

# Pohlcat: Mid-Michigan's Connection to the PGA Tour

By Kelly Hill, *Managing Editor*

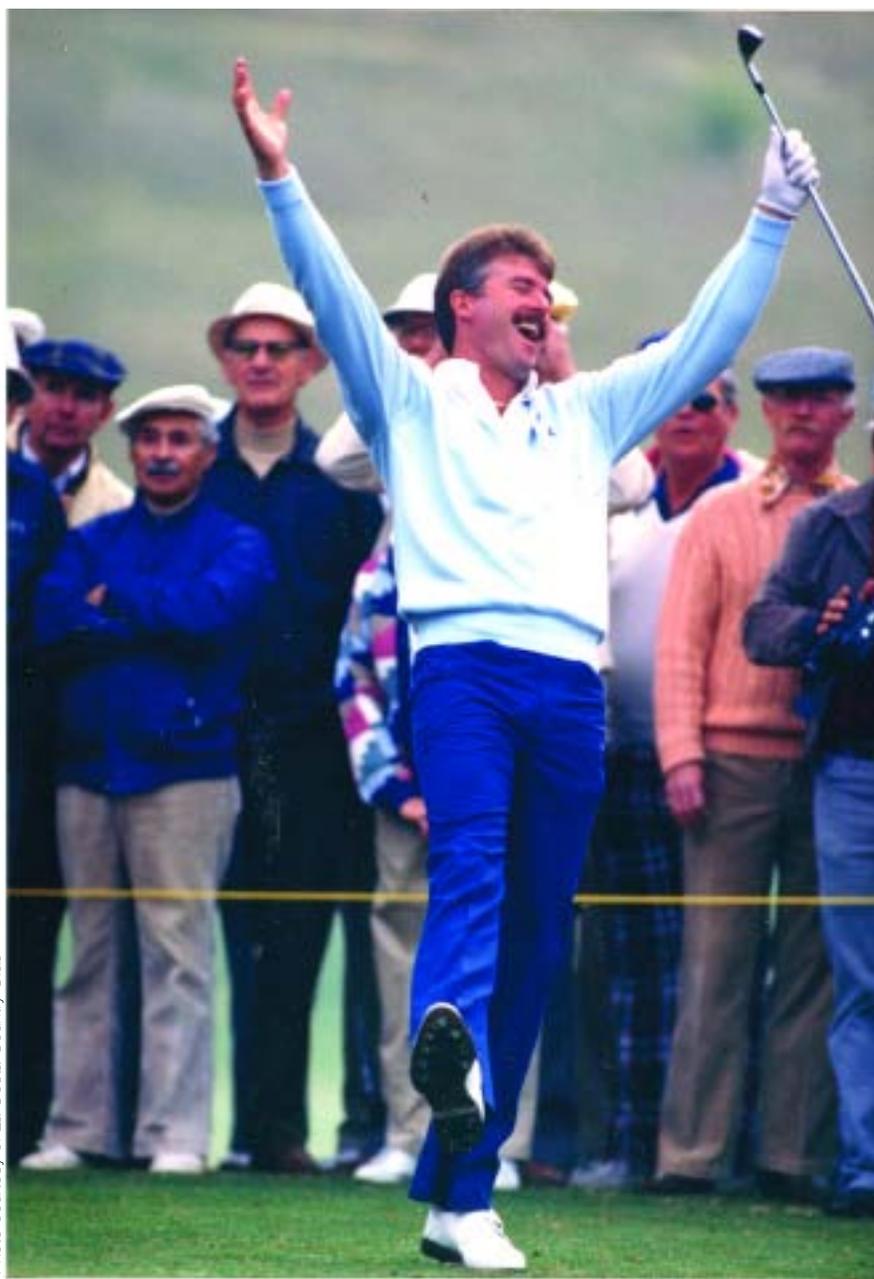


Photo courtesy of La Costa Country Club

**Dan Pohl celebrates a hole in one at La Costa Country Club in California.**

Is there such a thing as a “ho-hum” 67?

Doug LaBelle, 32, who was born in Lansing, lives in Mount Pleasant and who has won almost a half million dollars on the PGA Tour, holds the course record of 67 (5-under) at the PohlCat, Mount Pleasant's championship golf course.

Course owner John Brehm recalled LaBelle's record-setting round: “Doug shot 67 from the tips and he didn't do anything spectacular, like chip in or hole out from the fairway, or make really long putts or anything like that. It was a ho-him 67.”

LaBelle, who turned pro in 1998, often played the PohlCat with Brehm's nephew, Ryan Brehm, who recently concluded his junior year at Michigan State University and who finished second to Greg Davies in last year's Michigan Amateur Championship played on The Heather at Boyne Highlands.

“I kid Ryan about that 67,” John Brehm said. “He is still going for it. Ryan and Doug and I and Doug's dad would play together and Doug's dad and I would play from the whites and Doug and Ryan would go back to the black

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tees and then take two steps back from there. When I see Ryan go back to the blacks and then take two more steps back, I know he is going for that 67, and he wants to do it from back there.”

Ryan Brehm, 21, now lives adjacent to No. 13 at the PohlCat. “Doug was always a pleasure to play with,” Ryan Brehm said. “I probably learned more on the golf course from him than from anyone else. I haven't gotten that course record yet, though,” he added with a laugh. “I have been close a couple of times, but I don't play there as much as I used to do. I'm going to get it someday, though.”

Ryan Brehm's playing career, which he hopes takes him to the

Tour some day, also was inspired by the PohlCat's namesake, Mount Pleasant's most famous professional golfer, Dan Pohl.

“I knew Dan from a pretty young age,” Ryan Brehm said. “I played a lot with his son, Josh. Dan is more of an inspiration to me than anyone else.”

Pohl, 52, was born in Mount Pleasant, attended the University of Arizona in Tucson, and won the Michigan Amateur in 1975 and '77. Pohl turned pro in 1977 and joined the PGA Tour the year after that. He won the Colonial National Invitational and the NEC World Series of Golf in 1986. In '88, he and Hall of Fame quarterback Dan Marino won the Pebble Beach

National Pro-Am Championship. Marino and Fred Couples, who had won the Masters only a month earlier, were on hand for the PohlCat's grand opening in 1992. They were joined by Pohl, Dave Stockton, former NFL player Don Strock and former NBA player Dan Majerle.

“Dan and I played high-school golf together,” John Brehm said. “My family owned the Holiday Inn and other hotels and when we had the idea of building a golf course, we approached Dan about it and he thought it would be a great idea.” Also at that time, in the mid-1980s, John Brehm was teaching a course at CMU and as a class project, students compiled marketing schemes for the proposed golf course. “The



Photo courtesy of Pohlcat Championship Golf Course

Over the bridge to the 2nd green at the Pohlcat.



Photo by Art McCafferty

**Ryan Brehm lines up putt with help from his uncle, John Brehm.**

casino hadn't been built yet, but this was already becoming a good location," Brehm said.

Pohl, whose nickname on the Tour was PohlCat, was one of seven original investors in the golf course project. "Eventually we decided to hire a marketing firm,"

Brehm said. That firm was Stevens, Inc. of Grand Rapids. "They came up with our logo and the slogan: "Stalk the Cat."

The course's grand opening remains legendary in Mount Pleasant. "Fred Couples had won the Masters only two weeks

before the grand opening and even though he had said he'd come, we didn't think he'd be here," Brehm said. "Well, he showed up and we had press everywhere. People around here still talk about that grand opening. It was a super day." **MG**