

2023 Special Awards Candidate Bio Form

Please send this form back no later Friday, October 21, 2022.

If you were nominated for more than one award you must **submit a bio form for each award.**

Email *

cwhitten@GAM.org

Name of Nominee: *

Chris Whitten

Award Nominated for: *

Executive of the Year

Facility Employed at: *

Golf Association of Michigan

Year Elected to Membership: *

2009

Please describe your achievements/accomplishments that would pertain to this award. *

Thank you very much for considering me for this important recognition. I'm humbled to even be nominated by another PGA member.

I have served as the Executive Director (Chief Executive Officer) of the Golf Association of Michigan (GAM) since May of 2019. In this role, I am responsible for GAM's overall operation, as well as the GAM Foundation. As Executive Director I am the GAM's chief spokesperson, and liaison with the United States Golf Association (USGA) and other state, regional and national golf organizations, such as the Michigan PGA.

The GAM is the governing body for amateur golf in the state. As a not-for-profit organization, our purpose is to represent, promote, preserve, and serve the best interests of the game. The GAM provides membership to more than 80,000 golfers and more than 450 golf courses; conducts 30 amateur championships; and oversees 16 USGA qualifying events.

Our strategic vision is: "GAM is dedicated to connecting and serving all golf in Michigan - for players, administrators and facilities. By providing excellent core services and products, we strive to make golf accessible and inclusive in all its forms, for players of any ability & age."

The GAM Foundation aims to make golf affordable and accessible to the widest possible audience through programs and grants, led by Youth on Course Michigan.

I report to the GAM's volunteer Board of Governors, Officer team and Executive Committee.

Personally, I feel I serve the Association with a "general manager" focus and skill, political awareness, a detail oriented yet strategic approach, and a vision of "what could be" for the Association, and more broadly, for game in our state.

Along with managing our staff of 18 and 300 active volunteers, I have overseen significant growth of the GAM since 2018:

- Membership growth from 57,000 to 80,000
- Overall revenue growth from \$2.35 million to \$3 million
- Continued success of various GAM championships and high-level amateur tournament opportunities, attracting over 4,000 tournament entries per year, including nearly 1,000 for the Michigan Amateur Championship.
- Advancement of Youth on Course Michigan to help over 25,000 junior players in Michigan play 68,000 rounds of golf for \$5 or less. To make this possible, the Foundation has raised over \$1M for participating golf course subsidies, player development grants, junior tournament player grants, and a new PGM Educational Scholarship at Ferris St.

Other key objectives reached in the past three years include:

- Successful GAM Strategic Planning and Strategic Vision for 3-year initiatives
- Retention and funding models of Golf Genius Tournament Management Software for our own championships, but also our member clubs
- Celebrated the GAM Centennial in 2019 at Oakland Hills with a significant fundraiser for the GAM Foundation, led by special guest speaker Jack Nicklaus.
- Spearheaded GAM tournament support of the John Shippen Invitational, a tournament opportunity for black players highlighted by exemptions for PGA and LPGA Tour opportunities.
- Participation in USGA Golf Advocacy Nationwide Working Group
- Participant in collective effort of Michigan Golf Alliance during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to advocate for safe golf and reopening of facilities across the state
- Successful Governance of the Association and Foundation with Bylaws updates for both as well as Governor retention and recruitment with a focus on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Upcoming introduction of new GAM.org and revamped CRM model for staff and club administrators.

Overall, I feel that I represent the GAM, the Michigan PGA, and the game of golf with integrity, professionalism, friendliness and an inclusive attitude. I grew up watching and respecting PGA members from a unique point of view; I am a second-generation PGA member originally from Michigan - this makes me truly grateful for the opportunity to advocate for golf in our state. Now, I feel PGA professionals are my peers, but also GAM's valued customers. My goal is for the GAM to provide outstanding education, service, opportunities, experiences, and appreciation to those who play and serve the game.

Thank you again for this kind consideration and good luck to everyone in the Michigan PGA Section for a great season.

-- Chris

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