

Floridian Peach Waller makes fifth trip to Mesquite Amateur

It's 7:30 a.m. and "Peach" Waller is on the chipping range hitting 30, 40 and 50 yard wedge shots. He's getting ready for the Mesquite Amateur which is scheduled May 31-June 4 at six courses.

Thirty minutes later, he's chipping with an assortment of clubs trying to find that "feel" he'll need in the desert.

Next, he's on the range hitting full shots as he works his way through the bag. He wants his 14 allies to be ready because he's getting ready for the Mesquite Amateur.

Several hours after his start, he's on the putting green hoping the speed will be similar to Coral Canyon or Falcon Ridge or Casa Blanca. It's important because he's getting ready for the Mesquite Amateur.

Waller began his 1,956 mile journey from the Florida Panhandle to Mesquite, Nevada Friday to join 600+ fellow competitors in the desert. After flying to Las Vegas, the resident of Pensacola, Fla, will rent a car and journey some 80 miles to Mesquite.

This is his Masters. This is the high point of the golfing year and has been for him the past four years.

"The first time I heard about the Mesquite Amateur I was in Myrtle Beach, S.C. playing in the World Am," recalls the 60 year-old Waller, who earned a degree in radio-TV-film from the University of Georgia in 1971. "We were sitting around having a beer after the day's round and some of the guys were talking about how much fun the desert was. I asked somebody what was so good about Mesquite and they said don't have to pack your umbrella, your rain gear and there is not a hurricane sitting off the coast of Nevada threatening to cancel the tournament."

The former flight champion has played all the courses in the current rotation and likes them all. He doesn't find many tee boxes in Florida offering such elevations. In the Mesquite Am he might see quite a few during his annual eight night stay.

"In Florida, I think the highest elevation is about 89 feet," laughed Waller. "We'll see several elevation changes in Mesquite. I am going to get in three practice rounds before the tournament even starts."

Waller has made many friends over the years traveling to the World Am in Myrtle Beach, SC and the PacAm in Bend, Or. For numerous reasons, the memories from Mesquite are the sweetest.

"Maybe it's the camaraderie from the nightly dinner parties or swapping golf lies with my fellow competitors while playing blackjack at the Casa Blanca Casino," said Waller. "Then, too, it might be because the bartenders seem friendlier or the overall service just makes me feel more at ease than any other tournament I have found.

"In reality, it's all the above that makes Mesquite a great place to visit and the Mesquite Amateur a great place to play. That's exactly why I have been accompanied the last two years by 21 golfing buddies plus wives and girlfriends as part of the Hacker's Amateur Golf Tour. Everyone agrees the Mesquite Am is the best."

Sponsored by Golf Mesquite Nevada along with the Mesquite Resort Association, the event will be played at the CasaBlanca, Palms, Falcon Ridge, Oasis Palmer, Oasis Canyons along with The Chase at Coyote Springs southwest of Mesquite.

Sheila Stevenson of Round Mountain, Nev., shot a final round 84 combined to become the first woman to win the tournament last year.

The tournament is the brainchild of Black Gaming Director of Sales Ann Sunstrum.

Those interested in playing in the event receive three rounds of golf, a tee gift and four nightly parties for an entry fee of \$525. Further information can be found by visiting www.mesquiteamateur.com, www.mesquiteamateurblog.com/blog; or www.golfmesquitenevada.com or by calling Black Gaming Sporting Events Manager Christian Adderson at 888-711-4653, Ext. 51.

Caption: Talented writer and golfer Peach Waller, second from the right, returns for the Mesquite Amateur May 31-June 4. He is shown in last year's play on the 18th green at Coyote Springs with from left, Rick Valentini, Toronto, Canada; Dan Kinkle of Helen, Ga., and Chester Berry of Perdido Key, Fla.

CONTACTS: Christian Adderson, 888-711-4653, ext. 51; Mike Henle, 279-3483.