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## Okamura Takes MCC Challenge Title

By Lucy Amaral



(L-R) Tony Barbagallo, Wayne Hilty, Owen Shibata, Dean Okamura, Joe Osterman, Willie Osterman  
Photo Debi Pettit

earned a 2.4 handicap. He said he plays about twice a week on a regular basis, but ups that when a tournament is near. He plays golf for a variety of reasons, Okamura explained, but the personal challenge aspect is strongest. "When you can stand over a difficult shot, consider myriad variables, commit to making the shot you selected, strike it well and pull it off, you feel like you might live forever," he said.

Along with being a life-long golfer, Okamura's interests span a wide range of activities. A husband and busy father of two boys, he is also a real-estate broker for Pacific Union International in Orinda, freelance writer for Lamorinda Weekly, and plays the Ukulele in a band called J-Town Hui. Most recently, he has taken up the traditional Hawaiian slack key guitar called the ki ho'alu and has been asked to play at an upcoming Slack Key Guitar festival on Oahu, Hawaii in August.

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After three days of play, whittling away at the competition with every swing of the golf club, it all came down to a three-foot putt. Moraga resident Dean Okamura and his golf partner, Owen Shibata of Pleasanton, had made it to the 18th hole of the annual Moraga Country Club Challenge's final Shoot-Out. Yet they were unsure if Okamura's last chip, which had just landed on the green, was enough to seal the victory

"On the last hole, I had chipped onto the green trying to make it in, but didn't," said Okamura. "I left him (Shibata) a 3-foot putt, thinking that at best, we would finish second."

However, the other two teams struggled, giving Okamura's team a chance. "So, if we put it in, we win; if not, we probably will finish third," he said. "(Shibata's putt) was perfect, dead center in the hole."

The event was held June 3-5 and this win completes Okamura's unofficial "Grand Slam" at Moraga Country Club, lining up this win with his victories at the Stroke Play Championship, and Match Play Championship.

Jason Woodworth, director of golf for Moraga Country Club, said that this year's event drew 104 players and guests, who were then organized into 52 teams. Woodworth added that the teams are set up in flights and handicapped to level the playing field.

Okamura has been playing golf for more than 30 years and has