



JOSEPH “JOE” SEKA JR.: CEDARBROOK’S FIRST GOLF PROFESSIONAL

Joe Seka was born in 1893 in the Chestnut Hill section of Philadelphia and began his “golfing” career caddying at Stenton Country Club and the Philadelphia Cricket Club. Four-time U.S. Open Champion and Philadelphia Cricket Club Head Professional Willie Anderson took a liking to Joe, who had begun to show promise as a player, and spent much of his time showing the young caddy many tricks of the trade. In 1910, several months after competing in what turned out to be his final U.S. Open at the Cricket Club, Anderson tragically died at the young age of 32. Following Anderson’s death, Joe moved over to the Philadelphia Country Club for the winter, working for Jimmy Thompson, another highly regarded Philadelphia professional and great teacher.

Joe continued his apprenticeship with stops back at the Cricket Club and Whitmarsh Valley Country Club, honing his skills and perfecting the art of club making in the style with which Anderson had laid a foundation.

In 1914, Joe returned to the Stenton Country Club for his first position as head golf professional. After four years at Stenton and two more in the military during World War I, Joe accepted the head professional position at the newly constructed Cedarbrook Country Club in Cheltenham.

While Joe was an accomplished player, he had the misfortune of competing at a time when the Philadelphia area was stocked with many great players like “Long Jim Barnes,” Morrie Talman, and Joe Kirkwood. National players like Walter Hagen, Gene Sarazen, and many more also traveled to the Philadelphia area to compete in professional events. One *unique* win Joe carded was in January of 1923 when he finished first on a snowbound Stenton Country Club golf course in a benefit tournament for a local fellow professional. His “icy” 87 bested second place finisher Bob Barnett of the Tredyffrin Country Club by four shots in conditions extremely hazardous and so soggy that players sank ankle deep in mud in some spots! Joe also qualified for the 1924 PGA Championship in French Lick, Indiana and in 1936, partnered with Walter Hagen in a local better ball exhibition match, where they lost to local professionals Bruce Coltart and Clarence Ehresman.

Joe was very active in the upstart “Philadelphia Section of the PGA” and served as the section’s second president in 1923. Joe had a soft spot in his heart for junior golfers, organizing free clinics for the Boy Scouts of America and offering complimentary golf lessons to juniors on Saturday mornings. He was very active in charity events associated with the Red Cross and fundraising for the military. Joe was known as one of the best dressed golf professionals of the time, wearing very stylish and colorful outfits, and was also one of the most liked and respected professionals of his time.

Joe’s head professional career spanned 36 years. He was head professional at Cedarbrook from 1920 to 1928. He left Cedarbrook for a five year stint at Philmont Country Club, but returned to Cedarbrook in 1934 until stepping down in 1950. Joe spent several winters in Florida during his career as head professional at the Forest Hills Country Club in Tampa, and at the Mt. Plymouth Country Club in Orlando. During his years in Tampa, he had the opportunity to rub elbows and provide instruction to baseball great Babe Ruth and boxing legend Jack Dempsey!

Joe also operated his own driving range at Ogontz and City Line Avenues with the help of his golf professional son, Bob. Joe remained in the Chestnut Hill/Germantown area after his Cedarbrook career ended and devoted his efforts full time to teaching and managing his driving range.

One of Joe’s final appearances as a PGA Professional occurred at the PGA Whitmarsh Open Championship on June 11, 1964 where he accompanied his good friend “Long Jim Barnes,” head professional at Whitmarsh from 1914-1917. Jim christened the event by hitting the ceremonial first ball of the tournament. He passed away in 1965 at the age of 72.

