

# Monterey County SPORTS

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## Poppy Hills' Alexander nominated for honor

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Local golf instructor Ben Alexander is smiling a lot these days, and for good reason.

Recently, Alexander, who is based at Poppy Hills Golf Course, was one of two Northern California section teaching professionals nominated for the prestigious national PGA Teacher of the Year award.

The last local teaching pro to be named PGA Teacher of the Year was Pebble Beach Golf Academy director Laird Small, who received the honor in 2003. Each of the 41 PGA sections across the country can nominate two professionals.

"I'm really excited about it," said Alexander, who in 2004 joined the likes of Small and John Geertsen Jr. as locals who have been named Northern California PGA Teacher of the Year. "I'm walking on clouds. I'm just glad to be in the mix."

Along with his nomination, Alexander, whose pupils include seven-time LPGA Tour winner Danielle Ammaccapane, is also celebrating the start of a new golf show. In early May, Alexander will begin hosting a half-hour golf show on public television (local cable channel 24) that will air four times a day, seven days a week. The show will feature a golf tip instructional segment and local golfing guests.

### Leibovich going Nationwide

Tehama Golf Course head professional Rick Leibovich will be among those teeing off in this week's Nationwide Tour Livermore Valley Wine Country Championship at Wente Vineyards.



DAVID ROYAL/Herald file

Ben Alexander, right, has been nominated for the PGA Teacher of the Year award.

Leibovich, who earlier this year competed in the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am, is playing in the event via a Nor-Cal PGA exemption.

Last year, the Course at Wente Vineyards, which was designed by Greg Norman, played as the toughest track on the Nationwide Tour.

### Alliance growing

The California Alliance for Golf, a non-profit consortium of prominent golf associations in Northern and Southern

California, has launched its Web site.

Originally the idea of former Northern California Golf Association CEO Paul Porter, the organization functions as a trade association to represent the golf industry in the state. Included in its purposes is to serve as an educational resource for the industry and to communicate to the public the economic benefits and environmental stewardship provided by the game of golf. Along with the NCGA, which is one of its

leading members, the organization represents associations of golf course superintendents, golf course owners, golf course managers, golf professionals and public and private golf facilities.

Robert Bouchier, a Carmel resident, is executive director and works out of the NCGA office. The NCGA's Mike McCullough is assistant executive director. For more information, please visit [www.cagolf.org](http://www.cagolf.org).

### Win for Marin

Monterey resident and former CSU-Monterey Bay standout Chris Marin shot a final round 69 and erased a seven-stroke deficit to come from behind and win last weekend's amateur golf.com California Mid-Amateur championship at par-72 Stevinson Ranch in Stevinson.

Marin, who won last year's Monterey City Amateur at Del Monte Golf Course, finished the two-day tournament with a score of 142 (73-69), defeating runner-up and first round leader Jeff Dare of Pleasanton by three strokes.

Also walking away from the event a winner was Carmel resident Jose Sanchez. Sanchez captured the Masters Division title by one stroke thanks to a two-day total of 147 (73-74).

### Salinas Valley Amateur

San Jose resident Kevin Smith claimed the title at the Salinas Valley Amateur, defeating Al Conceicao of Santa Cruz 9 and 8 in Sunday's 36-hole finale at Salinas Fairways Golf Course. In net play, the first flight title went to Salinas' Ronnie Rehn. The second flight

crown went to fellow Salinas resident Jesse Neria.

### Local motion

Schmidt-Curley Design recently announced that it will begin construction of a four-course project at Maravia Golf Course in La Paz, Mexico and is partnering with Nick Faldo on a design at the Kanay Resort in Playa del Carmen, Mexico.

The projects will join Schmidt-Curley's design list of more than 100 courses in 24 countries on four continents, including Mission Hills Golf Course in China, four-time Skins Game host Terra Lago Golf Course in Indio and Bali Hai and Siena Golf Clubs in Las Vegas.

Brian Curley, who is one-half of Schmidt-Curley, is a native of Pacific Grove and a Pacific Grove High alum.

### NCGA Senior qualifying

A number of locals will be in the field when an open qualifier for this year's NCGA Senior championship is held today at Poppy Hills. Those slated to tee off include Corral de Tierra member Douglas Chaikin, Pacific Grove Golf Links member Mark Farina, Salinas Golf and Country Club member Larry Musgrave, Monterey Peninsula Country Club member Ken Slasor and Rancho Cañada member Donel Geisen. Along with play at Poppy Hills, qualifying will also take place at four other courses.

The championship will be held May 5-6 at Saddle Creek Resort in Copperopolis.

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