawatomie pro from 1980 to 2011, now rests at the No. 7 tee box.

Course superintendent Denise Gillett-Parchert and her staff developed an area that includes benches, trees and a rock with a plaque inscribed in Wheeler’s honor, augmenting the tribute constructed after his February 2011 retirement from the St. Charles Park District.

“Denise did a fantastic job, her and her staff out there, to get that ready,” Ogiego said.

But not before the Wheeler family gave its approval first.

“The family was all for it,” Ogiego said. “I mean, Jim spent 31 years here, you know. He was part of the golf course. Still is. Always will be.”

Those interested in contributing to the area’s upkeep and other course improvements can contact Pottawatomie at 630-584-8356 or make checks payable to the St. Charles Park Foundation, c/o the Jim Wheeler Fund.

Tournament shuffling: In a bid to boost participation, Ogiego and fifth-year Pottawatomie pro Ron Skubisz moved the course’s 50-and-over tournament from the fall to the spring. Registration costs \$60, and the deadline to register for the April 25 to 26 event is 7 p.m. Sunday.

Golfers will play 18 holes of stroke play on each day of the tournament, which is open to all participants regardless of residency. Those interested can register at the pro shop.

Shifting the senior event opened space for a new, 36-hole stroke play tournament for all golfers 12

and older, set for Sept. 12 and 13. It will be flighted after the first 18 holes, but the overall champ can come from any flight, depending on his or her final score.

“It’s kind of a best of the best type of thing. It’s one weekend. Get your clubs, go out and play and see where you match up with everybody,” Ogiego said. “Our men’s tournament [in July] is a match play tournament, so it’s usually just a head to head against one guy. This, you’re going to play against every single one that’s signed up.”

The registration deadline is 7 p.m. Sept. 6, but could come sooner if a full, 96-player field is reached. Cost is \$60.

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