

History of Area II Tournament of Champions

Circa 1962 or 1963 the Youth Activities Committee of Pennsylvania sponsored a junior golf tournament. Every year since then with the exception of one year (yet to be remembered) there has been a junior tournament in Pennsylvania.

The sites for the tournament were usually decided at the workshop and were held in various cities throughout the state and sponsored by the local Lodge who agreed to run the tournament, take care of the meals and lodging, etc. Some of the early sites were Latrobe, Sharon, Chambersburg, State College, Pottstown and East Strousburg.

In 1976 Meyersdale Lodge No 1951 requested to have the tournament at Seven Springs and the bid was accepted. The golf tournament was for boys and girls within the ages of 15 – 18. In 1978 Ben Ortman, State Youth Activities Chairman, requested that the tournament include a girls junior tennis tournament since it was difficult to have girls participate in golf. He asked the committee for a three-year commitment for tennis at Seven Springs in order to ensure a solid base for future tournaments and it was granted. *

In 1978 when Meyersdale hosted, with the addition of tennis, there were winners in both junior and senior divisions of both boys and girls. In 1980 some major changes had occurred. The golf and tennis portion was now divided into both boy and girl, junior and senior divisions, and a decision to add bowling was instituted. Since 1982 this tournament has been held at Seven Springs and with PGER Homer Huhn, traversing the various states under his jurisdiction, he talked about Elkdom and the various programs that were sponsored by the Pennsylvania Elks State Association and in particular the golf, tennis and bowling programs and interest was created in New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, D.C. and West Virginia to join with Pennsylvania in conducting a regional tournament with all the states under Homer's sponsorship participating.

The spring of 1984 representatives from the above associations met at Lancaster, Pa. Lodge # 134, to formulate plans for the upcoming tournament in August of that year. The meeting was very positive and all agreed to sponsor participants. Plans for the future included the Davis Cup approach in tennis with each state fielding a team and staying one additional day to compete for the championship. It was also formulated to include golf and bowling.

The Steering Committee members met three times a year to discuss and review the previous tournament and set ground rules and regulations for the upcoming tournament. The Steering Committee consisted of; PGER Homer Huhn and PSP Ben Ortman of Pennsylvania, PGER Lester C. (Ted) Hess and PSP Oral Sisson of West Virginia, E. Robert Bowlus, SDGER, and Henry Dembo, MD_DE_DC, and PGER Kenneth Cantoli, PSP Earl T. Cornelius and Leonard Leider, Youth Activities Chairman of New Jersey. Pennsylvania has been the host state for this tournament and the leader in the governing body that controls this event since the change to Area II. Kentucky was added as a member of Area II in 1992 but, until the year 2000, had not taken an active part. As of the 2001 Steering Committee meeting, there are now two representatives from Kentucky.

Since the deaths of several original Steering Committee members, the bylaws of the tournament have been changed to reflect equal voting rights of its members to three members from each state association with only two members eligible to cast votes.

After the Grand Lodge Session of 2004, Area II was realigned to consist of the states of New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia and Pennsylvania. West Virginia and Kentucky were now part of Area IV. The geographic changes now became an issue with the tournament on reduced participation and active committee members. The Steering committee remains the same with West Virginia and Kentucky being invited to take an active part. Since the 2004 Steering Committee meeting, both Ohio and Virginia have been invited to join.

The Steering Committee meets on the Sunday preceding the start of the tournament.

* Portions of this history were used from "The Pennsylvania Elk" dated December 1986.