

NEWS

Historic Kawartha Invitational tees off for landmark 80th edition

New Legends Row to be unveiled to mark anniversary.

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Two-time champion Andy Crampton watches the progress of his drive during the tournament in 2023. Will he add his name to Legends Row at this year's Kawartha Invitational?

Clifford Skarstedt/Metroland File Photo

By Mike Davies Examiner Sports Director

The Kawartha Invitational Men's Golf Tournament has become legendary as it celebrates its 80th edition.

The three-day tournament held each Civic Holiday long weekend at Kawartha Golf Club will unveil a new "Legends Row" to commemorate its history. The seven golfers who have won the event three or more times will have permanent plaques placed along the club's driveway.

Sandbagger, operated by Peterborough native Jay Rowan, has stepped up as title sponsor this year. It's allowed the organizing committee to do a few things to enhance the anniversary including the return of the Story Teller Longest Drive Competition, open to all tournament entrants, on Friday at 6:15 p.m.

The Sandbagger Shootout, a closest-to-the-pin contest on the par-3 14th hole, will take place on Saturday. The pro shop will provide prizes for both events and the longest drive winner will get an exclusive parking spot for the tournament, which runs Saturday through Monday.

New Legends Row recognizes winners

The club has rotating plaques, which honour the past eight champions but tournament chair Mike Self said they wanted to recognize the tournament's legacy and decided to create "Legends Row."

The inaugural members will be three-time winners Nick Weslock, Bob Epashnik, Moe Norman, Gerry Kesselring, Mark Brewer, four-time winner Bruce Brewer, Mark's father, and five-time champion Paul Davis. It's a list of names not only well-known locally but across Ontario and in some cases Canada's golf community, said Self.

"It's definitely a big year for the tournament and one to be celebrated," he said.

"Being the 80th year we're taking a look back into the vault and introducing our Legends Row. We have seven past champions we have defined as legends with their legend status being determined by them being three-time or more winners."



Past champion Mark Mackay makes a chip shot onto the 17th green during the 79th edition of the Kawartha Invitational Men's Golf Tournament on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025.

Clifford Skarstedt/Metroland File Photo

Popular tournament

The tournament has sold out for a sixth straight year following the COVID-19 pandemic with 208 participants. Included in the field are a couple of two-time champions looking to add their names to Legends Row in defending champion Mark Mackay and Andy Crampton.

Others to watch include 2026 club champion Anthony Asta, Derek Howe, who last week set a new course record under its new layout with a score of 61, and Conor Gaudet who has been in contention the past few years.

There aren't many three-day amateur tournaments left and Self cites several reasons for its longevity.

"One of the greatest things we have to offer is the golf course itself," he said.

"People come back, first and foremost, to be able to play at Kawartha Golf Club because it's a phenomenal course. It's challenging and (superintendent) Jen (Pendrith) and her staff always have it in great condition.

"There are participants who play in their traditional groups each year and it's their weekend away to play with friends and family members. We have a lot of returning groups who come back year-after-year. There are the other offerings like the closest-to-the-pin and the family dinner we have on the Sunday. The atmosphere we provide year-after-year helps grow the event and keep it popular."

Self said golfers have been requesting the return of the longest drive contest.

"A lot of players come in on the Friday to play a practice round so for many it's a four-day event. Being able to have that social and extra competition on the Friday is definitely nice to have," he said.

Self said it's been several years since they've had a title sponsor and the committee is pleased to have Rowan and Sandbaggers support.

"The sponsorship has allowed us to expand what we're doing to make sure the 80th is a special weekend," said Self.

Each day tees off at 7:30 a.m., with the leader groups expected to go off Monday at 2 p.m., and finish around 6:30 pm. Spectators are welcomed.



Mike Davies is a sports director and reporter at the Peterborough Examiner.

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