

SCGA inducts John Cook, Roger Kelly and Paul Runyan into Hall of Fame

Written by Australian Business

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif., Oct. 22, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Their golf careers were astonishing, but it was the lives of John Cook, Roger Kelly and Paul Runyan that were on display Tuesday at the Southern California Golf Association Hall of Fame Ceremony at the Sheraton Universal Hotel in Universal City. Words like family, honor, character, loyalty and integrity were used to describe the three men who have been influential to golf in Southern California.

In attendance to accept his honor was 11-time PGA TOUR winner John Cook, who grew up in Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif. playing SCGA and California Golf Association events. With his family and close friends present, an emotional Cook spoke to the audience of nearly 300.

"This is incredibly special," said Cook. "My mentor and close friend Ken Venturi once told his dad he was really good at golf. His dad replied, 'When you're good at something, tell people. But if you're really good at something, they'll tell you.' I want to thank the SCGA for telling me I am a really good player."

While attending Miraleste High School, Cook won the California Amateur Championship his junior year in 1975, joining a list of champions that included Venturi, Gene Littler and countless other iconic California golfers. He went on to attend The Ohio State University, where he would win the U.S. Amateur in 1978 and an NCAA Team Championship in 1979. His 20-year PGA TOUR career not only included 11 professional victories, but also a Ryder Cup win. He currently plays on the Champions Tour, where he has already amassed nine more titles.

SCGA inducts John Cook, Roger Kelly and Paul Runyan into Hall of Fame

Written by Australian Business

"I love to win, I love to compete and I love to defeat people," said Cook. "As long as I enjoy it, I'll continue playing."

Inducting Cook into the Hall of Fame was Virginia Country Club CEO and PGA Professional Jamie Mulligan, who in addition to Cook, boasts a list of students that include John Merrick, Paul Goydos

and

Patrick Cantlay

. Mulligan shared how impressed he's been with Cook's ability to balance an impressive golf career while remaining actively involved with his family life.

"John has had an unbelievable career, but has done it in such a classy way," said Mulligan. "He is a family man, and that really does overshadow his tremendous career. It's the pleasure of my life to induct him into the SCGA Hall of Fame."

Joining Cook in the 2013 class was Kelly, one of the most powerful forces in the history of Southern California

amateur golf and a longtime member of Lakeside GC. From 1936 to 1938, Kelly won the Los Angeles City Amateur, the SCGA Amateur Championship and claimed two California Amateur Championships. He also shot a 142 at the 1937 U.S. Amateur, breaking a record previously held by the great

Bobby Jones

. He passed away in 2004.

"You can rattle off his career accomplishments, but they tell you little about the man," said former USGA President and current SCGA Youth on Course President Jim Vernon during Kelly's induction speech. "He was such a respectable and honorable person, but one who also had an astonishing drive to win."

In 1947, Kelly played in the Crosby Pro-Am in Monterey and was paired with the legendary Sam Snead

. Known to enjoy a drink in those days, Kelly had tied one on the night before and stumbled to the first tee, barefoot, trying to put his socks and shoes on. When Snead saw this, he requested that the Tournament Chairman assign him another partner.

"Just get up and hit the ball," Kelly told Snead.

Slammin' Sammy stroked it 260 yards down the center of the fairway. Kelly stumbled up and after a few attempts, managed to tee up his ball. He then stroked a monstrous drive 270 yards dead center, looked at Snead and said: "You're away." Kelly and Snead would go on to win the tournament. Vernon shared the story with the crowd Tuesday, and despite not being there, Kelly was able to win over the crowd.

"I'll tell you, Roger Kelly sounds like someone I would have enjoyed spending time with," said Cook after hearing the narrative.

Accepting the award for her father was Gina Kosmo, who spoke on behalf of her siblings Tom and Kim who were also in attendance.

"We miss our dad so much, but golf is always such a loving reminder of his life and legacy," said Kosmo. "He embodied a total love and respect for the game, and he would have been so honored to be recognized by the SCGA like this."

Nicknamed "Little Poison" due to his slender 5'7" 125-pound frame, and because he often bested those who out drove him with his superb putting and chipping, Paul Runyan was the third inductee in the Hall of Fame class. After a dominant career on the PGA TOUR, which included 28 wins, Runyan went on to be one of the most influential instructors in the game's history. He taught at Southland staples Annandale Golf Club in Pasadena as well as La Jolla Country Club in San Diego

"Much of what we do in teaching golf is plagiarizing," said Mulligan. "But Paul didn't plagiarize, he blazed trails. When I think of the short game, and especially teaching the short game, I think of Paul Runyan."

SCGA inducts John Cook, Roger Kelly and Paul Runyan into Hall of Fame

Written by Australian Business

Former PGA President Pat Reilly inducted Runyan, and spoke of his integrity and sportsmanship in addition to his golf accolades.

"Paul believed it was nice to be important, but far more important to be nice," said Reilly. "A quote that embodies vintage Paul Runyan has to be 'it's not what you can do for me, but what I can do for you.'"

Accepting the honor on his father's behalf was Jeff Runyan.

All three inductees were honored with sepia-toned pieces painted by Scott Medlock, one of America's foremost artists who has been commissioned as the official artist of the SCGA Hall of Fame since its inception in 2007. With each piece, Medlock captures the emotion and significance of each inductee's contributions to the game of golf in Southern California

SOURCE Southern California Golf Association

RELATED LINKS <http://www.scga.org>