

Holes-in-one rewarded: Shaw and Sarmiento get their prizes

Corvette presentation takes place two months after the aces

By Andy Kent

LAUDERHILL – An automobile dealer's showroom is about as far from a golf course as you can get, yet the spirit of the links was alive and kicking March 19 at Phil Smith Chevrolet.

Two months after Chris Shaw and Alex Sarmiento defied the odds by each making a hole-in-one on No. 5 hole of the East Course at Woodlands Country Club in Tamarac, they were reunited for a special ceremony to present them with their spoils. Shaw drove off the lot in his new, red tint-coat Corvette, but Sarmiento was pondering the cash equivalent in a nod to parenthood.

Still, being able to stand in front of the Corvette next to each other brought back memories of Jan. 23 and the ninth annual Cindy Cusano Memorial Pro-Am tournament, a fund-raiser for Women in Distress. It also was a culmination of a lot of waiting and answering questions from the underwriters for Hole In One International, the company that provided the insurance.

"It has been a lot of anticipation, and I could tell right away by the underwriting that this was going to be a lengthy process."



Corvette or cash? Alex Sarmiento appears to be wrestling with the decision.

Photo by Milte Meelker

Shaw said. "I realized that if you make things too easy, somebody's going to find out and then you're going to have crooks trying to do it, so they've got to make sure or else they will get taken advantage of. So they make sure it's not easy for anybody to

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Tournament, charity and car dealership all share in the success

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sneak a car out of them.”

Considering the fact that Woodlands' Gary Axelrod can count on one hand how many aces have been shot on that Par 3 in the past 20 years, what Shaw and Sarmiento did four groups apart from each other was anything but easy.

Once it was confirmed that the contract called for any ace on No. 5 to be eligible for the sports car, it set in motion communications and verifications that eventually led Shaw and Sarmiento to be joined by tournament director John Cusano and his wife, Marie, as well as Don Geisen and Rich Gehris from the dealership.

“I’m a big supporter of Women in Distress, so that’s where I dedicate my donations during the year,” Geisen said. “And then when I was approached to sponsor the hole-in-one for the Cindy Cusano Fund, that was a no-brainer. I agreed right away and we made plans for it.

“Then I get a phone call after the first gentleman hit a hole in one and they go, ‘You won’t believe it, someone got a hole-in-one.’ I was thrilled, and then I get a second phone call a little later on about the second hole-in-one. We weren’t 100 percent sure of whether we could give two cars away on the same hole, so we made the call to Hole In One International and in turn were able to give the good news to the two winners.”

Because Sarmiento struck second, he



From left: Mary Riedel, Alex Sarmiento, John Cusano (partially obscured), Marie Cusano, Joe D'Amico, Jennifer Stewart, Chris Shaw, Gary Axelrod and Don Geisen.
Photos by Mike Meeker

agonized during the remainder of his round that he might have gotten his first hole-in-one only to be denied a prize with a manufacturer's suggested retail price of at least \$46,000.

“When I actually walked up to the club after the round is when it was official, so I started celebrating after that,” said Sarmiento, who has been playing golf since 1995 and has a double-digit handicap. “Chris and I actually met after the round because we both won a putter for being closest to the pin and we had a couple of laughs together, but this was just the second time we’ve seen each other. It’s more real now, though.”

John Cusano had perhaps the biggest smile of everyone on hand because, being a professional golf instructor, he knows not only how hard it is to get a hole-in-one but also how much his tournament and Women in Distress will benefit from the buzz created by Shaw and Sarmiento.

“Good begets good,” Cusano said. “They were rewarded because they’re doing something good for the community with Women in Distress, and for our memorial golf tournament.”

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Ira Drucker, sales person at Phil Smith Chevrolet, shares some operational details with Shaw.