

**Headlines:** Gary *Chip* Arbogast wins the 77th Annual U.S. Blind Golf Association Tournament

**Teaser:** He can add this trophy to his five world-series beep-baseball championship rings.

Last September, **Gary (Chip) Arbogast**, a management program analyst in IT's Enterprise Operations, won the B1 McMahon Stableford Division championship at the 77<sup>th</sup> United States Blind Golf Association (USBGA) Tournament. The tournament, featuring the best blind golfers in the country, was held at the World Golf Village Slammer & Squire Golf Course in St. Augustine FL. The event consisted of a scramble/practice round and two competitive rounds.

"When I won, I was both shocked and excited at the same time. I've only been playing golf for a year and a half, so winning the tournament was a big deal for me", said Chip.

The tournament features several levels of competition. Chip competed against two other players in the *Totally Blind Division*, which defined by the USBGA means players have no light perception, or light perception which is not functional, central or peripheral, with or without light projection, and can't differentiate between a blank sheet of white paper or a sheet of white paper with a black symbol on it. Chip scored a total of 12 Stableford points (see sidebar) over two rounds to win the tournament. He also had a caddie/coach to help him. Coaches line up shots, give players a perspective of the hole they're playing, yardage and wind estimates – just like a caddie does but coaches also help the player align their clubs with the ball for each shot.

In Chips opinion, aside from playing golf while totally blind, the biggest challenge is finding a coach. "It's the biggest challenge. I live in Minnesota and I'm new up here, so I don't know anybody making it difficult to find people willing to help me golf. I've reached out to golf pros to see if they knew anybody that might be interested in helping. I posted on Facebook was able to find two or three people that wanted to help me. For this tournament, I asked my brother-in-law, Chuck, who lives in Florida and is also a golfer, if he could come down and spend those three days with me and be my coach. He did a great job, and we had a lot of fun."



Chip, who works in Minneapolis MN, has been with the service for 20 years. "I heard about a blind rehabilitation school (Lions World Services) in Little Rock, AR that had a program with the IRS to hire blind adults to work in customer service. I was able to get into the program and was hired as a customer service representative (CSR) in Richmond VA." After four years on the phone, Chip was selected for an IRS program to teach customer service skills to blind adults at Lions World Services. After two years, Chip took a position in IT. "I ended up in IT with Unix and Linux server team and worked my way up for seven or eight years. At that point I had totally lost my sight," said Chip.



Before Chip took up golf, he was a designated hitter for the Indy Thunder Beep-Ball team for eight years in Indianapolis, where they won the National Beep-Baseball Association World Series five times. "I started getting a little older and I got tired of throwing myself on the ground trying to stop balls from getting past me and running to the bases and crashing into them. My body couldn't take it anymore. I decided to get out of beep-baseball. So I started looking for methods to help me to figure out how to golf, and this is where I ended up."



Listening to Chip talk about why he loves golf, it sounds like his new-found passion is going to be with him for a while. "You know when you hit your first home run or catch your first big bass or especially when you hear the click of the club striking the ball, that's a good sound to a blind golfer - you're hooked. Golf is a frustrating fun sport. You challenge yourself. Being outside is absolutely great when the sun is at its peak and

you're out there with your friends being active, meeting people, you know, it's just fun. I just won't quit. I am going to get better and better as time goes on.”

Sidebar:

### **How Stableford scoring works**

Stableford scoring is a point system. Instead of counting your total number of strokes for a round of golf, you convert your score on each hole into Stableford points based on how well you play. For example a common or standard Stableford point value would be:

- ◆ Five points for a Double Eagle (Albatross)
- ◆ Four points for an Eagle
- ◆ Three points for a Birdie
- ◆ Two points for a Par
- ◆ One point for a Bogey
- ◆ Zero points for a Double Bogey