



Taking golf seriously

Intern learns game's ups and downs

Story and Photos
by Fredrick D. Joe

Of The Battalion Staff

Imagine how it would feel to ditch a "serious" degree plan and pursue a career in your favorite sport. That's what Scott Michael Arnold did when he left behind two years of studies at Central Michigan University and enrolled in the Professional Golf Management program at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan.

Arnold, who is interning as a golf professional at the Texas A&M Golf Course, said that at Central Michigan he could not find a degree plan he wanted to pursue, so he decided to make golf his career.

Arnold said that as a golf professional, "Wages aren't high, hours are long, and you'll never be a millionaire — but you gotta do what you love."

He said most people have the misconception that all golf professionals play golf for a living. In reality, most golf professionals manage golf courses, sell equipment, run tournaments, repair golf clubs and give golf lessons.

At Ferris, students take classes in areas such as golf club repair, golf cart repair, rules and golf instruction, all of which are required by the Professional Golfers Association to achieve status as a golf professional. When Arnold graduates from Ferris he will receive a bachelor's degree in marketing with a golf management option. He has completed all the required coursework and two of the four required internships. Each in-

ternship lasts six months and must be completed at four different golf courses.

His first internship was at the Flint Golf Club in Flint, Michigan, and his second was at the highly exclusive Loxhatchee Club in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Arnold is working toward the completion of his third internship here at A&M.

Arnold said Ferris interns are in high demand because club and course professionals like to have knowledgeable help. Despite the high demand for Ferris interns, Arnold said that most internships do not pay too well.

"On most internships you just break even on expenses, but the experience is well worth it," he said.

Matt Schewe, head golf professional at Texas A&M and a Ferris graduate, is one of the many golf pros who have sought Ferris interns. He called Ferris and had A&M included on a list of internships from which students could choose. Arnold chose the Texas A&M Golf course for his third internship because his first two were at private clubs and he wanted the experience that comes from working at a public golf course.

In September, after getting the Texas A&M internship, Arnold jumped into his pick-up and departed on his first trip to Texas. "I like it and I might just stay down here," Arnold said teasingly, with a heavy Texas drawl.

Schewe said Arnold's internship is working out well and that he would like to continue hiring Ferris students after Arnold leaves in Feb-

ruary.

Arnold said he has not decided on the location of his fourth and final internship. Many students seek permanent employment when they consider their fourth internship, he said. Arnold said that Ferris' golf management program is highly regarded and that "a lot of great club professionals have come from Ferris."

Arnold plans to become a professional's assistant for a couple of years, until he can get the financial backing he needs to start his own golf enterprise — which probably will be a driving range. Whether Arnold works at a golf course or a driving range, he still will have the chance to teach.

"I really like teaching a golfer and watching him improve," Arnold said.

When asked if golf is as popular in Texas as it is in the east, Arnold said that "golf is popular everywhere right now." He added that high school golfers here might be better than those in Michigan because they have the benefit of playing year round in the mild southern climate.

Arnold said golf is more popular than ever. More retirees are golfing, junior golf programs are taking off, and golf is turning into a family sport, he said.

He said he has never regretted his decision to become a golf professional and he likes dealing with people in the recreational atmosphere that golf provides.

"They come out here to have a good time and it's my job to be sure they do."



Matt Schewe, A&M's head professional, jokes with Scott Arnold in the A&M pro shop.



Scott Arnold displays a good finish as he hits his drive on hole number four of the Texas A&M Golf Course.

Helping amateurs improve their game is an important part of being a golf professional.