



**Bucks
Scoot Past
Sturgis For
Pioneer
Day Victory**

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'Golf Ironman' Reunites With YHS Classmates



MARK MAHONEY/P&D
Bob Kurtz of Scottsdale, Arizona, pictured with his wife, Peggy, has returned to Yankton this week, after several years away, to attend his 65th Yankton High School class reunion. He is known as "Golf's Ironman" and is a holder of several golf endurance world records.

BY MARK MAHONEY mark.mahoney@yankton.net

When Bob Kurtz has the drive to do something, he follows through on it, whether that is playing golf to raise money for a charitable cause or returning to Yankton after a long absence to celebrate with old friends.

The 1959 Yankton High School (YHS) graduate, a retired sports-caster and church pastor who is known as "Golf's Ironman" and is a holder of several golf endurance world records, has returned to South Dakota this week to attend his 65th class reunion.

The 83-year-old Kurtz told the Press & Dakotan on Thursday that he was looking forward to seeing and visiting with his high school classmates after 45 years of being away from Yankton.

"I was the speaker at the 20th (class reunion), and I haven't been back since," Kurtz said, jokingly adding, "I imagine I might have a little bit of difficulty recognizing all my 'young, teenage' high school friends."

The reunion with his classmates is included with the YHS celebration of a century of homecoming this week. Part of the festivities is their gathering at Yankton's Hillcrest Golf & Country Club Saturday night.

Kurtz and his wife, Peggy, also were planning to gather with his classmates at the homecoming parade Friday afternoon and at the Bucks' football game against Sturgis later that evening. They are slated to head back home to Scottsdale, Arizona, on Sunday.

A YHS letterman, he competed in basketball and track and field — qualifying for the South Dakota state meet in the 880-yard dash — during his only year at Yankton, of which he said he has fond memories. He also expressed his appreciation for his classmates.

"I just had a wonderful, wonderful senior year," Kurtz said. "Although I was new, I felt welcomed and accepted and had a great time with that wonderful class of '59. Most of them grew up in Yankton and knew each other all their lives, but they just welcomed me right in. I had the lead in the senior class play, 'Abe Lincoln: The New Salem Days.' I played Abe Lincoln because I was tall and skinny."

He transferred to Yankton from Long Pine, Nebraska, a small Sandhills community located in the north-central part of that state.

"My dad got the call to become a minister," Kurtz said. "Yankton College had the Yankton School of Theology, a five-year program for ordination. Dad, who had not had any college (education), decided to enroll at Yankton. That's how I wound up (in Yankton). It happened very suddenly."

He went to Yankton College, as well, graduating in 1963 with a bachelor's degree in theology and philosophy. During his time there, he started playing golf with his father, Chuck, and they competed together on the school's golf team.

'GOLF'S IRONMAN'

After winning 53 golf tournaments as an amateur, the younger Kurtz became a professional golfer in 1976. He has played across the United States and internationally in Scotland, Denmark, Bermuda, Panama and Mexico.

Kurtz has played as a member of the PGA Tour Champions, which is for pro golfers ages 50 and above who are a part of the PGA Tour. He is still an active pro golfer, playing on the U.S. Senior Pro Tour.

After many years of pro golf competition, Kurtz set his most significant golf score record at the time in July 2005. At the Chesley Oaks Golf Course near Fairview, Alabama, he shot a 63 when he was 64 years old, shooting his age or lower for the first time.

That performance marked the first of many golf events that would help him eventually earn the nickname of "Golf's Ironman" for his endurance on the course during his record-setting career, which includes using his club skills for fund-raising.



COURTESY PHOTO **Bob Kurtz of Scottsdale, Arizona, a 1959 Yankton High School graduate, is known as "Golf's Ironman" and has used his golf endurance events to help raise money for charitable causes.**

Among the world golf endurance records Kurtz has set and have been officially recorded by Guinness World Records are playing 1,850 holes of golf in one week and shooting his age or lower seven times in one day on an 18-hole course.

"Both of these were official Guinness events," Kurtz said. "They were intended to set the world record. The record for the week (of holes played) was 1,800, and I broke it by 50. The world record for shooting your age (or lower) was twice in one day and I did it seven times."

On April 27, 2011, a strong tornado devastated the city of Cullman, Alabama, where he was living at the time, and caused severe damage.

As part of helping to raise money for that community's recovery, Kurtz set a new Guinness World Records mark of 1,850 holes played in seven days June 4-11, 2011, at the Quail Creek Golf Course near Hartselle, Alabama. The mara-thon event, during which he also shot his age of 70 or lower 23 times, raised about \$102,000 for tornado relief.

Legendary sportswriter Furman Bisher of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper gave Kurtz his "Golf's Ironman" title for the number of times he teed a ball up on a golf course during the event.

Kurtz, a sportscaster for about 20 years who was a part of CNN's original broadcast team for the debut of the world's first 24-hour news network in 1980, said he takes pride in his nickname.

"I've accomplished a lot of things in my life, including in television, but a lot of that was luck and so forth," Kurtz said. "This (his golfing accomplishments) I really worked at, and I feel like I worked hard. I do take a quiet pride in it."

CHARITY CHALLENGES

On Aug. 1, 2012, Kurtz, at age 71, shot 70 or lower seven times in one day at the Chesley Oaks Golf Course as

a fundraiser for his charity called Ministries to Children, which was formed in 2010 as a nonprofit organization to assist at-risk children and to donate money raised through "Golf's Ironman" events.

Another one of the many golfing accomplishments Kurtz is proud of is that, as far as he is aware, he is the only person in the more than 250-year history of the sport to shoot his age or lower both left-handed and right-handed on the same day from the same tees on an 18-hole course. At the age of 82, he accomplished this achievement on Nov. 18, 2023, at the Ancala Country Club in Scottsdale, Arizona.

"I had been intending to do it; I had been trying," Kurtz said. "I kept coming close and that was the day. I shot a 69 right-handed and a 78 left-handed."

His first attempt at this accomplishment was on April 24, 2023. That event raised more than \$20,000 for Ministries to Children.

He started raising money for charitable causes through his golf endurance events in June 2006 — when about \$53,000 went toward an orphanage in the African country of Kenya — and those have led him to keep challenging himself while at the same time raising about \$1 million overall in nearly 20 years.

"We've raised a lot of money and done a lot of things, including helping build an orphanage in Kenya and a hospital in Belize," Kurtz said. "We, just on a regular basis, have just raised money and have been so blessed. Plus, I'm a carrot-on-a-stick kind of a guy. I need something out there to keep me motivated."

He said he plans to participate in a golf marathon event at the Ancala Country Club on Dec. 2 for Folds of Honor, a nonprofit organization that provides scholarships to the

spouses and children of the country's fallen or disabled military members and first responders.

"I'm going to play 100 holes right-handed and 100 holes left-handed (with two sets of clubs at the same time all in one day); it's going to be fast," Kurtz said. "My wife reminded me as soon as I committed to it that, 'You're heading toward the shortest day of the year, when you're doing this, for daylight.' It'll be a joy and a challenge."

Kurtz, who said he can drive a golf ball about an average of 275 yards, shared the secret to his success with the golf endurance events he has participated in over the years.

"One is, you've got to be a little crazy, a little loony," Kurtz said. "Number two, you must be ball-striking strong. I hit a lot of golf balls. This

I don't know, but I would imagine that I've hit more golf balls than any golfer in history because I hit balls every single day except Sunday. I take Sundays off. When I'm home, I hit balls every day and stay ball-striking strong, so when I go out, I don't get tired."

One topic he never gets tired of talking about are the years he spent in Yankton as a young man.

He said the only time he had swung through Yankton since 1979 before this year was on a road trip with his wife across the western United States in 2020 during the CO-VID-19 pandemic.

"I didn't have any chance to get around and really see a town that is very important to me," Kurtz said.

That is why his wife — and some of his classmates — highly encouraged him to attend the 65th Yankton High School class reunion this year.

Kurtz reiterated that he was looking forward to catching up with his classmates, especially Roger Lange, whom he saw on Friday for the first time in 65 years.

"I lost track of Roger," Kurtz said. "Roger was my best friend here. Coming in from a small town in Nebraska as a senior two weeks after the (school) year had already started, he just made life so good for me and welcomed me."

More information on Bob Kurtz, "Golf's Ironman," may be found on his website at www.golfsironman.com and his on-line "Golf's Ironman" YouTube channel.