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ILLINOIS PGA NEWS

**HORTON SMITH, GARY HALLBERG AND GARY GROH ELECTED
TO ILLINOIS GOLF HALL OF FAME**

Induction Ceremony Set for Friday, October 27 at The Glen Club

GLENVIEW, Ill. – May 23, 2017 – Two-time Masters winner Horton Smith, multiple PGA Tour winner Gary Hallberg and Gary Groh, who has dominated the Illinois golf scene for more than three decades, were elected to the 17th class of the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame on Tuesday night.

Horton Smith

Only Tiger Woods won more quickly and more often upon joining the pro circuit than Horton Smith, the “Joplin Ghost.” He won 13 times on Tour while connected to Oak Park Country Club, and was made an honorary member of the club. Smith’s career total of 28 individual tournament wins and four more in team play rank him 15th in PGA Tour history. At 22, Smith won seven times in five months and was put on the Ryder Cup team in 1929, and captured 13 titles worldwide before the spring of 1930. Smith, the only player to beat Bobby Jones in the year of Jones’ Grand Slam, is best known for winning the first and third Masters Tournaments, triumphs that came after he recovered from a broken arm and while he was the professional at Oak Park C.C. Deeply involved in PGA of America business, Smith served as president in 1952-54, during which time the Tour began a long, slow move toward integration. He also pushed for continuing education by professionals.

Gary Hallberg

A two-time winner of both the Illinois Amateur (1978-79) and Illinois Open (1977-82), Berwyn’s Gary Hallberg flashed onto the leader board with a victory in the 1976 Western Junior. Success followed success nationally: a Walker Cup berth in 1977, back-to-back wins in the North and South Amateur, the 1979 NCAA title, and the first four-time first-team All-American in golf while at Wake Forest. Locally, he studded his amateur career with the 1977 Illinois Open victory and also had a 4-0 record in the Radix Cup, with membership on the second and third amateur teams to win. Hallberg scored three victories on the PGA Tour, losing twice in sudden-death playoffs, and has one Champions Tour victory to date.

Gary Groh

Gary Groh was 30 when he won the 1975 Hawaiian Open in his fifth season on the PGA Tour. But his decision to find a club job and reserve his competitive golf for Mondays led to a longtime position at Bob O’ Link C.C. in Highland Park. He quickly commenced a remarkable run of success on the Illinois PGA circuit. Groh won the 1994 Illinois Open and four Illinois PGA Championships, the last in 2002, when he was 57. He won 15 Illinois Senior majors from 1995 through 2004. In the Radix Cup, he had a 10-3-2 record and was undefeated from 1986 through 1999.

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“This was by far the hardest selection that the committee has experienced since I’ve been on the committee,” said Tim Cronin, chairman of the Selection Committee. “We had 12 great candidates and unfortunately we were only able to get three over the finish line. Any of the dozen would have made great inductees, but we have a wonderful and distinguished class with the three inductees.”

The Hall of Fame Selection Committee consists of representatives from the Allied Golf Associations, (Illinois PGA, Chicago District Golf Association, Illinois Junior Golf Association, Western Golf Association, and Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents), Hall of Fame Veterans, local media and at-large appointments.

About the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame

The Illinois Golf Hall of Fame was created in 1989 by the Illinois PGA Foundation in an effort to recognize and honor those individuals who have contributed to the rich history and tradition of the game of golf in Illinois. Plaques, trophies, photographs, and other related memorabilia make up a first-class tribute to the men and women who have played significant roles in all aspects of the game, from teaching to playing, course design and construction to administration and inspiration. These individuals represent not only an impressive collection of accomplishments in golf, but the true spirit and integrity that make the game great. The current roster includes some of the most influential contributors to the growth of the game throughout Illinois and the world. Representatives from Illinois’ allied golf associations serve on its selection committee. The Illinois Golf Hall of Fame exhibit is located on the main level of the clubhouse at The Glen Club in Glenview, Ill.

About the Illinois PGA

The Illinois Section of the PGA of America is a professional organization serving the men and women golf professionals in northern and central Illinois who are the recognized experts in growing, teaching and managing the game of golf. The Illinois PGA is responsible for the administration of competitive golf tournaments, educational opportunities, support programs and growth of the game initiatives. With over 840 members and apprentices, the Illinois PGA is the 12th largest of the 41 regional Sections that comprise the PGA of America. For more information about the Illinois PGA, please visit www.ipga.com and join us on Facebook, Twitter (@illinoispga) or Instagram.

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