



THE AVONDALE AMATEUR MEDAL

The Avondale Amateur Medal is the only “Open” competition run by Avondale Golf Club. It came into being following a Match Committee meeting on the 28th of September 1960 when Committee member Don Crofts was asked to explore the possibility of the Club conducting a major amateur event confined to players with a handicap limit of 4 and that he confer with the New South Wales Golf Association to have such an event included in the next years Association calendar.

The Captain and Mr. Crofts were to consider an appropriate title for the competition and that a date early in the Spring of 1961 be considered. The NSWGA offered the date 5th August 1961 and this was accepted by the Club and the title “August Amateur Medal” was decided upon. It was to be a stroke event played over 18 holes.

In July 1961 the Match Committee reported on arrangements for the competition and approval was given for the purchase of trophies to the value of 30 pounds and for the purchase of a board upon which the names of the winners would be placed. Players of other clubs were to be made honorary members of Avondale for one week to enable them to be able to play practise rounds.

Originally, in the event of a tie, an 18 hole play-off would be arranged for a suitable date, however this was later changed to a sudden death play-off as due to commitments it was too difficult to arrange a return visit to Avondale that suited all concerned.

Even though the event was proving to be popular, after the 1968 competition a suggestion was put forward that it be discontinued but fortunately this was not agreed to and history shows that this was a wise decision as the event continues to grow in popularity and importance.

Throughout the 1970’s there were minor changes to the format and handicap limits, but in 1975 there was a major change as it was decided that the name would be changed from the “August Amateur Medal” to the “Avondale Amateur Medal” and that it would be played in the April of each year.

In 1979 there was another major change when the decision was made to make it a 36 hole competition. It was realised that that many volunteers would be needed to make it a success and this has proven to be the case to this day.

The weather has very rarely been a problem and the event is a regular feature of the NSW golfing calendar, however due to a period of heavy continuous rain in 1989 the decision was made to close the course and the Medal was abandoned. The Medal was also abandoned in 1990 as due to the previous bad weather the course was not in good enough condition to host such a prestigious competition.

Prior to 1995, in order to divide the course into two nines, there was a “composite course” played, in 1995 a 3 tee start was implemented using the 1st, 7th and 13 tees and with careful management this proved to be successful and is still in use.

For the 1996 competition the handicap limits were set at 2 for visitors and 5 for members, a further reminder of the growing prestige of the event. An innovation for the 1996 prizes was the presentation of a blue jacket for the winner as well as the first prize, this was discontinued in 2004.

Members were expressing concern that the course preparation so late in the growing season was having an adverse effect on the Winter playing conditions so for this, and other reasons, in 2006 a decision was made to change the date to earlier in the year and a Saturday in January was chosen for the 2007 event.

The Avondale Amateur Medal then became a crucial lead up event for the Lake Macquarie International Amateur at Belmont and an unexpected benefit of this was the arrival of the British Amateur Team in Australia to continue their training and to compete in some Australian summer tournaments. As part of the arrangements for them to play in our event they were to be hosted by members. They proved to be a popular addition to the Avondale Amateur Medal competition, winning it in 2007 and 2008. Joining the British were also Golfers from Wales & Scotland.

Spotters: One feature of this competition is the presence of “Spotters”. These are members who volunteer their time to do duty at various parts of the course to help find balls and thus speed up play and avoid unnecessary penalties for the players. The feedback from the players is universally complimentary. The reward for this “onerous” task is the regular attendance of the “Pie Cart” with hot pies, coffee and cold beverages of various kinds to sustain each spotter.

Winners: The first winner in 1961 was Vic Bulgin of the Bankstown Golf Club and since then the list of winners is a virtual “who’s who” of NSW amateur golf. Some of the winners have gone on to join the ranks of professional golfers and of these, Paul Gow and Won Jon Lee for instance, have gone to the USA to further their careers. Whilst Rohan Blizzard went onto win the Australian Amateur Championship following his success at Avondale.