



**CHICAGOLAND'S  
CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS GOLF TOURNAMENT  
Park Ridge Country Club**

Park Ridge, Illinois, September 30, 2010  
By Dennis La Liberty

Craig McDonnell of Beverly Country Club, Chicago, Illinois, made a hat trick of birdies in three playoff holes for a decisive win over Jeff Walker of Sunset Ridge Country Club, Northfield, Illinois, in the *Champion of Champions* golf tournament, a one day stroke play event hosted by Park Ridge Country Club featuring the individual champions of private golf clubs in the Chicago metropolitan area. The tournament was played in beautiful early fall weather under blue skies and in pleasant southeast breezes.

Both McDonnell and Walker finished the regulation eighteen at even par, thus necessitating the three hole, cumulative score playoff, set for holes ten, seventeen, and eighteen. In the eighteen holes of regulation play, McDonnell was never more than one stroke off par, his high being one over after eleven, then, courtesy of birdies on the par three twelfth and fourteenth holes, to one under after fourteen. The birdie at twelve featured a 60' putt from the front of the green to a hole cut at the very back. A bogey at the tough dog leg sixteenth put him back to even, a score he

maintained with a par on seventeen and another on the four par eighteenth, which was playing at its maximum 435 yard length and further complicated by a tricky right rear pin location. Walker, who was two under after thirteen, had an uneven run in the last five holes of regulation play, going bogey, birdie, bogey, par, with a final hole bogey for his even par finish.

In the playoff, McDonnell set the tempo early with a long center cut drive which left him inside 200 yards on the 500 yard, par 5 tenth hole. Walker, who was some 235 yards away in the left rough and partially obscured by trees lining the left side of the fairway, had to lay up short and his ball found the right side fairway bunker, 110 yards from the green. Walker's third shot out of the bunker came up just short of the green, then rolled back some ten yards down the front slope, while McDonnell's four iron second shot put him pin high left just off the green. A chip and one putt birdie for McDonnell versus a double bogey 7 put Walker in serious trouble after just one hole of the playoff. On the three par seventeenth, McDonnell rolled in a birdie putt from just off the green while Walker's chip from off the green left him about 7 feet past the cup and, when his tricky par putt slid by, the resulting bogey left him two more strokes behind McDonnell going into the final playoff hole. At the 435 yard, double dog leg eighteenth, both players drove into the fairway center, with Walker 165 yards away while McDonnell's 310 yard effort left him just 125 yards from the back right pin. Walker hit first and put his second shot back left, 30 feet from the pin. McDonnell then hit what was the finest shot ever in the three playoffs which so far have been required in the thirteen years since the tournament has been held at Park Ridge Country Club, virtually holing out a pitching wedge and leaving his ball some 8" from the hole for a kick-in birdie. Anti-climactically, Walker nearly holed his long putt for birdie, finishing with a par, while McDonnell cleaned up his efforts with a glorious tap-in birdie and the win.

This playoff victory is Craig McDonnell's second consecutive in the Champion of Champions, thanks to a two stroke win in last year's tournament. McDonnell has competed successfully in numerous other CDGA tournaments and in the Illinois Open. His opponent, Jeff Walker, is a third generation member of Sunset Ridge Country Club, following the winning tradition of his father since both have won multiple year club championship honors.

Chicagoland's *Champion of Champions* invitational golf tournament for men was first played in 1933, and was held annually at various clubs until 1984. Park Ridge Country Club revived the tournament in 1998 and has hosted it annually ever since. The traveling trophy to be displayed at the home club of the winner was donated by the Western Golf Association (WGA).

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