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*Tournament
Guide*

TIGER TIME

Only winner in March
and May returns
to TPC Sawgrass

WHO'S GONNA WIN?

**Why the
move back
to March?**

THE  PLAYERS®

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Stunning Riverfront Estate

Exquisitely designed with extensive custom finishes this home instantly makes you feel you've been swept away to a chateau in France. Featuring 5 bedrooms, 6 full baths and 5 half baths. **\$7,800,000.**



Extraordinary Views

Wonderful & livable floorplan takes advantage of the home's premier location. 4 bedrooms & 4.5 bathrooms. **\$1,250,000**



Intracoastal Waterfront Condo

Mariana San Pablo 2ndstory condo featuring open floor plan, luxury amenities, and private balcony with water views. 2 bedrooms, 2.5 baths. **\$475,000**



Ultimate Beach Retreat

Steps away from the ocean, this beach bungalow is the ideal space to call home or utilize as an investment property. Located in a highly desired neighborhood within walking distance of restaurants and shopping, this home is the perfect space to enjoy the quintessential beach lifestyle. 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths. **\$750,000**



Most Desired Oceanfront Location in NE Florida

This first-floor unit was totally renovated with the finest finishes & craftsmanship. Includes an office, staurnia floors, mahogany doors & built-in custom cabinetry. 2 bedrooms & 2 bathrooms + powder room. **\$1,700,000**



The Perfect Beach Escape

Located between The Lodge and the Cabana Beach Club, this second-story condo gives elevated views of the beach while maintaining the unit's privacy and security. Includes a large covered balcony and ground floor storage. 3 bedrooms & 3 bathrooms. **\$1,625,000**



A Sophisticated and Luxurious Retreat on Ponte Vedra Blvd

Designed by Residential Designs by Kevin Gray, Inc. and built by Elwood Collier, this oceanfront home reflects the merging of beach living and architecture! Featuring 4 bedrooms, 5 full and 3 half baths. **8,750,000.**



Oceanfront Oasis

Stunning 210 ft oceanfront estate on private gated 2-acre lot with 27 ft elevation. Impeccable, quality home with spectacular views throughout. 5 bedrooms, 6 full/2 half baths. **\$5,750,000**



Build your dream home on Ponte Vedra Blvd!

One of the last remaining 150 ft pristine oceanfront lots in the sought after estate section of Ponte Vedra Blvd. This incredible lot sits comfortably protected at 27 ft elevation and a perfect distance from the shoreline. **\$2,500,000**



Rare Waterfront Opportunity on Roscoe

3 purchasing options: Combine lots to create One of the last opportunities to have 150' frontage on the Intracoastal! **\$1,399,000.** Or this beautiful 150 x 400 lot can be divided into 2 -75' lots. **\$699,000 each**



Turnkey Beach Condo

Oceanfront turnkey property Condo which comes completely furnished. This gated community features amenities such as pool/spa, clubhouse, basketball/tennis courts, and beach walkovers. 2 bedrooms, 2 baths. **\$999,000**



Exceptional Coastal Living at its Best!

With over 8,400 square feet that showcases spectacular ocean views, this is the epitome of Southern charm. Featuring 5 bedrooms, 5.5 baths, and a grand fireplace perfect for intimate moments. **\$6,100,000.**



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Small enclave of 11 homes ♦ 6 homes left

Don't miss this opportunity ♦ Perfect primary or second home



Beautiful Mediterranean Tower on the ICW

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3BR/3.5BA with office den
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Oceanfront in Jacksonville Beach

\$1,925,000

(ask about Founders incentives)

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Pool ♦ State-of-the-art fitness ♦ Conceirge



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OPC NEWS



Heart of Ponte Vedra

Make your visit to Ponte Vedra even more enjoyable with shopping and dining at Sawgrass Village! Delight in the exceptional selection of stores, restaurants and services. Stroll landscaped walkways, enjoy outdoor dining and relax lakeside at the Village Green.

SHOPPING

Major Stores

CVS Pharmacy
Publix

Apparel, Shoes & Accessories

A'Propos Boutique
Carla Shoes & Accessories
Chico's
John Craig Clothier
Lemon Twist Boutique
Marcia's Place
Mon Amie Boutique
Scout & Molly's Boutique

Decor, Jewelry & Gifts

Opulence of Southern Pines
Pineapple Post
J Turner & Company
Village Arts Framing & Gallery
Village Jeweler

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Calvet Couture Bridal
Clean Ocean Surfboards
Cutter & Cutter Fine Art Gallery
Kuhn Flowers
Peterbrooke Chocolatier

DINING

Aqua Grill
Caffé Andiamo
Metro Diner
Nona Blue Modern Tavern
Trasca & Co. Eatery

SERVICES

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Sawgrass Nails
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Wells Fargo Bank

Sawgrass
Village

sawgrassvillagepvb.com

Located on A1A at the entrance to TPC Sawgrass, across from the Marriott Resort.



Amanda (Mandy) Morrow
Broker Associate

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330PabloTerrace.com



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344 S Nine Drive | \$799,000
Sawgrass Country Club
Sawgrass CC Membership Available



4 East facing Lots | 7.92 Acres
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13th Green



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Plantation private
Beach Club with
Poolside Dining



On the 1st Green
181 Twelve Oaks Ln \$849,000



On the Big Lake
160 Laurel Ln \$725,000

Golfcourse design by
**The King
Arnold Palmer**

Our additional Plantation Listed Homes

- 181 Retreat Pl 4 BR \$596,600
- 108 Kings Grant 3 BR \$649,000
- 111 Lantana Ct 3 BR \$669,000
- 148 Retreat Pl 4 BR \$699,000
- 105 Cannon Ct 3 BR \$699,000

Additional Ponte Vedra Listed Homes

- 502 Quail Point \$450,000
- 620 Preserve View \$564,900
- 109 Shell Bluff \$574,900
- 120 S. Seranata #322 \$919,000

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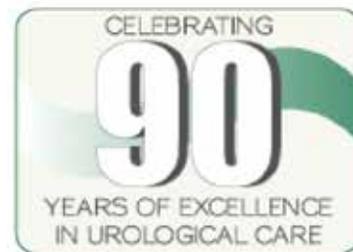


Dr. Collins

Please visit www.McIverClinic.com for a list of all of our doctors and to request your appointment!

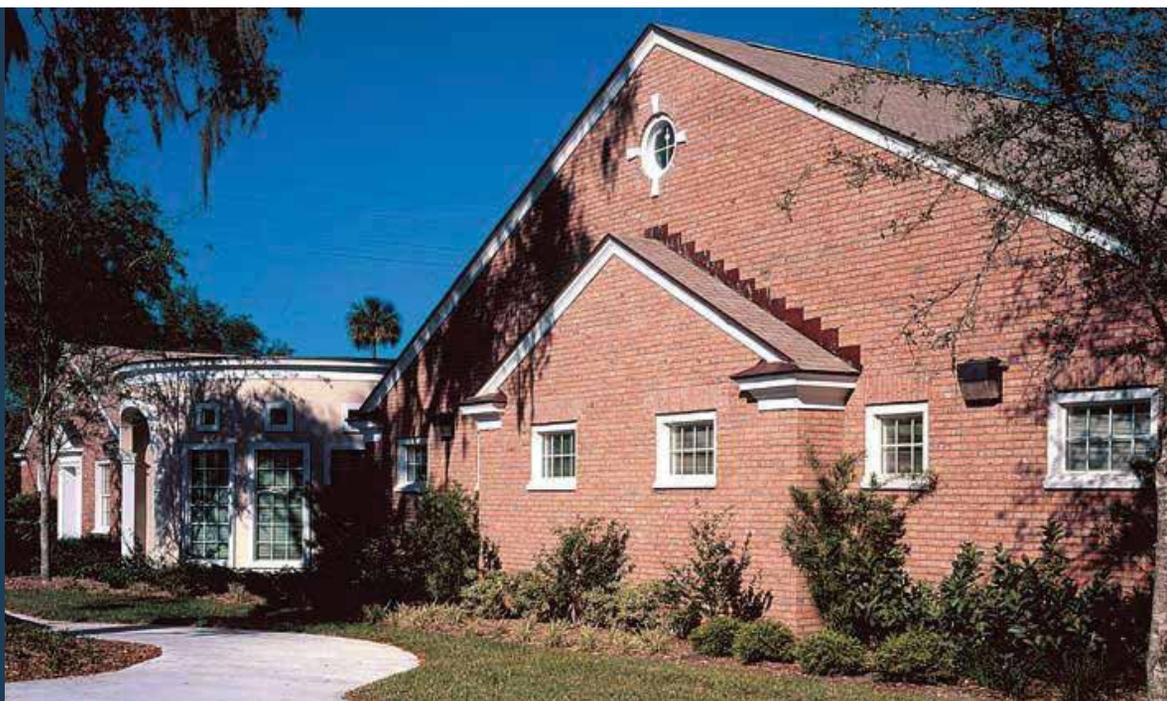
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Welcome to **THE PLAYERS**



Photo provided by
PGA TOUR

THE PLAYERS Championship is moving back to March and will be contested at THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass March 12-17. With the move to March, THE PLAYERS officially kicks off the Championship Season in the new PGA TOUR schedule. While the best players compete, the world will be watching, and all eyes will be on Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida this March.

Each year we challenge ourselves to elevate the status and stature of the event via enhancements for our players, volunteers and you the fans. Many fan favorites will return — including Trucks on 10, Palm Valley Village and the Family Care Suite presented by Baptist — but spectators are sure to be impressed by some of the new features in 2019:

- Tournament Entry — Redesigned Nicklaus Entry including an elevated, bridged pathway through the woodlands bringing fans into THE PLAYERS Welcome Experience
- THE PLAYERS Welcome Experience — This interactive fan zone includes the expanded PGA TOUR Fan Shop, the Kids Zone presented by The First Tee, Interactive Golf Experiences, Food Court and relocated Stadium Village, Morgan Stanley Eagles for Impact and the 17th Hole Charity Challenge presented by Optum, Morgan Stanley and Grant Thornton.
- Tuesday's Military Appreciation Day Ceremony and Jon Pardi concert will start at 5 p.m. and officially kick off tournament week. Plan to arrive early for a great time.
- Sawgrass Square — Located at the Davis Love III Entry, Mini Bar Donuts will be serving up its signature mini donuts alongside 4Rivers Smokehouse, a local barbecue favorite.

I encourage everyone to plan your transportation in advance. New this year, THE PLAYERS has a designated onsite Uber pickup and drop-off location located steps from the Couples Entry outside 15 tee and 16 green. Our new ride-share hub will feature the Coca-Cola Kitchen, a unique and entertaining gathering place to enjoy delicious ice-cold Coca-Cola, perfectly paired with freshly made cuisines prepared onsite by Publix chefs. Rideshare vehicles will be staged outside the Couples Entry for quick departure, making this one of the easiest modes of transportation for spectators.

As in years past, we offer complimentary bicycle and golf cart parking for spectators located inside the Sawgrass Players Club gates behind Lot 5.

Thank you in advance for your attendance, engagement and welcoming hospitality toward those coming from outside the region to enjoy THE PLAYERS. This tournament could not happen without our fans, Proud Partners and volunteers. This is your tournament. This is Our Gold Standard.

Share your experience with us via #THEPLAYERS, and you may see yourself on the scoreboard on the Island Green! I look forward to seeing everyone at TPC Sawgrass March 12-17.

Jared Rice
Executive Director, THE PLAYERS Championship



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109 PADDOCK PLACE
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144 MUIRFIELD DRIVE
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5BD/4BA/1HB, 6,382 sq ft

Moorman & Rowe Group
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209 ISLE WAY LANE
\$1,050,000
5BD/4BA/2HB, 4,238 sq ft

Nicholas Eklund
904-575-1197



358 ASPEN LEAF DRIVE
\$349,900
3BD/2BA, 2,202 sq ft

Hazel Cooksey
904-868-6332



7007 CYPRESS BRIDGE
\$673,999
4BD/2BA/1HB, 2,514 sq ft

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117 MIDDLETON PLACE
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502 PONTE VEDRA BLVD.
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ADMISSION TIMES

MONDAY, MARCH 11

- Practice Day for professionals
(Course closed to the public)

TUESDAY, MARCH 12

- Entries open at 7:30 a.m.
- Practice Day for professionals

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13

- Entries open at 7:30 a.m.
- Practice Day for professionals

THURSDAY, MARCH 14

- Entries open at 7 a.m.
- First round of competition begins at approximately 7:35 a.m. (threesomes off of No. 1 and No.10)

FRIDAY, MARCH 15

- Entries open at 7 a.m.
- Second round of competition begins at approximately 7:35 a.m. (threesomes off of No.1 and No.10)

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

- Entries open at 7:30 a.m.
- Third round of competition begins at approximately 8:30 a.m., depending on the size of the cut (twosomes off No. 1)

CHAMPIONSHIP

SUNDAY, MARCH 17

- Entries open at 7:30 a.m.
- Final round of competition begins at approximately 7:45 a.m., depending on the size of the cut (twosomes off No. 1)

Navigating THE PLAYERS



Photos provided by PGA TOUR

TICKETS

Tickets for THE PLAYERS 2019 are on sale at THEPLAYERS.com, as well as at 57 Publix stores throughout Northeast Florida and the surrounding areas, including two locations in Georgia.

Passes are \$25 for Tuesday and Wednesday; \$60 for Thursday; and \$70 for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Fans can also purchase a weekly Stadium Pass for \$240, which includes admission Tuesday through Sunday. Stadium Pass prices are exclusive of sales tax and do not include parking.

FAMILIES

Taking the kids to THE PLAYERS? You're in luck: Youth 18 and younger are admitted free of charge when accompanied by a ticketed adult, and there is no limit to the number of youth fans admitted with that ticketed adult. That means youth sports coaches, for example, can bring the whole team with one paying adult.

What's more, the "Family Plan" offers additional savings. Families get two adult Stadium Passes, unlimited youth admission at the entrances and two \$10 concession vouchers. The Family Plan is \$120 for Thursday and \$140 for Friday, Saturday and Sunday (taxes not included). Parking passes are additional, but remember that any car

with four or more passengers parks for free under THE PLAYERS "Four for Free" policy (download vouchers at theplayersparking.clickandpark.com).

The Family Plan is offered at 30 participating Daily's convenience stores and at THEPLAYERS.com.

MILITARY/VETERANS

THE PLAYERS provides all career military — including active duty, Reserve, military retirees and dependents — with complimentary admission to the tournament throughout the week, while non-career veterans receive discounted admission. Career military, veterans and their dependents also receive access to the *Birdies for the Brave*® Patriots' Outpost — a hospitality tent reserved exclusively for the military that offers complimentary food, beverages and activities. Located near the tee at No. 16, the Patriots' Outpost is financially supported by United Rentals, THE PLAYERS volunteer leadership, the Red Coats and Jacksonville-area companies and individuals.

To receive a voucher for complimentary or discounted admission, visit THEPLAYERS.com and click on the military link.

Parking is not included in the complimentary or discounted ticket price. Parking passes may be purchased at THEPLAYERS.com/parking.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ■

First Coast

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PARKING & TRANSPORTATION

On Tuesday and Wednesday, as in previous years, fans can still park for FREE in the general parking lot and no parking pass is required. Thursday to Sunday, however, fans are required to purchase parking in advance (\$35 on Thursday for general parking; and \$40 on Friday, Saturday and Sunday per day in general parking). Parking passes can be purchased at THEPLAYERS.com/parking. Volunteers will not sell parking passes in the lot. Parking will not be sold at Publix or Will Call.

FOUR FOR FREE

Fans with four or more guests in a vehicle can park for FREE Thursday through Sunday with the “Four for Free” parking voucher. Fans can go online to THEPLAYERS.com/parking (click on the “Tickets” tab) to download the voucher, which allows free parking in the general lot off of CR210. A new voucher must be downloaded and printed for each day (or saved on an electronic device); there is no limit to the number of days guests can park for free, but there is a limited number of vouchers per day.

UBER TO THE PLAYERS

Uber, the preferred ride sharing partner of THE PLAYERS, will drop off AND pick up at the Couples Entry. New in 2019, THE PLAYERS has a designated rideshare pickup, and drop-off, location located steps from the Couples Entrance off

of ATP Boulevard. Rideshare vehicles will be staged outside the Couples Entry, making this one of the easiest modes of transportation for spectators. As an added incentive, fans who purchase an Uber will receive a coupon code in their end of ride email from Uber for \$20 toward the purchase of PUMA product in the PGA TOUR Fan Shop in THE PLAYERS Welcome Experience. Valid same day, while supplies last.

SHUTTLES FROM DOWNTOWN

Shuttles are available from downtown-area hotels to TPC Sawgrass for THE PLAYERS, Thursday through Sunday of tournament week. Shuttles from Hogan Street by the Omni Hotel, Hyatt Regency Hotel and Lexington Hotel will be available to hotel guests and for residents to “park and ride,” providing a convenient and cost-effective way for fans to get to and from the tournament. Shuttle passes are \$20 plus applicable fees and must be purchased in advance at THEPLAYERS.com/shuttle. Shuttles will operate Thursday through Sunday.

PEDAL TO THE PLAYERS

THE PLAYERS offers complimentary bike parking during the tournament, from 7:30 a.m. until end of play. Spectators can ride their bikes to Gate B located inside the TPC Sawgrass Gates off of PGA TOUR Boulevard in the back of lot 5. Bike racks are available free of charge for spectators.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ■

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5396 BENTPIPE COVE ROAD
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9110 MARSH VIEW
\$1,239,000
5BD/5BA/1HB, 5,531 sq ft

Michelle Floyd/Jack Floyd
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158 MUIRFIELD DRIVE
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Moorman & Rowe Group
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405 ROYAL TERN RD SOUTH
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Hazel Cooksey
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2790 SYLVAN ESTATES CT
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Kasey Ritter/Catarina Soares
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101 PLANTATION CIR SOUTH
\$1,849,000
4BD/5BA/1HB, 5,683 sq ft

Moorman & Rowe Group
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129 HARBOURMASTER CT
\$600,000
Harbour Island with 60' slip

Michelle Floyd/Jack Floyd
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106 HOLLYHOCK LANE
\$849,000
3BD/3BA/1HB, 3,566 sq ft

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105 PALM FOREST
\$2,250,000
4BD/5BA/2HB, 5,738 sq ft

Michelle Floyd/Jack Floyd
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140 MUIRFIELD DRIVE
\$1,749,000
5BD/6BA/2HB, 5,769 sq ft

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24756 HARBOUR VIEW DRIVE
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904.310.0981

GOLF CART PARKING

THE PLAYERS offers complimentary Golf Cart parking services Tuesday through Sunday at Gate B located inside the TPC Sawgrass Gates off of PGA TOUR Boulevard in the back of lot 5. Golf cart parking is free of charge for spectators.

CONTINUED COOPERATION WITH AREA OFFICIALS

THE PLAYERS has teamed up with The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to encourage fans traveling to and from the tournament to use FDOT's 511 Traveler Information System for info on crashes, congestion, construction and more. FDOT provides up-to-date information on traffic conditions throughout the Jacksonville area, including I-95, I-295 and I-10. Motorists in the area can get information by calling 511 toll free, visiting FL511.com, downloading the free Florida 511 mobile app on Android and Apple devices or following @FL511_northeast, @FL511_I95 or @FL511_I10 on Twitter. Individuals can also sign up for route-specific text, phone or email alerts via the FL511.com website.

DISABLED GUEST SERVICES

THE PLAYERS Disabled Guest Services program provides shuttles during the tournament. There will be 14 shuttles on course.

A van shuttle, which is wheelchair accessible, is available to and from Accessible Parking in the General Parking Lot and Shuttle Row, adjacent to Davis Love III Entry for spectators wishing to access the Practice Area, Clubhouse or No. 1 Tee.

Carts will run from the time entries open each tournament day until 30 minutes after play.

Cart Shuttles will only pick up and drop off from designated locations below and will not stray from the official route under any circumstances.

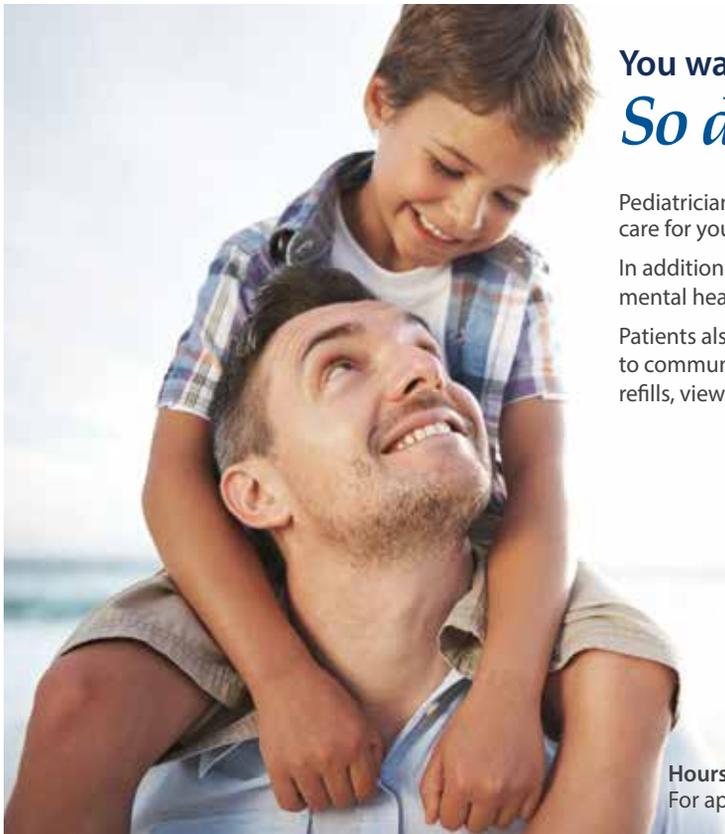
1. Behind 16 green by Couples Entry and The Courtyard
2. Behind 17 tee by the Food Court
3. Players' left of 9 fairway by Wine & Dine on 9
4. Players' left of 9 green by Greenside Lounge and Past Chairman
5. Clubhouse area behind 3 tee
6. Players' right of 16 tee in front of Patriot's Outpost
7. Players' right of 15 fairway at Taste of JAX

If disabled guests need assistance from a location without shuttle access, they should contact any tournament official with a radio.

VISIT WWW.THEPLAYERS.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TOURNAMENT POLICIES

MORE NAVIGATING THE PLAYERS

What to do at THE PLAYERS, *Pages 22 & 24* ♦ Dining at THE PLAYERS, *Pages 26-28*



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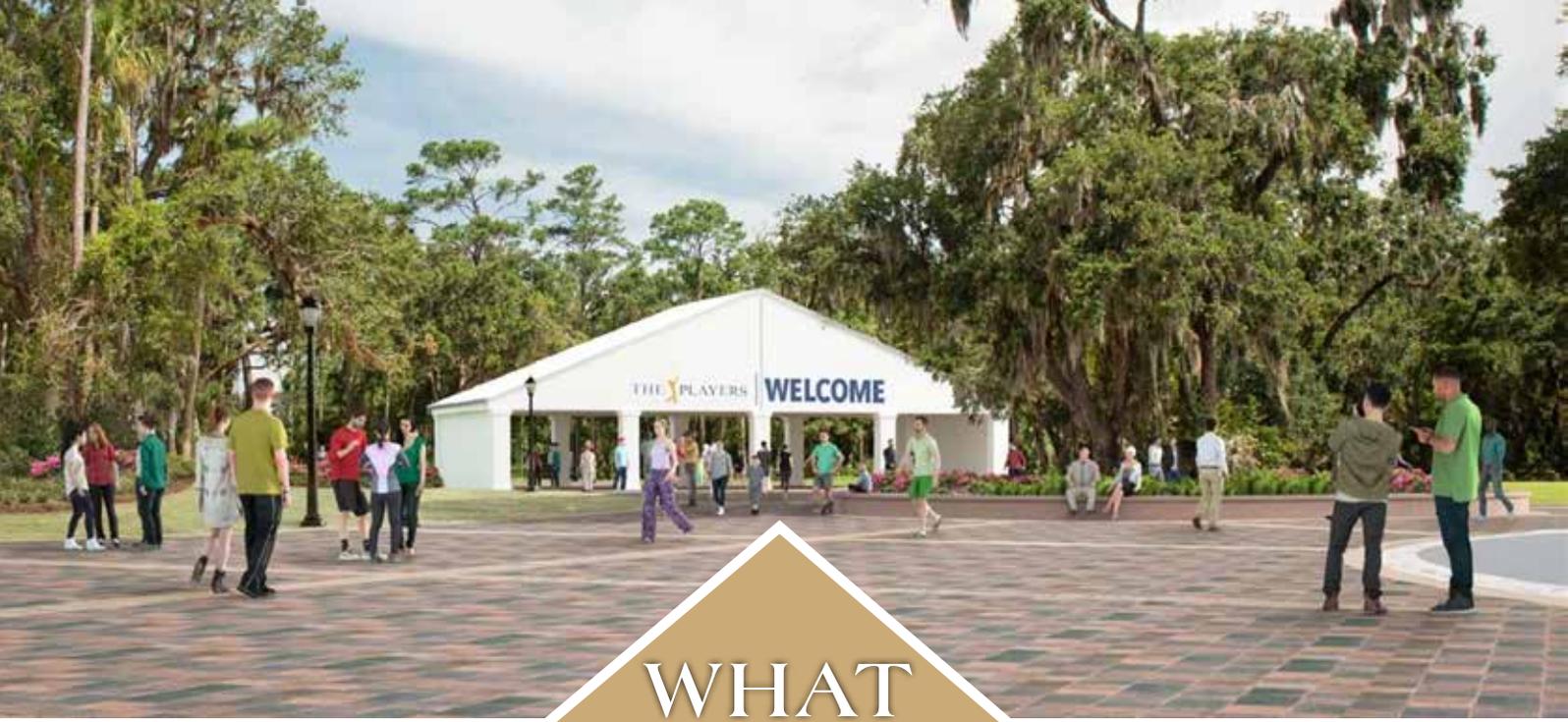
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WHAT TO DO



FAN JOURNEYS

To make fans' onsite experiences as easy, fun and memorable as possible, THE PLAYERS team created customized, step-by-step adventures — "Fan Journeys" — for all different types of fans. Whether you're a family with young kids, social scene seeker, golf fanatic, foodie, selfie taker or on a ladies day out, these Fan Journeys were designed based on your unique interests. To choose your Fan Journey, visit the "Plan Your Visit" tab at THEPLAYERS.COM or download the PGA TOUR App.

THE PLAYERS WELCOME EXPERIENCE

THE PLAYERS has upgraded the main entryway experience for fans as they arrive through the Nicklaus Entry from general parking. Upon entry into the 2019 tournament, spectators entering through the general parking lot will walk through a bridged pathway through the woodlands into THE PLAYERS Welcome Experience. THE PLAYERS Welcome Experience includes the following:

The PGA TOUR Fan Shop

THE PGA TOUR Fan Shop at THE PLAYERS Welcome Experience is a great place to gear up for THE PLAYERS, featuring 2019-specific items that won't last long once the crowds arrive. Improved in 2019, the PGA TOUR Fan Shop has been redesigned and expanded to over 25,000 square feet and includes new product lines and exclusive gear, including specialty T-shirts and custom logoed headwear for THE PLAYERS 2019.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 ■

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Stadium Village

This air-conditioned public fan zone features a centrally located bar, open-table seating and luxury restrooms. Stadium Village also includes interactive fan experiences including the Bridgestone Performance Center, the Lexus display, the GEICO display and more.

17th Hole Challenge presented by Optum, Morgan Stanley and Grant Thornton

This is a replica of the famed 17th hole where fans can take two free shots at the Island Green or purchase an additional chance for a \$5 donation to The First Tee of North Florida.

The Grove

Located in the area behind 17 tee and 16 green, The Grove is an outdoor, newly turfed area that is open to the public. The area includes space for gathering, pavers, table seating and a walkway from the Nicklaus Entry that will lead fans directly to the location. The Grove will include a large video board showcasing the Golf Channel and NBC broadcast so fans won't miss any tournament action while they're taking a break. The Grove will also feature a social media board covering THE PLAYERS Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feeds. The area is also in close proximity to the large permanent restrooms located behind 16 green and 17 tee.

The Kids Zone presented by The First Tee

The Kids Zone is an interactive destination for kids and families attending THE PLAYERS Championship. It features a par-3 Mini-Golf Challenge, a golf simulator, digital photo booth, The First Tee Target Wall and parent recharge stations with a live feed of the tournament. This is not a daycare area, as parents are required to stay with their children, but it allows parents the ability to take a break and relax in the shade while the kids have fun.

The Bier Garden presented by Hoptinger

THE PLAYERS will feature the Bier Garden presented by Hoptinger adjacent to the Couples Entry. Spectators will have a variety of craft beers on tap to choose from.

The Family Care Suite presented by Baptist Health

As part of Baptist's program as the onsite provider of medical services, the Family Care Suite will extend their services to attendees of THE PLAYERS with the venue serving as a comfort station for mothers and fathers to care for their babies and have a private, comfortable venue as needed during tournament week.

Palm Valley Village

Palm Valley Village is adjacent to the Greenside Lounge and is open to everyone with a Stadium Pass. This fan area will provide fans with a comfortable area near the 9th green, 18th green and practice area featuring food, available for purchase, from Publix and bibigo. Publix will be serving its signature sub of THE PLAYERS.



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5K
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Start Time: 7:30am

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(includes custom bib, race shirt, medal, Sweet by Holly coupons & cupcake at the finish line)

\$20 Cake Walk

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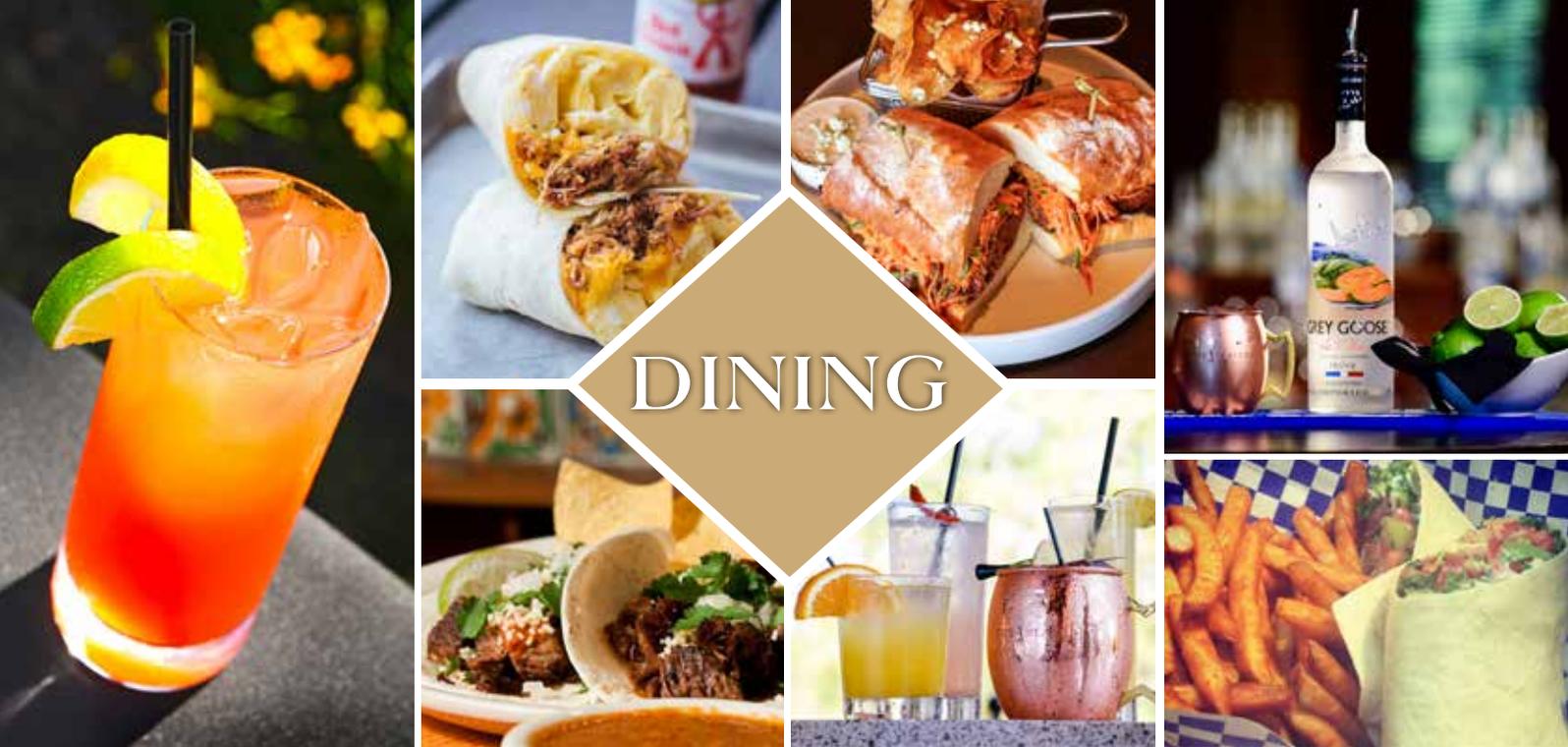
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DINING

FOOD POLICY

THE PLAYERS allows fans to bring in their own food in a 1-gallon clear, plastic bag, where food items are also wrapped in clear wrap. Fans can refill up their empty water bottles at the filtered water stations. This policy does not allow fans to bring in outside water bottles and/or beverages.

Below are some of the dining options/venues available at THE PLAYERS.

THE PLAYERS Club

THE PLAYERS Club is a private hospitality and hosting experience with private space onsite in the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse, as well as on 17 tee and 18 green. THE PLAYERS Club tickets cost \$6,000 per person and are purchased on a weekly ticket basis — each weekly ticket consisting of individually issued tickets by tournament day and including a ticket Tuesday to Sunday. Tickets can be transferred each day to another individual. Visit theplayers.com/theplayersclub for more information.

Captain's Club

New in 2019, the Captain's Club is available to spectators Thursday to Sunday at THE PLAYERS. The Captain's Club is a premium club space with views of the 16th and 18th holes at THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass. This hospitality venue is the only daily upgraded ticket available. It features seating, a full-service bar and will include a premium viewing experience to watch the tournament. Beer, wine and soda are included in the cost of the ticket. Tickets are \$225 per day for Thursday and Sunday and \$250 per day for Friday and Saturday. Tickets are available at THEPLAYERS.com/tickets.

The Fan Bleacher presented by ULTRA

This is a public bleacher located behind 8 green with concessions available for purchase.

Taste of JAX

Located behind 11 green and 12 tee, this public venue offers flavors from local, favorite restaurants, a GREY GOOSE open-air bar, permanent restrooms and video boards to keep up with the tournament. Taste of JAX restaurants include Brucci's Pizza, Mojo Kitchen, Zoe's Kitchen and Cousins Maine Lobster.

Wine & Dine on 9

Fans can enjoy gourmet small plates prepared by Matthew Medure, one of Northeast Florida's most renowned chefs, in a garden setting. Wine & Dine on 9 also features premium varietals from Kendall-Jackson. Located left of 9 fairway, there is a videoboard and permanent restrooms next to Wine & Dine on 9.

Food Court

Located in THE PLAYERS Welcome Experience at the Nicklaus Entry, restaurants featured in the Food Court include Bono's Pit Bar-B-Q, Daily's Grab-n-Go, Firehouse Subs, Hawkers Asian Street Fare, M Shack and Tropical Smoothie Café.

Trucks on 10

Located between 10 fairway, 11 fairway and 15 green, this public venue offers flavors from local, favorite food trucks, an upgraded restroom and an open-air, centrally located Michelob ULTRA Mobile bar. Trucks on 10 will offer seating for fans and include food from local trucks, including Cely's Filipino Food, Delish Kabob's, Mama's Food and Pele's Wood Fire, among others.

Tacos on 12

Located between 11 tee, 12 green and 13 tee, TacoLu will be serving food and beverages. This public venue includes seating and shaded areas.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 ■

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St. Vincent’s Medical Center Clay County, Memorial Hospital, Orange Park Medical Center and UF Health North.

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we will continue to ensure our patients enjoy the very best in orthopedic care!”

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Sawgrass Square

Located at the Davis Love III Entry, Mini Bar will be serving up its signature mini donuts alongside 4 Rivers Smokehouse, a local barbecue favorite.

The Benefactor featuring The ULTRA Club and Oakley Lounge

The Benefactor featuring The ULTRA Club and Oakley Lounge is situated behind the tee box of the 17th hole at THE PLAYERS Stadium Course and has sold out since 2012. This 14,500 square-foot, climate-controlled venue has a 4,500 square-foot patio and allows spectators access to The Benefactor, The Turn and Tournament Grounds. There is up-scale food and premium bar available for purchase and private restroom facilities.

Located behind the 17th tee at The Benefactor, the ULTRA Club will feature a climate-controlled interior with food and beverages for purchase, including Michelob ULTRA, the official beer sponsor of the PGA TOUR.

On the second floor of The Benefactor, fans can enjoy views of No. 17 from the Oakley Lounge in all-new Oakley sunglasses.

The Turn

The interior of the Turn features a GREY GOOSE 19th Hole lounge with GREY GOOSE signature drinks, including the TPC Sawgrass Splash, and soft seating. Flat-screen televisions

surround the interior lounge providing coverage of six-plus broadcasts at a time. The back wall provides a view of No. 9 green, and the front provides outdoor seating and spectator views of 18 fairway and green.

The Oasis

Open to the public (must be 21+), The Oasis features signature cocktails made with GREY GOOSE Vodka, the official spirit of the PGA TOUR. Located between 9 and 18 tee boxes, The Oasis debuted in 2012 to expand on what had been a popular concession area in the past. The area features an air-conditioned venue, where signature cocktails and food and drink are available for purchase. The Oasis boasts a rear deck for prime views of No. 9 tee.

The Patio

A fan favorite since it debuted in 2011, The Patio offers a shaded fan zone that includes food from V Pizza, open-air seating and a videoboard to keep up with the tournament. The Patio also features permanent restroom facilities and a Michelob ULTRA Bar. The Patio is located between 10 tee and 18 green/16 tee.

Fan Bleachers presented by Mayo Clinic

The Fan Bleachers presented by Mayo Clinic provide shaded viewing and covered decks for fans at two locations: 16 tee, with views of 10, as well as behind 17 green. Concessions are available at each location.

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\$975,000

Marsh Landing Country Club

If you are looking for a substantial, well-built home in an exclusive neighborhood with views of both water and golf, look no further! This home will impress you as you drive up the circular driveway and take in open views of the 18th tee in front of the home! You will be greeted with views of water and the 17th green as you enter the front door! It is a home you will enjoy entertaining your friends and family in and EVERY room in this home is large and gracious! 2 bedrooms on the first floor, Master Bedroom and 2 additional bedrooms on the 2nd floor. It is hard to find a home that has been so lovingly cared for as this home! It is ready for you to make it your own!



\$1,500,000

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**Sawgrass Country Club
\$325,000**

Fabulous beach retreat located in the heart of Sawgrass Country Club. This 2BR/2.5BA end unit town home offers privacy and golf views. Kitchen with granite and stainless steel appliances opens to dining area and den with wall of windows to bring in the views. Updated baths, high ceilings and tile floors. Great investment property with short term rentals permitted. Walking distance to the community pool and beach or take the golf cart included with sale. MLS 969538



**Serenata Beach Community
\$450,000**

Stunning 3BR/3BA Ocean Grande pent-house condo with expansive marsh to ICW views and just steps to the beach. Ocean views from the front balcony, tile floors, high ceilings and crown molding. Spacious kitchen with stainless steel appliances, wine chiller, granite counters and large breakfast bar. Great floor plan with all three en-suite bedrooms in opposite corners. The master is across the back to capture the vistas. Extra large screened balcony with built-in grill. New HVAC installed Jan '19. Private garage. MLS 969714



**The Pointe at PVB
\$625,000**

Nestled in among Ponte Vedra Beach's most desirable real estate, this gorgeous 3BR/2BA condo with garage and magnificent water views is just steps to ocean and across lagoon via foot bridge from famed Ponte Vedra Inn & Club. Renovated kitchen opens to great room with fabulous dining island that seats 6, updated baths, fireplace, walk-in closet and new AC. Beautiful Florida room overlooks lagoon with new impact proof windows and sliders. MLS 960604



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THE STADIUM COURSE:

HOLE 1

- ◆ No. 1 tee is a popular spot to watch players hit their tee shots with mounds to the left and right of the green for optimal viewing.
- ◆ Limited foliage lets you see a player's approach and putt.
- ◆ This less-crowded location provides an opportunity to get close to players as they walk from No. 1 green to No. 2 tee.

HOLE 2

- ◆ Elevated mounding behind the green provides a great place to watch players decide whether or not to go for the par 5 in two or lay up, and then you can keep an eye on them as they head to No. 3 tee to take a shot at the par-3 green.

HOLE 3

- ◆ Left of the tee box is a great place to view golf, as you are just on the other side of the practice tee, which means you can move back and forth to watch the third hole, as well as see players warm up. This elevated area provides a great line of sight.
- ◆ Extended mounding to the left of the green allows for great views of balls approaching the green and players putting.

HOLE 4

- ◆ Sit on the bulkhead around the water surrounding the green and dangle your feet (hold on to those flip-flops!).
- ◆ Lowered mounding for improved viewing on 4 tee.
- ◆ Expanded fan walkway.

HOLE 5

- ◆ Find great views of this tough par 4 from the elevated left side of the fairway, where you can also catch a glimpse of players practicing on the back tee of the upgraded driving range.
- ◆ Elevated mounding behind the green provides superior viewing angles.

HOLE 6

- ◆ This green isn't very crowded and offers a great place to catch the action up close.
- ◆ It's the perfect spot to be near players as they walk from the green to the No. 7 tee.

HOLE 7

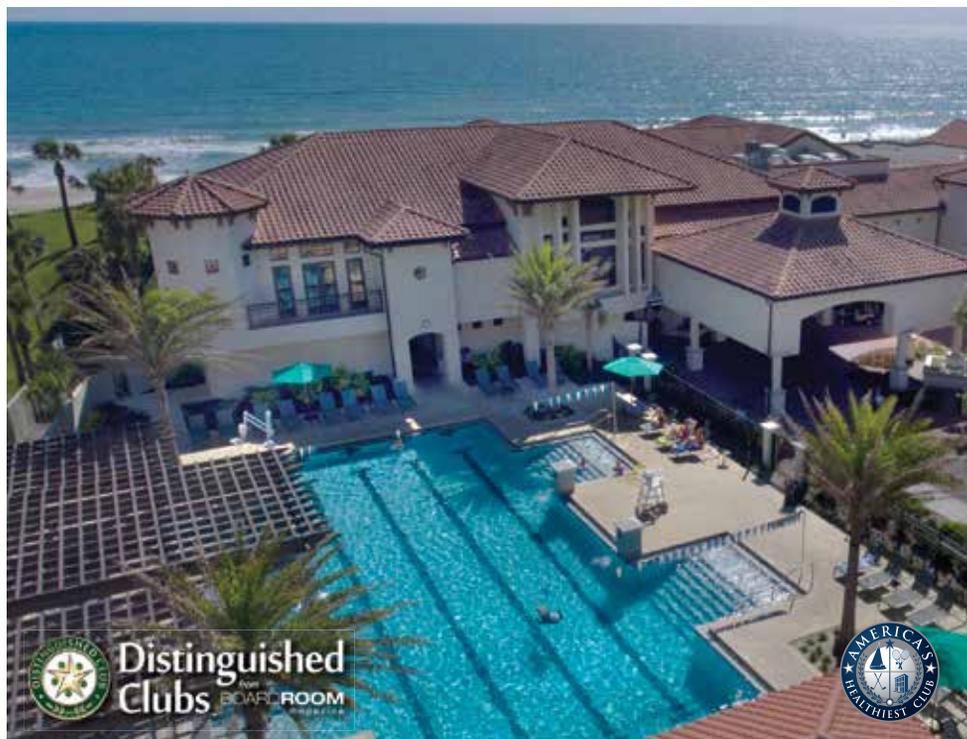
- ◆ The elevated mounding behind the green allows you to see all the way back to the tee box.

HOLE 8

- ◆ Always a fan favorite, you can get close to the action when players hit their tee shots thanks to elevated mounding behind the green (and in the shade of nearby trees).
- ◆ The elevated mounds also allow fans to see shots land and players putt on this undulating green.
- ◆ The Fan Bleacher presented by ULTRA offers views of the eighth hole.

HOLE 9

- ◆ A great par 5 to watch players hit their tee shots and decide whether or not to go for the green in two.
- ◆ Significant amounts of foliage to the left of the green have been removed, and bleachers were added.
- ◆ Mounding on 9 green allows you to have a better view of players' approach shots and putts.



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HOLE-BY-HOLE OVERVIEW

HOLE 10

- ◆ The elevated mounding behind the tee provides great views of players' tee shots, and you're just steps away from a permanent restroom.

HOLE 11

- ◆ A fan favorite par 5 where players often go for the green in two, the green is surrounded by sand and water, which provides non-stop drama and excitement.

HOLE 12

- ◆ Elevated mounds around the tee provide excellent views of players hitting their tee shots. Will they go for the green or lay up?
- ◆ The mound near the green allows you to look back at the tee and approach shots, as well as over the green for up-close views.
- ◆ Additional mounding for improved viewing on 12 tee.

HOLE 13

- ◆ Fans directly behind the green may even see a ball or two roll through the green and end up in collection area just on the other side of the ropes from where they're sitting.
- ◆ The top of the mounding behind the green also provides a nice view of players teeing off on No. 14.

HOLE 14

- ◆ A tough par 4 with great, elevated views behind the tee and the right side of the fairway. Errant tee shots to the right often end up right near fans.

HOLE 15

- ◆ This par 4 has elevated mounding on the left side of the green, providing good views of approach shots and putting.
- ◆ Additional mounding for improved viewing on 15 green.

HOLE 16

- ◆ The elevated mounding on the left side of the green provides an ideal vantage point for approach shots and putts, as well as a view of the 17th hole.
- ◆ This is one of the most iconic par 5s in all of golf, offering opportunities for eagles and birdies with accurate approach shots, but also bogeys and double bogeys with water looming down the right-hand side.

HOLE 17

- ◆ There is not a bad view of this legendary, Island Green par 3.
- ◆ This is a perfect spot to watch golf and then see players walk off the green and through the tunnel as they head to the 18th tee.

HOLE 18

- ◆ This finishing hole is one of the most difficult on the PGA TOUR, with water down the left side and an extremely narrow fairway.
- ◆ You'll find great views behind the tee and down the right side of the hole.
- ◆ The elevated area around the green is known as The Bluff, where courtesy folding chairs are provided at no charge, and if you're in your chair when the last putt drops at the end of the day, you can take it home for free!

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WEBB SIMPSON sets records in victory at THE PLAYERS



by KATHY BISSELL
Photos by CHRIS NORTON

It's hard to be on top of the world and then to fall miles to the depths. Just ask Webb Simpson. His life has changed dramatically in the last seven years. Twice.

After being at the top of his game, he had a slide that was totally abysmal. But there was a resurgence and a second change that was equally spectacular.

It was 2012. Simpson was coming into his prime in golf. He had won a few tournaments, and then snagged his first major, the 2012 U.S. Open. Less than a year later, the bottom fell out.

Simpson, you see, was one of those professional golfers who had spent many years using a belly putter. As a professional, he had never used another method.

When the United States Golf Association and the R&A announced in 2013 that anchoring a putter was going to be banned starting in 2016, he knew he would have to give up the club that had helped him get to the top of the game.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

It seemed like an arbitrary decision at the time. After more than 25 years of ignoring the use of long and anchored putters, the USGA and R&A decided to “do something.”

The PGA of America objected to outlawing them because so many older golfers anchored. The PGA TOUR did not like the decision either. But the USGA & R&A create the rules, and so both organizations went along. In the process, many older golfers across the country and around the world who had the putting yips were chased out of the game at a time when golf needed all the players it could get. This could have caused a significant drop in rounds played. We will never know because

no one has studied it.

Before 2013, the most recent, long putter controversy was in 1989, when the USGA and R&A looked at Orville Moody's victory in the U.S. Senior Open, which he won with a long putter. They decided it wasn't something they needed to rule on at that time and chalked it up to individualized putting methods. Plus, Moody was a military veteran, and ruling against him would probably have made them look bad.

But in the late 1980s and mid-1990s, the longer putters caught on. Johnny Miller at the 1980 LA Open used a homemade long putter that fit into his armpit. Five years later, he used a 45-inch putter like Matt Kuchar does today. Two years later, he won the AT&T Pebble Beach tournament using it.

Rocco Mediate used a long putter that he anchored next to his sternum and won the 1991 Doral tournament. Nine years later, Paul Azinger used a belly putter in winning the 2000 Sony Open.

They weren't alone in going to a longer than standard putter. Tim Clark, a former champ of THE PLAYERS, had to use a long putter because of a physical problem he has with his arms/elbows. It was the only way he could putt.

Bubba Watson had a longer putter for a while. Then he went short. Now he's adopted the Kuchar method. Vijay Singh went back and forth from regular length to long.

Long putters became less shocking to see on the course. They were being used by good players.

Now scamper forward to 2010. Clark won THE PLAYERS with an anchored long putter.

About 18 months later, in 2011, Keegan Bradley, using a belly putter, won the PGA Championship.

A month or so after that, Bill Haas won the \$10 million prize for the FedEx Cup in a playoff using a longer putter. In fairness, however, it was his amazing blast out of the water in the playoff that won it in the end.

The long and anchored putter victory march continued.

Simpson won the 2012 U.S. Open with a belly putter. Ernie Els won the 2012 British Open with a belly putter. Adam Scott finished runner-up to Els, with the long putter anchored to his chin.

Immediately afterward, Peter Dawson, then head of the R&A, said they would have to take a hard look at the long and anchored putters. What he really meant, I think, was that having a guy with a belly putter win the U.S. Open was one thing, but having another player with a belly putter win his beloved British Open made his head explode, and he wasn't going to have any more of that. It's impossible to call the rule change a coincidence.

The next spring, Adam Scott won The Masters using a long putter that he anchored next to his chin.

A month later in May 2013, the R&A and USGA announced — and this is paraphrasing — that starting in 2016, there would likely be a ban against anchored putting and the putters that went with it.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 36 ■

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BACK TO SIMPSON

After the announcement that the putters would likely be banned, Simpson played on in 2013 with the club. In the fall of 2013, he won the Shriner's tournament, still using the belly putter. He would not win again for five years.

"The unfortunate thing is I had used this (belly) putter for 11 years, and so it's still a learned skill," Simpson explained at THE PLAYERS 2018. "To unlearn a skill or to learn a new skill in the middle of your career was the biggest challenge."

First, Simpson tried going back to the conventional length, and he fought and struggled with the club. In 2012, he finished the season 17th on the money list and 11th in the world rankings. In 2013, he was 20th in money and 24th in ranking. In 2014, he was 17th in money but had fallen to 33rd in world ranking. By 2015, he had dropped to 43rd in money and 53rd in world ranking. That meant he would no longer get invitations that go to the top 50 players.

The end of the year in 2016, he found himself at 73rd in money and 67th in ranking.

Don't get me wrong. Webb Simpson was not suffering financially. In his worst year of this decline and rebound, he still earned nearly \$1.5 million on the course. But his golf psyche was bruised and battered.

"The lowest point ended up being the turning point," Simpson recalled. "It was 2016 at Barclays at Bethpage Black. ... You get used to playing at a level that you know you're

SIMPSON AT THE PLAYERS 2018

Second-round records tied or set by Simpson:

Tied low 36-hole score (15-under 129; tied Jason Day/2016)
Set largest 36-hole lead (Five strokes)

Third-round records tied or set by Simpson:

Tied low 54-hole score (19-under 197, Greg Norman/1994)
Set largest 54-hole lead (Seven strokes)

capable of, and then for — you go a year or two years playing below that capability, and it starts to get at you."

He was frustrated at not being able to return to the level of golf he had played before the anchored putting ban. After having an argument with caddie Paul Tesori about his game, he decided to talk to some golfers who were good putters. He consulted Aaron Baddeley and Brandt Snedeker. He made a bold change and finally settled on the Matt Kuchar method, which for reasons that are not particularly fathomable, was allowed after the anchoring ban took effect.

Kuchar uses what is called the "Arm Lock" style. He braces a 42-inch putter grip against his left forearm and then grips the putter in almost a normal fashion. For some reason, Simpson was not able to have success with the Arm Lock either.

In 2017, however, the week of THE PLAYERS, Simpson spoke to Tim Clark, and that conversation put him on the right track. Clark suggested Simpson use the claw with the Kuchar style. And that proved to be the difference.

Simpson came up to 23rd in money and 37th in world ranking.



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WINNING AT THE PLAYERS

As with all new techniques, figuring out how to make any new putter work took time. In Simpson's case, it was 107 starts between his 2013 Shriners victory and winning THE PLAYERS in 2018.

"It means everything to me," Simpson said last year after capturing THE PLAYERS title. "I feel like it's my first win. I feel so similar to how I felt in Greensboro back in 2011."

His whole week looked easy from the outside. Simpson started with a 66 and was tied with Dustin Johnson, Matt Kuchar, Patrick Cantlay, Alex Noren and Chesson Hadley.

"It's a really cool event with a lot of history," Simpson said after round one. "I think it's just as hard to win as a major because you've got the best players in the world here, maybe a better field than any tournament, and then, last few holes there's trouble lurking."

He's right about that!

The next day, though, Webb went really low, shooting a 63 to tie the course record that he then shared with Jason Day (2016), Colt Knost (2016), Martin Kaymer (2014), Roberto Castro (2013), Greg Norman (1994) and Fred Couples (1992). Later that week, Brooks Koepka would also post 63 on Sunday, too late for a victory charge, but it got him into the record book.

"Obviously when you're out there competing in a big tournament, you're as focused as can be, but then at a certain point, maybe on 13 today, you start just — like a kid, just kind of laughing," Simpson said. "Everything is going in."



CONTINUED ON PAGE 38 ■

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In fact, Simpson's round could have been a 61, but he doubled the 17th. To say he was playing well was a total understatement. Even with that double, he was five shots ahead of Patrick Cantlay, Danny Lee and Charl Schwartzel.

In the third round, Simpson extended his advantage over the field. When scores were added up, he was seven ahead of everyone else. Seven. It was Tiger Woods-like.

Danny Lee was in second heading to the final round. Dustin Johnson was nine back. Jason Day was 10 behind. This was some golf for a guy who had nearly disappeared since leaving his old belly putter.

The final round wasn't as clean as the first three, but really, he could have played two extra par threes more than the field and still won if the rest of his card was clean. It wasn't, however.

Simpson was even par through



six, birdied seven, bogeyed eight and turned in 36. On the back, it got a little more exciting, but Simpson was never in real danger, although as Roger Maltbie said during the telecast, "He's giving himself some stress every hole."

Simpson traded bogey and birdie at the 10th and 11th and later said the biggest hole for him was the 11th because the birdie there got him back to even par for the day.

"I felt really good about our plan on 12, 13, 14, and I kind of managed in that middle part of the round in a way that I was just playing smart," he explained.

He was steady through the 16th, where he birdied, which a good golfer is supposed to do.

"I thought long and hard about how I'd feel coming off 17 knowing I had it won," Simpson said. "So, once I got to 17 and the ball was on the green, internally I was celebrating."

The last hole was the one that got him. After a nice, conservative tee

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shot, about 250 yards into the right side of the fairway, Simpson pulled his second shot into the water to the left of the green. But he was so far ahead at the time that it really didn't matter. He made a double bogey six. Not the way a champion wants to finish, but even with the dropped shots, he was still four ahead of the nearest competitors.

"It was difficult," Simpson said after winning. "It was harder than I thought. I would have loved to have gotten off to a little better start. I was 1-under through seven, feeling pretty good with 9 coming up and 11, but dropped a shot at 8, and there's so much noise in front of us with Tiger, and you wonder what everybody is doing."

In the last year that THE PLAYERS was held on Mother's Day, Simpson said he won for his mother.

"To be on Mother's Day, and I know how much she prays for me and pulls for me and watches every putt and screams when I make long putts and hit good shots, I thought about her a lot today," he admitted. "I knew she was watching every shot. It was for her, for sure."

(Simpson's dad died in November 2017.)

And now, guess what? Webb Simpson has another five-year exemption on the PGA TOUR. This time, he won't need it to relearn another kind of putting. He can enjoy the fruits of his victory, hopefully without another rules catastrophe headed his way.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40 ■

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Simpson was fortunate to have the perseverance to master a new putting style forced on him by the rules change and to come out the other side a winner. It might have defeated a less determined, less skilled player. But not Simpson. He took his modest length, his arrow-straight irons and his rejiggered putting stroke and won, not by a stroke, but by four, setting and tying records along the way.

And those guys at the USGA and R&A, they may still sit smugly in their easy chairs, feeling like they did the right thing. But there are thousands of golfers and some former golfers who still think it was a bad decision.

Regarding the fate of the long putters that were banished to the trash pile, Adam Scott got the last laugh on Peter Dawson. When Dawson retired from the R&A, Scott packed up his long putter and sent it to him as a retirement gift. Scott, the champ of THE PLAYERS in 2004, has won 13 times in his 13-year career on the PGA TOUR, twice after the anchored putting ban.



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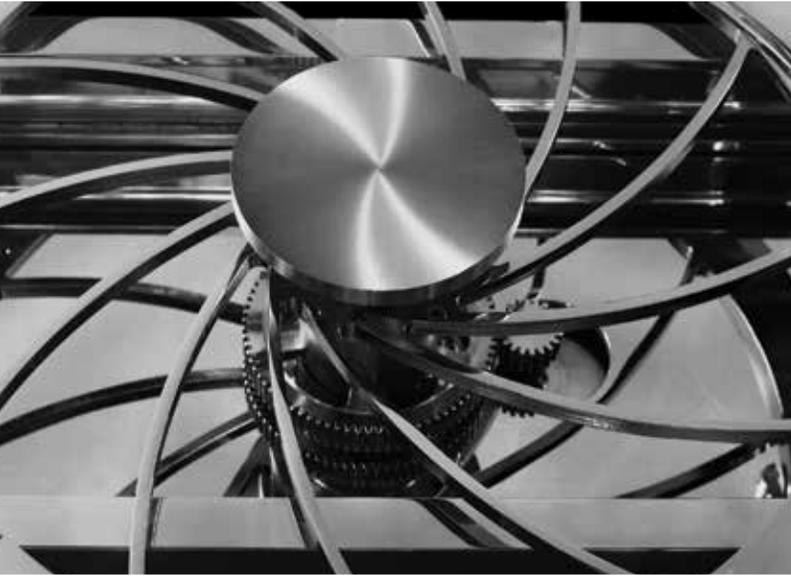

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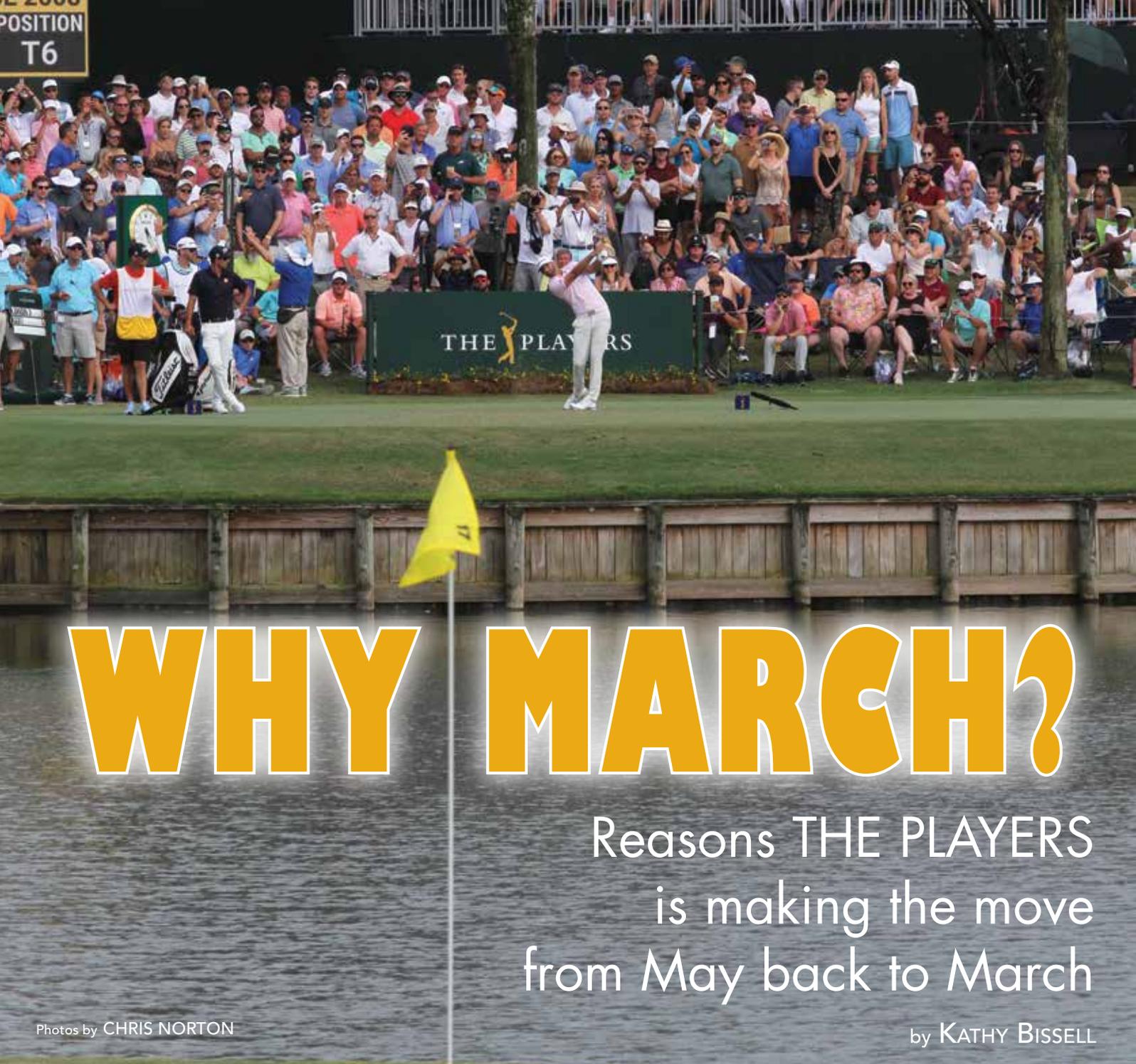
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WHY MARCH?

Reasons THE PLAYERS
is making the move
from May back to March

Photos by CHRIS NORTON

by KATHY BISSELL

You had just gotten used to May. Your houseguests were ready for it. Mother's Day was set up around it. Or you had already booked a place to go and put your house in the rental pool, only to discover that THE PLAYERS had moved from May back to March.

Everyone asks why. Sure, I could give you a quick, snippy answer, but it doesn't do justice to the heavy lifting that was required to get it done. Making the change was a lot like juggling broken glass: dangerous, hazardous and wrought with peril.

It wasn't as easy as just picking a date and saying that's it. To give you a feel for what it took, a little background is needed.

First of all, the main missions of the PGA TOUR are to provide playing opportunities (and therefore an income) for its members (the PGA TOUR players) and to raise money for

charities, literally hundreds, maybe even thousands of them, across the country. The TOUR has other sub-missions by department, but those are at the top. Everything else supports those two. It's a great concept that was put in place by the TOUR's second commissioner, Deane Beman. Give him an "Attaboy!" next time you see him.

Now, each of the events on the yearly PGA TOUR schedule is predicated on having sponsors. Sponsors typically sign contracts for more than one year. When they do that, they are given a date that typically will vary no more than two or three weeks from year to year unless there is a cataclysmic disaster.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44 ■

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Fortunately for the PGA TOUR, they have many sponsors with long-term contracts, and that gives the TOUR stability over multi-year spans. That also gives a sponsor security in its relative position on the calendar. For example, Zurich Insurance has signed an agreement to sponsor the Zurich Classic of New Orleans through 2026. Valero has agreed to host the Valero Texas Open through 2028. Waste Management just announced a 10-year extension in Phoenix, so they are good through 2030.

In the list of sponsors, the thousand-pound gorilla or the elephant in the room, whichever you prefer, is FedEx.

For the last 12 years, FedEx has sponsored a season-long FedEx points race with a bonus pool that pays out millions to the top 125 players when the TOUR Championship concludes. In addition, the player who has earned the most FedEx points for the season has won the FedEx Cup and now \$15 million. That's on top of the prize money for each place in the Playoff events and the TOUR Championship. It's a big benefit to the exempt players, the top 125.

Exempt means they don't have to do anything to be able to play the next season, except play a certain number of events to support the TOUR. If they want to play in any PGA TOUR event, except THE PLAYERS, the WGC events and a couple of invitationals, all they have to do is enter by 5 p.m. the Friday before the event is held. The PGA TOUR does not run or own the Masters, the U.S. Open, the PGA or the British Open. Each of those has a different qualifying system.



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Now, back to our March saga.

When the FedEx program started, the end of the “PGA TOUR year” changed. The season used to end around the first of November with the TOUR Championship.

When FedEx came aboard, the PGA TOUR adopted a split season and created a series of Playoffs leading up to the TOUR Championship finale. FedEx wanted an earlier-in-the-year finish. The TOUR tried with a season that ended in September.

Then, a new season started a week later, the first week of October. It took a couple of seasons, but everyone adjusted to that.

The Playoffs started after Labor Day mainly because there were many long-standing tournaments already in August. Post-Labor Day, however, became the issue because both college football and NFL games start after Labor Day, and they steal away sports fans. It puts a dent in golf TV ratings in what would otherwise be compelling competition with all the big

stars of the year playing. And sponsors care about TV ratings as much as the PGA TOUR does.

The exception to ratings concerns showed up last year when Tiger Woods was in contention at the TOUR Championship in his latest comeback. On Sunday, NBC had the highest rating of any PGA TOUR telecast of 2018. That’s why everyone says Woods doesn’t just move the needle, he is the needle. It was a bonanza for everybody. But no one can count on Tiger Woods being in the hunt every year.

To renew the contract for the season-long FedEx points race, to guarantee the massive prize to its winner and to continue the payout to the other 124 players, FedEx wanted to have the season end before Labor Day. That’s where the change started, with the question: How do we finish by Labor Day?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46 ■

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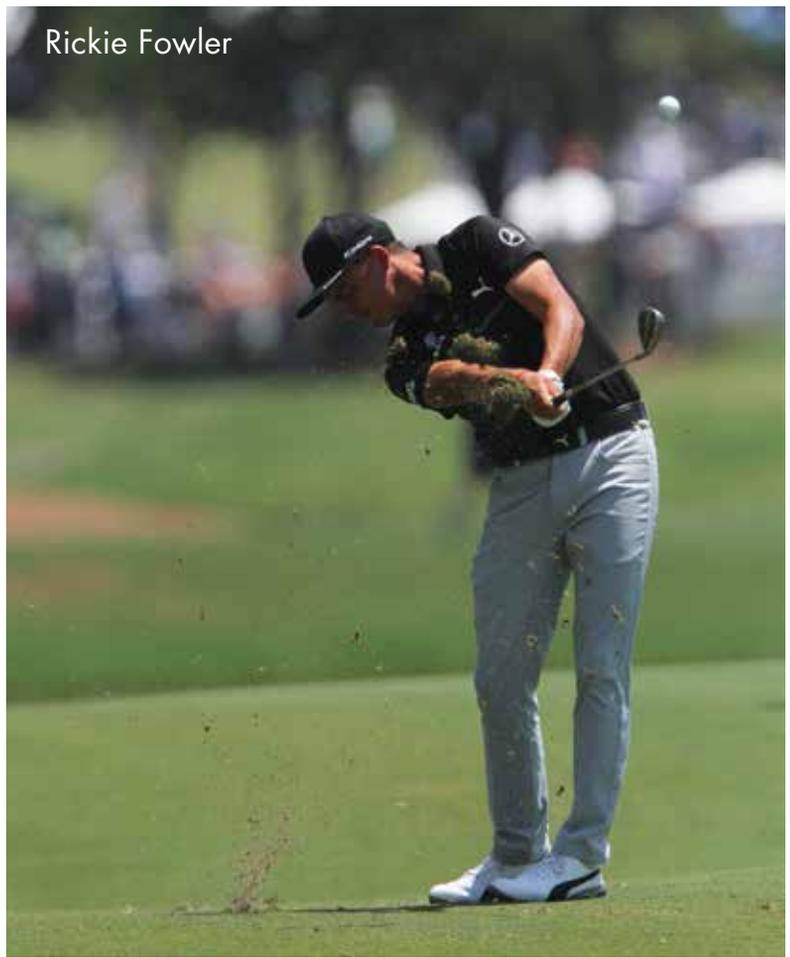
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Having an end date of Labor Day, the TOUR executives had to sit down and figure out who could move a date and who might be losing a sponsor and not have a replacement so that FedEx's wishes could be accommodated. Remember, the points race is financially beneficial for the PGA TOUR players, and that's one of the TOUR's top two goals.

The FedEx Playoffs had already proven attractive to viewers, and many players embraced it from 2008 through 2018. It was a tough stretch of golf for the guys playing, however. In the last decade, TOUR players who qualified for the Playoffs might have gone from the British Open to the Canadian Open to the WGC-Bridgestone to Wyndham to the Playoffs.

It meant that many golfers were playing seven weeks out of nine or even nine weeks in a row. Yeah, the rest of us would like that kind of schedule, but playing PGA TOUR golf is fairly high stress on the show ponies of the game. They get both physically worn out and mentally worn out, even if they don't like to admit it. At their level, the mental aspect is important.

In addition to everything else, there was the issue of what to do every four years with the Olympics, the scheduling of which nearly annihilated TOUR players in 2016 because one more event was added. It was 10 pounds of golf in a 5-pound bag.



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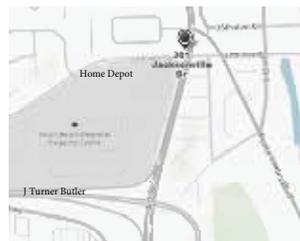
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Phil Mickelson

Other than THE PLAYERS Championship, the January-through-March portion of the schedule had to stay more or less intact because it's hard to play golf in the U.S. north of Interstate 10 that time of year. That's why the schedule is set the way it is: the West Coast and Hawaii first, then Florida, then Louisiana and Texas, with The Masters in April.

It was mainly the May, June, July and August portion of the schedule that had to be worked out.

Houston lost its sponsor, freeing up one week. It will now come back in the fall, after Labor Day, but we don't know when.

Then other things happened.

Quicken Loans, headquartered in Detroit, wanted to have a tournament there. So, they pulled out of the Washington D.C. market and moved to Detroit with the Rocket Mortgage Classic to be held the last week of June.

3M got into the picture with a new tournament outside of Minneapolis, the 3M Open, following the Rocket Mortgage Classic and before the John Deere Classic.

No one knows exactly what happened with WGC-Bridgestone, but they are now a PGA TOUR Champions event, which is a sudden change for everyone familiar with the history and tradition of golf at Firestone Country Club, dating back to the 1960s. They have the same date and players who love the course. Bridgestone will now sponsor the Senior PLAYERS Championship.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 50 ■

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■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47

But as a result, the WGC moved to a different tournament. I'll give you three guesses. The FedEx St. Jude is now the WGC-FedEx St. Jude. It will be played the week after the British Open. FedEx has sponsored the Memphis tournament, which benefits St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, since 1986. They get a big lift as a WGC, must-play tournament.

With the additions and subtractions, the number of PGA TOUR tournaments before Labor Day was reduced by two.

Those shifts gave the PGA TOUR what they needed except for one thing. The PGA Championship, which is owned by the PGA of America, has been held the second week of August for at least 60 years with a couple of exceptions. It was played in February a time or two, but most often, it's August.

To move the PGA Championship, which was very heavy lifting, the PGA TOUR offered THE PLAYERS date in May and said they would return to March.

I'm sure, however, that before making that proposal, the TOUR cleared it with their sponsors. That's because last year THE PLAYERS Executive Director Jared Rice said the sponsors loved the idea of March. Most of them are from places up north, and hey, who wouldn't want to escape a polar vortex or two. As we all know, March is spring break month, and even sponsors love the idea of spring break someplace warmer than where they are.

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Photo provided by PGA TOUR

The PGA of America accepted the May date with enthusiasm, and THE PLAYERS moved back to March.

With that done, the course will now be overseeded instead of being a Bermudagrass surface. According to the TOUR, that will provide more consistent greens. In our climate, Bermuda is just getting a good start in May. But in March, weather willing, things will be fine, turf-wise, at least where the golfers are walking, because the overseed was done in fall 2018.

Then, the PGA TOUR did one more thing. Since they were giving up Mother's Day, they decided to take the week of St. Patrick's Day. This year, the finish will be on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.

Now, I'd still like to see that lake at the 17th dyed green like they do to the Chicago River, but you can't have everything. Maybe we'll all find leprechauns and pots of gold that week hidden amongst the azaleas and pine straw. For sure, one PGA TOUR player will take home a veritable treasure.

So that's, more or less, how and why THE PLAYERS moved again. And I'm sure the "doing of it" was even harder than juggling broken glass.

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March or May?

What's YOUR preference?



By KATHY BISSELL

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THE PLAYERS was held in March from 1974 until it moved to May in 2007.

With the tournament shifting back to March in 2019, there are varied opinions as to which timing is best. Before I help you decide which month you prefer, let's dive deep into the history of the tournament to better understand how we got to where we are today.

THE BEGINNING

Jack Nicklaus won the first tournament in 1974, and he won two additional times. But none of those were held at THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass, and the tournament was not called THE PLAYERS.

It was called the Tournament Players Championship or TPC for short. Many locals and some older pros still call it that.

The first three were held at the Atlanta Athletic Club, Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth and Inverrary Country Club in Lauderhill, Florida. They were won by Jack Nicklaus, Al Geiberger and Jack Nicklaus.

FIVE YEARS AT SAWGRASS

The next five years, everything moved to Sawgrass Country Club in Ponte Vedra Beach, where PGA TOUR players were often nearly blown off the course. OK, I exaggerate, but not by much if you have read any of the stories about the bad weather and the level of the wind.

Tournament champs were Mark Hayes, Jack Nicklaus, Lanny Wadkins, Lee Trevino and Raymond Floyd.

THE LEGEND OF TPC SAWGRASS IS BORN

Then, of course, the TPC Sawgrass course was unveiled to more or less horrible reviews by the PGA TOUR players. Really, none of the pros had anything good to say about it. It was a gigantic uproar, and you can find all kinds of unpleasant comments with Google. But it made the course famous! Especially noteworthy was the comment about it being the first golf course that could burn down because of the railroad ties.

The tournament was renamed THE PLAYERS Championship in the late 1980s.

There have been many extraordinary golfers who have won THE PLAYERS, the most prestigious tournament on the PGA TOUR. And there have been some journeymen. But what all champions have in common is that they beat the best field in golf. And after 1982, they beat the best field in golf on a very demanding, top-100 golf course, from first tee ball to final hole out. There is no easy shot out there, unless it's a tap in.

So now with that background, which month do you prefer?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56 ■



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Now for the fun: Consider the following questions to help you decide which month you prefer, and I'll weigh in too.

► *Azaleas (March) or roses (May)?*

The knock-out roses were great, but with luck, that eye-popping bloom of pink and white azaleas up and down TPC Boulevard will be at its peak.



► *Windy 17th (March) or milquetoast 17th (May)?*
March will bring lots of doubles and others at the Island 17th. If it were me playing, I'd want May when I get to that hole.



► *Windbreaker (March) or sunscreen (May)?*

I know which I'd prefer, although some of those May days did get warm.

► *Record scores in March or record scores in May?*

OK, this is a tie because record scores have been shot at both times of the year, but nobody has touched Greg Norman's 24-under par. That was in March.



► *Dining fireside (March) or dining oceanside (May)?*

They can both be nice, but a pleasant May evening is hard to beat.

► *Tree pollen (March) or grass pollen (May)?*

Tissue alert. I'm not sure which is worse. Are you? Just don't sneeze in anybody's backswing.



► *Hot toddy (March) or sweet tea (May)?*

Hmm. Sometimes life's choices are difficult. Maybe the onsite mixologists will create a new beverage?



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► *Ryegrass (March) or Bermudagrass (May)?*

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► *Earmuffs (March) or sun bats (May)?*

I have earmuffs. I am ready!

► *Fewer bugs (March) or more bugs (May)?*

This isn't even close. If only bug spray smelled like Chanel No. 5 ...

► *Boots (March) or flip-flops (May)?*

This just depends on your style and whether or not you have alien toes.



► *Spring break (March) or pre-graduation parties (May)?*

Does it matter? It's a par-tay either way.

► *Earlier finish (March) or later finish (May)?*

Well, the media will be happy with this anyway.

Sunset in March is 7:34 p.m. Sunset in May is 8:10 p.m.

► *First major of the year (March) or second major of the year (May)?*

"It's the first major of the year now," Davis Love III said.

"Yeah, you can quote me." Naysayers be banned from Ponte Vedra Beach!



► *New gold trophy (March) or crystal trophy (May)?*

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TIGER TIME

A look back
at his bounce-back
2018 season

By KATHY BISSELL

It's official. Tiger-mania has returned.

You may buy all the red Nike shirts you want, all the Bridgestone balls you can hit and all the TaylorMade drivers you can find.

Then, stake out your favorite spot at THE PLAYERS because after what we saw last season, anything is possible with Tiger Woods this year.

You remember last year, when Woods took his game out of mothballs and teed it up at the Farmers Insurance Open. His biggest issue was staying out of the rough. But he did make the weekend, and he finished 23rd. Respectable, unless your name is Tiger Woods and you've won eight times on that golf course.

But then, at Riviera Country Club for the Genesis Open, Woods took two steps back, missing the cut. Honestly, that course just has his number. It may have been great for Hogan, but so far, Woods has had little success there. It was on to Florida.

At the Honda Classic, Woods was within six shots of the lead going into the final round. And when he made three birdies by the eighth hole on Sunday, it looked for a time like he had a chance. But the magic wasn't there yet. Justin Thomas emerged. Woods moved up in his finishes, though, this time to 12th.

Thomas told a funny story about Woods after his victory.

"Every other time that I've had a chance to win or in LA, I get a text from him or hear from him, you know, kind of giving me a little advice or just kind of wishing me luck," Thomas explained. "Got crickets last night. I knew he had one thing in mind, and we both had the same thing in mind, so I thought that was pretty funny."



Photo by CHRIS NORTON

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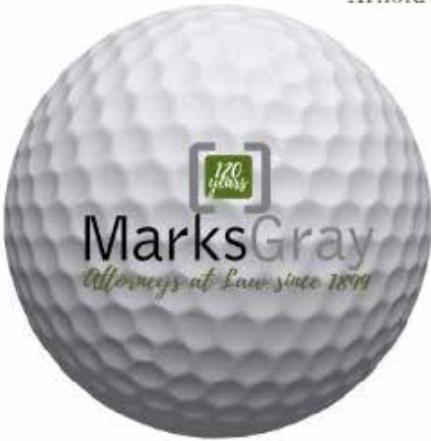
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In other words, they may be friends, but Woods is still Woods with Ws on his mind.

Next was the Arnold Palmer Invitational, which Woods has also won eight times. Eight. Really, you had to like his chances. He did too. In the back nine of the final round, he pulled to within one shot of the lead. An untimely left turn by his tee ball at the 16th hole, however, landed out of bounds. That ruined his score and made it easier for Rory McIlroy to win the tournament. But not all was lost.

“If you would have asked me at the beginning of the year if I would have had a chance to win two golf tournaments, I would have taken that in a heartbeat,” Woods said afterwards with a smile that genuinely indicated he was pleased with his progress.

What Woods wasn't doing was getting into the lead. He was chasing.

In a last-minute decision based on the need to get more reps, Woods added the Valspar in Tampa, a tournament he'd never played. To say it discombobulated the event organizers is an understatement. There may still be some residual backed up traffic on Route 19 from last year.

As the final round unfolded, Woods was within closing distance of the lead. Coming down the stretch, he needed to make a miracle, 43-foot birdie putt at the 17th hole to pull within one shot of Paul Casey. What he did was vintage Tiger. It rolled and rolled and rolled and finally dropped into the hole. Everyone went nuts. Totally bonkers. In the end, Woods was not able to make birdie on 18 to force a playoff. Paul Casey won.

The Masters rolled around, but Woods was over par the first two rounds, even par in the third and finally posted a 69 on the last day. He was never in it.

Because of his victory at THE PLAYERS in 2013, Woods was exempt for that tournament because it was the last year of his five-year exemption.

At TPC Sawgrass, Woods was average the first two days, posting a 72 and 71. Then something ridiculous happened. In the third round, he was 8-under for the day by the time he finished the 12th hole. Woods went 6-under par for the same 12-hole stretch on Sunday. On Sunday, however, a bogey at the 13th and an uncharacteristic ball in the water at the Island 17th dropped him back to an 11th place finish. But what everyone was talking about was that he was 14-under par for the first 12 holes for two days.

At The Memorial, Woods was 23rd, and at the U.S. Open, I like to say he was smart enough to miss the cut on a beautiful golf course that was set up by someone's divorce attorney. At his own tournament, the Quicken Loans, he finished tied for fourth.

In the final round of the sport's oldest event, the British Open, Woods actually took the lead for the first time all year after nine holes. He was one up on Francesco Molinari and Jordan Spieth. But fate would intervene. He doubled the 11th and bogeyed the 12th. Molinari went on to win.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 62 ■

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HOME OF THE PLAYERS



Photo by JON BLAUVELT

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 61

In the good news/bad news department, Woods had qualified for the final WGC-Bridgestone at Firestone, the last time a PGA TOUR event would be played there. He tied for 31st. He was tired but wouldn't get a break for a week.

Next came The PGA Championship in St. Louis, which featured monster-sized crowds all week, despite very hot weather. Woods did not contend until the final round, but he ended up posting a 64 to get the attention of eventual winner Brooks Koepka. He finished just two shots back. Woods could not believe the size or enthusiasm of the galleries.

"The people here were so positive, the energy was incredible," he noted.

He had played his way into the conversation for the Ryder Cup. Then, though all golfers were exhausted by the heat as much as the golf, they started the FedEx-Cup Playoffs.

His goal was just to get to the TOUR Championship. Woods finished tied for 40th at the Northern Trust. At the Dell Technologies, he finished tied for 24th.

At the BMW, however, Woods opened with a 62 that featured a back-nine 29. He was co-leader with Rory McIlroy. But it did not last. He finished tied for sixth.

Then came the most amazing tournament for Woods since he started down the road of back surgeries, of which there were four, in case you forgot.

At the TOUR Championship, Woods led or had a share of the lead for each of the first three rounds. After the first round, he was tied with Rickie Fowler. After the second, he was tied with Justin Rose. And after the third round, Woods once again had the lead by himself in a golf tournament. He was three shots ahead of Rory McIlroy and Justin Rose. As he explained, the chasers had to get to 3-under just to be even with him. He liked his chances.

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He started with a birdie and that electrified the crowd. He was four ahead. Meanwhile, McIlroy had three bogeys and a double on the front side. Justin Rose had two bogeys on the front. They were his closest chasers but halfway through their rounds, they were headed in the wrong direction.

It was Billy Horschel with a six-birdie, two-bogey round who nearly ruined the party for Woods, because Woods started to falter, making bogey on the 10th, 15th and 16th, with only one more birdie to counteract them. With Horschel finished, Woods needed no worse than par at the last hole to win the tournament. It was a par five, downhill, with a lake in front of the green and the historic East Lake clubhouse behind it.

After Woods' tee shot, the gallery that had witnessed his Sunday play began to overtake the fairway behind him. They were a swarm, amoeba-like, oozing into the short grass, behind him, ignoring the gallery ropes.

It was extraordinary, like the finish of the British Open. They came from everywhere, eclipsing the entire hole from tee to just in front of the green, all the while chanting, "Ti-ger, Ti-ger, Ti-ger." It was tumultuous and enthusiastic.

"I could hear it," Woods said about the commotion. "I just didn't really see much. I figured that security would hold them back."

Woods' second shot landed in the greenside bunker, causing a few nervous moments.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64 ■

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He described the situation best.

“The tournament wasn't over yet,” he said. “I still had a two-shot lead, but anything could still happen. I still needed to play the hole, and once I hit the ball into the bunker, I tried to miss it right of the flag. And once I got the ball onto the green, then the tournament was over. When I was hitting that bunker shot, just like every weekend hacker, just whatever you do, don't blade this thing out of bounds.”

Woods missed the first putt, a 7½-footer. But, really, he didn't need to make it. He had only inches left for his 80th PGA TOUR title, and he wasn't going to miss.

“It's certainly up there with obviously all the major championships I've won, THE PLAYERS, World Golf Championships,” he said after winning his 80th. “You know, I've explained throughout the year that I just didn't know whether — when this would ever happen again.”

But it did.



Photo by JON BLAUVELT

In a way, the 2018 TOUR Championship was one of the most important victories of Woods' career because it showed that at age 42, after multiple back and knee surgeries, he was still capable of winning. It was absolutely extraordinary to witness.

This season, everyone looks forward to seeing what kind of magic Woods has. Here in Ponte Vedra Beach, everyone

wants to know, will he contend at THE PLAYERS? Honestly, we have no way of knowing, but after last year, he can't be counted out.

As caddie Joe LaCava said about Woods at THE PLAYERS in ESPN film “Return of the Roar,” “This guy will own that golf course for the next six to eight years.”

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by KATHY BISSELL

photos by CHRIS NORTON

I don't know about you, but after 12 years of THE PLAYERS in May, I was just getting used to it. I was getting an idea of what kind of golfer would win that time of year, although my predictions were never anything close to the actual winner (except for the Adam Scott year, when I predicted an Aussie).

Now, they've gone and moved it back to March, and my cracked crystal ball hasn't made the transition yet. I can't even get a glimmer out of the darn thing. It just sits there and looks like a glob of glass. With cracks no less. I think it's still in May because it likes the weather better that time of year. I'm going to have to have a heart-to-heart with it shortly.

What I know for sure about March is it could be 85 or 55 out. It could be blazing sunshine or a nor'easter. But I am totally ready because I have earmuffs (leopard fake fur, if you must know) and gloves (in several colors, even pink and purple). I have fleece, and I have sunscreen. This change is not going to mess with me. But my mojo is off, and the crystal ball is having a bad hair day.

Outside of the weather, the real unknown is who the winner will be. I have to pick. As regular readers know, I avoid this like measles, which I hear is making a comeback. I would also avoid it like mumps. I've had both of those, and they were awful, just like chicken pox.

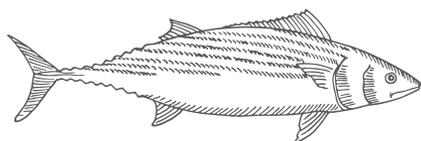
Anyway, a lot of things can get in your way when you really want to avoid something. There are the "Downton Abbey" re-

runs. There are the "Victoria" reruns and then the new season. There's the all-Tuesday night of "The Curse of Oak Island." You can blow an evening with them. There's "Finding Your Roots" where it was just recently revealed that Michael Strahan is a descendant of Charlemagne. No lie. How's that for an ancestor? And of course, there's golf on TV. These are all excellent ways to avoid choosing a winner. I can't find my old circular slide rule, either. At least I think I had one of those.

OK, OK. I know you really want to know who will win. Sometimes you have to start with who won't, especially if you are contacting Ladbrokes.

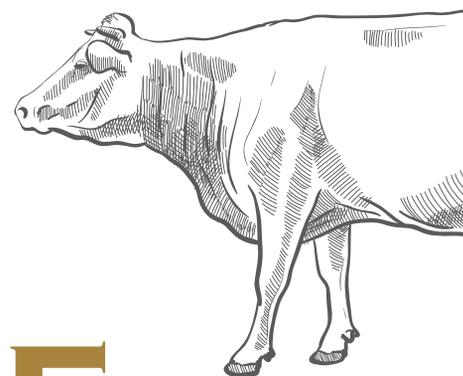
I would love to pick Jordan Spieth, but I don't think he's quite ready for Pete Dye. To win any PGA TOUR event, you need three good rounds, and you need to have no doubles in the fourth one. Lately, he's had 2 1/2 good rounds. And just to prove me wrong, he'll probably go out and win three tournaments in a row. We know he's capable. It's just if I had to pick him now, I'd say no. As someone, whose name

CONTINUED ON PAGE 68 ■



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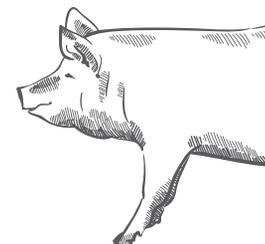
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I won't mention, said to me about Bob Tway after the year he won the PGA and three other tournaments, he might not ever win again. Of course, that wasn't the case with Bob, and it's 99.99 percent likely that it's not the case with Jordan. He's just not on a roll yet.

Dustin Johnson has played well here in the past. He's won twice since the calendar flipped to 2019, in Saudi Arabia and at the WGC-Mexico Championship. He is magic with the driver. He can stand at the Publix and AIA intersection and hit a ball that goes practically to Atlantic Beach and keep it on the road. Long is dangerous (Tiger Woods, Davis Love III, Fred Couples). Straight can be dangerous, too (Fred Funk). But DJ can be both, and that's killer. Plus, he's a "big tournament" player. Five of his 19 PGA TOUR victories have been WGC events, and four more have been FedEx Playoff titles. He's won the Sentry Tournament of Champions twice.

Pete Dye won't scare him. DJ probably just scowls at all the water hazards the same way he looked at the USGA officials who neglected to tell him for 30 minutes that he was getting a penalty at the U.S. Open that he won. His comment about it was something like, "Whatever." He just plays on. The more I think about it, he's a great pick.



Dustin Johnson

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Justin Rose

Another big-moment guy is Justin Rose. Remember, he won the gold medal at the 2016 Olympics. Since joining the PGA TOUR in 2004, he has won 10 times, including the U.S. Open and two WGCs. He won the 2018 Fort Worth Invitational at Ben Hogan's Colonial Country Club, which is short and requires special shot-making skills. And he won this year's Farmers Insurance Open, which plays the length of a U.S. Open course. He can hit it straight. He can hit it long when he needs to, and he can be a very good putter. And don't forget, he lost a playoff at The Masters. So, he has a solid game. In Europe, he has another nine victories. His game travels. It might travel to Ponte Vedra.

No one can overlook Brooks Koepka, unless he reinjures his wrist. So far as I know, he's fine. Last year at THE PLAYERS, he threw up a 63 in the last round. That tied the course record, proving that he, too, can play TPC Sawgrass. Sixty-threes do not grow on trees, and they are particularly rare at a course as severe as the one he will face here. Brooks just looks like he could tackle the course and hit it while it's down and have a laugh about it. He's officially a very serious contender.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 70 ■



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I don't know if Henrik Stenson's elbow is healed. It bothered him all last year. He's a straight hitting machine when he's on, and he's hysterical quote-wise. I imagine his family is in stitches all the time with the stuff he says. For instance, when Jordan Spieth won the TOUR Championship a couple years ago and Stenson was second, Henrik was asked about a 30-foot putt that Jordan made in the final round and he quipped, "That's just a tap in for him." But, unfortunately, I think we have to wait a while for Henrik to come back to top form.

Xander Schauffele finished second last year, and I picked him as a dark horse. Well, he won a TOUR Championship in his first full season on the PGA TOUR, so I keep thinking he deserves more than a look. I actually like his chances. He's sneaky when he wins. You don't expect it, and boom, there he is, holding the trophy while your back was turned for two minutes. At this writing, guess who's leading the money list? Xander. He might like that five-year exemption, although chances are, he won't need it. Do not count



Xander Schauffele



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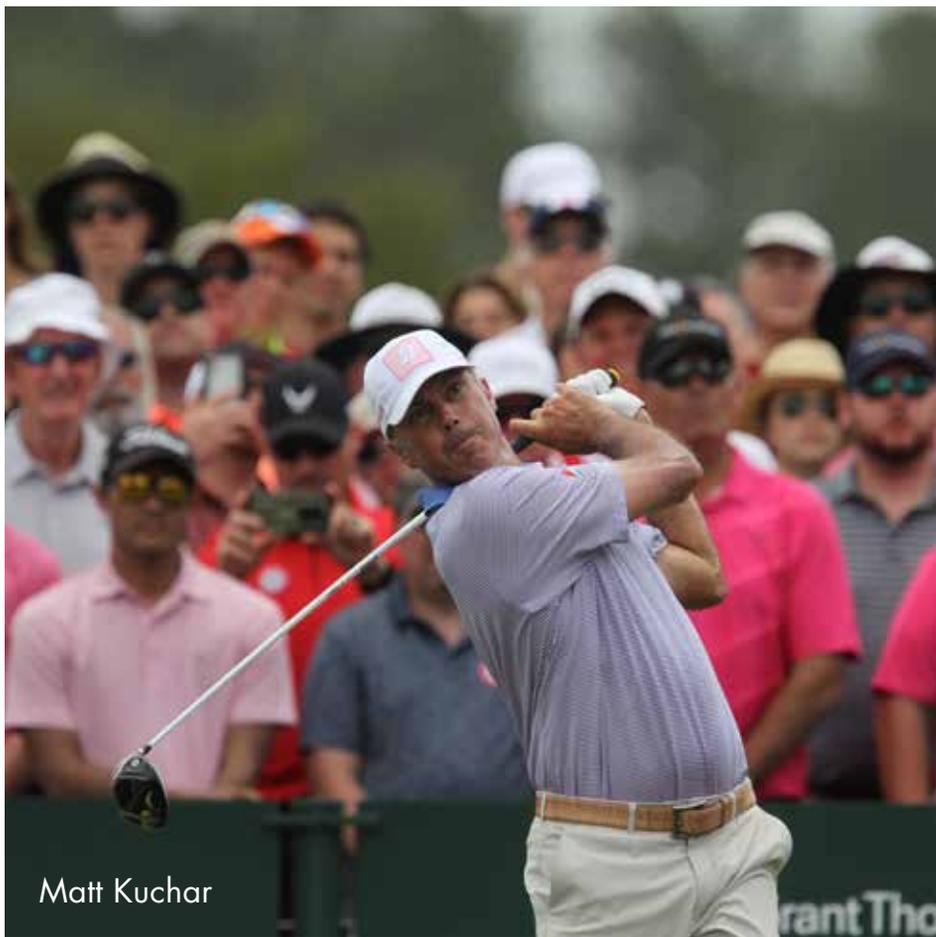
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Matt Kuchar

him out. He really needs to change the spelling of his name, however, to “Zander” and then start doing autographs like Zorro. “Z” slash, slash, slash. For full effect, he could try playing in a mask and use the Chi Chi Rodriguez Zorro-like sword move each time he finishes a round. That would get some attention.

Matt Kuchar is another guy who sneaks into the winner’s circle when you least expect it. Like Xander, he’s won twice since the latest wraparound season started. He’s already won at TPC Sawgrass so he knows where all the alligators and snakes and other denizens are hidden. He knows how to use his stealth to overcome Pete Dye’s design. He’s a threat.

Rickie Fowler has already proven he has as much guts as any other player. That shot he hit at the 17th in winning THE PLAYERS a few years ago showed how much talent and fortitude he has. With a win in his back pocket already this season and what seems to be the best attitude in golf no matter what, you’ve got to give a guy who rebounds like the Roadrunner a good look.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 72 ■

Who is Scott A. Grant?

- A) Historian
- B) Investment Strategist
- C) Chess Player
- D) All of the above



Ah, and then there's the ladies' favorite: Bryson DeChambeau. Yes, he's a chick magnet for sure, but he's also got a winning game. He won three times last year at tough tracks: The Memorial, Northern Trust and Dell Technologies. Then he added another victory in the fall at the Shriners and continued his success into the early winter with a victory in the Omega Dubai Desert Classic. That's five victories since last May. Not bad for a guy who missed 16 cuts two years ago. I'd definitely call him most improved! He doesn't seem to be bothered by any distractions, now that he's settled on a putting style. If he can keep the ball dry, he should do well.

We should all watch to see how Cameron Champ fares at TPC Sawgrass. It's the first time he's eligible for THE PLAYERS, and so, to me, that takes him out of the mix. But I have been wrong plenty of times. The issue is that the angle of the dangle on the holes at TPC Sawgrass will tend to negate the length advantage he has on many other courses. Yet, long hitters have had great weeks here.



Bryson DeChambeau

Janet E. Johnson, P.A.

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Jason Day

I can't believe Justin Thomas has not won THE PLAYERS twice already, let alone once. The way he attacked golf in the 2017 season, with five victories including the PGA Championship, I was surprised he didn't win every time he teed it up after that. Seriously. He was incredible. Last year, he dropped down (I hope you realize I'm kidding) to only three wins on the PGA TOUR. He's a skinny, but strong, wisp of a man, and he hits his drives so hard that he leaves the ground when he does it. Watch him if you get the chance. It's unbelievable. Laura Davies does the same thing. If this were the Wild West, you wouldn't want to try to outdraw him. And amazingly, he's a really nice guy.

We also have to keep an eye on Jason Day. After a couple years of not being No. 1, he's got the hunger back. He's been playing better this season. His back is not giving him problems, and his family is doing well. I think he can probably play through anything, weather-wise. He's won all over the country and then some. He has a victory in San Diego, in Chicago, in Orlando, in Wisconsin, in North Carolina, in Ponte Vedra and in Canada. That is golfing your ball.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 74 ■



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Adam Scott has already won THE PLAYERS. As for his new technique of leaving the pin in the hole when he putts, one TV announcer said it was like the USGA gave him back what they took away with the anchored putting ban. He's using a regular length putter, at least as of this writing. I charge the improvement to the fact that it's easier to see the slope of the green with the flag in. It's like a permanent plumb bob. You know where perpendicular is. He's almost always been a great driver of the ball, and he's not intimidated by the course. He won in March and told us last year that he preferred it then.

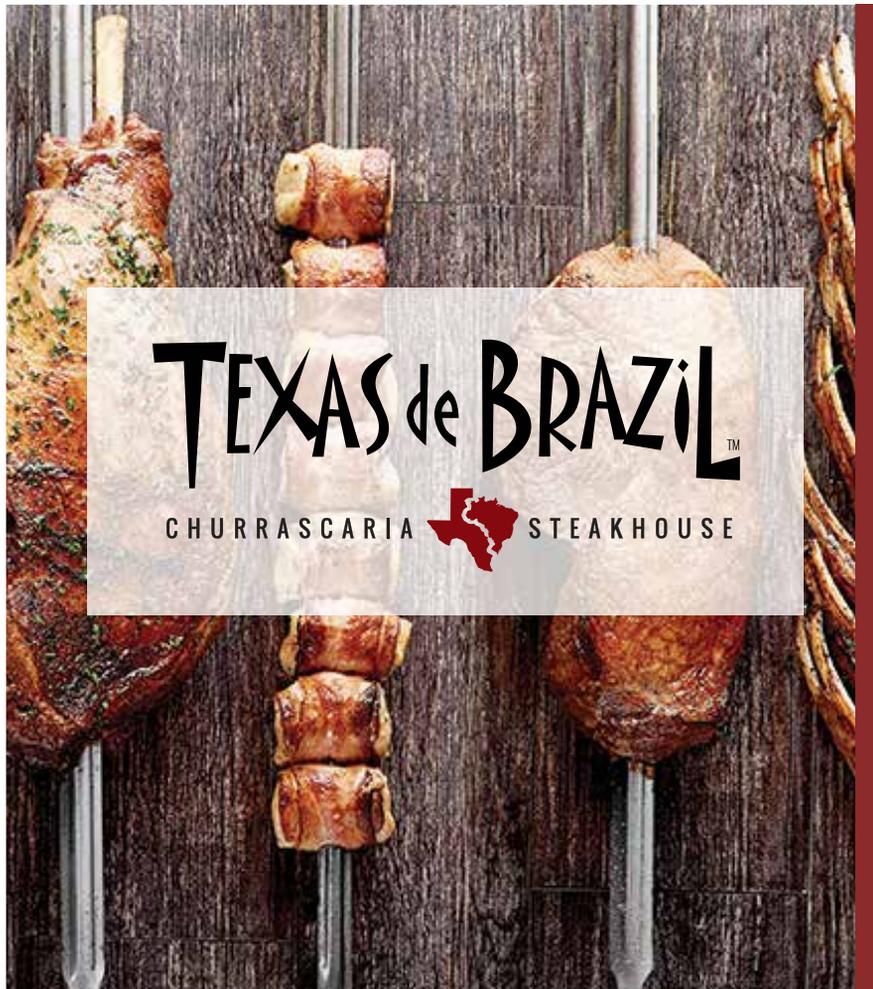
"I think they tried to make it the best in May they could, but I think that course just played better with the grass conditions in March," he said. "It's such a huge event. I think it's going to kind of be the first big event of the year again so I think that'll be exciting for that tournament."



Adam Scott

One guy who has played well but hasn't won at THE PLAYERS is Rory McIlroy. I'm baffled by that. He has precision. He can obviously hit it long when he wants to, since he led the TOUR in driving distance average last year. Really, he should birdie at least two out of four par fives every day. Two of them are very tough. Two are relatively easy. No. 9 is a hard hole for everybody. If you hit it

long enough to go for the green in two, you face trying to hit a very small target with a longer club. No. 2 is annoying because it requires precision off the tee although there's more room to hit the green with the second shot. And so Pete Dye goes, "Heh, heh, heh," again. Those two holes seem tougher to birdie or eagle than 11 or 16. I still think Rory can get it done.



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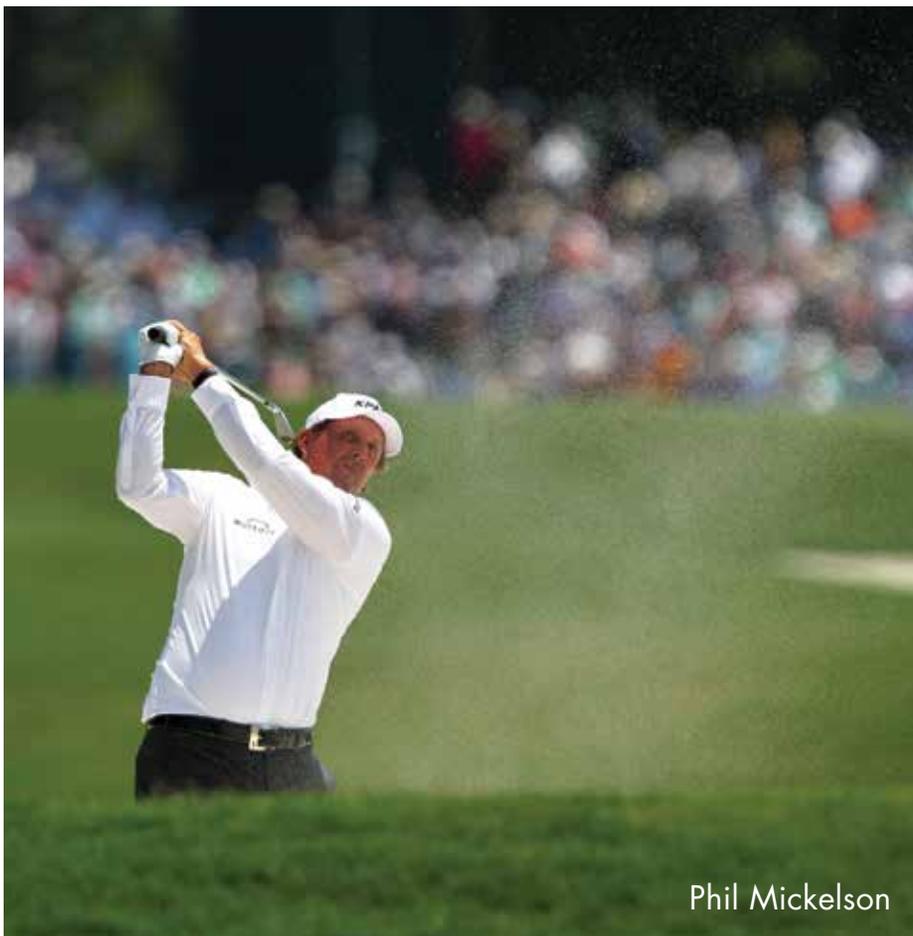
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Phil Mickelson

Also, in the “I can’t believe he hasn’t won it” department is Jon Rahm. Gosh he’s got talent coming out his ears. He does tend to have a bit of a temper, however, and nobody can make a golfer madder than Pete Dye. At least not from what I’ve seen. So, if he can let the temper out without letting it carry forward to the next shot, he has all the tools necessary for a victory here or anywhere.

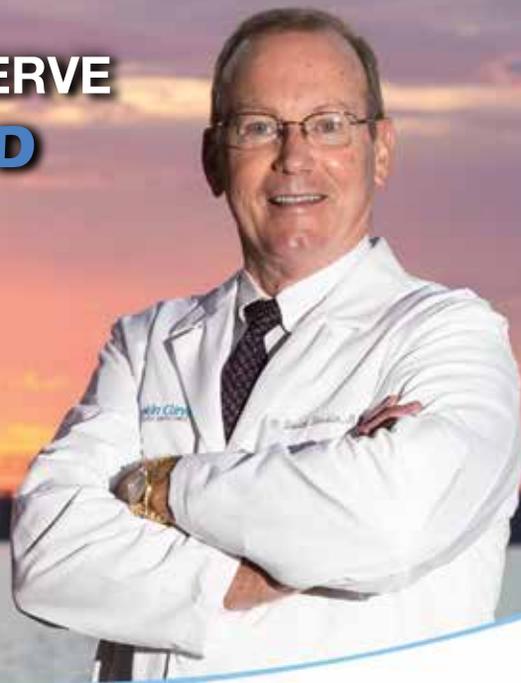
Now there are two players not named so far. One is Phil Mickelson, who is making an effort to win 50 tournaments. He turns 49 in June and he’s won 44 events as of AT&T Pebble Beach. So, six to go. I can’t believe it. I’m sure he can’t believe it either. I remember when he brought Amy, who had just become his fiancée, to meet Jay Randolph and me when we were working on a television show at the Tournament of Champions at La Costa. Phil was, as they say, “over the moon.” Perhaps if the stars line up and the rough isn’t too thick, he will be the second guy to win in May and March. Hopefully it won’t be so cold and rainy that he has to wear two gloves, but the better to hoist the new trophy.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 76 ■

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Tiger Woods

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 75

OK, you must have guessed by now that the last one to be mentioned is Tiger Woods. He is the only golfer who has won THE PLAYERS in both March and May.

The progression he made last year from the Farmers Insurance Open to Arnold Palmer's event was astonishing. Then the next week, he had another chance at Valspar. He kept

getting close, and then like Charlie Brown, Lucy pulled the football out from under him. It was frustrating, I'm sure, except that he was truly pleased with his progress.

If Tiger had not won the TOUR Championship, I would not even mention him. And if his caddie, Joe LaCava, had not said in "Return of the Roar," "This guy will own that golf course for the next six to eight years," meaning TPC Sawgrass, I would not even think it possible.

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But I have a lot of respect for what Joe says. If Joey says he can do it, I'm on board.

Tiger's chances may depend on how he plays at the Arnold Palmer Invitational. If he's cruising there, then I wouldn't bet against him here. Woods is simply the most explosive golfer of his generation.

Then there's history, which if Tiger thinks about it, will motivate him.

While Davis Love III and I think THE PLAYERS is a major, not everybody is quite convinced yet. But it will get there. It has the strongest field all year. Much stronger than The Masters, stronger than the PGA, stronger than the U.S. Open and stronger than the British Open. It is the annual Armageddon of golf, played out on a turf and sand and water battlefield until only one victor emerges. It is played on a dramatic, distinctive, destructive and memorable top-100 golf course, the likes of which people had never seen until its debut in 1982.

As Webb Simpson said at media day, it's now the first time all year that all the top golfers show up for a tournament because nobody skips it. It's too important.

So, when the rest of the golf world comes around to the point of view of Davis Love III (and me), then whoever wins it will have won another major. If Tiger wins one more, seeking to match the major titles of Jack Nicklaus, he will equal Jack in THE PLAYERS trophies. It's worth winning again for that. And the first-place check isn't bad either.

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Going Gold

By KATHY BISSELL

Previous winners of THE PLAYERS will now have trophy envy. Gone is the crystal, and here to stay is a new, 24-karat gold vermeil trophy that brings to life the tournament's famed "Goldman," and the PGA TOUR's swinging golfer logo.

The golfer in the trophy is perched on a miniature 17th Island Green, complete with railroad ties and surrounded by hammered metal that represents the water. And then that sits on a smooth vermeil base.

For those who are unfamiliar, vermeil is sterling silver coated in a layer of gold. It is often used in jewelry and other precious items. A famous use of vermeil is in the Vermeil Room at the White House, which features a collection of vermeil items, many of which were donated to the White House during the Eisenhower administration. Some date from the late 1700s.

Really, the new trophy is quite striking, and it wasn't just any trophy design or just any golfer's swing that was used to create it. It was, as Tiger Woods says about improving his game, a process.

The PGA TOUR worked with Tiffany & Co. to design the new prize. Using a process called "electroforming," the two companies began with the inspiration of the swinging golfer. Then, through sophisticated computer modeling, designers incorporated aspects of each of the 38 different winners of THE PLAYERS — from Jack Nicklaus to Webb Simpson, with elements of Phil Mickelson, Calvin Peete, Rickie Fowler, Fred Couples and Tiger Woods mixed in between.



When I heard about this overall process, I thought of the Indy 500 trophy with all of the winners' faces plating the prize. But that's not what the PGA TOUR had in mind at all. They wanted something sleek and modern.

"Tiffany & Co. has gone through an arduous level of detail to create a fitting accolade and citation for our champion, one that will continue to elevate the status and stature of THE PLAYERS Championship," said Jared Rice, THE PLAYERS executive director. "The final product is beyond stunning and will serve as a fitting final acknowledgement for the player who outlasts the deepest field in our sport."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 80 ■



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■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 79

Electroforming is a process that uses electric current to build up layers of a precious metal around a temporary core to create a smooth and seamless finish. The Tiffany & Co. design team worked with the PGA TOUR to replicate a golfer whose form was then created into a mold using 3D-printing technology.

“This project was both challenging and fun,” said Andrew Hart, senior vice president of diamond and jewelry supply at Tiffany & Co. “We had to design and engineer a trophy that was held together from the inside. From the beginning, Tiffany designers and craftspeople in our 18-person shop were



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The bonus of this design process is that the PGA TOUR can say that all past champions are represented more than just in name. They are the trophy.

As though that wasn't enough, there will really be two trophies, one that the winner takes home and the permanent one inside the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse. The golfer in the trophy that will be hoisted up by THE PLAYERS champion will be nearly 8 inches in diameter, 17 inches tall and will weigh just over 7.5 pounds.

The permanent trophy, which will be on display inside the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse, will be 32.25 inches high and weigh 34.46 pounds. It will have a 15.25-inch base, where the names of all the winners of THE PLAYERS will be engraved.



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Going the

DISTANCE

Data shows players' drives becoming longer

by KATHY BISSELL

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In December, the final PGA TOUR statistics for 2018 were revealed in the distance category. The average drive of a PGA TOUR player was 4 yards longer at the end of 2018 than at the end of 2017.

“Harveleckuways!” you shriek.

I agree. In whatever language you are speaking, yes, it’s amazing.

“Perunkrub!” you moan and order another beverage.

I feel your pain and wish I, too, could add 4 yards or better yet, 14 yards.

“Lamiss,” you sigh.

Ok, all these ridiculous words were really from a nonsense word generator, but it saves me from getting fined by the expletive police. And when you find out how far the PGA TOUR players are hitting their drives, not only will you have driver envy, but you will want to yell, “Literessage, lificity, you bloove!” In other words, why the bleep can’t I do that?

Here’s where the big boys are today.

In 2017, the average drive on the PGA TOUR was 292.1 yards. For 2018, it was 296.1 yards. Four yards more.

The thing is, 4 yards is a big jump, even for the average of the longest of the long. The commonly quoted phrase on year-to-year increases has been, “It’s no more than a yard or two a year.”

And they’ve been right, until now. Looking at the PGA TOUR stats, since 2000, most years, it’s actually less than that. Still, to me even a yard per year over 10 years is 10 yards. (Yeah, I’ve got that one math brain cell working.) So, let’s look

in the recent rearview golf mirror for a minute.

In 2008, 2009 and 2010, average driving distance was 287.3 yards. In 2011, it increased to 290.9 yards, a gain of 3.6 yards, which is a lot. Hard to believe no one said anything then, but they didn’t.

In 2012, it dropped back to 289.1 yards. In 2013, it dropped again, by almost 2 yards, to 287.2 yards. I’m guessing the culprits of those two stats were rainy golf seasons. Some years are like that.

But in 2014, the climb began once more. That year it was up to 288.8 yards. In 2015, it was up again to 289.7 yards. In 2016, it was 290.1 yards.

Then, in 2017, the average was 292.1, which was a 2-yard increase, according to the TOUR’s stats.

Finally, in 2018, with an average of 296.1 yards, the PGA TOUR driving average increased by 4 yards, really a numerically giant leap. I’d say it was a significant move, but significant actually means something in particular in statistics, and 4 yards may not be “statistically significant,” although it is definitely an eyebrow raiser.

Now, let’s face it, everybody digs the long ball, including the guys who hit it. Dustin Johnson, Bubba Watson, Tony Finau, Brooks Koepka. And how about that newcomer, Cameron Champ? He set a new record for driving distance average last year on the Web.com Tour at 343 yards. Average. That was not even his best drive.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 84 ■

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THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP GUIDE 2019 83

So, who was the leader in driving distance average in 2018? This may surprise you. It was Rory McIlroy, that cherubic-looking gentleman from Northern Ireland. His average last season was 319.7 yards, a far cry from 296.1 and 23.6 yards longer than the TOUR average. And he's not alone in the long-bomber department.

There were 60 golfers who averaged 300 yards or more in 2018. Poor Jordan Spieth and Rickie Fowler were tied at 299.8, in 61st place, along with Louis Oosthuizen. Oh, for that extra two-tenths of a yard to average at least three football fields! Arrrrgh!

McIlroy's power aside, the concern among many traditionalists is that golf courses are rapidly being obsoleted, faster than imagined, for professional play. For instance, many remember when the Stadium Course at PGA West was opened in 1986, and everybody looked at the back tees of 7,700 yards and thought, that's just nuts. Guess what. It's not. It's the Farmers Insurance Open in 2019, the distance they played it this year. And that's not long enough for the future.

I've written about the distance issue before, but now that the horse and all other animals have left the barn, the USGA and R&A are "studying" the matter.

Well, they could have conveniently checked out this site handily run by Golfweek.com that has driving distance stats dating to 2000 in an easy-to-read-and-understand chart. The URL is mighty interesting, showing the former "distance-hasn't- changed-much" attitude. (golfweek.com/2015/12/22/average-driving-distance-pga-tour-hasnt-changed-much-decade/)



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The chart shows the average driving distance at the turn of the century was 272.8 yards. So, using my third- or fourth-grade math, from back in the Jurassic period when I was in elementary school, in less than 20 years, the average driving distance has increased nearly 25 yards. Actually, it comes to 23.3 yards, but hey, let's round up.

That means that PGA TOUR players, on average, are playing a course that's nearly 350 yards shorter for them than it was in 2000, just off the tee. (25 yards x 14 tee shots that are not par threes.) When you add second shots, and so forth, it's significantly shorter. And that's just for the average PGA TOUR player.

For McIlroy, a course could easily be 50 yards per tee shot shorter or 700 yards in all. You get the idea. Too much math gives a lot of people a headache, and this is golf, not a seminar in brain cramps. But this distance thing is one reason that before nearly every U.S. Open or PGA Championship, you'll hear about golf courses being modified to be longer.

So, is it good? Is it bad? It's good for those of us who like to see guys hit a ball practically into outer space. It's bad for anyone with a 1970s or earlier course wanting to host a PGA or a U.S. Open or be the site of a PGA TOUR event.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 87 ■



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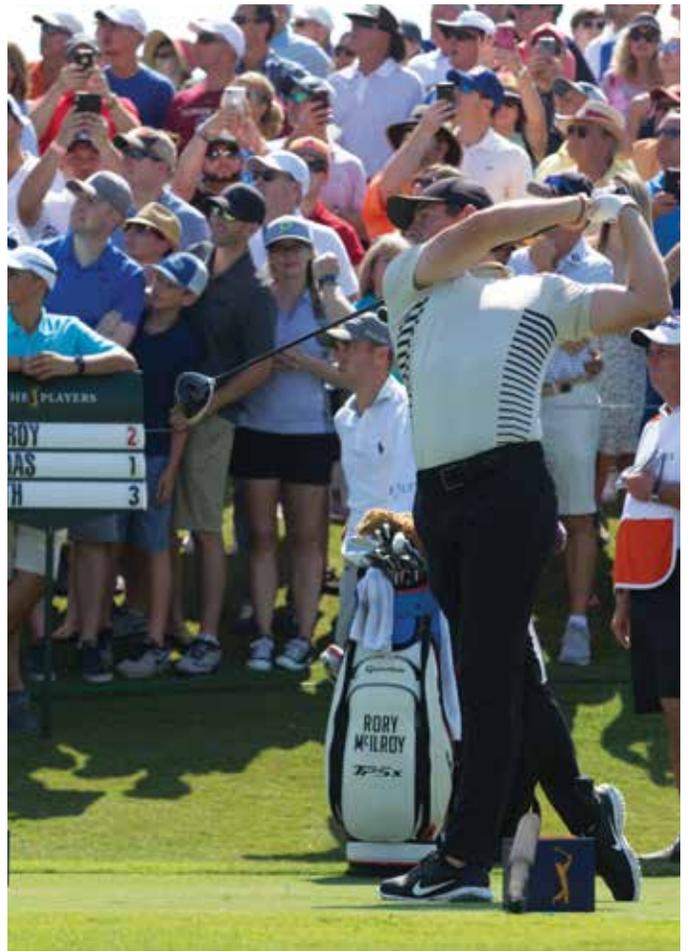
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Who was exactly an average driver on the PGA TOUR in 2018? Abraham Ancer. His driving distance average last year was exactly 296.1, based on 192 measured drives.

Year	PGA Tour avg. driving distance	PGA Tour leader (yards)	Players avg. over 300 yards
2018	296.1	Rory McIlroy (319.7)	60
2017	292.5	Rory McIlroy (316.7)	40
2016	290.0	J.B. Holmes (314.5)	27
2015	289.7	Dustin Johnson (317.7)	26
2014	288.8	Bubba Watson (314.3)	25
2013	287.2	Luke List (306.8)	13
2012	289.1	Bubba Watson (315.5)	21
2011	290.9	J.B. Holmes (318.4)	21
2010	287.3	Robert Garrigus (315.5)	12
2009	287.3	Robert Garrigus (312)	13
2008	287.3	Bubba Watson (315.1)	13
2007	288.6	Bubba Watson (315.2)	18
2006	288.9	Bubba Watson (319.6)	20
2005	288.4	Scott Hend (318.9)	26
2004	286.5	Hank Kuehne (314.4)	15
2003	285.9	Hank Kuehne (321.4)	9
2002	279.5	John Daly (306.8)	1
2001	278.8	John Daly (306.7)	1
2000	272.8	John Daly (301.4)	1

Data courtesy of Golfweek.com and PGATOUR.com



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The increasing distance pros hit the ball has already been bad for Augusta National. They have had to buy land from neighboring Augusta Country Club twice to “fix” their 13th hole, and in recent years they bought up land northwest of the golf course, including a goodly number of homes, which until now, they have used as parking. Golf.com got an early copy of the tournament guide for the 2019 Masters and reported that the yardage for the fifth hole has been increased 40 yards. Apparently, the tee is across Old Berckmans Road, which used to be the northern boundary of the club’s property. The hole is now 495 yards.

To give you some perspective, when most baby boomers were growing up, a par five started at 475 yards. This hole is 20 yards longer than that and is a par four, with some yawning chasms of sand and a fairway that slopes away from the middle and a green that’s unhittable even from close range.

Guys like Cameron Champ, however, beg the question, in five years, how many other pros will be averaging 343 off the tee? I hope the PGA TOUR has an acre or two in reserve behind the tees of a few holes at TPC Sawgrass, or the field will be driving the green on half the holes. OK, I exaggerate, but I bet you’ll find that it’s not much of an embellishment. Just wait until 2024.

At that point, someone at PGA TOUR headquarters is surely going to yell, “Potatage warnwable! We need a longer course!”

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RECENT RULES MODIFICATIONS 101

by KATHY BISSELL

All hail simplified golf rules. Thank goodness, you're thinking. In fact, the most recent set of rules modifications set forth by the USGA and R&A has many golfers shrieking, "Eureka!"

The reason is that some of the rules are just so nutty that you figure they were written by 10-year-olds trying to make a game harder than necessary. Or they were written by someone who wanted to clerk for the Supreme Court. But the rules are the rules, and you gotta follow them or there are penalties, even if the writing is sometimes as clear as chocolate milk.



BALL PLAYED FROM GREEN HITS UNATTENDED FLAGSTICK IN HOLE

The most noticeable change, if you've watched any televised golf this year, is that golfers can now leave the flagstick in the hole when they putt. Bryson DeChambeau, the winner at the 2019 Omega Dubai Desert Classic, is using the rule change to his advantage.

"It depends on the COR, the coefficient of restitution of the flagstick," DeChambeau, a former physics major at Southern Methodist University, said to Golf Channel early in 2019. "In U.S. Opens, I'll take it out, and every other TOUR event, when it's fiberglass, I'll leave it in and bounce that ball against the flagstick if I need to."

(Coefficient of restitution basically is the measure of materials colliding, like a golf ball with a flagstick or a golf ball with a driver.)

Jason Dufner said he's going to leave the flagstick in some of the time but admitted it's an adjustment.

"You're so conditioned to seeing the hole and not having the flagstick in, so that's a little awkward," Dufner said at the Sony Open. "I think outside of like 6, 8 feet, there are defi-

nitely opportunities to use it to your advantage."

Justin Thomas is inclined not to leave it in the hole.

"If I have an 8-footer to win a golf tournament, I can't — I mean no offense, I can't really take myself seriously if I kept the pin in," he noted at the Sentry Tournament of Champions. "I guess there's some instances in tournaments where the pin is really the only thing that can stop it, that's one thing. But if I have a putt I'm trying to make, that thing's coming out."

For decades, it had been dangerous to leave the flagstick in the hole when putting on the green because there was a two-stroke penalty if the ball hit it. It wasn't always that way, however.

For a 12-year window between 1956 and 1968, a golfer could leave the flagstick in and hit it without penalty. Then in 1968, the rules makers had second thoughts and reversed the 1956 thinking. Now, it's OK to leave the flag in, again, and if you hit it, so what.

There's never been a penalty if the ball hits the flagstick with a shot from off the green or from the fairway, bunker or tee. Maybe they were going for consistency. That would be novel.

REPAIRING DAMAGE ON THE PUTTING GREEN

The most popular rules change has to be that golfers can tamp down spike marks on the green that are in the line of their putts. That means you'll see more golfers tap, tap, tapping down all manner of stuff on greens. Anyone who plays golf for any length of time has had putts hit spike marks, which in turn have thrown the ball off-line.

At the 2018 PGA Championship, for instance, Tiger Woods said about the condition of the greens at Bellerive after rain, "The only thing is you have to hit, a couple putts, you got to hit harder than normal, and there might be a few little spike marks."

Going forward, golfers can also repair damage on the green from animals, from ball marks when the ball hits the green and leaves indentations, and from shoe prints in the green. But they cannot fix "aeration holes, natural surface imperfections or natural wear of the hole," as stated exactly by the USGA.

I am somewhat confused about natural wear of the hole. What the heck is that? On the PGA TOUR, holes are moved every day. Of course, there are some golf courses that just leave them in one place for long periods of time. Those locations will not be charging you \$150 per round. More like \$5.

TOUCHING LOOSE IMPEDIMENTS OR GROUND IN A PENALTY AREA

And now let's look at a rule change that's going to make you really happy if you are an average golfer.

If your ball lands in a penalty area — what we have all called hazards for our whole lives — you can pick up loose grass, leaves, sticks and so forth, and you can touch the ground with your club without penalty before you take your next shot. It also applies to what we have all called water hazards, which the USGA now wants to call "penalty areas." They also lump stuff like lava into this category.

Remember when Paul Azinger was disqualified from the 1991 Doral tournament? I'm sure he'd like to forget it. Azinger's ball had landed in a shallow water hazard, now penalty area. He decided to play it. He took a stance and when he did, he moved a rock or two with his foot.

What caused the disqualification was a combination of ingredients. First, Azinger omitted the proper penalty for moving loose impediments in a penalty area because he didn't realize he had. As a result, he signed for a score that was lower than he should have had. That's why he was DQ-ed. It was a scorecard issue.

With the rules change, if he had that same shot today, he would not be penalized for moving loose impediments. He might still have gotten wet feet, however.

OTHER RULES CHANGES

There are many other changes in the rules, and here are some simple ones.



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CONTINUED ON PAGE 90 ■

If you are searching for a lost ball and move it accidentally during the search, there is no longer a penalty for moving the ball. Move it back to where it was as best you can. Play on.

Here's a rule modification that might have changed the outcome of the 1985 U.S. Open. It's a change in the double hit rule. Now, there's no longer a penalty for double hitting a ball in the same stroke. Most of us have enough trouble hitting it once.

A double hit almost never happens, but during the final round of that U.S. Open, T.C. Chen hit the ball twice while chipping from thick, gnarly rough around a green. At that time, because of the way the rules were written, he had to count both hits and take a penalty. Chen finished the hole with an eight and finished the tournament one shot back of winner Andy North. Of course, he did get a great nickname out of it. T.C. became "Two Chip."

Lest you think I was kidding about the Supreme Court clerk language, get a load of this one. It's an improvement that we can loosely call the "Dustin Johnson, U.S. Open" rule. You remember when the wind moved the ball on the green at Oakmont and Dustin Johnson got a penalty while others in the same situation didn't? And the USGA waited for quite some time before telling Johnson. (Grrrrr.)

If you are on the green and have marked and lifted your ball and replaced the ball and taken away the ball marker, if it

moves on its own or if the wind blows it, you can replace it to the original spot without penalty. If you haven't marked it and it moves, it is played from the spot where it ends up.

You'll love the USGA's language to describe that difference:

"When a ball at rest is moved by natural forces such as the wind, it is normally played as it lies because its movement is considered a continuation of the previous stroke, as no person or object affected where the ball lies.

"But when the moved ball had already been lifted and replaced, the connection to the previous stroke is no longer obvious."

Come on. Really? Connection to the previous stroke? What kind of mumbo-jumbo is that?

Rules for bunkers have changed. Golfers can pick up loose impediments, but the rest of the rules remain. They can't test the sand by touching it with a club. And they can't touch the sand on a backswing. But golfers can pick up leaves, soda cans, half donuts, whatever you happen to find in a bunker that isn't attached. Leprechauns. The normal stuff.

Here's one of my favorites. If you know someone who has damaged a golf club during play, like by bashing a tree in anger — that would never be us! — that club had to be taken out of play. Not anymore.

You've seen guys finishing rounds putting with their wedges, right? Usually because they got mad at their putter and bashed it into something immovable. Now, if a golfer

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damages a putter during a round and wants to continue using it even though it's damaged, it's OK. The same applies for any other club.

There are many other practical rules modifications, such as, if your ball hits you, your caddie or your equipment, you are no longer penalized.

If you need to drop a ball, you'll be dropping from knee-height, not your shoulder height. Yeah, it's a crazy one, but they were actually thinking of having people drop from an inch off the ground. That's nutty. They might as well have allowed someone to place the ball.

There was also the rule that stated your caddie can't stand behind you to help you line up your shots or putts. But believe it or not, this became a brouhaha as January turned into February. The rule got whacked by the PGA TOUR at the Phoenix Open. They suspended or rescinded it and sent it back to the USGA for revision because it came down to interpretation and intent. It wasn't specific enough.

What happened was that one player was penalized under this new rule. Denny McCarthy.

"I called a rules official over this morning, and showed them a couple videos of pictures that people sent me of other players doing exactly the same thing, and I was trying to find out what the difference was basically," McCarthy explained the day after he got the penalty. "And he (the rules official) said there was no difference and that they just, they missed it."

That's when the PGA TOUR knew they were working with

a bad rule, and they decided they were just not going to enforce as written. Denny McCarthy's penalty was rescinded.

"We appreciate — kudos to the R&A and to the USGA for looking into this, we'll get a more of a more definitive interpretation probably the next few days, and again I think it's a positive," PGA TOUR rules official Slugger White said.

So, before the end of the first week of February, the USGA tried to rewrite that one after the PGA TOUR said it was not going to call penalties on PGA TOUR players.

I tried to read the revision, which was released Feb. 5, but honestly, my eyes glazed over. I'll just wait to see how the PGA TOUR rules staff deals with it. These rules-making people all play golf, and half of them are attorneys. Yet they find it impossible to write a rule that works? As I said at the outset, some of the rules are nutty, and this was surely one of them, even though they originally intended it to be something that needs enforcing in certain situations.

If you are having trouble falling asleep and want to see the rewrite, here's the link that has a second link inside it for further study, as they say in academic papers: www.randa.org/News/2019/02/The-Randa-and-USGA-Release-Clarifications-To-Rule-10-2b%20

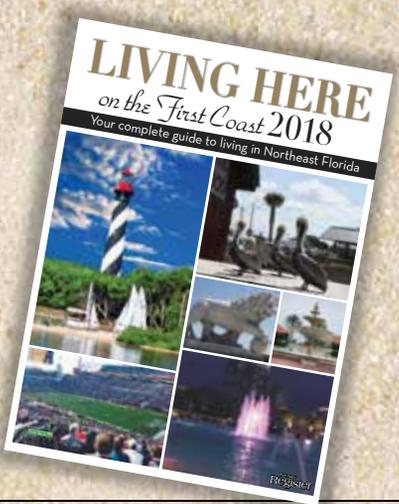
For more on these and other rules changes, some to potentially become controversies, visit the USGA web site at www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/major-changes.html.

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THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP GUIDE 2019 91

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goods fore Golfers

Best finds at the
2019 PGA Show

by KATHY BISSELL

Each year, the PGA Merchandise Show hosts PGA professionals and golf industry professionals in Orlando to discover the latest trends in golf equipment and technology, apparel and accessories. Here's a quick look at some of the most intriguing items that were on display at this year's show in late January.



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PUMA'S PLAY LOOSE COLLECTION

Palm frond designs seemed to be everywhere on golf shirts. Rickie will wear them from PUMA's Play Loose Collection. They are mostly worn untucked. Think surfer-style. us.puma.com/en/us/home



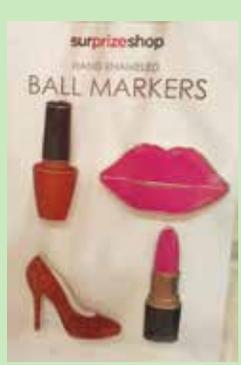
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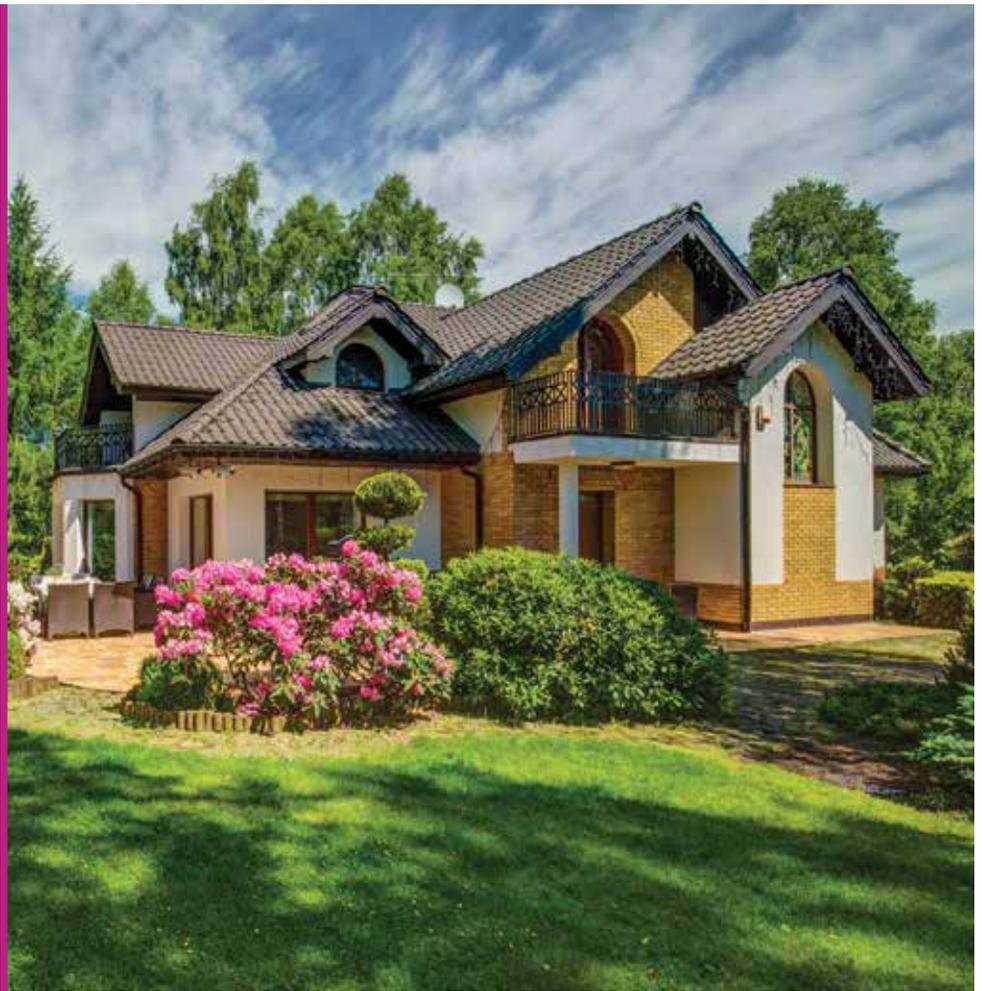
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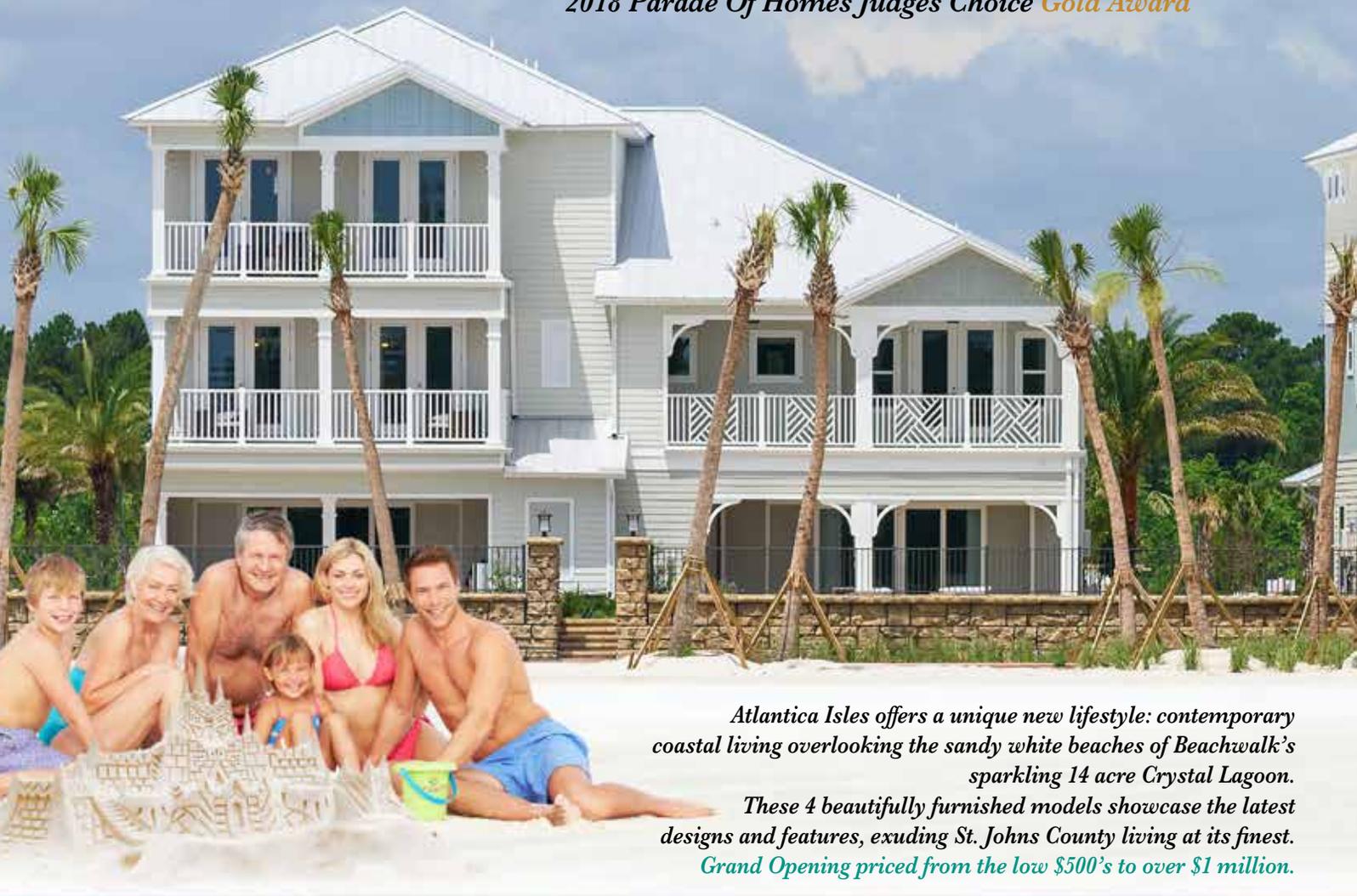
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