

# TEE TO GREEN

## LOCAL GOLF

# A major dream



Photos by Andy Tullis / The Bulletin

Jeff Fought putts on the practice green at the Big Meadow course at Black Butte Ranch on Friday morning. Fought, the director of golf at Black Butte Ranch, hopes to earn a spot in the Senior PGA Championship.

• Black Butte Ranch's Jeff Fought is set to compete this week at the Senior PGA Professional National Championship, which could lead to a berth in a bigger senior event

By Zack Hall  
The Bulletin

Ever since he was a child, Jeff Fought has dreamed of playing in one of golf's major championships.

Now, at age 53, the director of golf at Black Butte Ranch has a real opportunity to play his way into just such a tournament.

Fought will tee it up this week at Creighton Farms in Aldie, Va., for the 2013 Senior PGA Professional National Championship.

A \$285,000 purse is on the line, and the winner will hold the crown as the top club professional in the nation age 50 or older.

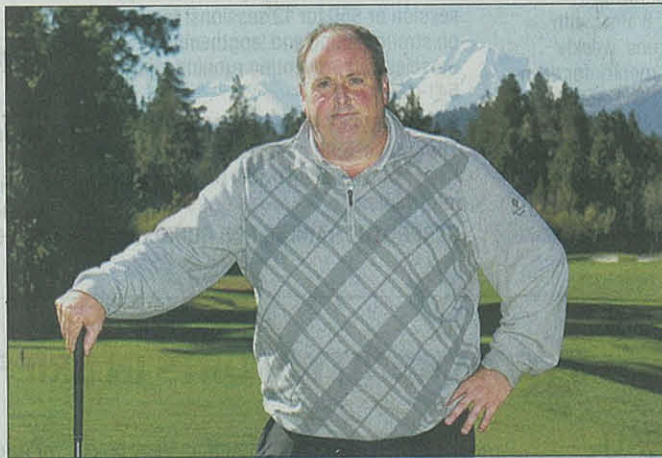
But it is hard for Fought to not think about being one of the 35 golfers this week who will earn a berth in the 2014 Senior PGA Championship, set for next May at Harbor Shores Golf Club in Benton Harbor, Mich.

"Who wouldn't want to play in a major?" says Fought, who lives in Sisters. "That would be something that would fulfill my life.

"And whether you make the cut or don't make the cut (at the Senior PGA), just being there and having a chance to compete in it? Oh my gosh. Really neat."

The 72-hole Senior PNC begins Thursday at both Creighton Farms and River Creek Club in Leesburg, Va., which will share hosting duties the first two rounds before the field — 264 club professionals from the PGA of America's 41 sections — is cut.

Fought qualified by finishing in a tie for fifth place at last month's Pacific Northwest Senior PGA Championship, a cap to what has been a strong season that included a win at



Fought qualified for the Senior PGA Professional National Championship with a solid finish at last month's Pacific Northwest Senior PGA Championship.

the Senior Players' Championship in April.

"This year I played more golf than I have ever played," Fought says. "And I've played very well this year."

Fought, who grew up in the Portland area, has long been a strong player.

The younger brother of John Fought, a former U.S. Amateur champion and PGA Tour player best known now as a course designer, Jeff Fought was a member of an elite Brigham Young University golf team that won the national championship in 1981.

Fought spent his first three years out of college on the mini-tour circuit, trying to advance up the ranks to the PGA Tour. When that did not pan out, he moved to the business side of golf and became a PGA member, eventually taking over the golf operations at Black Butte Ranch in 2000.

"My passion became being a golf operator," he says.

Not that he ever abandoned playing the game.

In fact, he still loves to com-

pete, part of what he considers one of the responsibilities of being a golf pro.

"I hope I am a well-rounded golf professional," Fought says. "I play, teach, manage a business and manage maintenance. I always wanted to be everything."

This week will mark the second time Fought has played in the Senior PNC.

In 2011 at Creighton Farms, he finished in a tie for 125th

place at 9 over par, three shots short of the 36-hole cut.

He admits that two years ago he fell under the spell of playing on a larger stage, something he does not want to repeat this time around.

"The ultimate goal is to go and play in something big-time like that," Fought says. "They have the big sponsorship signs. And it is just about 10 steps above about anything you play in all year.

"It's easy, like last time, to get so caught up in it," he adds.

This time he is traveling to northern Virginia with his 21-year-old son, Jeffrey, as his caddie.

The only thing that might make the trip better, he says, is to play well enough to accomplish what he has been dreaming about for so many years.

It will not be easy, Fought knows. But this time he will be ready for the challenge.

"I'm excited," he concludes. "I'm just starting to feel it right now. ... I'm just going to go back and have some fun with it."

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