

Dow H. Finsterwald

Ohio '52

Oxford Cup Roll No. 085

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Dow H. Finsterwald, *Ohio '52*, was initiated into the Beta Kappa Chapter on March 6, 1948, as Roll No. 889. Born in Athens, Ohio, he earned his bachelor's degree from Ohio University in his hometown.

While in school, Finsterwald was a three-year letter winner in golf, a member of Omicron Delta Kappa, and president of both the Varsity O Club and his chapter of Beta Theta Pi. Even as an undergraduate, Finsterwald left an indelible mark as an amateur golfer. At 20 years old, he posted a 61 in the final round of the St. Louis Open – the lowest round at a PGA Tour event, at the time. By 1951, Finsterwald had turned professional, and he debuted on the PGA Tour one year later.

Known for his superb short game, Finsterwald was widely considered one of the most consistent players on the Tour in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He finished fifth or better more than 50 times throughout his career, and finished either runner-up or shared second 18 times in the 31 months preceding his PGA Championship win in 1958.

All told, Finsterwald won 11 Tour titles as a PGA professional, along with capturing the 1957 Vardon Trophy (awarded each year to the PGA Tour's leader in scoring average), registering the lowest scoring average (70.3) for an entire season and was named the 1958 PGA Player of the Year. He also made 72 consecutive cuts, still the fifth-longest streak of all time and in such company as Byron Nelson, Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods. In fact, Finsterwald made 398 of 474 Tour cuts, an amazing 83.9 percent efficiency standard.

He was a member of four U.S. Ryder Cup teams, and served as non-playing captain for the victorious 1977 U.S. Ryder Cup team. During the 1961 and 1963 Ryder Cups, he played alongside Arnold Palmer. The two went on to become close friends.

Since retiring, Finsterwald has served as director of golf at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Colorado; PGA of America vice president; sat on the United States Golf Association Rules of Golf committee; and is pro emeritus at the Pikewood National Golf Club in Morgantown, West Virginia.

In 2006, Finsterwald was inducted into the PGA of America Hall of Fame, and a year later was honored by fellow Ohio native Jack Nicklaus at the 2007 Memorial Tournament in Dublin, Ohio. In 2008, he was inducted into the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame.

While today he splits his time between Florida and Colorado, Athens and Ohio University have long held a special place in Finsterwald's heart. There, he was awarded the Medal of Merit in 1958, the alumni association's highest honor, and was inducted into the Ohio University Athletic Hall of Fame in 1960. It is also where he met his late Beta Sweetheart, Linda, who passed in 2015. The school's Dow and Linda Finsterwald Sports Management Scholarship is named in their honor.

Dow's father, Russell, was also a Beta brother, initiated into Beta Kappa in 1914. Dow has three sons and a daughter. The family's love for the game continues through his middle son, Dow Jr., who is head pro at the Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas.