



## Omaha raises some eyebrows with U.S. Senior Open performance

***By Russ Pankonin  
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Call it a U.S. Senior Open super performance.

Kenny Perry put on a record-setting performance at the U.S. Senior Open held at the Omaha Country Club last week.

The 52-year-old Kentuckian won his second straight senior major on the Champions Tour. His 64-63 finish and the 10-shot deficit he overcame after 36 holes set tournament records. His 13-under total of 267 matched the lowest four-round score.

But perhaps the most brilliant performance of the weekend came from Omaha itself as it played host to its first-ever major golf championship.

Omaha is best known for the College World Series, but it's been on a roll drawing big sporting events, but probably nothing quite as big as the U.S. Senior Open.

In addition to the CWS and the Open, Omaha has played host to the men's NCAA regional basketball tournament in 2012, the 2012 Olympic swim trials (for the second time), and the 2013 U.S. figure skating championships

Gene Smith, tournament director for the Champions Tour, said the U.S. Senior Open in Omaha will likely be one of the biggest and best ever he's seen in his 20 years with the Champions Tour.

He was astounded by how 3,000 volunteers took time off to help put on the tournament. And by the crowds.

The overall attendance of 157,126 ranked second only to the 1999 U.S. Senior Open held in Des Moines. Both Saturday's and Sunday's single-day attendance, 32,994 and 34,354 respectively, set records for the largest single-day attendance at a sporting event in Omaha.

Sales of corporate hospitality tents hit a record \$5.6 million and ticket sales topped \$2 million for only the third time in the history of the event.

Smith said it's likely Omaha will get another look for a major tournament somewhere down the road.



### **Locals impressed with the atmosphere**

Several people from Imperial made the trek to Omaha last week to rub shoulders with some of the greatest players in the game of golf.

For golf fanatic Ron Moritz, it proved to be almost more than he could imagine. He went

Monday during the first practice round, when golfers take a much lighter approach to the game. There were several players he sought out for autographs, including Hale Irwin, Fred Funk and Corey Pavin. He especially wanted to see Funk. "He's just a card," Moritz said.

Moritz walked most of the course which is full of hills and elevation changes. It was a challenge, he admitted.

Getting to rub shoulders with all the big boys of golf and seeing their personalities will stick with Moritz for a long time. He also marveled at how far and how straight they can still hit the ball.

For Ray Lindekugel, it was a rare opportunity to see golf legends who haven't lost their game by any means. "It's always fun to see the big players," he said.

What impressed Lindekugel the most was just how organized everything was. "We were treated really well," he said.

Kirk Wilson and his son-in-law, Matt Hanna, received tickets to the tournament for Christmas and made the trip to Omaha.

Wilson described it as "one of the best experiences of my life," adding that getting to see golfing heroes and legends was "the chance of a lifetime."

He was in awe at the ability of the professional senior players. "They hit the ball so pure," he said. Seeing the players' thought processes and what they do to get ready to hit the ball was "so cool. I was in heaven."

He too was impressed with how well Omaha and Nebraska as a whole stepped up to show that such an event can be a huge success in the state. "Nebraska showed up big time," he noted.

Hanna said he was amazed at the access fans had to players. They were just feet away from you, he noted. He said it was fun to see the players up close and was also impressed with the quality of play.