

Profile: Hope Valley | Catching Up With Eddie Pearce | Balsam Mountain Preserve

Carolinas Golf



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CAROLINAS GOLF ASSOCIATION
VOL. 31, NO. 2

CAROLINASGOLF.ORG
SUMMER 2024



Pinehurst No. 2 was the star
of the 2024 U.S. Open

DeChambeau PUTS ON A SHOW

110th Carolinas Am Heads to **The Cliffs** at Mountain Park

Historic championship returns to South Carolina

BY DON JOZWIAK

The 110th playing of the Carolinas Amateur Championship, set for July 10-13, brings the championship back to South Carolina. The Cliffs at Mountain Park, a Gary Player Design course in Marietta, S.C., will host the championship for the first time – the event was last held in the Palmetto State in 2016, when the Country Club of Charleston played host.

2023 Champion Garrett Risner (rhymes with visor) is set to defend his title after a strong junior season at North Carolina's Elon College, where he's captain of the men's golf team for the Phoenix. Risner was voted team MVP after averaging a team-best 71.5 strokes over the course of the season and earning first-team All-Coastal Athletic Association honors.

Last year at Pine Needles in Southern Pines, N.C., Risner led going into the final round, but ended up in a playoff with Kevin O'Connell of Apex, N.C., after both players finished at 6-under par in regulation play. Risner drained a seven-foot putt for birdie on the second playoff hole to claim victory and add his name to the record books.

"I just stuck to my game plan, sometimes took a

moment to just collect myself and take a few deep breaths," Risner said after his victory. "I reminded myself I'm just trying to hit some targets. If I win, great. If not, I did the right thing."

Fortunately for Risner, the right thing was the winning thing at Pine Needles. And it means he'll be back in the field for a shot at going back-to-back this year at the Cliffs at Mountain Park.

"I can't even begin to tell you how it feels to actually win this event, to be honest," Risner said. "I've always looked at it as just a great event to make the

110th Carolinas Amateur

Dates: July 10-13, 2024

Location: Marietta, S.C.

Host: The Cliffs at Mountain Park

Format: 72 hole stroke play; field reduced to top 60 and ties after 36 holes

Defending champion: Garrett Risner, Holly Springs, N.C.

Fast Fact: The Cliffs has seven golf courses - one for every day of the week - from designers like Tom Fazio, Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player.



cut in and get top 30 so I can come back again next year. Everything fell into place, and it's a wonderful feeling."

Risner and the rest of the field in the 2024 Carolinas Amateur Championship will compete on the links-inspired layout at the Cliffs at Mountain Park, which opened in 2013 with a layout spearheaded by Gary Player Design's Jeff Lawrence. Those who've played the course say it isn't as rolling as you might expect for a layout in the mountains of upstate South



"I can't even begin to tell you how it feels to actually win this event, to be honest. ... Everything fell into place, and it's a wonderful feeling."

—Garrett Risner, 2023 Champion

Carolina, and the wide fairways and collection areas around the greens will make getting the angles on approach shots key for shooting low scores.

The final four holes on the Cliffs at Mountain Park set up a number of strategic challenges for players battling for the Carolinas Amateur title. No. 15 is a par-5 with trees in the middle of the fairway that cause players to choose a side of the fairway that will dictate whether they can go for the green – protected by a massive bunker on a mound just short of the putting surface – in two or lay up. That's followed by the par-3 16th, which can play more than 200 yards or much less, creating options for players from round to round.

No. 17 is a drivable par-4 at 290 yards, and players looking to make a dramatic move will be com-

elled to take an aggressive line and perhaps be rewarded with a shot at eagle. The closing hole is a 525-yard par-5 with a creek protecting the front of the green. This provides another chance for a possible eagle and a chance to make up a stroke or two at the end of a round.

The player who successfully navigates these last four holes and the rest of this demanding layout at the Cliffs at Mountain Park in the 2024 Carolinas Amateur Championship will earn an exemption into the 124th U.S. Amateur Championship at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Minnesota this August. ■

Garrett Risner (above) will look to defend his title on the picturesque layout at the Cliffs at Mountain Park in Marietta, S.C.

