

At any Price, he's a proven top player

SENIOR ATHLETES

John Price, 55, won the prestigious FSGA title in the first year he was eligible.

By Mark Cardon
STAFF WRITER

There is a familiar saying among the Florida golfing fraternity that goes something like this: "If you can't play with the big dogs, stay on the porch."

Until this past April, John Price, formerly of Ireland and Toronto and most recently Sarasota, was relegated to a seat on the porch. He was good enough to play with them, but he just couldn't prove it.

A session with a sports psychologist and a hot putter changed his legacy.

On a miserable, almost British Isles-type weekend, Price hit his tee ball into the teeth of those big dogs and walked away with the Florida State Golf Association's Seniors Amateur championship, beating the likes of Rennie Law of Tampa and Bo Williams of Ocala. Law was the runner-up in the U.S. Senior Amateur two years ago, and Williams has two of those trophies on his mantle from the late 1980s.

Price, 55, won the prestigious FSGA title in the first year he was eligible, shooting a 73-75 and then capturing a playoff with Law at the Sun-tree County Club in Melbourne. Inclement weather reduced the 54-hole tournament to 36 holes, but what made it so special is that Price, who plays golf and tennis out of The Oaks Country Club in Osprey, kind of introduced himself to the talented field.

"Nobody had a clue who I was," he said. "I think it made some of them quite upset. You are talking to a guy that doesn't have a huge background in tournaments outside the club level."

But even at the club level, Price has struggled. He lost in the final of The Oaks tennis championships last year, and Charlie Roberts has beaten him the last two times for the club golf championship.

"He's a legitimate two-to-three handicapper," said Jimmy Wright, the Director of Golf at The Oaks, "but he's the second-best player at our club. His whole game is good. He doesn't have any glaring weaknesses."

He was born and raised near Belfast, Ireland, but spent 17 years as an industrial property landlord in Toronto before moving to Siesta Key

three years ago.

"I've absolutely won nothing in the past," said Price. "I have challenged at The Oaks and was contender in the Ontario Mid-Amateur."

"You wouldn't know it, watching him play," said Jim Witherspoon, the director of rules and competition for the Florida State Golf Association. "He's pretty talented."

"He hits it fairly far off the tee," said Tom Bler, a golfing buddy, who demands strokes even to the hole.

Price was the leader after the first day of the Senior Amateur, but Law caught and passed him on the second day. A birdie on No. 17 pulled Price even. Both players parred the final hole and then first playoff hole, but Price's birdie putt on the second playoff gave him the title. He is the first senior in recent years from the Sarasota-Bradenton area to win the championship.

"The playing conditions were miserable," he said. "Only about 17 players broke 80 on the second day. It was cold and drizzling."

Perfect playing weather, however, for someone who started playing golf in Ireland at age 7 quote from Tom Watson inspired him.

"When Tom Watson won those British Open in bad weather, he said, 'When the weather is this bad, half the field doesn't show up.'"

Price cashes in on delay at Senior Championship

By Jeff Navin
FLORIDA TODAY

MELBOURNE — Sarasota's John Price didn't let a day of rain or a two-hole playoff with Tampa's Rennie Law prevent him from claiming the Florida State Golf Association's 1997 State Senior Championship.

The 55-year-old carded 75 for a 4-over-148 at Suntree Country Club's Challenge Course on Thursday.

While many of the entrants bemoaned the cancellation of Wednesday's play, which dropped the tournament from 54 holes to 36 holes, Price returned to Sarasota. Haggling over the purchase of a new Jaguar XJ6 helped take his mind off golf and the poor weather.

"Just having lots of stuff to do helped," said the 55-year-old Price, who was born in Scotland before spending most of his adult life living in both Australia and Canada as an investor in real estate. "The delay was no problem. After all the rain, I thought we would be playing lift, clean and place. But the golf course was spectacular, even with all the rain."

Price entered the day with a two-stroke lead after shooting 1-over-par 73 on Tuesday. Law, who shot 75 on Tuesday, improved to 73 to tie Price for the lead.

Bland beginning

John Bland uses his early tee time to shoot 5-under-par 67 and lead the first round of the PGA Seniors' Championship in rain-soaked Palm Beach Gardens, 2C.

Both players parred the 470-yard, par-5 No. 18, the first hole of the playoff.

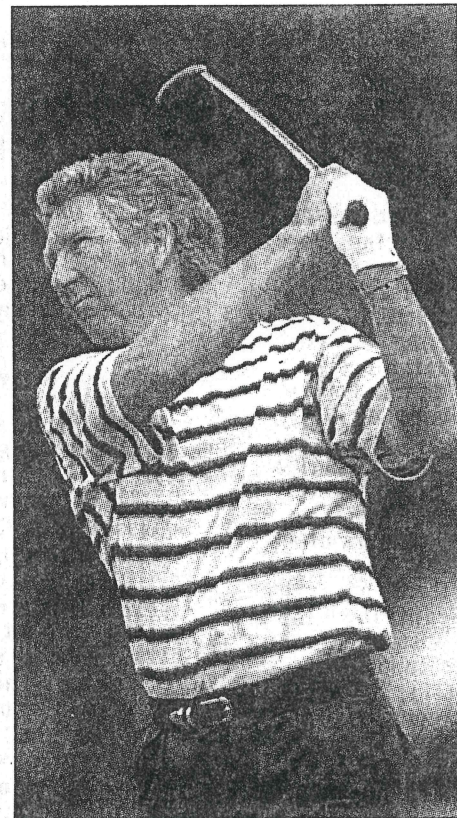
Price then hit his drive on No. 1, which left him facing a looming sand trap.

"I was absolutely terrified of the sand," Price said. "But I had to go for it with the 9-iron. He was a small wedge from the hole. I had to get a birdie quick, but I was taking quite a chance with the sand."

Price's second shot sailed just past the hazard, leaving him within 20 feet of the hole. Price converted the birdie putt. Law then missed his putt to the left.

"This was discouraging," Law said. "Finishing second is no fun. I wanted to win. I wish that it had gone the full three days. I had an advantage the longer it went."

■ Scores, 5C.



Rik Jesse, FLORIDA TODAY

JOHN PRICE of Sarasota tees off on the first hole in Thursday's final round of the FSGA 1997 State Senior Championship at Suntree Country Club. Price won the event on the second playoff hole.

SARASOTA'S PRICE IS FSGA STATE SENIOR CHAMPION

April 18, 1997

MELBOURNE, Fla. -- John Price of Sarasota sank a 20 foot birdie putt on the second play-off hole to defeat Tampa's Rennie Law in the Florida State Golf Association's 1997 State Senior Championship. Price was the leader after day one with a 73. His 75 on the final day allowed Law to move even with him. After a 75 in the opening round, Law closed with a 73.

Mount Dora's Curt Madsen and Bonita Springs' Allan Breed finished one stroke back for third place.

In the super senior division, Bob Ornitz of Delray Beach shot 78 and 76 for a five -stroke win. The first flight champion was Merritt Island's Dale Wright.

SECOND ROUND OF FSGA STATE SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP CANCELED

April 16, 1997

MELBOURNE, Fla. -- The second round of the Florida State Golf Association's 1997 State Senior Championship at Suntree Country Club was canceled Wednesday due to inclement weather.

Sarasota's John Price will lead the field into the final round of the rain-shortened tournament. His first round score of 73 placed him at the top of the leaderboard. Tampa's Rennie Law shot a 75 and C.L. Williamson of Oldsmar shot a 76 to place themselves near the top.

The final round begins Thursday morning at 8:10 a.m. The leaders will be the last group to tee-off shortly after 12 noon.

PRICE LEADS AFTER FIRST ROUND OF FSGA STATE SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

April 15, 1997

MELBOURNE, Fla. -- Sarasota's John Price leads after the first round of the Florida State Golf Association's 1997 State Senior Championship at Suntree Country Club. His one-over 73 was shot despite a day of steady rain.

Suntree's Challenge Course, along with the rain, proved to be a "challenge." Out of the 140 competitors in the Championship, only 17 shot below an 80. Tampa's Rennie Law shot a 75 and C.L. Williamson of Oldsmar shot a 76 to place themselves near the top.

Richard Blomstrom shot a 79 to lead the local golfers. Other local players and their scores follow: Glenn Kerres - 81, Stan Ayer - 81, Jerry Rooney - 81, Travis Akin - 84, and Herb Hedgecock - 87. The second round begins Wednesday morning at 7:30 a.m. The leaders will be the last group to tee-off at 12:30 p.m.

FLORIDA STATE SENIOR - CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT
SUNTREE COUNTRY CLUB, MELBOURNE
ROUND 2 - GROSS

Rennie Law, Tampa 75-73--148
John Price, Sarasota 73-75--148
Allan Breed, Bonita Springs 79-70--149
Curt Madson, Mount Dora 78-71--149
George Andre, Palm Beach Gardens 79-71--150
Dick Goerlich, Tampa 80-71-151
Thomas Watrous, Palm Beach Gardens 78-73--151
George Cordial, Brandon 78-74--152
Bill Maloy, Jupiter 78-74--152
Tracy Allen, Winter Park 82-72--154
C.L. Williamson, Oldsmar 76-78-154
Glenn Kerres, Melbourne 80-75--155
Robby Stanford, Orlando 80-75--155
Malcolm Martin, Altamonte Springs 80-77--157
Larry Cunningham, Naples 79-78--157
Daryle Larimer, Orlando 78-79--157
Stanton Ayer, Melbourne 81-78-159
Jerry Rooney, Melbourne 81-78--159
Moot Thomas, Ocala 83-76--159
Ron Leclair, Fern Park 77-82--159
Ed Garver, Lutz 86-74-160
Travis Akin, Melbourne 84-76--160
John Ward, Winter Park 84-76--160
J.E Rowe, Jacksonville 83-77--160
Bob Leonard, Lecanto 78-82-155
Bob Allen, Rotonda West 83-78--161
Sonny Mueller, Valrico 82-79--161
Dick Sheldon, Sarasota 83-78--161
Tom Matey, Orlando 82-80-162
Bob Hajas, Vero Beach 79-83--162
Richard Shulman, Port St Lucie 84-79--163
Joseph Underwood, Stuart 80-83--163
Richard Blomstrom, Melbourne 79-84--163
Bill Morton, Jupiter 82-82--164
Charles Costolo, Port St Lucie 89-77--166
Jack Davis, Melbourne 91-75--166
Bob Wallace, Pensacola 88-78-166
Ed Houts, Tampa 85-81--166
Stan Malls, Port St Lucie 86-80-166
Ron Kavel, Palm Beach Gardens 85-81-166
Jack Vasko, Oldsmar 84-82-166
Fred Collins, Orlando 87-80--167
Bob Edward, Ruskin 89-78--167
Thomas Grace, Boca Raton 88-79--167
Ray Robison, Winter Park 88-80-168

Whit Wright, Bonita Springs 88-80-168
Charles Angle, Melbourne 85-83-168
Joe Eubank, Daytona Beach 87-82--169
Russ Brown, Bradenton 88-81--169
C Linne Carlson, Ocala 85-84--169
Edwin Muto, Port St Lucie 86-83--169
Frost Walker, Coral Gables 82-87--169
Kaye Davis, Merritt Island 87-83--170
Steve Gombas, Palm City 87-83--170
Terry Louis, Jupiter 84-86--170
Del Foster, Titusville 91-80--171
Myron Herndon, Altamonte Springs 86-86--172
Dean Stromwall, Apopka 86-88--174
Eldridge Suggs, Melbourne 94-81--175
Steve Bain, Titusville 90-86--176
Jim Barnett, Merritt Island 94-82--176
Bruce Bubenzer, Tampa 91-88-184
Don Besman, Wellington 97-91—188

Arty Carrandi, Melbourne 88 -WD --88
Dom Ciraco, Deland 83-DQ--83
Ron Clayton, Sarasota 85 -NS --85
Doc Cunningham, Palm City 81 -WD --81
Frederick Ewen, Jupiter 94 -WD --94
Ronald Goldberg, Boca Raton 82 -NS --82
Lee Habjan, Seminole 84 -WD --84
Dick Harrell, Auburndale 80-DQ-80
Carl Kettenacker, Lecanto 86 -NS --86
Richard Miller, Oldsmar 86 -NS --86
David O'Connor, Winter Park 88 -NC -88
Dick Pearce, Lecanto 86 -NS --86
Chuck Perry, Heathrow 91 -NS --91
Bob Rennick, Lecanto 85 -NS -85
Jim Sweet, Clermont 93 -NC -93

FLORIDA STATE SENIOR - FIRST FLIGHT

Dale Wright, Merritt Island 84-82-166
Richard Engstrom, Mount Dora 84-83-167
Samuel Hansche, Riverview 86-81-167
Herb Hedgecock, Satellite Beach 87-80-167
William Russ, Melbourne 90-81--171
Michael Hurd, Palm Coast 87-86-173

William Dunaway, Merritt Island 95-WD--95
Geoffrey Hyde, Naples 85-WD—85

FLORIDA STATE SENIOR - SUPER SENIORS

Bob Ornitz, Delray Beach 78-76-154

John Lay, Vero Beach 81-78--159

John Ruggiero, West Palm Beach 82-78-160

Hugh Bitter, Winter Haven 85-77-162

Ken Young, Ft Myers 86-77-163

Jim Roberts, Winter Springs 85-79-164

Newt Hodgkins, Delray Beach 84-80-164

Bill Meier, Mount Dora 8592-177

Steve Orlich, Pensacola 86-WD-86