

Forest City hosts amputee open



Geoff Nicholas (right) receives a very special medallion from Fred Ward, director of the Bank of Nova Scotia Private Banking Group.

Australian Geoff Nicholas may spell his surname differently than The Golden Bear, but he racks up tournament victories just like Jack. The 12-time world amputee champion captured his fourth Canadian Amputee National Open championship Aug. 15, at Forest City National GC in London, Ont.

Nicholas, 41, of Sydney scored a nine-stroke victory over two-time defending champion Robert MacDermott of Edmonton. A 54-hole total of 214 (74-72-68) over the 6,372 track led the field of 58 golfers from Canada, the U.S., South Africa and England.

Nicholas was born with both legs deformed as a result of the controversial drug thalidomide. At 13, his right leg was amputated below the knee, with the bones used to reconstruct his left leg. He took up golf at 14. Today, Nicholas drives the ball 275 yards, and is considered the world's best amputee golfer.

In fact, Nicholas became the world's first amputee touring professional in 1992 when he won his card to the Australasian tour. Although he has since lost his card, Nicholas competed at this year's Johnnie Walker Classic in Perth, and he has survived the cut at the Australian Open, playing alongside The Shark and Tiger.

Owner of a deadly short game, Nicholas says the Canadian Amputee Golf Association and events world-wide for amputee golfers are "getting increasingly more competitive." A regular competitor in his native Australia and the U.S., Nicholas ranks Forest City "right up there with the tougher courses in the U.S." Forest City hosted the 1994 and 1995 Ontario Open events, and the 1998 CPGA Championship.

This year's CANO title sponsor, Scotiabank, awarded Nicholas a silver medallion rescued from a company vault at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. An accompanying plaque reads: "Enduring hope for the future." •