

Irwin aims to fulfill dream: Ex-Buff has chance for first Tour win in Colorado at '08 U.S. Senior Open

By [Gary Baines](#) (Contact)
Tuesday, May 15, 2007

COLORADO SPRINGS — You can count on hearing about it just about every time Hale Irwin is in contention to win a tournament in Hawaii.

Even though there aren't many PGA Tour-sanctioned events in that state, Irwin brings out his Hawaiian magic on a regular basis when he competes there.

During his career, he's won an amazing nine tournaments on the Islands. The former Boulder High and University of Colorado athlete also has taken a liking to competing in Florida, where he's also won nine times in his career.

In all, Irwin has won Tour-sanctioned events in 19 different states. But although he's posted 65 Tour victories in his career — 20 on the regular tour and a record 45 on the Champions circuit — none has come in the state where he grew up, Colorado.

Irwin would like to rectify that next year when the U.S. Senior Open comes to the Broadmoor East Golf Club in Colorado Springs July 31-Aug. 3. Irwin, who will turn 62 in about three weeks, returned to the Broadmoor on Monday for the first time in 40 years, holding a press conference and kicking off ticket sales 14½ months ahead of the event.

Winning the 2008 Senior Open — especially with it being a national championship — in the state where he spent his formative years "would be another one of those dreams," he said. "We haven't played that many tournaments here, but if I would at least give myself a chance, that would be fantastic."

Irwin has played in less than a dozen tour-sanctioned events in Colorado — nine Internationals, a U.S. Open and a PGA Championship — but hasn't given up hope for victory at that high level here. And since he always seems to have extra incentive in U.S. Golf Association events — he's won three U.S. Opens and two U.S. Senior Opens — a victory at the Broadmoor would be a fitting cherry atop his career.

"When I was out there as a youngster at Boulder Country Club and other places, I would think, 'This (shot) is to win the Open,' " Irwin relayed. "That was living the dream."

While Irwin hasn't experienced a tour-level victory in Colorado, he did record a notable win at the Broadmoor. In 1967, the same year he won the NCAA individual title at CU, he claimed the prestigious Broadmoor Invitational amateur championship. A picture of Irwin receiving his trophy from that event was on display Monday for his return visit.

That same year, the U.S. Amateur was held at the Broadmoor, and in a qualifying tournament Irwin was in great shape heading into the final hole. Alas, on that last hole, he hit a ball into the water and another out of bounds, eventually making an 8. He missed qualifying by one stroke.

All in all, though, he has fond memories of the Broadmoor. After all, he said he was spurred on during his college days by a 1965 visit and practice session with Dow Finsterwald, the 1958 PGA Champion and a longtime pro at the Broadmoor.

"The Broadmoor in July — there's no better place to be," said Irwin, the honorary chairman of the 2008 Senior Open. "It'll be a fantastic venue. There's already a bit of a buzz out on the (Champions) tour about coming to play the Broadmoor. It's a wonderful spot. I haven't been here for 40 years, and I'm blown away again."

The Senior Open will be the sixth USGA event held at the Broadmoor. The club hosted the 1959 and '67 U.S. Amateurs, the 1962 Curtis Cup, 1982 U.S. Women's Amateur and the 1995 U.S. Women's Open. Champions in those events include World Golf Hall of Famers Jack Nicklaus (1959 Amateur), Annika Sorenstam ('95 Women's Open) and Juli Inkster ('82 Women's Amateur).

Ticket information

Officials of the 2008 Senior Open have set up several different levels of ticket pricing for the event. Individual-day tickets will be \$20 for the practice rounds Monday through Wednesday, \$40 for championship rounds Thursday and Friday, and \$45 for Saturday and Sunday.

A "fore pack," which provides four good-any-one-day tickets to the tournament, will run \$135. A full package of tickets for the week will go for \$155, with additional amenities available in a \$250 package. Military personnel with active I.D. will receive discounts, and kids 17 and under will be free when accompanied by a ticketed adult.

"The goal is to get to 35,000 (fans per day) on the weekend," said Douglas Habgood, the event's championship director.

"The Senior Open has been growing by leaps and bounds," noted Pete Kowalski of the USGA. "We've experienced very good crowds, especially west of the Mississippi."

Tickets are available at 1-877-281-OPEN, at 2008ussenioropen.com, and participating King Soopers and TicketsWest outlets.

Notable

Irwin was asked Monday to hit a shot to kick off the festivities for the 2008 Senior Open. From an artificial-grass mat on a balcony of the clubhouse, he hit a wedge down to the 18th green, with the ball finishing 5 feet from the cup. ... The Broadmoor East course will likely play at 7,202 yards and to a par-70 for the Senior Open, with two par-5s being converted to par-4s. "I hope they play it at its maximum (yardage)," Irwin said. ... Tournament officials estimate the U.S. Senior Open will have an economic impact of about \$30 million on the area. ... The tournament already has 1,700 volunteers committed to work the event. ... Should a playoff be needed for next year's Senior Open, it will be a three- or four-hole event held the same day as the final round. USGA officials will have to consider the course layout more in depth before deciding on a three- or four-hole playoff format at the Broadmoor.

<http://dailycamera.com/news/2007/may/15/irwin-aims-to-fulfill-dream/>