

Chipping in

Golfer returns to links after cancer surgery thanks to friends' kindness

By Jim Massey

Editor

UW-Madison emeritus dairy science professor Dave Dickson is back on the golf course this summer, thanks to successful bladder cancer surgery and a little help from his friends.

Dickson, 70, well-known in Wisconsin dairy circles as the longtime coach of UW-Madison dairy judging teams and a world-renowned dairy judge, had bladder cancer surgery in early March. About two weeks later, Dickson's friends surprised him by purchasing a five-outing golf package for him during a silent auction at the Professional Dairy Produc-

ers of Wisconsin Annual Business Conference.

Pete Giacomini, chief operating officer of AgSource in Verona, came up with the idea to buy the golf package for Dickson.

"Every once in a while you have what you consider a good idea," Giacomini said. "(The idea) came late, but with modern technology it's amazing how quickly it came together."

Giacomini said he got the idea the day before the conference was to begin.

"I went through my e-mail address book and sent an e-mail to anybody who I thought might be interested," he said. "I was

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Dave Dickson, second from left, is playing plenty of golf this summer thanks to his friends. Dickson is pictured with, from left, Brian Hettiger of the UW Foundation; Greg Stumpf, a member of one of Dickson's national champion dairy judging teams; and Tom Schomisch, UW-Madison emeritus professor and former chairman of the Agricultural Journalism Department.

Submitted photo

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Golf/ Bids benefit PDPW education foundation

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amazed at the pledges that came streaming back in. It was a pretty easy job.

"Dave had gone through cancer surgery at the time, and pretty much everybody knew that. His prognosis was real positive, and he said he was looking forward to playing some golf this summer. So it fit well."

Forty-six people pledged \$3,350 to buy the golf package. The bid benefited the PDPW education foundation.

Dickson said he was overwhelmed by the gift from his friends and associates.

"It was fantastic — it was a huge surprise,"

Dickson said. "I was quite amazed by the generosity of the people who were involved."

Dickson said he got e-mail addresses from Giacomini and sent personal thank-yous to everyone who contributed. He invited some of the contributors to play golf with him.

"So far I've gone to two of the outings and I have plans for two more," he said. "I only have one waiting in the wings that I haven't scheduled yet."

The golf package included foursome outings at the Baraboo Country Club, The Oaks Golf Course near Cottage Grove, University Ridge near Verona, Autumn Ridge near Valders, and The Bull

at Pinehurst near Sheboygan Falls.

Mark Ludtke, dairy business development manager at Stewart-Peterson in West Bend, put together the golf package as a first-year member of the auction committee.

"All five of the courses have a tie to the dairy industry," Ludtke said. "That's a little bit of the reason why these courses were selected."

Most of the golf package was donated by the courses, but Stewart-Peterson and AgStar Financial picked up some of the costs.

Ludtke said the golf package "worked out really well" as an auction item, and he is planning to put together something similar for the 2010 PDPW conference.

Dickson said his health prognosis is "excellent" following the surgery.

"I tell people that I give 99 percent of the credit for the success of my recovery to Dr. Neal Jorgenson," Dickson said. Jorgenson is a former colleague in the UW-Madison dairy science department.

"Seven years ago, Neal went through the same surgery from the same surgeon," Dickson said. "As soon as I found out the diagnosis, I called him,

and he told me he had been extremely happy with his surgeon and University Hospitals. I told him I'd take his word for it.

"The (surgeon) was phenomenal, but the best part was I kept in touch with Neal. He now lives in Florida, but I would call him or send him an e-mail every other day, and boy, did he get me through some tough spots. He had been through the same thing himself and he understood my questions. It was truly a blessing."

Dickson said he has to go back to the doctor for periodic checkups, but he passed his first review "with flying colors."

Dickson's dairy judging teams won more than 40 collegiate contests and five national championships. He judged U.S. national shows for all breeds of dairy cattle and judged national Holstein and Brown Swiss shows in more than 20 countries.

Dickson was a UW-Madison dairy science professor and UW-Extension dairy specialist for 31 years. He chaired the dairy science department from 1984 to 1990 before retiring in 1997.

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