

Sunday, September 11, 2016 | The Journal Gazette 11B

# Senior champ on course

## Dominant Till goes for 3rd straight title at familiar Coyote Creek

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The Journal Gazette

For participants in the Senior City Championship, the prospect of beating Sam Till Jr. is a formidable one.

Not only has he won this tournament five times, including each of the last two years, but he's also won the City Tournament five times and proved himself as one of the best amateur golfers in Fort Wayne's history.

So this may not be welcome information: The Senior City, which runs today and Monday, is at a course that Till knows inside and out — Coyote Creek Golf Club — as he tries to add to his titles from 2003, 2005, 2009, 2014 and 2015.

"I grew up there. I caddied there. I worked my way up to the pro shop under the Schumaker family," the 63-year-old Till said. "There haven't been many changes. They have added some tees and done a few very nice things, ... but the basic layout has remained the same, and it's a course I know well."

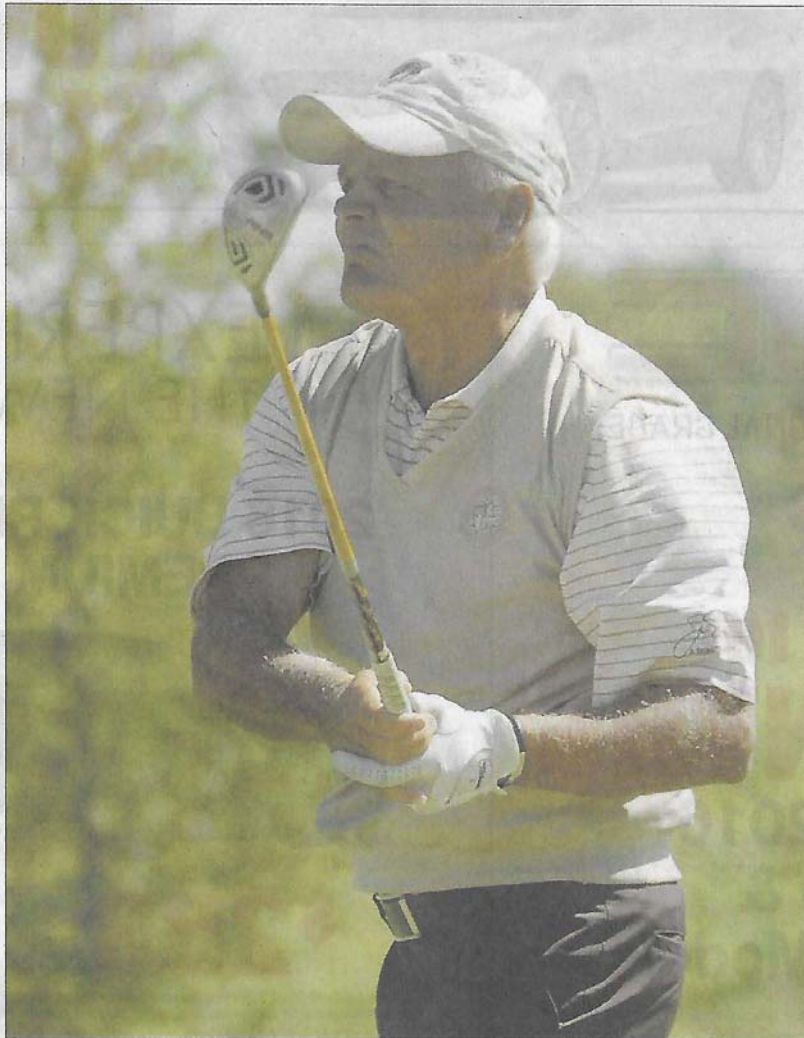
Last year, Till won the City Tournament, an event run by the Fort Wayne Golf Association, at Coyote Creek by shooting a three-day total of 3 under. Just over a month later, he won the Senior City, which is organized by the Senior Golf Association of Fort Wayne, at Orchard Ridge Country Club. After going 3 over in the two-day event, he holed out with a choked-up pitching wedge from 105 yards to eagle the first play-off hole and defeat Tom Wood.

The City Tournament has been held since 1926 and the Senior City since 1992, and Till is the only person to have won them both in the same year. He didn't play in the City Tournament this year — it was won by Mitch Rutledge at 12 under over three days — so he can't repeat the double.

The Senior City has been held four times at Coyote Creek, formerly The Elks Country Club, and Mark Rietdorf won it the last time there, in 2008. After the tournament spent the last four years at Orchard Ridge, Till is hoping Coyote Creek is set up long (though it's maximum yardage of 6,978 yards is unlikely).

"I hope they play it a little longer and give my length a little bit of (an advantage)," Till said. "But it's like any golf course, if you can drive it and keep it in play, then you've got a chance. You have to have a good mid-iron game out there."

While Till's competitive schedule has been lighter than



Samuel Hoffman | The Journal Gazette

**Sam Till Jr. will try to win the Senior City Championship for the sixth time. It will be at Coyote Creek Golf Club, on which he grew up playing.**

### AT A GLANCE

#### Senior City Championship

**Where:** Coyote Creek Golf Club  
**When:** Today and Monday  
**Par:** 72

usual this year, he won the Indiana Senior Match Play at Columbus' Otter Creek Golf Course, defeating Valparaiso's Dave Vlasic 1-up in the championship match July 22. Vlasic had beaten Fort Wayne's Marty Rifkin 4-and-3 in the quarterfinals.

"It was hotter than blue blazes out there. It really is a grind. You play matches over two days, but I was lucky enough to come out on top," said Till, who had posted a

1-under 71 in the stroke-play round, tied for the sixth-best score July 19.

Till tied for 17th at the Indiana Golf Association's Mid-Amateur Championship at Leesburg's Tippecanoe Lake Country Club, completing his 36-hole total of 5 over on Aug. 12. Greenwood's Sean Rowen won at 2 under. Decatur's Keith Blythe was third at even par.

Coyote Creek, which has been hosting tournaments since 1929, has a rich history. Legendary golfer Arnold Palmer got his first professional paycheck there in 1955 at the Fort Wayne Open, winning \$145 for 25th place.

For many years, one of

northeast Indiana's best known golfing families, the Schumakers, was synonymous with the course. The patriarch, John, was the pro. His kids, Dave and Bill, learned the game there,

as did some of the area's other great amateurs, such as Chip Novak.

"I'm pretty much self taught," Till said. "But as a caddie, I got to see and learn from a lot of good players out there."

"And I did get to caddie for Bill Schumaker, who was a terrific amateur and college player. He played in many of the top amateur events in the country, and I got to learn a lot from him."

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### RECENT CHAMPS

2015 — Sam Till Jr.  
2014 — Sam Till Jr.  
2013 — Tom Wood  
2012 — John Wray  
2011 — Tom Wood