

LSU SPORTS

Peterson, Loupe bid to qualify for U.S. Open

- *Advocate staff report*
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Led by former LSU golfers John Peterson and Andrew Loupe, nine players with Louisiana ties will try to earn spots in the 111th U.S. Open in 36-hole sectional qualifiers Monday across the country.

Eleven sectionals, the final stage of qualifying for the United States Golf Association-sponsored event, will have 801 players vying for the final 63 spots in the field.

The U.S. Open will be played June 16-19 at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Md.

A native of Fort Worth, Texas, Peterson, will be playing near home at the Dallas Athletic Club's Blue Course four days after winning the NCAA individual title.

He'll be joined by Loupe, a Baton Rouge native and former Episcopal High School star who also completed his LSU career last week at the NCAA Championships in Stillwater, Okla.

Peterson and Loupe will be trying to land two of the four spots available in the 71-man Dallas field along with three other Louisiana golfers: Lafayette's Michael Smith, a member of the Adams Golf Tour, **Mandeville's Ben LaVergne** and West Monroe's Clinton Shepard.

LaVergne, an instructor at the Rob Noel Golf Academy at the Money Hill Golf and Country Club in Abita Springs, earned his spot in the sectional by firing a 66 to win the local qualifying tournament at Money Hill in May.

Loupe finished second to LaVergne with a 67 and Shepard, a former Louisiana Tech star, tied for third with a 69.

Former LSU standout Brian Bateman, who has spent several years on the PGA Tour, will try to qualify at the Woodmont Country Club in Rockville, Md., where 112 players are chasing 10 spots.

Also, LaPlace's Brett Bergeron, a former Southeastern Louisiana University player, and Lake Charles native Greg Sonnier, another Adams Golf Tour veteran, will be in the Vero Beach, Fla., sectional at Quail Valley Golf Club along with LSU redshirt freshman Curtis Thompson, a native of nearby Coral Springs, Fla.

The top three players from the 56-man field at Vero Beach gain entry into the U.S. Open.