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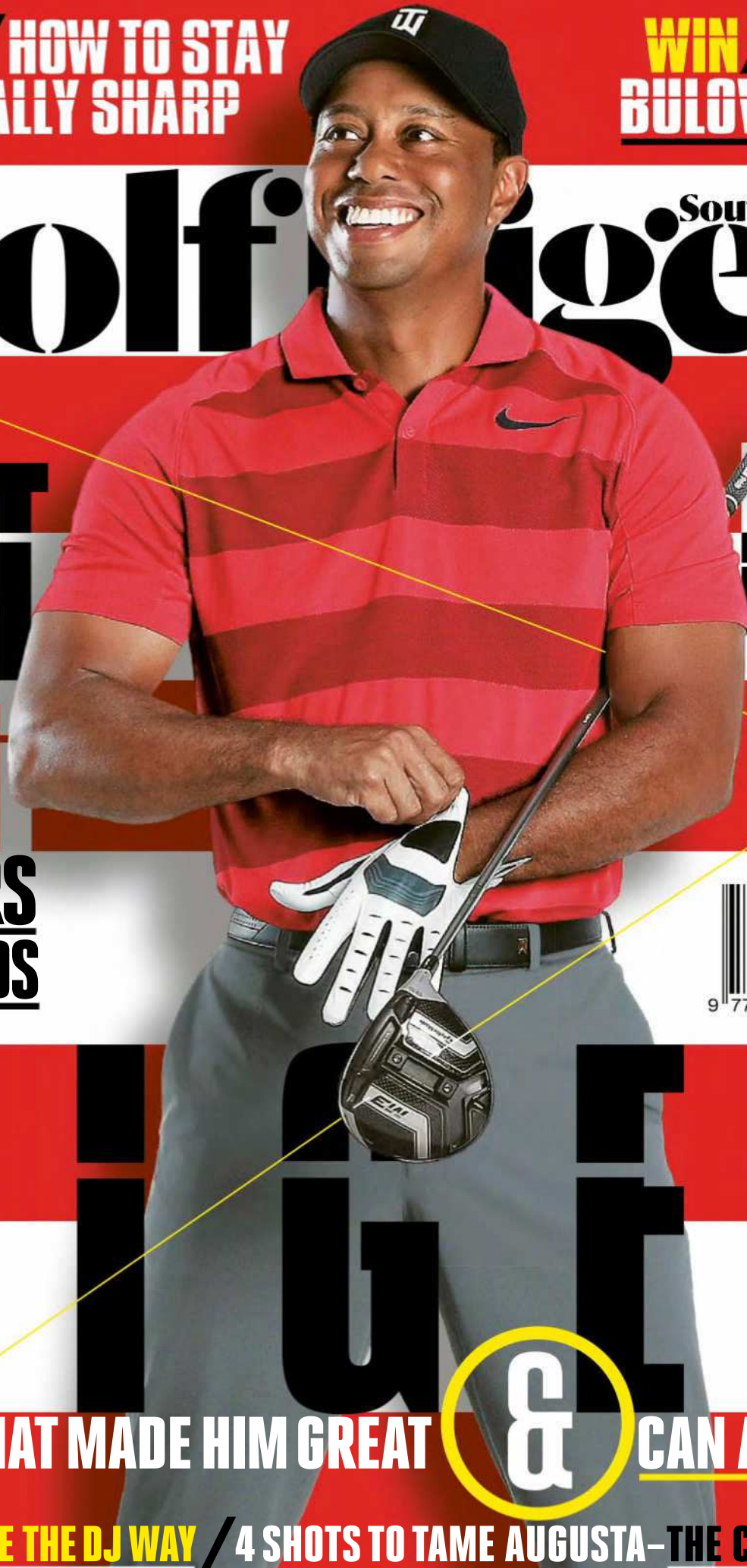


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THE GOLF & CLUB

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PRACTICE THE DJ WAY / 4 SHOTS TO TAME AUGUSTA - THE CLUB NEXT DOOR





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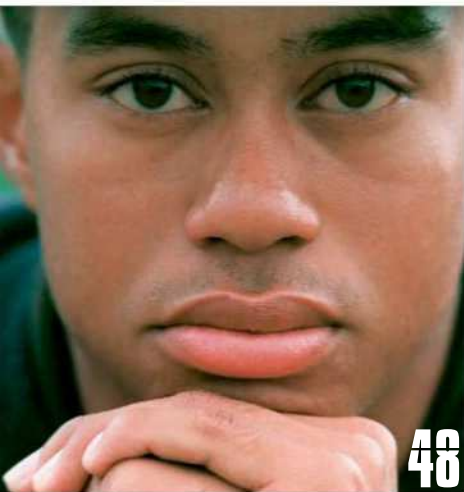
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04 / 18 BEHIND THE SCENES

WE'LL ALL SOON HAVE LOWER HANDICAPS

By Stuart McLean, Editor



Club golfers will soon face a drastic change to their handicaps. I'm not referring to the upcoming World Handicap System (see Page 22) but rather the

introduction locally of the USGA Course Rating which will lower everyone's handicaps by between one and three shots. Our handicap index will be in decimal points, not rounded up or down.

It turns out we are much better golfers than we thought we were in global handicap terms. Our talents have been hidden by an outdated rating system which only took length into consideration, and didn't interpret the difficulty of courses with bunkers, trees, water hazards, tricky greens and wind.

The USGA rating system is complex, and takes time to implement – modern courses with a variety of tees can take a day to rate – but under the leadership of former golf administrator Eric Lefson it has finally been achieved. All 441 courses in South Africa have been visited over the past two years and new ratings fixed for each of them.

Now it's up to the SA Golf Association to decide when they will be introduced once the cost of rollout is evaluated. They don't have to wait for the World Handicap System to take effect in 2020. But they must introduce the new USGA ratings in conjunction with Slope – a measure of the relative difficulty of a set of tees for a higher handicap when compared to a scratch golfer. The two elements need to work together.

The new ratings assigned to courses convey a different picture of their strengths and weaknesses compared to current ones. In virtually every case, the rating has increased, some drastically. Consider the current rating of 72 for the men's white club tees at Kyalami CC in Gauteng. The new rating will be 74.7, the highest rating of any course in South Africa off the club tees. Which means that many of Kyalami's members could face a handicap cut of nearly three shots.

Some may blanch at that, but the good news is that there will also be a Course Handicap every time they play which could see their handicaps go out again. A current 10 at Kyalami could be cut to 7, but play off 9 in competitions! Course Handicap is

determined by the Slope. Slope ensures equality among different golfers when competing, providing additional strokes. Golfers will be able to find their Course Handicap on conversion tables at a golf club, on the Handicaps Network Africa App, and HNA terminals.

HNA say that women golfers will experience the biggest fall in handicaps, 2.5 shots on average, and the average for men will be 1.5. The reason is that the average playing length for courses off the men's tees have not been as accurate as those for women. And when the new course ratings are introduced, they will be immediately backdated on the handicap system. So handicaps will change instantaneously.

A course's Slope rating tells you how easy or difficult it is to play for the high handicap. Among Top 100 courses, examples of a low Slope (easy) include St Francis Bay at 123, Royal Port Alfred 125, Mossel Bay 126, and Southbroom 129. Lengthy Legend is 130, and Wild Coast just 133, the same as Kyalami's club tees. The highest Slope in the land is 155, from the back tees of the Gary Player CC and Fancourt Links. Others include Steyn City and Jackal Creek (both 153), Pinnacle Point and Blair Atholl (152), St Francis Links (151), Pearl Valley and Silver Lakes (150).

Lefson explains the difference between course rating and Slope. "Typically, a course with a high rating is long and has tough greens, whereas courses with high Slope tend to have lots of carries, which affect a high handicap much more than a scratch golfer. The East Course at Royal J&K has a rating of 76.8 from the back tees, and a Slope of 142. This shows it is tough, but not impossible for the average golfer. Conversely, courses like Pinnacle Point and Eagle Canyon have lower course ratings, but a high Slope due to the way they play."

Slope will affect handicaps of golfers when they visit other courses, to put everyone on a level footing. Play at Pinnacle Point or Sun City and, depending on the tee you use, several extra shots will come your way.

"These are exciting times for our club golfers, who will have more realistic handicaps for the various courses they play," said Lefson.

stuart.mclean@newmediapub.co.za

Golf Digest

EDITORIAL

Editor **Stuart McLean** 021 417 5195
Head of Creative **Mark Serra**
Group Account Director: Health & Sport Division
Cat Anderson
Group Managing Editor: Health & Sport Division
Chantel Kleinsmidt 021 417 5156
Account Manager **Thanaa Moosa**
Contributing Editor **Barry Havenga**
Designer **Marcus Viljoen**
Photographers **Grant Leversha, Jamie Thom, Luke Walker**

GOLF DIGEST USA

Editor-in-Chief **Jerry Tarde**
Contributing Editor: International **Ju Kuang Tan**
Rights Clearance - Contracts & Rights **Monique Parish**
Director of Licensing **Angie Byun**
Playing Editors **Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson, Rickie Fowler, Phil Mickelson, Nick Price, Jordan Spieth, Justin Leonard, David Toms**

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Business Manager **Diane Lubbe** 083 391 1651
Key Account Manager **Elna Coetzter** 082 971 9715
Advertising Co-ordinator **Michelle Koetenberg**
Production Manager **Shirley Quinlan**

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Magsathome Contact Centre:
36 Old Mill Street, Ndabeni, Cape Town, 7405
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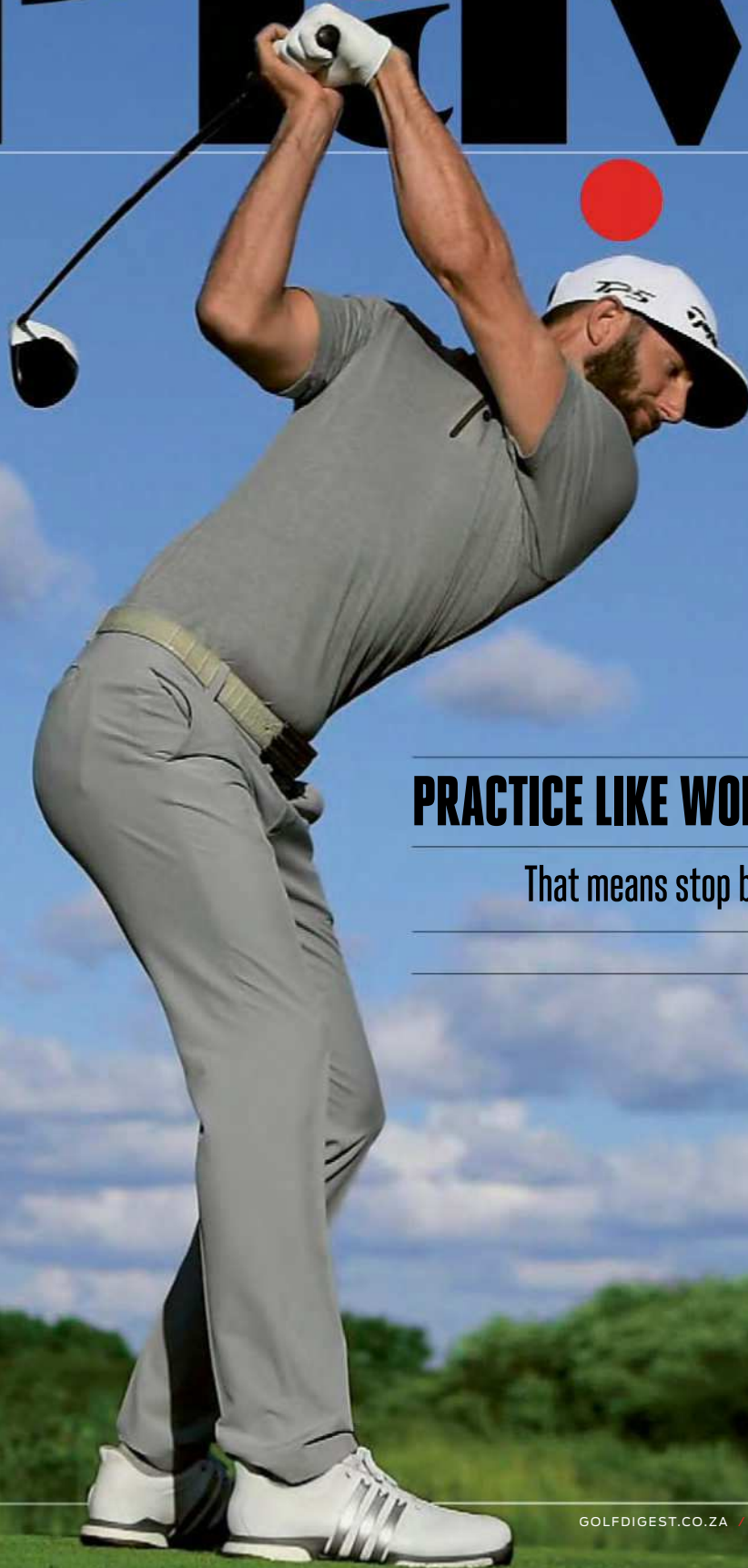
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Play



PRACTICE LIKE WORLD NO 1

That means stop beating balls

BY DUSTIN JOHNSON

“On days I play, I usually get on the practice green twice.”





A lot of guys misunderstand quality practice. They think they're getting value out of going to the range and beating balls for hours. But if you're not working on the correct things, not practising with any kind of focus, you're actually hurting your game. Me? I can't focus that long, and I get bored fast. So as soon as I start losing my concentration, I either go play or leave. You should, too.

Also understand that there's *practice* – that's what I do when I'm at home and I go see (instructor) Claude Harmon at the Floridian – and then there's *warming up*. What I mean is, you should take a different approach depending on whether you're about to play 18 or are just working on your game. Here's what I do for both.

HOW I PRACTICE

At home I play more than I practice, but when I do hit balls, I'm mostly hitting wedge shots. Then I'll go putt and chip. I don't have to tell you how much short game matters. When it comes to the longer clubs, I'll hit only a few balls with the rest of my irons, and maybe a few 3-woods and drivers. I'd rather go play. Even if I have two hours, I probably won't use it all on the range.

If you really want to get some good practice time in, especially if you're working on something, go on the course and play nine. Out there, I'll hit a couple of balls off the tee, a couple of shots into a green, maybe chip a few around the green – all focused on whatever mechanics I'm trying to put into play. That's way better than just standing on the range.

Think about it: If I'm just aiming at a flag on the range, I'm going to find a way to hit it at that flag – even if what I'm doing to get that ball on target isn't good for my game. Also, when you're on the range, you're hitting from a fixed position. The perspective is always the same. But when you get on the course, the perspective changes all the time. That's where you really get a sense of what it will be like in a

“I spend 80 percent of my practice time on wedge shots.”



competitive round.

One thing I worked on during the offseason was getting back to hitting almost all fades. After I returned from the back injury I had before the Masters last year, I really struggled to hit fades – especially with my irons. Because we were in the meaty part of the season, I didn’t have time to work on it until after the Presidents Cup. Now I’m paying more attention to my setup and holding the clubface open to my path coming into impact.

I’m also working on my putting stroke. I got in a habit of exiting it too much to the left, like a slice. Now I’m standing closer to the ball to help prevent that.

Getting back to my practice

routine, I have four wedges now and spend about 80 percent of my time hitting each of them four distances – a half shot, a three-quarter shot, a full shot and a max distance. I’m trying to control distance as best I can, and this type of practice builds confidence. If you want to score, these are the shots that are going to help the most.

HOW I GET READY FOR A ROUND

I take a little longer than most to warm up. I like to take my time because my biggest problem is, if I have to rush, I’ll be moving too fast all day. That’s not good for my game. I like to get to the course two hours before I tee off. First thing I do is get in the gym. I’ll ride the bike, do some

functional exercises, stretch, etc. Then I’ll come out to the practice area more than an hour before I play. I might hit some bunker shots and chips if the course has a decent short-game area, but if I don’t think the practice area is good enough, I’ll skip that and focus on putting for about 10 to 15 minutes. If I’m doing any practice drills with my putting back home, I’ll do them here, too, just to reinforce that feeling when I play.

After that, I’ll go to the range. Again, I’m hitting mostly wedges, using the same routine I do at home (half wedge, three-quarter, full, etc). Then I usually hit about five balls each with my 8-iron, 6-iron, 4-iron, 3-wood and driver – maybe not even five

swings with the driver.

I’ll then think about what I want to do on the first tee. It’s important to get off to a good start, so I’ll visualise the first tee and hit that shot, whatever it might be. I’ll then hit a few irons thinking about the approach shot before returning to the putting green to work on reads and speed. I read most of my putts, so I want to have a pretty good idea how fast it’s going to be out there. It’s the last thing I do.

Overall, my routines aren’t necessarily better than any other guy’s out here on tour, but if you do something similar to what I do, you’re going to get a lot more out of your prep time.

—WITH RON KASPRISKE

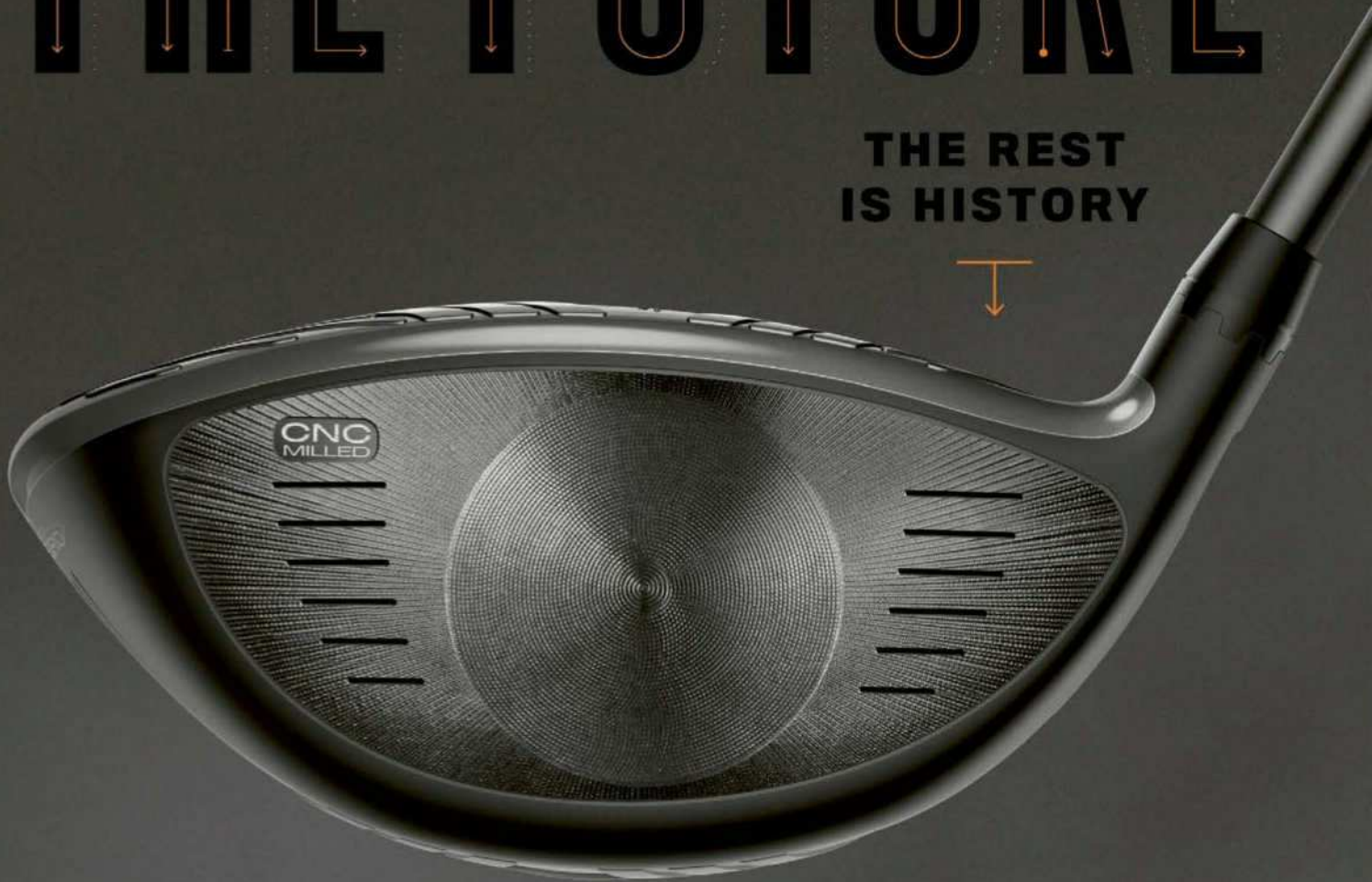


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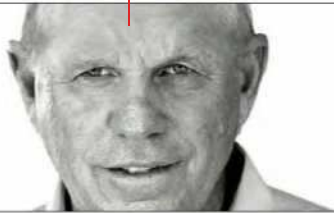
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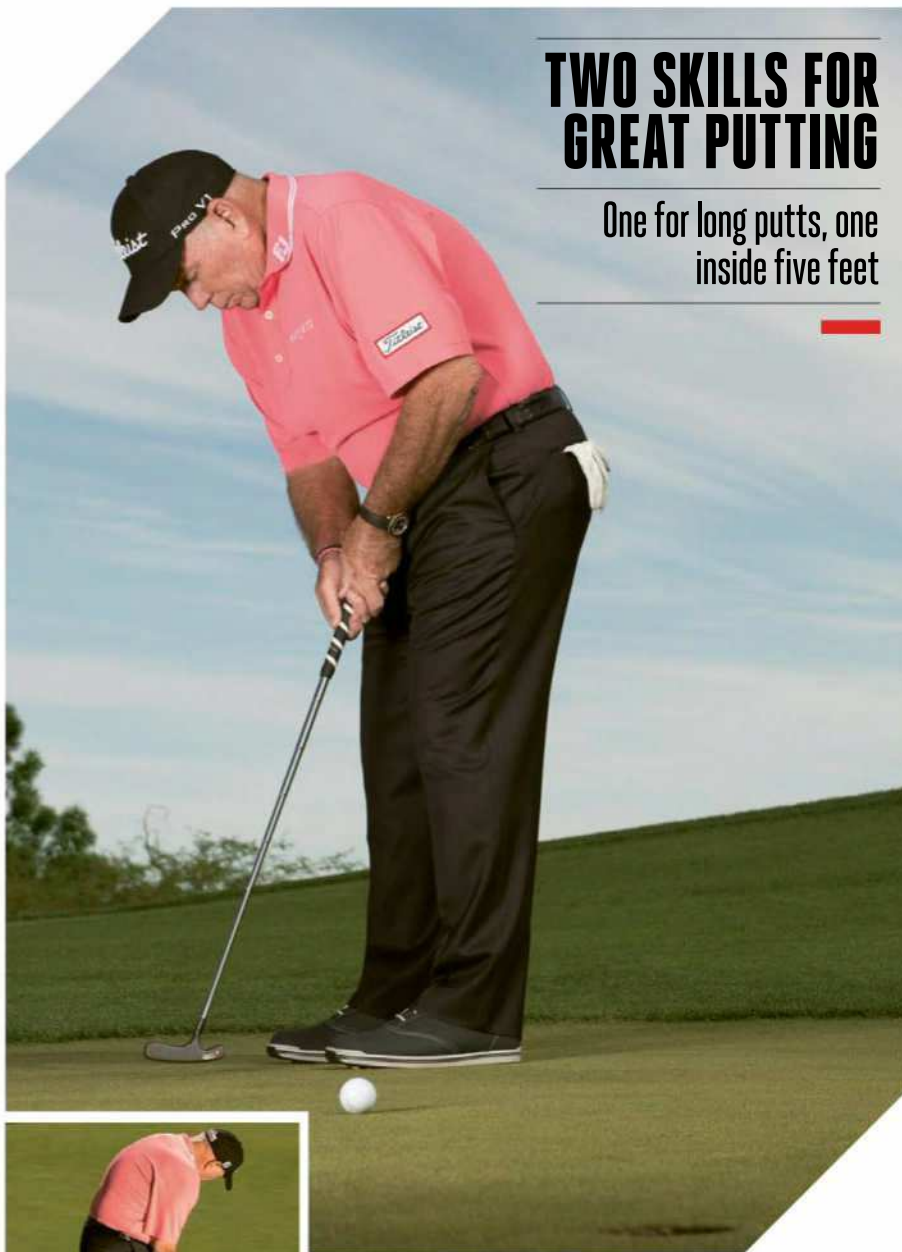


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“If you take your stance, then try to aim, you’re cooked.”



TWO SKILLS FOR GREAT PUTTING

One for long putts, one inside five feet

Being a great putter doesn't mean you're rolling in bombs all day. Sure, that would be nice, but quality putting is about distance control from long range and precise aim on the short ones.

From inside five feet, the biggest problem I see is a careless routine. It drives me crazy when golfers step up to a putt and plop their feet into place before thinking about where to aim the putter. Essentially, their feet have already dictated their aim. A better routine is to aim the putterface very carefully down your intended start line, *then* take a comfortable stance and go (*left*). If you do that – let your aim drive your setup, not the other way around – you'll make a ton more of these short putts.

For long putts, the first thing to check is grip pressure. Too often amateurs strangle the club, especially when they think they have to hit the putt harder for the ball to reach the hole. The problem is, the tighter your grip, the worse your chances of having any feel for distance. You need a light hold, so you can feel the weight of the putterhead as it swings, and keep that same pressure throughout the stroke. More distance comes from a longer stroke, not a burst of speed at impact.

So focus on (1) grip pressure on long putts and (2) aim on the short ones, and you'll do fine.

Butch Harmon is at Rio Secco Golf Club, Henderson, Nevada.



TRY TIGER'S OLD DRILL FOR CONSISTENT ROLLS

▶ Sometimes your stroke can get out of whack, and you start mis-hitting the ball. Here's a drill Tiger used when we worked together. Create a gate with two tees just wider than your putterhead and hit putts without the club touching either tee (*left*). If you loop the putterhead to the outside during the

stroke, you'll bump the outside tee. If you swing it to the inside, you'll bump the inside tee. Go through clean, and you're hitting the ball in the centre of the face. Just like any other shot in golf, if you catch it in the centre, with the face square, you're going to get a good result. That's what I see the best putters do.



Justin Thomas (1st)



2017 PGA Tour average



Ryan Palmer (180th)

▶ PUTTING (PER HOLE) AVERAGE

SOURCE: SHOTLINK

The big difference last year – winning five times, my first major (PGA Championship) and the FedEx Cup – was working hard on my putting consistency. I’ve always been a streaky putter. My great putting days are really great. But it’s about the bad putting days. You look at Jordan, Rickie or Tiger in his prime; their version of putting bad versus a guy ranked 100th on tour in putting is just so different.

So I worked on making those bad days better. First, when I practice, I put a mirror on the green with a line on it and put a ball on that line. Then I stand over the ball and make sure my eyes also are on that line with my left eye over the ball. I’m left-eye dominant. Having your eye line correct is going to make you a lot more accurate. I also check that the putterface is square to that line and my posture and body alignment are consistent. Finally, I pay attention to my feet. I’ll explain that in a second.

Another change, my pre-putt routine is shorter. I no longer take a practice stroke. I just step in and go before doubt can set in. I also have a shorter stroke. It’s the same on both sides of the ball, but the overall length is shorter because it’s easier to control. I mentioned my feet, because it’s important to feel as stable as possible in your lower body when you hit a putt. I want my feet gripping the ground, so my body doesn’t drift when I make a stroke.

As far as practice, I worked hard on putts over 10 feet. Making ones from long range, or at least getting them a lot closer to the hole, is going to make you a better player. One way to do that is randomise your practice. Keep changing the distance you hit putts, with a focus on speed control. Success at any level comes from not taking this part of the game for granted.

– WITH BRIAN WACKER



STROKE OF GENIUS

Make your worst putting days better

BY JUSTIN THOMAS



IT WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR

Money isn’t everything, or so they say, but it’s hard to ignore all those zeroes Justin Thomas added to his bank account throughout 2017. Here’s a breakdown.

▶ PGA TOUR REGULAR SEASON	\$7 094 741
▶ FEDEX CUP PLAYOFFS	\$2 826 819
▶ FEDEX CUP VICTORY BONUS	\$10 000 000
▶ TOTAL	\$19 921 560



Hitting it low and off the toe? Try this move to launch it.



GET OFF TO A GREAT START

Put yourself in position to hit solid tee shots

Nany times the easiest way to get a player to learn a skill or correct a mistake is to have them overemphasise the movement needed to execute the task – or even do the opposite of what they're doing, so they can find middle ground.

I call this teaching philosophy the art of exaggeration. Here's a great example of overemphasising a move to get you to swing with proper width, so you can hit better tee shots.

Many amateurs mistakenly bend the right arm almost as soon as they start the backswing. This pulls the club up and inside the target line way too soon, narrowing the swing arc and putting the club in poor position for the proper through-swing. Remember, your goal with a driver is to sweep the ball from the tee, not

hit down on it like you would with an iron off the turf. As your club approaches the ball, it should be on a shallow path – as if it's tracing the ground – and your arms should be as long as they were at address. That's what I mean when I say proper width.

If tee shots are one of the weakest parts of your game, you need to work on your takeaway. What you really want is a relatively straight right arm during the initial part of the backswing, as this promotes width. The move to accentuate

is keeping the right arm on top of the left as you take the club back for as long as you can, like I'm doing here.

As your upper body rotates away from the target, your right arm will fold under the left naturally. But the key is to focus on the right staying on top of the left during the takeaway. It sets you up to really launch your drives better than ever.

—WITH RON KASPRISKE

David Leadbetter, a *Golf Digest* Teaching Professional, runs 32 academies worldwide.

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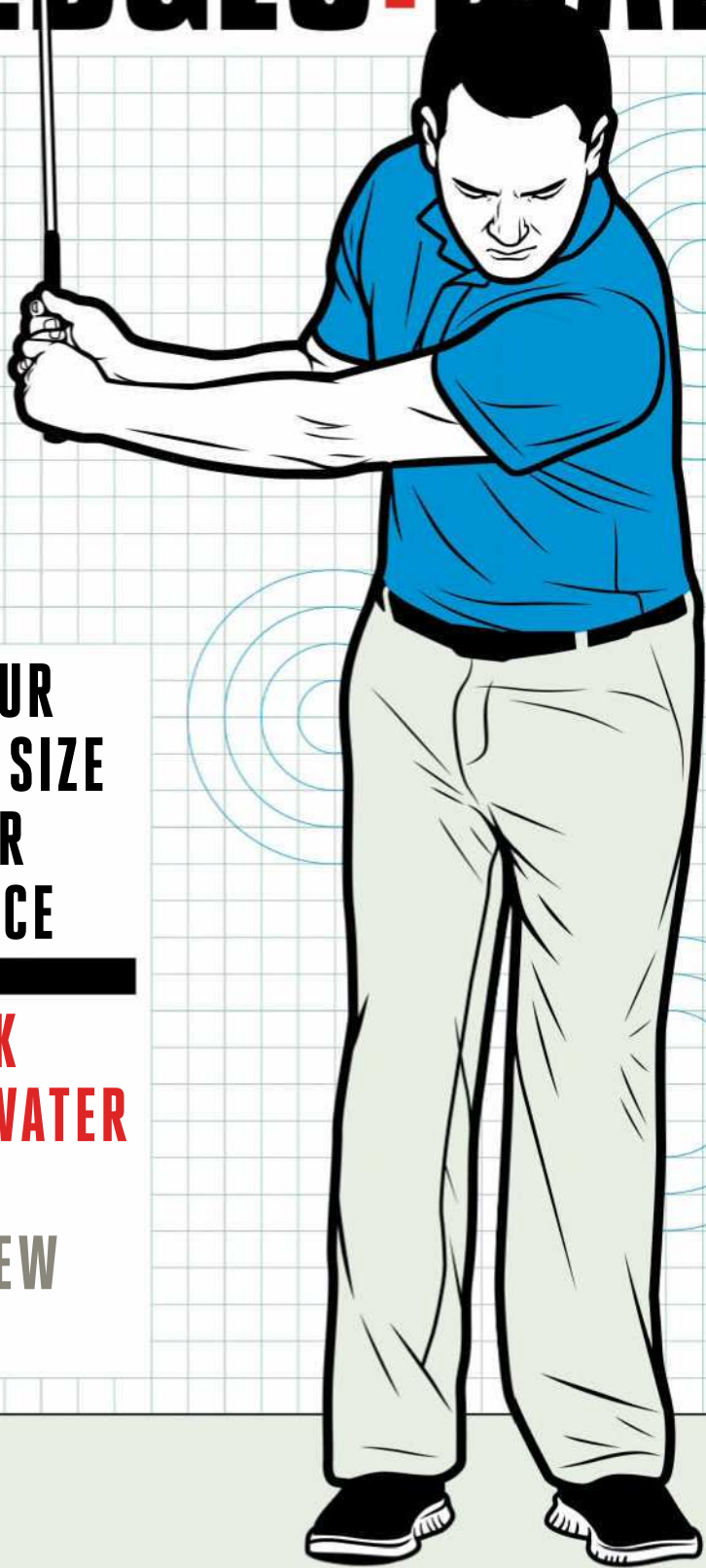
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**PEG YOUR
SWING SIZE
TO YOUR
DISTANCE**

**BY NICK
CLEARWATER**
WITH
MATTHEW
RUDY

STEP ONE
Regulate the length
of your backswing by
paying attention to the
position of your lead arm
as you go back.

When you drill down into the swing data GolfTEC collects on thousands of students, the prime factor that pushes handicaps higher is inconsistent quality of contact. Players just aren't hitting it solid, and that makes distance control difficult. With wedge play, higher-handicaps tend to have a big backswing and small follow-through or a short backswing and rushed follow-through. Neither technique works well to hit the shot the desired distance. Instead, practice this procedure to get your wedges dialed in: Take a sand wedge and hit shots with the same length backswing and follow-through, and note how far the ball goes. Then simply vary the length of your swings – staying equal on both sides – to control distance. You'll also improve the quality of your shots by striking the ground with the sole of the club, not the leading edge. Keep a slight bend in your lead wrist through impact, and you'll get that crisp contact.

Nick Clearwater, a Golf Digest Best Young Teacher, is vice president of instruction for GolfTEC, based in Englewood, Colorado.

STEP TWO

As the clubhead reaches the ball, the sole should be sliding along the ground. Don't try to gouge it out.

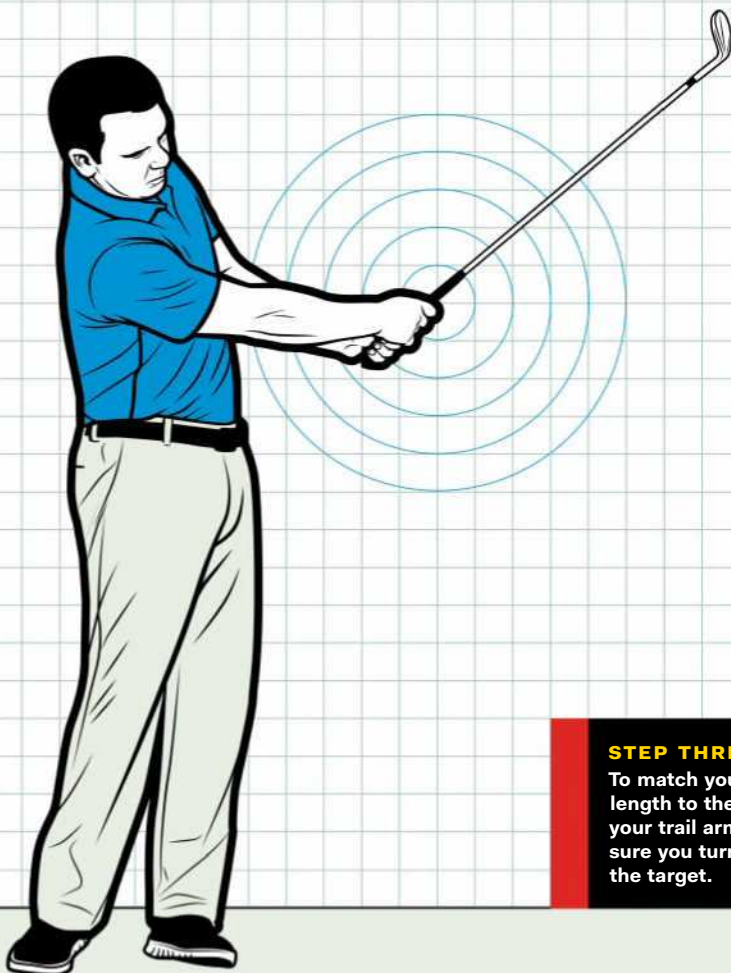


A PLAN FOR FAST IMPROVEMENT

Getting better at golf often is a matter of breaking bad habits. If you're a newer golfer, you're in the sweet spot: With less golf experience, you should have an easier time making changes. That's an exciting time, and it's a crucial time because the quality of the instruction you get will determine if you improve quickly or struggle. The editors of Golf Digest have partnered with the instruction company GolfTEC, which gives more golf lessons than any organisation in the world, to create "Your First 5 Golf Lessons." Hosted by GolfTEC's vice president of instruction, Nick Clearwater, the programme covers a range of game-improvement topics, from driving to fairway shots to greenside play. Every video is packed with simple instructions, do's and don'ts, and practice tips, all designed to give developing golfers the simplest plan for becoming better players. For more information, go to golfdigest.com/go/5lessons.

STEP THREE

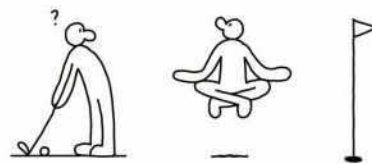
To match your through-swing length to the backswing, check your trail arm's position. Make sure you turn your body towards the target.



Play Your Best | RICKIE FOWLER



ILLUSTRATION: TIM LAHAN



THE FINISH LINE

My trick to stay mentally sharp the entire round

Most of the mistakes you'll make in a round of golf are mental, not physical. I know, you're thinking that's an easy thing for a tour player to say – we all have pretty much honed a good swing. But I'd argue that if you reach a level where you hit a number of solid shots every round, what's holding you back from hitting more is mostly in your head and not some urgent technical flaw.

When I look back on a round, my bad shots are almost always the ones where I wasn't fully committed. I can remember the tinge of doubt I felt over the ball, or that the vision of how I wanted the ball to fly wasn't fully crystallised in my mind. As a result, I'm something less than totally aggressive through the shot, and the clubface wavers. I can only kick myself for not having backed off and reset.

A lot of people think the mental part of sports is inscrutable and can't really be taught, but I disagree. It comes out in physical ways, and in golf, there's no clearer evidence of what's going on in a person's mind than how they finish a swing. If you're feeling the least bit tentative, it'll look that way. If you're wild and unfocused, that's obvious, too. Using the body to train the brain might sound like reverse-engineering, but it works. By making a perfect finish my primary goal, it helps ensure my commitment. What I consider to be a perfect finish, by the way, is what you see here: chest fully rotated, head released, eyes on target and absolutely zero wobble in my body or club. I arrive sharp as a statue.

In your next round, try to finish swings holding a crisp pose. You might be surprised how hard it is to end every swing like this, but it's the simplest way to actually see and evaluate your mental game. Which, if you're breaking 90, is pretty much the whole game. —WITH MAX ADLER

Rickie Fowler has four wins on the PGA Tour and earned \$31 million in his tour career.

Life



SPANNING THE GLOBE

Coming soon: a handicap you can use anywhere

It's one of the game's unique and abiding traits: For any given round, golfers of all skills can compete against one another using a handicap. But there is a flaw. Specifically, there isn't just one system for calculating handicaps. The largest number of golfers worldwide, including those in South Africa (roughly 10 million of the 16 million who have handicaps), use the USGA's formula, but it coexists with five other systems, none of which easily translates. In Great Britain and Ireland, there's the CONGU system, which computes handicaps differently and is based on a smaller number of rounds. In Europe, they use a variation of CONGU called the EGA. Australia and Argentina use their own systems similar to the USGA's.

Enter the World Handicap System (WHS), the result of six years of deliberations and mathematical modelling among the statistical gurus who oversee the formulas. The goal? To clear up the confusion and create a single Handicap Index that's easy to obtain and truly portable.

"We'd hear about the challenges (of multiple systems) constantly," says Steven Edmondson, the USGA's director of handicap and course rating. "Finally, we just all decided it was time. It was really everyone saying, 'Wouldn't one system be better for the game?'"

The WHS follows an extensive review of systems administered by six existing handicapping authorities: Golf Australia,

the Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU) in Great Britain and Ireland, the European Golf Association (EGA), the South African Golf Association (SAGA), the Argentine Golf Association (AAG) and the USGA.

The good news for South African and American golfers is that when the WHS goes live on January 1, 2020, it will look and feel much like the current USGA system.

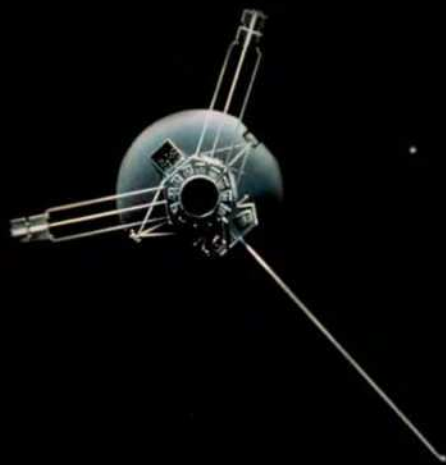
The WHS formula will be average-based, pulling from a golfer's last 20 rounds – though you need just three to establish a handicap – to calculate an Index based on your best eight. (The current SAGA and USGA systems take 10.)

The new formula will use a course's Slope and Rating and will continue to

produce an Index that's translated into a "playing handicap" for each set of tees at each course. One difference: These playing handicaps will represent the number of strokes a golfer gets in relation to *par* rather than the *Course Rating*.

Perhaps the biggest adjustment from the USGA system is that the highest score a player can take for any hole is net double bogey, regardless of the player's Handicap Index. This varies around the world. Currently, in South Africa, the highest score you can take if you have a handicap of 18 or lower is a gross double bogey.

Edmondson says that most players with SAGA Indexes won't see their number change under the WHS formula. There will still be plus-handicaps for the very



best, and scratch golfers will remain in the neighbourhood of a 0 Handicap Index. What will change is the top end of the scale, with a maximum Index of 54.0 for men and women, up from 36 for men and women in South Africa.

“Our research showed some people were intimidated to get a handicap because they didn’t think they were good enough,” says Edmondson, noting only 10 to 15 percent of golfers in the United States have a handicap. “We’re hoping this sends a message that anybody can have one.”

Modern computing will allow the calculations to be more intuitive. For instance, players’ Indexes will be updated daily rather than every two weeks. That already happens in South Africa. And the formula will adjust depending on how course and playing conditions affect scoring on the days you tee it up (*see box below*).

For the six organisations to arrive at the new WHS, each made concessions. The

USGA agreed to adhere to a 2016 change disallowing scores from rounds played alone. Other handicap systems have long frowned upon counting these solo rounds. CONGU and EGA golfers, who have traditionally counted only tournament scores, will now count scores posted for other types of rounds. Some supporters of the CONGU and EGA systems feared the switch would mean sharp spikes or drops in handicaps, and the move to accepting nothing greater than net double bogey on any hole was meant to address this concern.

Between now and 2020, Edmondson says, officials will use real scoring data to help refine the final formula; and organisations like Handicaps Network Africa in South Africa will start outreach programmes to help educate golfers on the changes taking place.

“It’s been a long process,” Edmondson says, “but ultimately it will be something I think we’ll all look back on as a good decision.”— RYAN HERRINGTON

ADJUSTING FOR THOSE “DIFFICULT” DAYS

▶ Ever shoot an 84 that feels more like a 79? Or vice versa? The new World Handicap System seeks to account for those days. If the average score posted at a course on any day is statistically unusual – high or low – the WHS algorithm will essentially create a one-day adjustment to the formula it uses to create your handicap. So you might shoot a score that isn’t great by your standards, but if everyone else is struggling, say, because of bad weather, that round might count when calculating your Handicap Index.

FEATURES OF THE NEW SYSTEM

- ▶ Flexibility in formats of play, allowing both competitive and recreational rounds to count for handicap purposes and ensuring a handicap is more reflective of potential ability.
- ▶ A minimal number of scores needed to obtain a new handicap; a recommendation that the number of scores needed to obtain a new handicap be 54 holes from any combination of 18-hole and 9-hole rounds.
- ▶ A consistent handicap that is portable from course to course and country to country through worldwide use of the USGA Course and Slope Rating System, already successfully used in more than 80 countries.
- ▶ An average-based calculation of a handicap, taken from the best eight out of the last 20 scores and factoring in memory of demonstrated ability for better responsiveness and control.
- ▶ A calculation that considers the impact that abnormal course and weather conditions might have on a player’s performance each day.
- ▶ Daily handicap revisions, taking account of the course and weather conditions calculation.
- ▶ A limit of Net Double Bogey on the maximum hole score (for handicap purposes only).
- ▶ A maximum handicap limit of 54, regardless of gender, to encourage more golfers to measure and track their performance to increase their enjoyment of the game.



“
**THERE IS
 ABSOLUTELY NOTHING
 HUMOROUS AT THE MASTERS.
 HERE, SMALL DOGS
 DO NOT BARK AND BABIES
 DO NOT CRY.**
 ”

GARY PLAYER

QUIZ

THINK YOU KNOW THE MASTERS?

- For the first Masters, in 1934, Bobby Jones reversed the two nines so the current front nine played as the back and vice versa. Why?
 - He believed the present front nine was a more difficult down-the-stretch test.
 - The ninth hole offered a better chance for a closing birdie.
 - The ninth green was considered an ideal location for the award ceremony.
- The gleaming sand in Augusta National's bunkers is from:

- Bermuda
 - Mexico
 - North Carolina
- Each of Augusta National's four par 5s have yielded a double-eagle 2, the latest coming from Louis Oosthuizen in 2012. Which of the following players did not make an albatross?
 - Bruce Devlin
 - Raymond Floyd
 - Jeff Maggert
 - Gene Sarazen
 - When heavy rains in October 1990 turned Rae's Creek into a torrent and

- nearly obliterated the 11th hole, how long did it take to rebuild the green and open the hole for play?
- Six weeks
 - Three months
 - Six days
 - 48 hours
- True or false: Rae's Creek runs in front of the par-5 13th green and along the left side of the fairway.
 - Inmates from the Georgia penal system.

- Volunteers among the Augusta National membership.
- German prisoners of war.
- A team of Texas oil-field workers.

ANSWERS:

- (a) Turns out the front-nine stroke average for all Masters tournaments is 36.94, and the back is 37.15.
- (c) It's actually quartz and has been used in the bunkers since 1975.
- (b) Floyd did ace the par-3 16th hole in 1996.
- (a) Using maps charted to the square inch, the club had the green ready for play by Thanksgiving.
- False. The small stream is a tributary. The actual Rae's Creek is visible as the pond fronting the 12th green, 13th tee and the stream running behind the 11th green.
- (c) The POWs repaired damage done by 250 cattle roaming the course during the war. — GUY YOCOM

6 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT AUGUSTA NATIONAL

IN THE CLUB'S EARLY DAYS, THERE WAS A BUNKER SHAPED LIKE THE STATE OF TEXAS TO THE RIGHT OF THE 18TH GREEN.

THE 14TH HOLE, NOW THE ONLY ONE WITHOUT A BUNKER, ONCE HAD A HUGE FAIRWAY BUNKER SO SHORT OFF THE TEE THAT IT NEVER CAME INTO PLAY.

THE POND ON 15 WAS JUST A WIDE CREEK IN THE EARLIEST DAYS, INCLUDING IN 1935, WHEN GENE SARAZEN CLEARED IT AND HOLED OUT FOR DOUBLE EAGLE.

IN THE LATE 1940S, THE COURSE HAD ANKLE-DEEP ROUGH.

WRITERS USED TO INTERVIEW PLAYERS ON THE CLUBHOUSE BALCONY. THERE WAS A BAR BELOW, AND WRITERS WOULD CALL DOWN THEIR DRINK ORDERS, WHICH WOULD BE DELIVERED BY ROPE AND BUCKET.

AS RECENTLY AS THE LATE 1990S, THERE WAS A BARBERSHOP ON THE MAGNOLIA LANE SIDE OF THE CLUBHOUSE. A FORMER SHOP KEEPER HAD A NICE PERK: WHEN BUSINESS WAS SLOW, HE PLAYED AUGUSTA NATIONAL THREE OR FOUR TIMES A WEEK.



PLAYER: AUGUSTA NATIONAL/GETTY IMAGES • HAIRCUT: PHIL SHELDON/POPPERFOTO • PAINTING: THE PRINT COLLECTOR/GETTY IMAGES • RIGHT PAGE: AUGUSTA SIGN: DANITA DELIMONT/GETTY IMAGES



MAJOR MASTERS MALFUNCTIONS

▶ ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ROBERTO DE VICENZO'S SCORECARD ERROR THAT KEPT HIM FROM PLAYING OFF FOR THE GREEN JACKET, SOME OTHER BIZARRE HAPPENINGS AT AUGUSTA THROUGH THE YEARS:

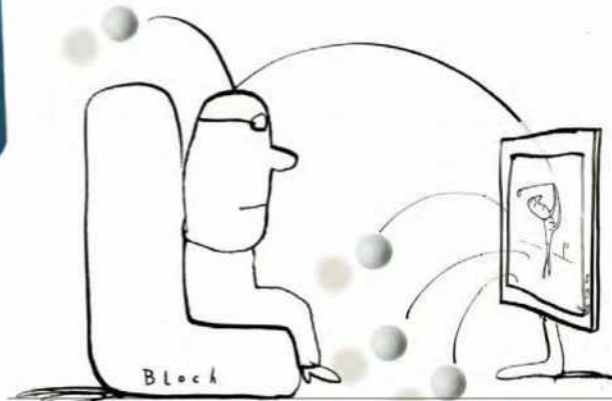
A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA GOT A LATE START WHEN HE SHOWED UP AT AUGUSTA DURING THE 2003 MASTERS . . . AUGUSTA, MAINE.

IN 2012'S FIRST ROUND, HENRIK STENSON TOOK A TWO-SHOT LEAD TO THE 18TH HOLE BUT HOOKED HIS TEE SHOT AND BECAME THE SEVENTH PLAYER TO MAKE A QUADRUPLE-BOGEY 8 THERE. "IT KEEPS ON SNOWBALLING," STENSON SAID, "AND I GOT THE SNOWMAN."



BILLY CASPER'S 105 IN THE 2005 MASTERS, AT AGE 73, DID NOT GO INTO THE RECORD BOOK BECAUSE CASPER WITHDREW, LEAVING THE 95 BY CHARLES KUNKLE IN 1956 AS THE HIGHEST ROUND IN TOURNAMENT HISTORY.

ERNIE ELS OPENED HIS 2016 MASTERS WITH A SIX-PUTT FROM THREE FEET TO MAKE THE FIRST 9 AT No. 1 IN TOURNAMENT HISTORY. SAID ELS, WHO BATTLED HIS DEMONS TO PLAY THE FINAL 17 HOLES IN THREE OVER PAR: "IT'S HARD TO PUTT WHEN YOU'VE GOT SNAKES IN YOUR HEAD." — MIKE O'MALLEY



THE PERFECT MASTERS WEEKEND

68%

WATCHING TV COVERAGE

26%

PLAYING GOLF BEFORE LEADERS TEE OFF

6%

SLEEP AND EAT

DID YOU KNOW?

MEMBERSHIP IN AMERICA'S MOST REVERED GOLF CLUB IS INVITATION-ONLY. BUT WE'LL LET YOU IN ON A LITTLE SECRET: ONCE A YEAR, IN A NOD TO WILLY WONKA, IT ADMITS A GREEN TICKET APPLICANT FROM THE PUBLIC. SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION ONLINE AT GOLFDIGEST.COM/GO/GREENTICKET. THIS YEAR'S DEADLINE: SUNDAY, APRIL 1.

040118

8 WAYS TO GET KICKED OUT OF THE MASTERS

1 YELL "BABA BOOEY!" DURING JACK'S CEREMONIAL OPENING TEE SHOT.

2 SNIP OFF A FEW AZALEAS NEAR THE 13TH GREEN AS A KEEPSAKE.

3 ASK NEW CHAIRMAN FRED RIDLEY IF THAT'S HIS REAL HAIR COLOUR.

4 CRASH THE CHAMPIONS DINNER BY SPORTING A GREEN JACKET AND CLAIMING YOU'RE BOB GOALBY.

5 HOLD UP A SIGN PLEADING FOR THE REINSTATEMENT OF GARY MCCORD.

6 HAWK KNOCKOFF AUGUSTA NATIONAL-LOGOED BOXER BRIEFS IN THE CROWD.

7 SPREAD FALSE RUMOURS THAT THE PIMENTO-CHEESE SANDWICHES CONTAIN LAUNDRY DETERGENT.

8 PULL YOUR CAR INTO THE MAGNOLIA LANE GATE AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF AS MARTHA BURK.



MASTERS PROP BETS WE'D LIKE TO SEE



The 2017 champ and his wife, Angela, at Wimbledon.

▶ Sergio Garcia won't return his green jacket because it has become a staple of his wardrobe. ▶ Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player will pace off their ceremonial tee shots to settle who hit it further. ▶ Jim Nantz will open TV coverage by saying, "Hello, friends – and robots secretly plotting to take over the universe." ▶ Bubba Watson will glob ketchup all over whatever Sergio serves at the Champions Dinner. ▶ Tiger Woods will win by 12 shots, declare, "I'm back!" at the green-jacket ceremony, and drop the microphone.



NEW VERSUS OLD STUFF

Does buying new equipment help your game?

Golfers on average change their equipment every four or five years.

If you don't, you risk getting left behind in technology. Equipment Editor Mike Johnson's analysis of the 102 players on the PGA Tour who qualified for distance-stat tracking in 2013 and again in 2017 shows the average distance gain was 2.2 yards, from 289.8 to 292.0 yards. Sixty-eight players got longer; 34 got shorter. Rory McIlroy gained the most: 15 yards. Experts will tell you distance gain is actually greater because pros can hit it further when they want to. There were 29 drives of 400 yards or more last year on the tour. But let's talk about us, not them. I'm calling in Senior Editor of Equipment Mike Stachura to testify:

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I BUY NEW EQUIPMENT? *Stachura:* The minute you get excited about a new club, start the process of demo-ing and fitting. But own nothing older than five years except maybe a divot tool.

WHEN MY PARTNER SAYS HE'S HITTING IT 20 METRES FURTHER

WITH HIS NEW DRIVER, IS HE ONLY JUSTIFYING THE \$5,000 HE SPENT? Certainly possible if he wasn't fit for his old driver. Put him in front of a launch monitor with his old and new clubs. *Numbers. Do. Not. Lie.* Every shot we hit at the Hot List testing is captured by a launch monitor, so we're not going only on hearsay and feel.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST BREAKTHROUGH IN GOLF EQUIPMENT FOR 2018? Highly forgiving, supersize drivers used to pay a penalty for slightly higher spin, but that compromise no longer exists. These new drivers give you higher launch with less ball spin, which means more carry and overall distance.

HOW MUCH FURTHER WILL ONE OF THESE NEW DRIVERS GET YOU TODAY COMPARED TO FOUR OR FIVE YEARS AGO?

Golf Digest's robot testing with Gene Parente at Golf Laboratories showed that at average golfer swing speeds, there's a gain of five metres on centre hits, eight metres on heel and toe mis-hits, and 10 metres on low-face impacts. At the extremes, we saw some new drivers that were nearly 10 metres longer

GETTING LONGER

Of 102 PGA Tour pros tracked from 2013-'17, Rory McIlroy gained the most: 15 yards.



for on-centre hits and 12 metres longer on off-centre hits than older models.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH DRIVER LENGTHS? IS LONGER LONGER? Driver lengths have settled back down, generally to around 45½ inches. Longer isn't longer; properly fit for length (and loft and face angle and weight and bend profile) is longer. Although longer shafts

generate more speed, shorter shafts might give you more distance because you find the centre of the face more often. Rickie Fowler went down to a 43½-inch shaft last year and lost only one yard, but fairways hit went way up.

THERE WAS A MOVEMENT TO MORE LOFT ON DRIVERS A FEW YEARS AGO – I WENT FROM 9 TO 10.5.

WHAT DEGREE LOFT SHOULD I BUY NOW? Across the board there is less spin per degree of launch than there was a generation ago. More loft is usually better than less loft. *But* if you're adding loft by hitting up on the ball at impact, higher loft can hurt you.

SHOULD I BUY THE STOCK SHAFT FOR MY DRIVER OR SPEND

ANOTHER \$1,000-PLUS FOR A SUPER-DUPER SHAFT LIKE THE PROS HAVE? Stock shafts are somewhat better than they used to be. I look at it this way: Stock shafts are like shoes. If you wear flip flops all day, one size fits all. But if you want to run, I'd get some running shoes that fit my feet.

WHAT'S THE BENEFIT OF THE NEW IRONS? The biggest benefit I see is the number of iron sets designed progressively in a job-specific way. Long irons designed with distance-enhancing technology, while short irons are compact for shot-making control.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU CHANGE YOUR WEDGES? DO THE GROOVES

REALLY WEAR OUT? If you play 15 to 20 times a year, practice your short game once a week for half an hour and haven't changed your wedges in three years, you might as well be throwing the ball on the green.

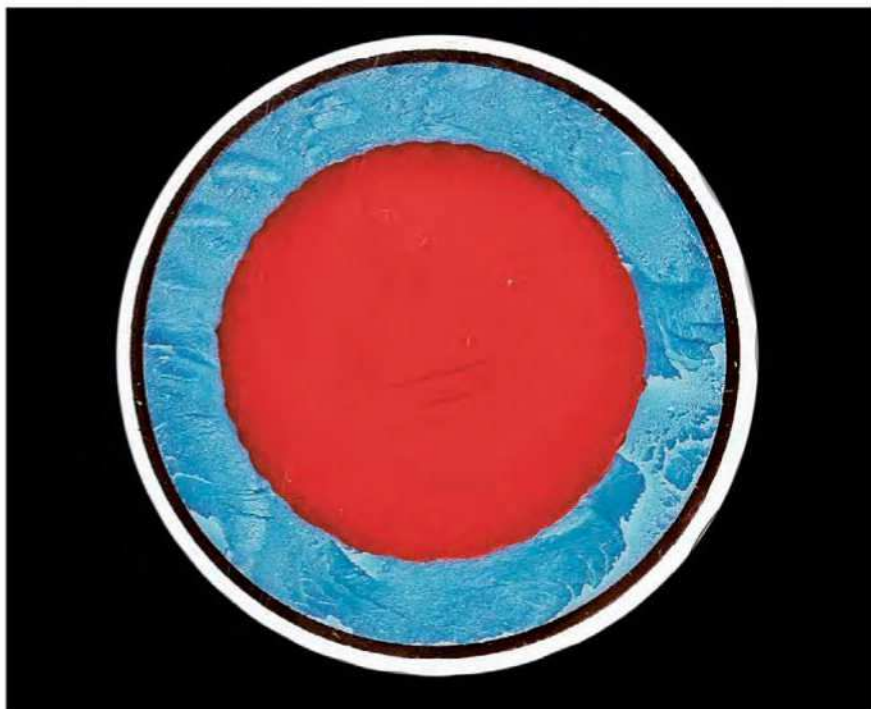
PUTERS ARE PUTTERS. WILL THE NEW ONES REALLY HELP ME MAKE

MORE PUTTS? That said, at the very least, they will reduce your three-putts. But I wouldn't want to get between the love of a golfer and a putter, seriously.



MY TOP-10 REASONS THE BALL IS BEING HIT SO MUCH FURTHER BY TOUR PROS THAN WHEN I WAS A KID:

- 1 Oversize metal drivers aiding off-centre hits and encouraging golfers to swing harder without fear.
- 2 Trampoline faces.
- 3 The ball.
- 4 Shaft technology.
- 5 More athleticism (see Billy Casper, above, versus Dustin Johnson).
- 6 Better fitness and training.
- 7 Launch monitors and ball/clubfitting that optimise ball speed and spin.
- 8 Coaching 24/7 by teams of teachers, trainers, psychologists.
- 9 Higher course-maintenance budgets, improved grass strains and mowing equipment that led to firmer, faster fairways.
- 10 Private aviation. Okay, it might not add distance to your drives, but wouldn't it be nice!



- SPIN SKIN® COATING
- URETHANE COVER
- LOW COMPRESSION 3-PIECE CONSTRUCTION

Q I teed off, and the ball split in two. When I found half of it in the rough, my playing partner said I had to hit another ball from there. Was he right?

A How sure are you that your swing was the force that cracked that ball? We're not doubting your superhuman strength, but if the ball broke as a result of a stroke, that stroke is cancelled, and you'd play another ball from the original spot, per Rule 5-3 (Ball Unfit for Play). If some other force split the ball – a mower, for example – you may replace it with another ball and play from where you found it without penalty.

•••
I just saw a player on the European Tour move a small rock out of a bunker that was near his ball, and it was allowed. Are European Tour rules different from those on

the PGA Tour?
The R&A and USGA combined forces in the late 1960s to publish a uniform book, the *Rules of Golf*, to govern golf worldwide – including both the PGA Tour and European Tour. In that book, Rule 13-4 says that you cannot move a loose impediment in a bunker. But, it also says that the Committee may adopt a Local Rule that deems stones as movable obstructions in bunkers.

•••
I heard the PGA Tour and LPGA won't take viewer call-ins about rules anymore. But can they really stop them? Call all you want, but nobody will be picking

up. (And, by the way, how did you get a number to reach rules officials?) As part of a new USGA and R&A protocol, at least one rules official will monitor broadcast feeds for potential infractions on all the top men's and women's tours. "Somebody can attempt to reach out," says Thomas Pagel, the USGA's senior director of rules, "but we're not going to be actively monitoring phone lines or email accounts. And we're certainly not going to be responding to any inquiries." Guess you'll have to yell at your TV like the rest of us.

SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS HERE:
ask@golfdigest.com / Twitter @GolfDigest

10 THINGS BESIDES DRIVERS THAT SHOULD BE "ADJUSTABLE"

- ENTRANCE FEES
- CART SPEEDS
- WHITE STAKES
- THE STARTER'S SPEECH
- RAIN DELAYS • HANGOVERS
- BUNKER LIES
- GIMME LENGTHS
- CIGAR SMOKE • WINTER

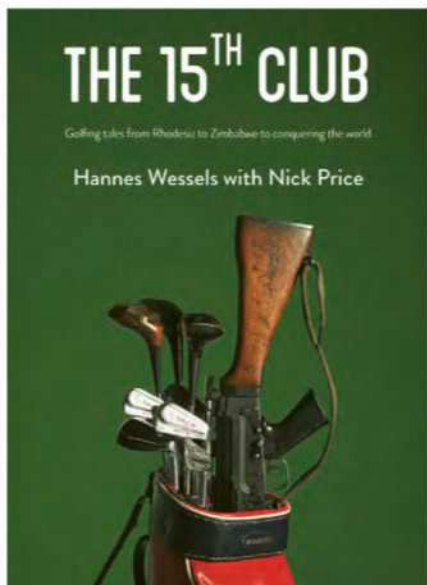
NEW AD333 TOUR™

TAKE YOUR PERFORMANCE FURTHER

A tour performance ball for players with moderate swing speeds.



ZIMBABWE'S SPECIAL CADRE OF GOLFERS



The 15th Club. 244 pages. By Hannes Wessels with Nick Price. R322 on www.loot.co.za

This soft-cover book recounts the life tales of the numerous Zimbabwean golfers who have had their moments of fame either in South Africa or the global stage. They range in age from Denis Hutchinson, born in Umtali 86 years ago, to Brendon de Jonge, 37, who was recently on the PGA Tour before losing form.

The 15th Club refers to the period in the early 1970s when rural golfers in the Centenary area north of Harare were first allowed a 15th club in the bag. This was an automatic rifle, to protect themselves while on the golf course. Mark McNulty, who grew up in the district, was 19 when a group of ZANLA guerrillas attacked a remote farmhouse in December 1972. A new front in the bush

war had been opened. “Altena Farm was only a few miles from us, and I was home when it happened. Everyone went to maximum alert,” he recalls in the book.

McNulty and George Harvey were the first of the 1970s batch of stars to emerge, to be followed in quick order by Denis Watson, Teddy Webber, Nick Price and Tony Johnstone. It was a remarkable period in that country’s golfing history when their teams were often more than a match for those from South Africa.

Between them these six players won close to 150 tournaments on the PGA Tour, European Tour and Sunshine Tour, and more recently the Champions Tour. There was also David Leadbetter, who became one of the world’s top coaches, and tour caddie ‘Woody’ Woodward.

Several were intimately involved in the bush war, and got into scrapes and firefights while on active service. Webber, twice SA Amateur champion, was in an army vehicle hit by a landmine, and was at home in Umtali in 1976 when the town was hit by rocket fire. That was the year the war escalated. Several of them, particularly Price, saw school friends killed in the war.

Author Wessels, whose previous book was about the Rhodesian SAS, *A Handful of Hard Men*, has interviewed everyone, including the older brigade of characters such as Hutchy, Simon Hobday, Peter Matkovich and Muss Gammon, and the book is essentially their words. Mainly uncensored too! Gammon’s memories of early days working in the cigarette business is a hoot.

They have told their stories in a refreshingly candid manner – Wessels doesn’t always edit out the swear words

– from their days of growing up as kids to when they achieved their golfing dreams. There are a number of “new” Hobday stories from his farming and golfing days in Zambia. The first part of the book is the best, dwelling as it does on the early days, while the second half is about their international tournament successes.

Nick Price recalls his days as a junior at Warren Hills Golf Club. “I was horrified by my first outing with (12-year-old) Tony Johnstone (Price was 11). He tried to find a gap between two Msasa trees with a 4-wood on the third hole, but there was a loud crack and his ball bounced behind him. He went purple, took that 4-wood and flushed it against a tree, snapping it in half. It was the first time I had seen a club broken in anger, and I was miffed because it was an expensive club that I would have liked to have had in my bag.”

Price talks sadly about giving up his Zimbabwean passport in 2004, and ending his tenure as a Zimbabwean citizen. “Most of us whites took Robert Mugabe at his word and that was a huge mistake,” he says. “Most of my pals who went farming had put absolutely everything they owned into their land and when it was taken away they had nothing. Some lost their lives. There were over a hundred golf courses, many excellent ones built by farmers, and now there are probably about 20 left and not many in good condition. My older brother Tim (who passed away in 2010) fought hard to save Harare South from the ‘war-vets’ during the land invasions but it was a losing battle. All the trees have been felled for firewood.

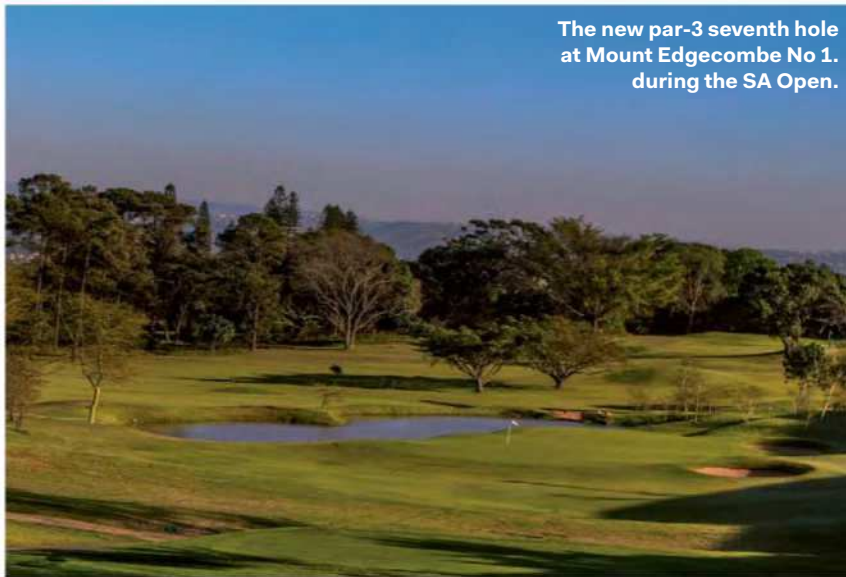
“Although I fought under a white government I did not agree with everything that was happening, but I was proud of my heritage. My father and brother are buried there and I’ll never stop loving that country.”



STEYN CITY POST FOR MASHABA

Golf industry veteran Norman Mashaba, 55, has been appointed Director of Golf at Steyn City in Gauteng. Mashaba, a PGA of South Africa member for almost 30 years, was a member of the PGA Board of Directors, and in recent years had been coaching

young black professionals trying to break through on the Sunshine Tour. Mashaba described his appointment as a launching pad for transformation in the golf industry. “Steyn City has taken a bold step in transforming professional golf,” he said.



The new par-3 seventh hole at Mount Edgecombe No 1. during the SA Open.

CHANGING THE ORDER OF HOLES

Mount Edgecombe's balanced solution.

The development of golf estates in the 1990s saw South Africans rush to embrace secure fairway living. But most residents were non-golfers, who had no idea of the world they were entering. When selecting a prime fairway facing stand, they gave no thought to it being 200 metres from the tee, right of the fairway. Only when golf balls started crashing into their home, and inquiries were made, did they comprehend the enormity of what lay before them.

Many estate courses were built too close to the housing, and the bombardment was unrelenting. Even golf-savvy residents who built where they believed no golf ball could find them, have been struck. Golfers can be so incompetent that no property is safe on a golf estate.

But the residents have been fighting back, and several golf clubs have had to rethink the design of certain holes under threat of a lawsuit. Milnerton GC on Table Bay was the first to do battle with a tenacious resident at Sunset Links whose home on the par-5 sixth hole was in the direct line of fire from the tee. The resident won the case, and Milnerton had to erect a high fence next to the tee, plus reduce the hole to a short par 4 on non-competition days.

The Arabella resort last year

completed a redesign of their short par-4 16th hole after a home left of the fairway had been hit so persistently that the owner erected a net over his property to safeguard his kids.

But the biggest design change occurred at Mount Edgecombe CC in Umhlanga, where the original par-5 fifth hole has been scaled down to a par 3. In terms of safety, this was always a problematic hole. Housing left of the fairway, and a public road to the right. It's amazing that the hole lasted as long as it did before being shut down. The new par 3, by Peter Matkovich, is a beautiful hole, but it did leave the No 1 course, now par 70, with an unsatisfactory opening of three short par-4s and two par-3s. The front nine was 34 (three par 3s) and back nine 36.

Golf director Micky Hough identified a better balanced solution (35-35 on each nine) which has resulted in a wholesale re-routing of the layout, without compromising the strong finishing holes which are a feature of the No 1.

The new first is the old 10th, followed by the old 11 to 13. Golfers then move to the tee of the par-5 eighth, which becomes the new No 5. Then it's over to the old fourth, which is No 6, followed by the old fifth and sixth, before completing the nine at the par-3 ninth. The back nine starts with the old 1 to 3, whereupon golfers switch to the old seventh, a long uphill par 4. This is the beginning of a tough stretch of holes which should enhance the layout's design variety. After that hole it's a short walk to the downhill par-5 14th, and the No 1's familiar finish.

Cleveland
GOLF

**DON'T JUST HIT IT,
LAUNCH IT!**

HYBRID TECHNOLOGY IN EVERY IRON.



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ON THE BRINK

Keenan Davidse is currently the leading graduate of the Gary Player Class of 2017/18 with hopes of an imminent maiden tournament victory.

BY BARRY HAVENGA

ON LEADING THE JOBURG OPEN

I chose quite a time to have my career best round – 63 in the first round of the Joburg Open at Randpark in December – and I wasn't really prepared for what happened next. I didn't have any expectations going into the event and the next thing I was sitting in a press conference answering questions about leading a European Tour event! My mind was racing the next day and I shot 74, eventually finishing T-67, but the experience gained was invaluable.

ON RAISING HIMSELF FOR THE BIG EVENTS

I've played in five SA Opens and have never missed the cut. I'm proud of that. I'm very patriotic and don't feel added pressure in the big (co-sanctioned) events. At the Cape Town Open in February I had a large group of family and friends supporting me at King David Mowbray. We are starved of pro golf in the Western Cape so it's a great opportunity for us to show off a bit and put our skills on display.

ON MATURING AS A PROFESSIONAL

I don't want to go into too much detail, but I was a naughty teenager. The scar on my forehead is a reminder of my wild years that I don't need to revisit. Getting married and having our first child over the last three years has made me grow up very quickly and I think I've played better because of it.

ON FINANCIAL STRESS

I've never been back to Q School since earning my card at the first attempt in 2009, but money is always a constant concern in the life of a professional golfer. I learnt that the more money you make the more expenses you will have.

ON THE GARY PLAYER CLASS OF 2017/18

Being a member of this initiative has greatly benefited all 30 members over the last two years. We receive financial assistance, coaching (physical and mental) and general guidance on being a better professional. I'm leading the standings and



KEENAN DAVIDSE

AGE 28

BORN/RESIDES Stellenbosch, Western Cape

ATTACHMENT Erinvale

CAREER Former member of the Ernie Els & Fancourt Foundation and played provincial golf for Boland before turning professional in 2009. A runner-up twice on Sunshine Tour, and third in the Cape Town Open in February. Biggest career cheque at 2017 Joburg Open (January), earning R393 000 for T-7.

QUICK FIRE

Window or aisle? Window.

First person to call in a jam? My wife Delmaine.

Test match at Lord's or Twickenham? Lord's.

First car? I bought my first car in February, a Hyundai Veloster Turbo.

Favourite TV shows? I watch mostly live sport, particularly cricket.

Lowest round? 63 in first round of Joburg Open in December.

Superstitions? I only use a R2 coin to mark my ball.

Best friends on tour? Peter Karmis.

Strongest player mentally on tour? Peter Karmis.

Most naturally gifted on tour? Justin Harding, he can up-and-down it from absolutely anywhere!

Longest hitter on tour? I'd like to see a driving contest between Merrick Bremner and Dean Burmester.

First thing you bought after first pay cheque as a pro? Furniture for my apartment in 2009.

Who would you like to be stuck in a lift with, living or dead? Seve Ballesteros.

Dream fourball?

Tiger, Jack and Seve at Augusta National.

the incentive is huge: R250 000 for first place from Investec (R150 000 for second) and an equipment sponsorship from Parsons Xtreme Golf (PXG). If I win, I'll use the money towards a deposit on a house and a trip to the European Tour Qualifying School.

ON FRIENDSHIP WITH A FELLOW ATHLETE

I met Proteas fast bowler Vernon Philander at a golf day when I was 15 and we've been close friends ever since. He was best man at my wedding and we play a lot of golf together. He plays off 4 (a member at Parow) but should be a 1 and loves taking my money! People think that A B de Villiers is the best cricketer who plays golf – he's good – but Vernon plays really well. We talk often about our respective sports and help each other, particularly on the mental side of things.

ON DISRUPTED TRAVEL PLANS

Peter Karmis and I are travelling buddies. He makes all the bookings and sends me a bill after each tournament. Last year we were heading home to the Cape on a 14h15 flight out of Joburg, but when I reached the SAA counter my name on the ticket was 'Mrs Keenan Karmis!' We couldn't change it in time and I eventually got home at 10pm. I probably only send five words to him over the next week *(laughs)*.

ON BEING ON THE BRINK

I feel like I am close to winning on tour. I've been in contention enough times now to know what it's going to take to close out a victory. Sam, my caddie, keeps me in check when my mind starts to wander. If I get lazy he's the one who tells me to go to gym or practice. He's threatened to phone my wife a few times if I don't listen to him.

IN THE BAG

Driver: Titleist 917D,
10.5 degrees

Fairway: Titleist 917F,
16.5 degrees

Irons (3&4): Titleist T-MB;
(5) CB; (6-PW) MB

Wedges: Titleist Vokey SM6,
50/54/58

Putter: Odyssey Versa 1W

Ball: Titleist Pro V1x

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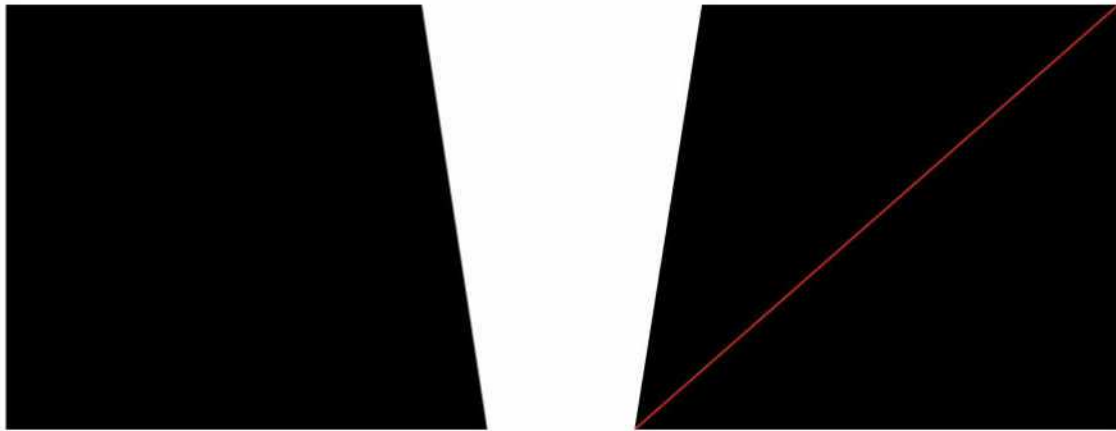
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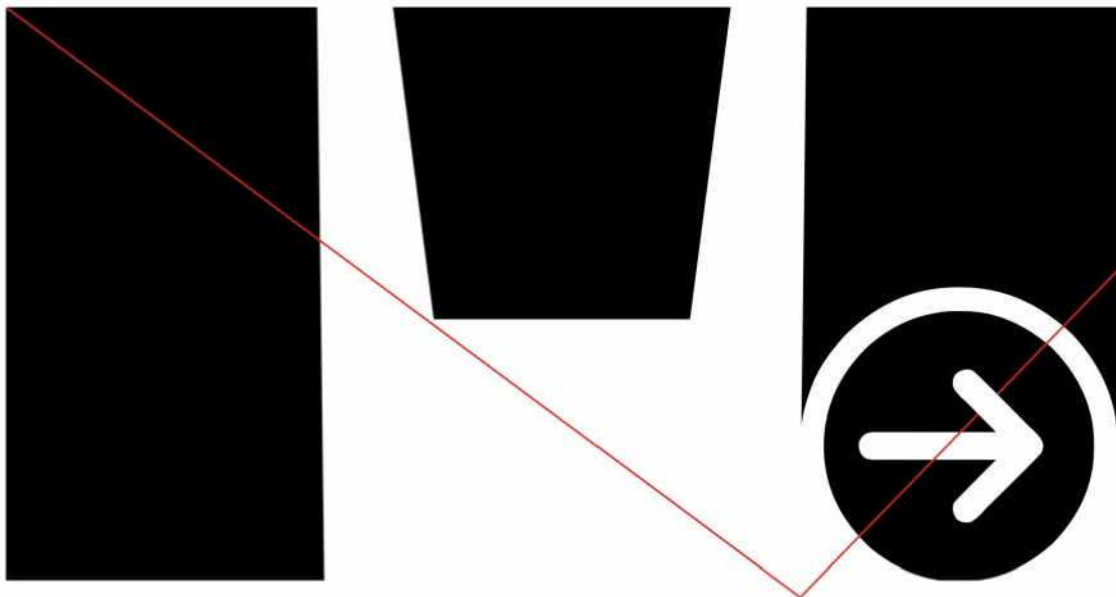




MADE FOR THE MASTERS

4 SHOTS YOU NEED TO WIN AT AUGUSTA (AND ANYWHERE) BY BROOKS KOEPKA

▶▶▶ A lot of people have told me my game really suits Augusta National. I'd like to agree. The first time I played there, on the eve of my first Masters, in 2015, I loved it. It's such a special place, and the course teaches you something new each time you play it. My results so far have been fair, finishing T-33 as a rookie and T-11 last year, but I'm optimistic about this year. I'm healthy again, and I feel like I finally have all the shots you need to play Augusta well. The way I count, there are four. Here I'll show you how to hit them. ▶ Of course, knowing the right shots to practice and doing the work is only half the equation. The other half? Controlling emotions. When we arrive at Augusta National each April, it's been eight or nine months since we played in our last major, the PGA Championship. Guys are ready to go, and many put so much pressure on themselves that it's hard to play like they should. That's an important lesson for any golfer. Whatever round feels like your Masters, tamp the adrenaline. Do whatever it takes to stay cool. ▶ Once you're relaxed, these four shots will help you play great anywhere. And if you ever land the invite to ANG, you'll be especially well prepared. —WITH MAX ADLER ▶▶▶





BIG DRAW

A LOT OF THE TEE SHOTS

at Augusta set up best for a draw. Or for lefties like Phil and Bubba, a power fade. The par-4 10th and the par-5 13th are the most critical spots to turn it right to left. You've probably heard the basic tips on hitting a draw: Aim your feet and shoulders at the right side of the fairway, aim the clubface at the middle of the

fairway, then swing along your toe line. Solid advice, but what I've found most helpful is to start the downswing *sloooow*. Make an emphatic pause at the top of the backswing (*above*), then feel zero rush to get the club down to the ball. With my weight on my right leg longer than normal, the clubface is going to close. If I can make a nice, slower swing

driven by my arms, I know I'll see the ball turn over right to left.

If you struggle to do this with a driver, use a 3-wood. The extra loft and shorter shaft make it easier to draw the ball. Besides, on most holes that demand this shot, distance isn't your priority. The last thing you want to do is hit it through the fairway.

AWKWARD APPROACH

WHAT'S REALLY UNIQUE about Augusta are the uneven stances in the fairway where the green complex is asking you to hit the opposite trajectory than the stance promotes. For example, on the 10th fairway the ball will be above your feet, yet the green tilts in a way that it won't hold a draw. You need to fade the approach (or at the very least, hit it straight) despite the feeling you're hitting a baseball because the ball is perched so high (*right*). The fact you're likely swinging a middle iron or long iron only makes it tougher. Outside Augusta, you almost can't find comparable terrain to practice these shots.

Natural athleticism goes a long way, but to be good at working the ball from odd stances you need to be in control of the bottom of your swing. My teacher, Claude Harmon,



DRILL

showed me a great drill for this. Switch your hands to take a cross-handed grip (*left*), then hit shots that travel 60, 70, no more than 100 metres. Go easy, making only half-swings on both sides to protect your shoulders. You'll hit the first few to the right, but stick with it. Here I have a 4-iron, but I've used every club from driver to wedge with this drill. Your only goal is solid contact. It will help you feel exactly how the club is meant to move through impact. Whatever your tendency – releasing the club too early or too late – cross-handed swings can help you feel the opposite.

Though it's smart to go easy with this drill, I've seen Rickie pure it 280 cross-handed. We were on the range at a tour event, and he said he wondered how long it would take for someone to notice his grip. Took eight or nine balls. I'll stick to my 100-metre shots, thank you very much.

'I STAND MORE UPRIGHT THAN USUAL AND SOLE ONLY THE TOE OF THE WEDGE ON THE GRASS.'

CHIP AGAINST THE GRAIN

AUGUSTA GRASS MIGHT LOOK

perfect on TV, but up close the lies are frightening. Miss a green, and chances are you'll end up in a hollow where the grain of the fairway grass is mowed against you. Anything less than a perfect strike, and the grain will catch the



wedge's leading edge or heel. Result: you stub the chip.

You might laugh because it doesn't exactly look sexy, but I've discovered an effective method to protect against the stub. I stand more upright than usual and sole only the toe of the wedge on the grass (*above*). With the heel off the turf, there's no way it can catch. I then close the clubface a bit so it's pointing left of my target. It looks like the shot is going to go left, but trust me, if you make a normal chipping stroke you'll be surprised at how straight the ball starts. It just pops right up (*left*). You can hit it high or low, and with any club you'd use for chipping.

Not sure about the grain's direction? Doesn't matter. Use this method whenever you sense a stubber coming.

TRICKY LAG

THE GREENS AT AUGUSTA are so fast with so much swing, it's almost impossible to explain to anyone who hasn't played there how difficult they are to putt. Nowhere else do you see four-footers that break three cups. You have to hit the short ones with au-

thority, but to even get those, your lag putting needs to be dialled in – and these greens don't make it easy. Here's my favourite practice drill for speed control:

Set two coins two metres apart and hit a putt. The game is to get the ball to travel past the first coin (*below*) but not past the second. Wherever your putt finishes, that's where you move the first coin before

you putt again. Do this over and over, always shifting the first coin to where your last putt finishes. If you hit a putt short of the first coin or past the second coin, the game ends. Start over.

An example: If the two coins are between five and seven metres away, and your first putt travels six metres, you only have a short area left for your next putt. If you

want to keep the game going for a while, it's best to keep the distance between the two coins as wide as possible for as long as possible. My best score is 19 consecutive putts between the coins. If you want it to get really difficult, set them on a downslope or putt from a longer distance. You'll learn never to leave a putt short. That's a skill that travels anywhere.

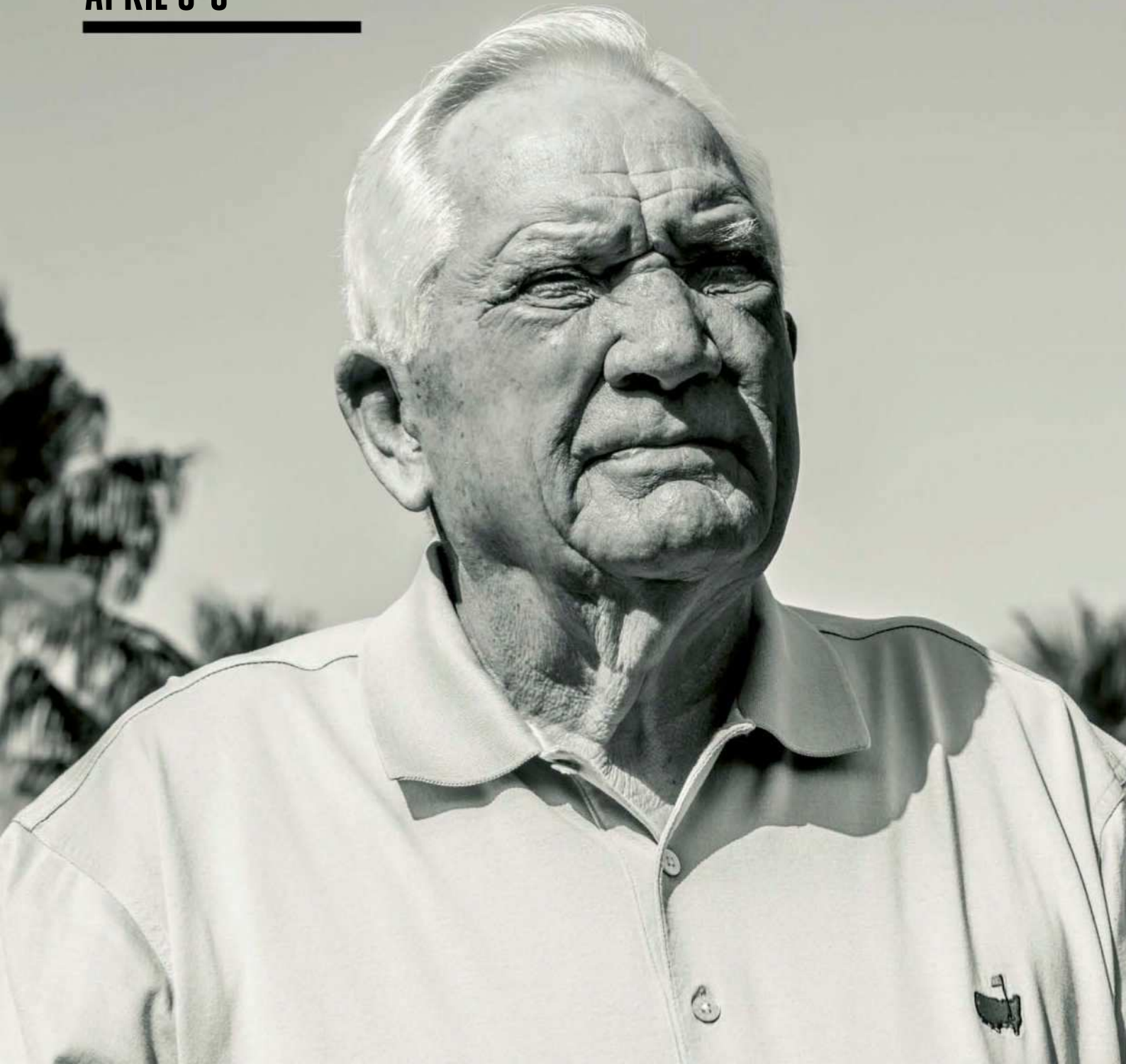
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MY SHOT / 89 / BELLEVILLE / ILLINOIS



MASTERS 2018
AUGUSTA NATIONAL
APRIL 5-8



FINDING

1968 Masters champion Bob Goalby on the De Vincenzo disaster

PEACE

50 YEARS LATER

WITH GUY YOCOM

GOALBY

GARY PLAYER SAID IT BEST: “We spend 10 hours a day at the course playing and working on our games, so the least we can do is take two minutes to make sure our score is correct.” Knowing how strict *The Rules of Golf* are on that, it’s hard to argue with Gary. What’s funny is, scorecard mistakes continue to be made. At least once a year I’ll read about some mishap, and I’ll think, *Oh, no, not again.*

•••••
WHEN I CAME OFF 18 after the final round of the 1968 Masters, everyone, myself included, thought I had tied with Roberto (De Vincenzo). I walked directly to the scorer’s table just behind the green. It was a little chaotic. Roberto and Tommy Aaron were sitting there, as was my playing partner, Ray Floyd, and I believe an official. I vaguely wondered why Roberto was still there, when he’d been two holes ahead of me. I remember saying something to Roberto along the lines of, “I guess we’ll be playing together tomorrow.” But Roberto didn’t say anything. He seemed lost in thought. I wasn’t alarmed by that. My attention was all on checking and signing my scorecard. When I finished, I left the table and was lingering near the green. Sam Snead had hung around to watch me come in, and he and Doc (Cary) Middlecoff approached me. Doc, who had just finished his hole coverage for CBS, said to me, “You just won the tournament.” I said, “What the hell are you talking about?” I looked up at the scoreboard, and it showed Roberto and me both at -11. Then Doc, who was privy to what was being said through his TV headgear, said, “Roberto screwed up his scorecard.”

•••••
WHAT HAPPENED WAS, Tommy Aaron was playing with Roberto and kept his scorecard. For the 17th hole, Tommy wrote down a 4 for Roberto when Roberto actually had made a birdie 3. It’s up to the player to check his scorecard and make sure it’s right, because after you sign it and leave the area, that’s it. I always was careful to check and double-check my card, putting actual check marks by the individual holes. Most players do some form of that, because errors like that happen all the time. I mean, every week, because if I’m playing with you, I’m not as careful recording your scores as I am my own. Looking back, I played with Roberto on Saturday of that Masters. I kept his card. After we sat down to go through them, I hadn’t got past my first hole when Roberto tossed his in and left. I happened to get it correct, but it’s a good thing I did. It was just his way. Eventually, it cost him.

THE PRESENTATION CEREMONY wasn't what it could have been. I sat next to Roberto and did what I could to console him. There's video of me patting him on the leg. I felt no elation, nothing like you'd expect from winning the biggest tournament of your life. It was awkward. It was tragic for Roberto, but it was equally unfortunate for me. I never did get full credit for what I'd done. I played damned well, especially the last day (the 66 matching De Vincenzo's amended score).



I STATED AT THE TIME that I wished there could have been a playoff, but what I meant by that was, I wished perhaps that the penalty had thrown us into a playoff rather than me winning outright. As it was, there was no way I was going to refuse the victory. To do so would have been very disrespectful to Augusta National and the Masters. And it would have been a one-man mutiny against *The Rules of Golf*. Consider for a minute how

I'LL TELL YOU A STORY I've kept mostly to myself all these years. It's a true story because the man who told it to me, the late Jack Tuthill, had as much integrity as any man ever. Three weeks after the 1968 Masters, Roberto won the Houston Champions International tournament. Jack was tournament director for the PGA Tour and was on-site. He told me that Roberto left the scoring tent without signing his card; the penalty is disqualification. Jack told me he struggled with himself at that moment, because on one hand there was the letter of the law, while on the other was the unholy mess that would arise if Roberto was DQ'd by, of all things, another scorecard incident. What do you do? Jack searched for Roberto, found him and brought him back to sign his card.



TUTHILL HAD A LOT OF INTEGRITY. He was working as an official at the Masters in 1972. On the second hole, Arnold

ON THAT SUNDAY AFTERNOON at Augusta in '68, I walked to the 15th tee right in the thick of it. Understand, I was a good player, but not a world-beater. I won 11 tournaments, played the Ryder Cup. But the Masters is a different animal. I knew that what happened over the next 40 minutes could change my life. I was feeling the heat. I hit a huge drive and had only a 3-iron left. I hit it solid, a nice draw that stopped eight feet from the hole. And then I made the putt for eagle. On the wall of my home is a letter, framed, to me from Bobby Jones. There's a part where he says, "I was particularly thrilled by your exquisite second shot to the 15th, which was the finest I have seen played to that hole." Jones was present when Gene Sarazen made his double eagle there in 1935, so that's some high praise.



AT THE CHAMPIONS DINNER, Cliff Roberts always invited players to give suggestions to make the tournament better. One year,

"There was no way I was going to refuse the victory ... It would have been a one-man mutiny against *The Rules of Golf*".

many golfers would have refused to accept rulings in the future had I done that. How many would have imposed their own codes as to what was "right"? I was not about to put myself above the game.



I RECEIVED HATE MAIL like you wouldn't believe, telling me I was the worst son of a bitch who ever lived. One guy wrote, "They ought to put you and Sonny Liston in a sack of concrete and dump you in the ocean." The negative-to-positive ratio was 10-to-1 negative. The letters piled up, and every one of them hurt. For some reason, I've kept that hate mail. I don't know why. Maybe to one day explain to people what the experience was like.



IT SHOULD BE KNOWN that Roberto (who died last year at 94) and I were friends before that Masters and for many years after. Not like brothers, but to the point that we partnered in two Legends of Golf tournaments.

Palmer left a bunker shot in the bunker, then whacked the sand with his club in anger. Jack immediately hit Arnold with a two-shot penalty for grounding his club in the bunker. It was absolutely the right call, but after the round officials convened and decided to rescind the penalty. That kind of thing happened at Augusta on occasion. This one did not sit well with Jack. He felt belittled by it. He refused to work as an official there again.



ONE OF THE TV NETWORKS seized on the idea of a head-to-head match between Roberto and me. Within a couple of days, the offer came in: We'd play that Thursday at Firestone in Akron, and the offer for me was \$90 000 (Goalby made \$20 000 at the Masters to De Vincenzo's \$15 000). I don't know what Roberto was offered, but I declined. Put yourself in my spot. If I agreed and Roberto beat me, I in essence lose the green jacket. If I win, it's a nice bit of cash, but so what?

Art Wall, who won in 1959, suggested that more attention be given to starting times for past champions. He complained that he'd had many that were very early and late, and that he was embarrassed by them. When Art got home, a letter from Cliff was waiting for him. It included every one of Art's tee times from 1959 on, and it turned out they all were excellent. Art told this story on himself. He said he kept quiet at the dinners after that.



WE'RE AT THE 50-YEAR MARK of that Masters, and history is being kinder to me. Young people especially don't know about the controversy because it was so long ago. To them, I'm just a Masters champion. They'll say, "That's so cool. What year did you win? Can you tell me about it?" And I tell them about how I shot 66 on Sunday, and the letter Bobby Jones wrote me about my shot to the 15th. Time is allowing me to be at peace and to feel even more proud and satisfied.

MASTERS CONFIDENTIAL

Who are the contenders (or pretenders) for the first major? Who among the favourites are battling the putting yips (You might be surprised by one of them.) Golf Digest interviewed dozens of players – including 11 major champions and five Ryder Cup captains – along with tour caddies, teachers and broadcasters in a candid Masters Confidential. The definitive answers come starting April 5 on a field of green in Georgia.

TEACHER I like the top players at Augusta, but it depends on the weather to an extent. Last year the weather let Rose and Garcia into contention. I don't like Rory, though. His putting is terrible. He's got the yips.

And his wedge play is awful, too. Jason Day had been awful for a while (before winning a playoff at Torrey Pines for his first tour victory since 2016). Stenson's not going to win. Hideki can't win because he can't putt. I don't see a guy who can't putt winning two years in a row. It could happen, but only if the weather is tough. None of those guys can win an 18-under-par Masters. Sergio (who won a playoff after finishing at nine under last year) certainly couldn't.

So we're down to Jordan Spieth (*right*), Justin Thomas and Dustin Johnson. Koepka (coming off a wrist injury) isn't good enough, although he is opportunistic. He's a basher – the 21st-century pro who plays great three times a year. Then again, he's oblivious – like Dustin – and that works out well for him. That's cruel, but true. I like Rickie Fowler, but his problems are mental. He could be like Sergio and just eventually win one when no one expects him to.

TEACHER Tiger has inspired a generation of guys who have all become savages.



Look at Jon Rahm. He has a backswing and downswing like Trevino. He has a great short game. He expects to make every putt. He's like a long Trevino – good luck.

You've got Dustin, who can win playing bad because he's still better than most guys when they're good.

MULTIPLE WINNER ON

TOUR Everyone points at Rory's wedge play and the ball he uses, but it's the same one Dustin uses, and his wedge play is great.

FORMER TOUR PRO My heart says Rory if he tidies

up his putting and wedge play. He has technical issues in both. He's so "trapped" with his short irons. He leans on the shaft so much, and the ball comes out on a different flight and spin every time, so it flies a different distance every time and reacts differently when it lands.

BROADCASTER We've seen the caddie change (by McIlroy last year). I'm still hoping he drags Billy Foster onto his bag. They would be great together. Billy would be strong enough to say "no" to Rory when required. Also,

Billy is funny, and that would keep Rory light.

TOUR CADDIE Patience is huge. If you start to make mistakes, you start to chase – like Rory did in 2011 – and end up making more and more mistakes. I don't think he would make that same mistake now. He has the ideal game for that course

TEACHER Spieth does stand out on that course. His short putting is a problem, though. No one says it, but those are yips, and they're back. There's a reason Jordan looks at the hole. He missed three

putts inside 2½ feet at the Hero. They were all blocks to the right. That's the big question in his game, but only short-term. Jordan's like Langer, who has had yips his whole career but is still a great putter. Jordan's resourceful and not scared to try things. He's got an issue, but he'll find a way to putt well. Rory's pretending there's nothing wrong. He's not even close to figuring it out.

TEACHER If Jordan's capability on a given day is 68-72, he shoots 69, not 71 or 72. He make more 15-to-25-foot putts than anyone, and you get a lot of those at Augusta.

TEACHER DJ can't turn it over well enough. He can hit it left to right all day, but the doglegs going the other way will find him out.

MAJOR CHAMPION With Bubba winning again on tour, he's one of the clear favourites. He loves the course. Hideki carries such a weight of expectation in every major. Dustin won't notice any of that, of course. The big question mark over all of those guys – except Jordan – is, can they putt well enough to win? He's the only one who beats you with his putter. Justin Rose isn't going to. Nor is Sergio. Adam Scott, no. Jason Day might.

TEACHER I question the size of Fowler's heart. Right now, his swing has to be completely on for it to work. He relies so much on rhythm and timing – the things that go under pressure.

TOUR CADDIE Rickie plays well there and always seems to have a chance. I want to see what Dustin can do (after missing the 2017 Masters with an injury).

TEACHER I like lefties – Mickelson. They have a big advantage on that course.

FORMER TOUR PRO Few are better tee to green than Tommy Fleetwood. So all he has to do is putt well. The same with Justin Thomas.

TOUR CADDIE Everyone points at how important the chipping is, but Westy (Lee Westwood) has done well there, albeit without pulling on a jacket. You can play 'round it, if you hit the ball well enough. The most important thing on the greens is speed. Westy has that, which is why his record is surprisingly good. He doesn't make a lot of putts, but he doesn't three-putt often, either.

FORMER TOUR PRO If I look at all of the top players, they all have parts of Tiger in his prime, but none of them have it all. They all have an obvious weakness.



OLD SCHOOL

The final sentry at Augusta National's 18th is one big oak

Golf courses tend to change with the times. In recent years, Oakmont, Pine Valley and other grand places have been returning to their roots, literally and figuratively, by deforesting sections of property to restore the designers' initial vision, not to mention the grass.

At Augusta National, on the other

hand, trees are revered – not a surprise when you christen the most heart-thumping opening drive in golf (automobile division) as Magnolia Lane. On the other side of the clubhouse sits a live oak that is the favourite meeting place before, during and after Masters Week. If you're making plans, for instance, these are totally sufficient directions

for regulars: "Meet you at 8 under the Big Tree." On the course there was the Eisenhower Tree, a loblolly pine on the 17th hole that bedevilled the former US president and his slice. When Ike's Tree was finally felled by an ice storm in 2014, it was like a death in the family.

That leaves the live oak near the 18th green – the tree annually photo-bombed by the giant leader board – as one of the most prominent landmarks on a course known for them. Photos from the early 1930s show the tree wasn't nearly as big then as it is now. It has grown to a height of approximately 16 metres, and its limbs stretch about 30 metres from one side to the other. If you're having a hard time getting your arms around something that huge, this is also true: At hugging height, the trunk's diameter is 1.7 metres, perhaps the largest live oak on the grounds.

The estimated lifespan is 200-300 years, though some live oaks are said to be over 1 500 years old. Support cables and lightning protection systems are used to help this particular specimen make it to old age. Now it just needs a name. Let's see: a flowing crown that billows a bit in the wind . . . a little extra girth . . . some intractable roots . . . right of centre . . . an orange-ish hue, depending on the sun. Hey, Jim Nantz, call it the Trump Tree. We hear the president isn't against having his name on things.

THE CLUB NEXT DOOR

Augusta Country Club sells its ninth hole to Augusta National



BY CURT SAMPSON



last year's Masters there was tension at the border. By "border" we mean Augusta National's southeast bound-

ary, more or less opposite the 11th and 12th greens and the 13th tee, where the two golf courses straddling Rae's Creek form a sort of golf paradise. On one side of the water – the side you know from TV – heroes battle on a sublime green field, and dignity prevails, and uniformed security guards make damn sure it does.

There's no yelling, unless someone makes an eagle or a really good birdie, and there's no running, and no cell-phones. No beer after 4pm. Sandwiches are famously cheap but so flabby you better keep both hands on your egg salad on white or it will double up on you like a futon.

The equally verdant but far-less-famous facility on the opposite bank is Augusta Country Club, and it's of a piece with the National's rolling terrain and barking dogwoods, but it ain't the same. It couldn't be. Its membership is local, and it's a country club, with all that that implies. ACC encompasses a superb Donald Ross-designed, Brian Silva-remodelled golf course; tennis; a big L-shape swimming pool; a workout facility; a voluminous, luxurious clubhouse fit for wedding receptions; and, the new thing, a bocce court.

The Country Club has 1 340 members; Augusta National's 300 or so are scattered all over the United States. They fly private to Daniel Field when they want to play the Alister MacKenzie masterpiece on their side of the creek.

Free of the significant burden of staging a major tournament, the Country Club lets you run if you must, it's okay if you've got to take or make a call, and if

you want to shoot a picture of a pine cone or an azalea bush, go ahead. Not that they're firebrands at ACC; far from it – doctors, lawyers and business owners predominate. The food is excellent: Try the signature dish, clam chowder, and wash it down with a Velvet Hammer, if you dare. Cut off beer sales? Are you kidding? Besides, you might prefer a Manhattan or a martini to suds in a cup from a concession stand. Of course you can take your glass outside. How else are you going to loosen up your rusted-over stroke? For on the fast and sloping practice green between ACC's first tee and its massive wedding-cake clubhouse, late-afternoon putting matches are a rich thread in the Masters Week tapestry. The party within the party sounds something like this:

"Who needs another beer?" some genial Augusta gentleman always says.

"What you doing for dinner?" asks another.

"What three players won the first Masters they ever played?"

"Putt that. Some chicken on that bone."

"Smith, Sarazen . . ."

"Oh, too bad! You're 3 down."

"So on 6, Bubba hits a flop shot from the front of the green to that back-right pin, and he almost holes . . ."

"Let me use your badge tomorrow afternoon. My sister's comin' in. She wants to buy some shirts."

"Who needs another beer?"

Kibbitzers seated in white Adirondack rockers on the patio call out "Choke!" or "Woo-hoo!" as appropriate. We putt, we miss, we make, and we yak. Mellow-yellow sunlight slants in decreasing angles through the mighty pines lining the first and 18th fairways, a light chill kisses the air, and happy hour slides into even happier hours. . . I've been witness to and a participant

in this ritual for almost 20 years, since I first came to town to research a book unimaginatively titled *The Masters*, and it never gets old.

CROSSOVER MEMBERS . . . AND TENSION

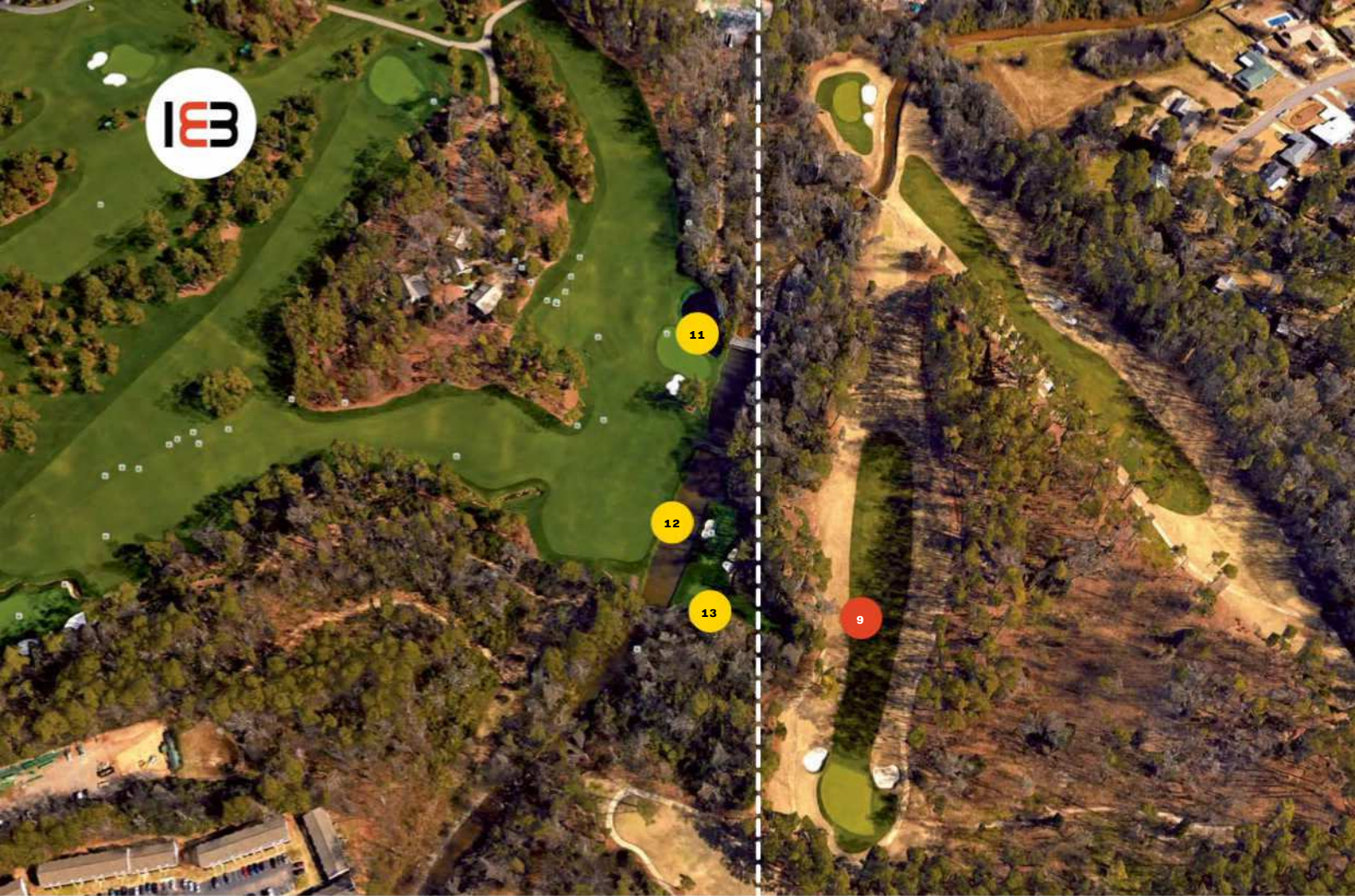
Although the differences between the two clubs on Rae's Creek are sharp, the relationship is as intertwined as the roots on adjacent oaks, and it's complicated by the fact that every Augusta-based member of the National also belongs to the Country Club. There are about 30 of them. What with its cadre of volunteers, and its willingness to lend a mower or a blower or a jar of Grey Poupon (mustard), the people at Augusta National could run the Masters without Augusta Country Club, but they couldn't do it as well.

Money mortars the bricks: Both clubs roll in it thanks to the toon-a-mint. Golf Digest estimates recent annual profits for the host club at about \$30 million, and next door, various media entities rent prime space. Surge pricing allows the Country Club to charge \$5.25 for a beer that's \$2.90 the other 51 weeks.

And when Masters magic compels patrons to attempt the game themselves? Look no further.

"*We are the only course you can play in the Augusta area where you get to hit shots over Rae's Creek and hear the roars from the Masters Tournament,*" brags the ACC website. The tee sheet was almost full by the end of 2017. The fee is \$2 000-\$2 500 for a fourball, and don't forget to tip your forecaddie.

And don't forget to call ahead; patrons should not just waltz in to the old (1899) club on Milledge Road. Quoting the website again: "*The club permits reciprocal privileges to other private clubs upon formal written introduction.*" There's another way to get into the



Augusta National (left) and Augusta Country Club (right). A land sale has allowed Augusta National to possibly extend the 13th tee.

clubhouse, of course: know a member. How to do that? Go where they go. When you see an ACC logo on the sweater of a diner at Calvert's or Sheehan's or the French Market Grille, buy dinner for his entire table. That could work. Friendships have been formed on less. At minimum, it would increase the joy in an already joyous week.

At the January 2015 annual meeting at the Country Club, one of the dual members, red-faced and angry and sitting behind an empty glass, shouted, "Y'all are just a bunch of damn liars." A big-dollar business deal between the clubs was in the offing, but it was not coming off. Frustration bloomed.

The territorial ambitions of recently retired Augusta National chairman Billy Payne were at the heart of the hard feelings. During Payne's 11-year reign, the club snapped up contiguous real estate, pursuant to expanding parking, increasing security, and for the erection of a new media centre and tournament HQ.

By the simple expedient of paying a lot, the mission was accomplished.

There were one or two stubborn little holdouts and one big one: the Country Club. The National wanted to buy its hole on the border, the uphill, par-4 ninth, plus the eighth green – for what reason, it will not say. Perhaps the National would move the tee back on the par-5 13th, or scrape out an expensive road for maintenance vehicles, or create housing of some kind. Losing the hole might have inconvenienced the Country Club but hasn't harmed it – there's ample room for a new ninth.

But the two old friends couldn't agree on a price until a deal was finally done in August 2017. In 2016, Augusta National paid \$5.35 million for 3 000 square metres on a busy corner of Washington Road, and in 2017, the club paid \$6.9 million for an auto repair business on Washington Road. ACC's ninth hole is 2.4 hectares. Sources say the last number on the table was \$18 million.

THE BOBBY JONES CONNECTION

The ties between the clubs go way back. Masters and National co-founder Bobby Jones enjoyed Augusta and its Country Club on numerous visits in the 1920s, climaxing in early April 1930, when one of the best golfers ever played his best golf ever. Jones began his Grand Slam year with a second place in Savannah, then won the Southeastern Open in Augusta – against a good field, most of them pros, including future Masters champs Horton Smith and Gene Sarazen – by 13 shots. The first two rounds of that victory march were at ACC.

Although co-founder Cliff Roberts' official club history holds that an Augusta friend named Thomas Barrett introduced the principals to the site for Bobby's dream course, the idea persists that at some point, Jones looked across the creek while he walked up No 9. If he turned to his right in April 1930, he would have seen the eventual 11th

Numerous sources say that the last number on the table was \$18 million.



and 13th fairways, very few pines, and scores of flowering trees and shrubs left behind by the defunct Fruitland Nurseries. It would have looked heavenly. Jones, Roberts and friends bought the 148-hectare plot for \$70 000.

The two clubs and the Masters blended over the years, up to a point. Jerry Matheis, a member at ACC since 1966, remembers the days when many

songs, Jimmy selected jokes and one-liners from his vast collection. Sides were split. Someone, we assume, hit a cymbal.

A charming vestige of the Snead-Demaret era involved Byron Nelson. From 1981 until he couldn't, Nelson was one of the three creaky legends who got the tournament started on Thursday morning by swatting out a ceremonial tee ball. The kindly two-time Masters

ing hosted a Tuesday-evening dinner at ACC for every Masters player who hit a Dot. "Usually about 20 or 25 of us," recalls former Spalding sales rep Wendell Couch. "Greg Norman in his heyday, Payne Stewart, Johnny Miller. And those who had a prior commitment (that is, attendees of the Champions Dinner at Augusta National) would come over for dessert," Couch says. "Bob Goalby did that, Charlie Coody, and Craig Stadler."

The delay in selling the ninth hole to Augusta National was described as a symptom of a larger negative trend, according to certain traditionalists at the Country Club.

"They've just replaced the atmosphere, from local Augusta to corporate," says an ACC member who has been attending the Masters for over 40 years. "They bought so much land for free parking, local people can't make a few bucks by parking cars in their yards like they always have. Then they put up a bunch of nice bars and restaurants called Berckmans Place, over behind No 5. It won't surprise me if they build their own hotel, or a lot more cabins. It's stay at their place, eat their food, spend all your money there. Do they really care about the community?"

Maybe chairman Payne is the Great Usurper, and maybe the National has changed the lay of the land too much and too fast. Dead men like Jones and Roberts, and live ones such as the ACC member quoted above, could never have pictured the club's acquisition of so much real estate, or the creation of the fabulously expensive Berckmans Place. It includes a "putting experience" featuring miniature replicas of three National greens, with full-size replica caddies in white coveralls who tell you that your putt breaks left. Will this affect the Country Club putting match?

Unless Augusta National keep buying holes until they have the entire golf course, Augusta Country Club should remain a great place to reunite with old friends, to borrow a badge for an hour, to trade hot sports opinions, and to take Spieth over Day for 10. And to drink, and to putt.



Full house: The scene at Augusta Country Club during the Masters.

invitees stayed in the homes of ACC members, and the members didn't leave, and they all had a lovely time. At the parties at the country club, musician / golfer / showoffs named Snead, Hebert and Demaret would on occasion tell a couple of the paid performers to take 10. Then someone counted off one, two, three, and three-time Masters winner Sam Snead blew through a trumpet, his cheeks puffed out as if he were Dizzy Gillespie. Lionel Hebert (four top-10s in the '50s and '60s) majored in music at LSU (Louisiana) and could play anything. And Jimmy Demaret, another three-green-jacket man, owned a pleasant tenor he loved to use. Between

champ warmed up at ACC. "Tuesday and Wednesday," recalls Tommy Brannen, the Country Club's head pro, "we'd take carts out to the back of the range. I'd tee the balls up for him because he had replacement hips, and it hurt him to bend over."

Brannen has seen other Masters players play on his side of the creek during tournament week. "Let's see, Bernhard Langer, Ian Woosnam . . . remember, there's no pro-am in the Masters, so we're the best place to get together for social golf with sponsors or friends. And this is not a bad little golf course."

Here's another example of hands across the creek water: for 40-odd years, Spald-

Michelob
ULTRA

Lite

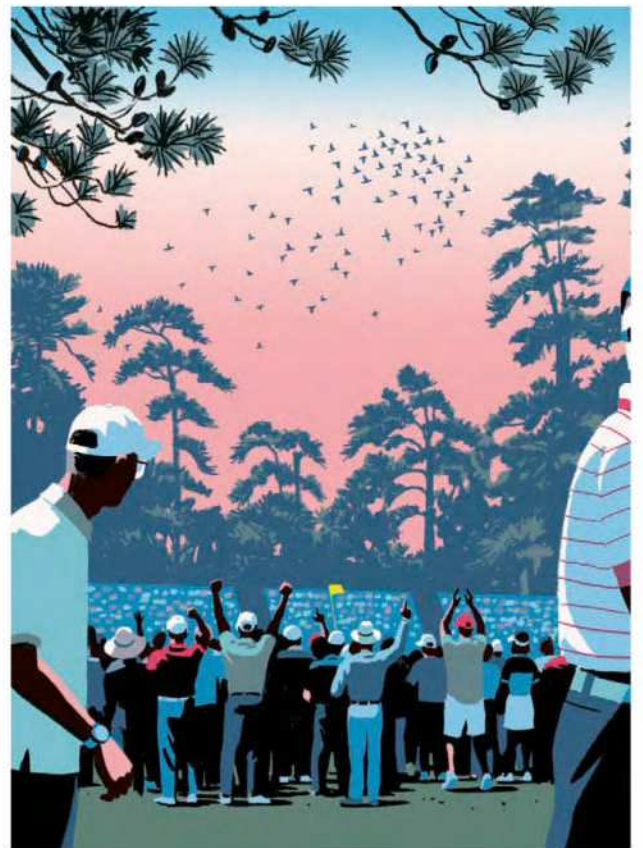
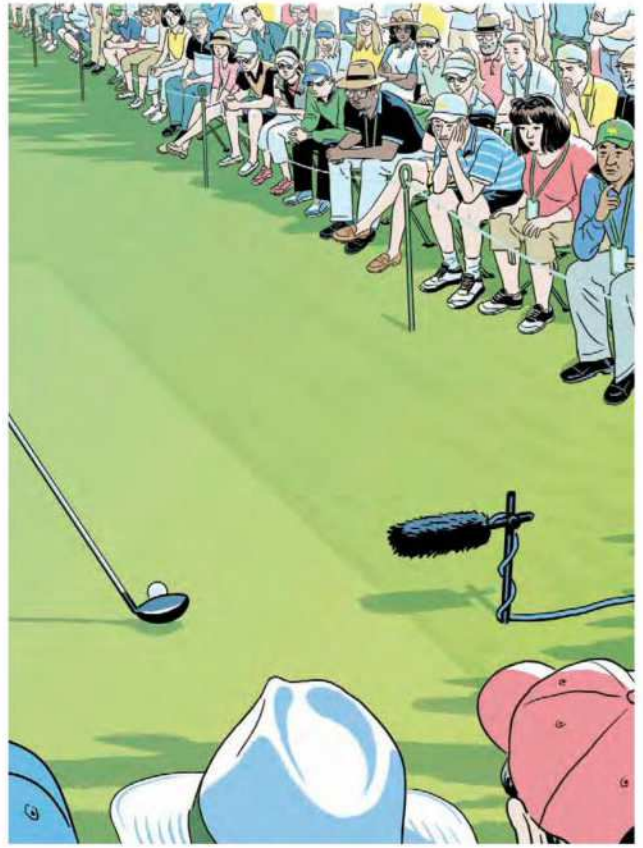
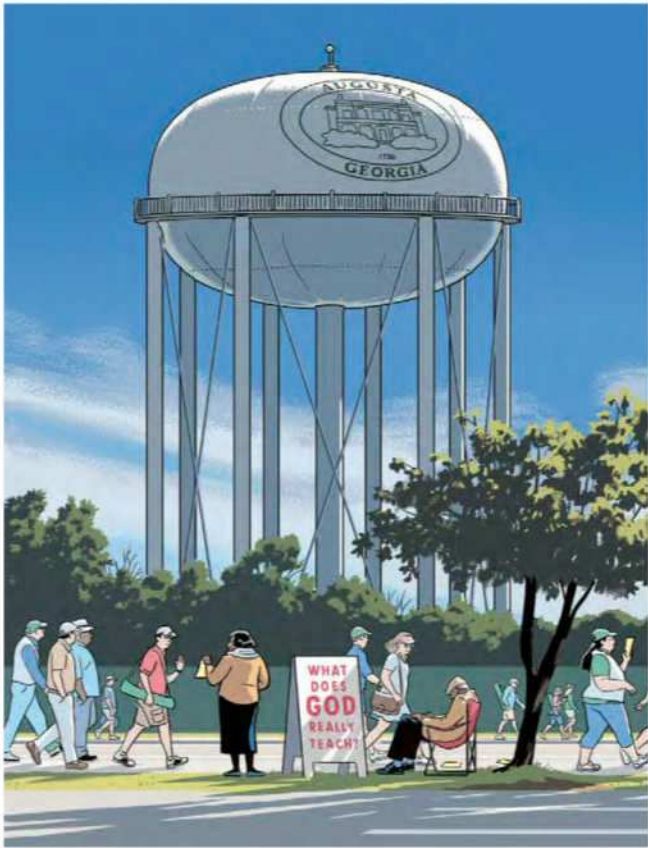
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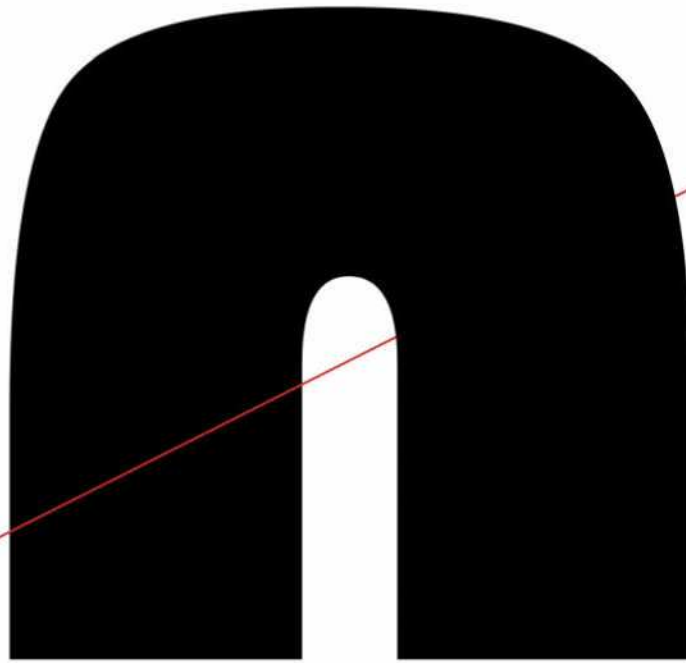


MASTERS WEEK, INSIDE & OUT THE GATES ILLUSTRATIONS & TEXT BY KIKUO JOHNSON









WHAT MADE TIGER GREAT WHAT MADE TIGER GREAT

NICKLAUS, PLAYER, TREVINO, MILLER & FALDO ON GOING FROM GOOD TO TRANSCENDENT

BY JAIME DIAZ

▶▶▶ MORE THAN ANY OTHER PLAYER IN HISTORY, Tiger Woods at his peak refuted the adage that no golfer gets it all. The image of that once-supreme completist from the century's first decade remains indelible and continues to magnify light onto every part of the game – especially the elements that constitute greatness. ▶ Those who can perceive and convey that last piece with the most precision are the elders in an ultra-exclusive fraternity that includes Woods as a junior member. So as Tiger embarks on his latest comeback, Golf Digest sat down with five of the best: Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, Lee Trevino, Johnny Miller and Nick Faldo. ▶ All are multiple major winners – collectively their total is 41, the inverse of Woods' 14. All are essentially retired from competition yet remain avidly connected to the current scene. All are close students of a figure who has transcended and brought scrupulous attention to the game they once mastered. ▶ For them, Woods is both an illuminating prism and a mirror.



Our idea was to exploit a premise that has proved reliable since Woods first came to world renown as an amateur in the mid-'90s: The better the player, the better the take on Tiger. To varying degrees, each Hall of Famer possessed some or even all of Woods' myriad qualities and strengths. But to allow the interviews to form a more coordinated whole, the subject matter for each former player focused on the area he most closely compared with Woods.

With Nicklaus, it was the uncanny ability for making it happen. For Player, an indefatigable self-belief. For Trevino, an undying obsession for the game. For Miller, a nearly identical crucial head start as a youth. For Faldo, a relentless focus on majors. The individual framing allowed each of our sages to pull from personal experience and observation. The result is wisdom and insight about what it takes to reach the very highest levels of golf – and through a more intimate understanding of five all-timers, a more refined appreciation of Woods.

Greatness in golf will remain fascinating and mysterious. The current question: When, if ever, will Tiger, now 42, achieve the kind of late-career climax – Nicklaus' 1986 Masters at 46 the epitome – that provides each of our five elders such an enduring satisfaction? As 2018 develops, they'll retain the most interest and empathy as a renewed Tiger – still very much a completist – chases his missing pieces.

NICK FALDO

THE JOURNEY TO THURSDAY MORNING

Tiger, and I were similar in that we could almost be in the zone for four days. I had this ability to focus on golf. You hear the psychologists say you should bounce around, but I didn't. Sometimes Fanny (caddie Fanny Sunesson) would go off on a subject, and I used to drag her back: "No, no, no. Just keep talking golf."

The preparation time between majors is vital, and this is where I think Tiger was absolutely phenomenal. It's the journey getting to Thursday morning of the US Open or whatever, and if you're really smart and know more about the game, it starts the week before or two weeks before or, in the case of the Masters, months before. But you've got to start well, to be absolutely ready for Thursday morning. I remember reading that Arnold Palmer said he would take the intensity of 17 and

'TIGER KNEW HE WAS DIFFERENT. SPECIAL. HE HIT A GOLF BALL DIFFERENTLY – FULL STOP – THAN ANYBODY ELSE.' – NICK FALDO

18 on Sunday of a major and bring that to Thursday. And that was a little jolt to me. I used to say to myself in the majors: *Every shot is history on Thursday as well, so don't waste them.*

With Tiger, I think of the opening nine holes when he shot 40 at the 1997 Masters. (Faldo, the defending champion, was his playing partner in the first two rounds of Woods' 12-stroke victory.) I wonder if that was one of his epiphanies where he said, *I'm never going to do that again. I'm never going to set myself up to get that far down. I'm going to find a way to prepare.* And I think that's what he did so brilliantly. How he could go out, win a tournament, disappear for three weeks and come back out in a major, and there was no wastage of shots or sloppiness. And the number of times you would say, *How does he come out holing every putt?*

Tiger knew he was different. Special. He hit a golf ball differently – full stop – than anybody else. Nobody could drive it like him, nobody could hit long irons like him, or the wedges and the putter. There wasn't anybody ever who was that good in every department. And then he'd believe he was better prepared for Thursday than anyone else, and it became a pattern.

It's true in other sports. I love Formula One racing. How come these guys will all qualify within tenths of a second, and then on the first lap of the race, Lewis Hamilton will be a full second ahead of everybody?

I birdied a lot of opening holes at the Open Championship. You psych yourself all week, and you visualise it, seeing yourself knock it out there, on the green, in, and off you go. Whereas some people stand up on the first tee, and they can't see the fairway.

I'd like to do some of my career differently. I made mistakes working too hard at tournaments. I know I wore myself out,

wore out my golfing batteries. But I said to myself, *I don't want to get to 45 and regret that I didn't try hard enough.* Because I know some golfers, I watched them get into their 40s, and they were lazy. And suddenly it's gone. You're an athlete given a window of opportunity. And while you've got your nerve, you'd better make the most of it. Because once your nerve starts to go, you ain't getting that one back.

That last round at the 1996 Masters (overcoming Greg Norman's six-stroke lead) was the best round mentally I ever had. The swing wasn't quite right, and I had to mentally push myself through each shot. I would think to myself, *Are the wheels coming off?* And I had to yell at myself, *No, they're not! Come on, what are we going to do? Okay, hit it, land it there, piece it together, and I'm going to do this in the swing, because I know if I do this, I'll hang on to it.* I had a little checklist I had to go through. I'd lost that 100 percent self-belief, or whatever the percentage is where you're Superman. Once it gets chinks, it becomes, *Oh, I got away with it.* And then one day, you say all those things to yourself, and *tuang!* – it goes sideways. And that's the day when you go, *Oh, blimey.*

To go to a major with the intention of winning it and doing it, that gives me the greatest pride. I did that in three of them (1990 at the Masters and St Andrews, and 1992 at Muirfield were among Faldo's six major victories). With Tiger, I don't know if he's done 14 with the intention quite like that. It gives you that sense of power. You definitely feel everybody must be looking at you. The way you act probably pisses off a lot of the players – has to. Because I'm sure that's when you're at your rudest. Because you're so focused, you're so engrossed.

Tiger was quite happy to come into a tournament with a horrendous spotlight on him. I was amazed how he could do that. I'll never forget, I was on the range doing TV at Augusta. He came on the range, and you could feel the aura. Every player would turn and look. All the gallery, every eye was on him. He turned it into energy. I'm sure Ali had that.

Once you get everything right, it's that wonderful feeling knowing that you're going to do it. I had that once: walking down the first fairway at St Andrews, in 1990. They had put the flag just over the burn, into the breeze, and David (Leadbetter) came to tell me that balls were spinning back into the burn. So it's a 9-iron, but I'm



WOODS AS AN AMATEUR IN 1995.

PREVIOUS PAGES: WOODS IN APRIL 1997 BEFORE HIS FIRST MASTERS VICTORY.

worried, so I'll hit 8. And then I get a little more nervous and take out a 7. So I chip a 7, and I land it right in the back of the bloody green, and I've got a 30-yard putt. And I said to myself, *Just relax. You're going to win.*

You can say it now 30 years later, and people don't think you're an ass. But how cool a line is that to say to yourself? That is your ultimate. The millions of golf balls and the thousands of hours just to be able to say you know what to do and how to do it under the ultimate pressure, and you love it.

JOHNNY MILLER
THE FATHER INFLUENCE

When Tiger came up, I saw a lot of my golf upbringing in him. I don't know exactly how Earl worked, but I could tell he had that affirmation thing going big-time with

Tiger. I mean, he said, *This guy's going to be the greatest*, and he probably said it a million times to Tiger. He also paid the price with Tiger with his time, doing a lot of things my father did. Everything was centred around his dad, right?

With Tiger, what I saw was the drive, even a stronger drive than I had. And he had the rarest of all abilities: If he needed to make the putt, somehow he could make it go in. Not many guys can actually make it, you know. I think of Casper, Nicklaus – for a while, Trevino. It's very rare to have a guy who actually improved his putting when it mattered the most. Tiger was definitely that way. I could do it with my ball-striking. But you still had to finish it off with the putts.

I think Earl had that sense that this guy is special, and I think it was a special relationship. Tiger wanted to please his dad and follow what his dad wanted to accomplish

with him. Sometimes you hear some of the negative, but I think most of it was pretty amazing. I believe Tiger, if it wasn't for Earl, would be just another guy. I really believe that.

When my dad started me out hitting balls into a canvas tarp in our basement when I was 5, you couldn't use too much loft because it would hit the rafters. So I hit a lot of 5- and 6-irons. And I would wear out this dark-green canvas, making a little light green line where it would start to shred. I'd aim for that little stripe about 15 feet away, and I knew where a perfect 6-iron would hit.

The thing that the basement did for me, is that it really got me to know what the sound and feel of a pure shot was. You could hear the strike, and you could feel no vibration. Trying to get that would really focus you.

I was very little. When I graduated from ninth grade, I was 5-2, 48 kilos. I was a



"HE GOT BORED," LEE TREVINO SAYS OF WOODS, SHOWN IN 1997. "IT WAS TOO EASY FOR HIM."

phenomenal putter. I'll bet you when I was 12, I was in the top 10 in the world putting. I once had 16 putts for 18 holes (at San Francisco's Lincoln Park). On terrible greens, by the way.

But I loved the game, everything about it. My dad, he made me like a little pro, had me practice how I put my hat on, how I tipped my hat, how I put my glove on, and how I squinted my eyes and gritted my teeth. Sort of a little Hogan. He always talked about psyche. And he had a blackboard with certain things he wanted me to do because I was small and I needed to be strong — push-ups, squeeze grips, pull-ups.

He would work the midnight-to-8 am shift so that he could sleep while I was in school. After school, he'd take me to San Francisco Golf Club, where I was taking lessons, and the club sort of adopted me. They averaged only 20 players a day, so in the afternoon no one was even out there, so I could hit as many balls as I wanted. Even on approaches into the greens, I could hit eight balls, fixing my divots.

If I hit a bad shot, my dad didn't really focus on the bad at all. It was just, "Okay, one more shot." It was always one more, no matter how many balls I had hit. It was, "Okay, let's see you hit another one," never, "Okay, let's go home." I don't think he ever said, "Let's go home."

He was a smart guy, and he was teaching the best he could. He'd give me 10 things

to try, and eight of them were just way out there. But I would analyse why each one was not a good idea. And then one of the ideas was really good, and one was fantastic. Like when I was 10 or 11, he had me carry a left-handed 5-iron. So I became quite good left-handed, about a 6-handicap. Now coaches recommend swinging left-handed as a training aid. It wasn't boring, because he was super creative.

I was a good little fighter. My dad was a boxing fan, and he taught me how to box. I didn't get in that many fights, but I never lost a fight. The fight would last only 30 or 40 seconds, but that's the way you settled disagreements back then. When he taught me how to box, that gave me confidence, too.

'TIGER WANTED TO PLEASE HIS DAD. . . . I BELIEVE TIGER, IF IT WASN'T FOR EARL, WOULD BE JUST ANOTHER GUY. I REALLY BELIEVE THAT.'
— JOHNNY MILLER

When I was a young player, I didn't even know what a bad stretch was. Never played bad. Never. It's not like I would shoot a bad round and then a real good round. It was just always good. I was a plus-2 when I was 16 years old on the Lake Course at Olympic Club.

I do think you need a start like I did to get a head start. All my friends would work as hard as I did, but they were always a little behind me. They didn't have their father involved. That can work negatively if the guy is overbearing. But my dad was always about affirmations — "You're doing great. . . . You're on the right track. . . . Keep doing those exercises. . . . You're going to be a champion." Over and over. He'd call me Champ — that affirmation of potential. Actually, not just potential, because I knew when I was 9 years old that I was going to be a champion golfer. Something inside me said, *Just keep doing what you're doing. You're going to be a champion, like your dad said.* So that affirmation of greatness or being successful from your father is the strongest affirmation there is for a boy.

JACK NICKLAUS
MAKING IT HAPPEN

When you say, "Making it happen," I think the key to that, and what Tiger and I both understood, is knowing *what* was happening.

I go back to some of the mistakes that I made. I look at the 39 I shot on the last nine holes of the US Open at Cherry Hills in 1960. At Pebble Beach in 1963, I came to the last hole tied with Billy Casper but three-putted from 22 feet by being too aggressive with the first putt and then missed the comebacker. As good as Casper was, my chances of beating him in a playoff were higher than making that 22-footer. Later that summer, down the stretch at Royal Lytham, I lost by one after bogeying the last two holes by not being smart.

Those are things you learn from, how to assess a situation and learn who you are and what you can do. And you gain confidence when those lessons teach you how to choose the correct course. Ultimately you become that golfer.

If I had a putt on the 18th to make, that I needed to make, more often than not I made it. Inside 10 feet, more than likely I made that putt. With Tiger, the same thing. Think of Tiger at the (2003) Presidents Cup in South Africa in sudden death with Ernie Els. Particularly the second putt, the one in the dark. I mean, that was just . . . he made it happen.

In those situations, I always stood over a putt, and I'd say, *I need . . . I HAVE to make this putt.* Period. *I gotta make it.* And more often than not, that made me focus more, and I made it. And once you do that a couple of times, you say, *Well, what should I say this time: Gee, I'd LIKE to make it? No. I HAVE to make it.* Once you find something you tell yourself that works, you continue to do that thing until it proves it doesn't. For me, it kept working most of the time.

I got nervous all the time, as nervous as the next guy. It's just that I caught myself before it became destructive. You might be thinking, *Gosh, I'm worried about missing it.* When you get that out of your system, you eliminate all the negatives.

I don't know how much is innate. I mean, I started winning when I was 10, 11 years old. I was playing with (wife) Barbara at Lost Tree on the sixth hole one time, a par 5, and Barbara hit three fairway woods up there and made 4. And I had a 25-footer for 4, and I made it. And she says, "You can't ever let me win one?" I said, "I'm sorry, it's what I do. I'm like the scorpion and the frog. It's my nature." Why, I don't know. I wish I could answer that question, but I can't — I just don't know. It was not an accident. No, I worked very hard for

'I WANTED TO LEARN WHY I MADE MISTAKES. I THINK TIGER DOES MUCH THE SAME THING.' —JACK NICKLAUS

that. But no, I never tried to figure it out. How does Jack Nicklaus know who Jack Nicklaus is? Whatever I had to do, I just went ahead and did it.

Sure, I could have gone the other way. Why didn't I? Because I didn't want to (*chuckles*). I didn't want to be a bad player. I didn't want to lose tournaments. I wanted to learn why I made mistakes. I think Tiger does much the same thing.

My dad loved playing all sports, and so did I. I've played tennis all my life. I played basketball in a league until I was 40. I'd take the kids to football practice, and I'd throw to them in passing drills. Playing all those sports taught you a lot about yourself and about what you can do and what you can't do. Especially when you're dealing with team sports, you're working with your teammates and seeing them make mistakes and their strengths. And you relate those things right back to yourself and how to make yourself better. Did what I learned from team sports help me to learn to rise to the occasion in golf? Absolutely.

Tiger was always a guy who once he got ahead, he was able to gain the ability to just bury everybody. And I never really thought about burying the field. All I ever thought about was, *I got my lead, now how do I not do something stupid to lose my lead?* The 1965 Masters (where Nicklaus won by nine), it just happened. And the 1980 PGA (Nicklaus won by seven at Oak Hill), I was playing terrible.

I try to subdue my emotion in competition. When I was a kid, I'd find myself getting excited when I did something good, and I'd lose my focus and wouldn't get back down for a hole or two. I said, *I can't do that.* So I was one of those guys who didn't pump himself up by getting excited. I had to control it so I could continue to do something good.

The game is unpredictable, and it's different every day. I don't think I ever had two problems to solve in a round that

were exactly the same, ever. You always have to figure out, *How do I really make this happen?* I trusted my instinct. I always felt like any time I played a tournament, any place in a round, if I didn't like how I was swinging, I would change it. I go back and look at a lot of times I did that, and who knows why I did it, but I just said, *This is not what I want to be doing. I need to make an adjustment, and I need to make it now, and I've got to do it without destroying myself to do it.*

GARY PLAYER

"BOUND FOR GREAT THINGS"

Tiger had advantages physically and in his early exposure to the game that I didn't have. It put him on the road to being the greatest golfer who ever lived. But the thing where we were equal, or I might have even had more of, was drive. Man, I was driven. There is never enough success for me.

One of the first things I noticed about Tiger is his strong belief in his destiny. He carried himself with a peaceful but powerful sense that he was bound for great things. I understand that feeling. It was vital to my inner view of myself, especially when I knew others might not have shared it. But that only made me more determined.

When I was 15, I broke my neck showing off for some other boys by jumping headfirst into what I thought was a pit of soft leaves and grass, and hit bottom. I had to stay inactive for nearly a year. I had been playing golf for only a year, but I was already consumed by the game. During my convalescence, I would be alone in the house and stand in front of a mirror, saying over and over, *You're the greatest golfer in the world.* It was absurd, but something told me that mattered. Later, I learned from reading and befriending Norman Vincent Peale. He once wrote, "If you want something and you go for it, you will be astonished at the values you will find."

My parents, Harry and Muriel, always encouraged us. I'm sure it gave me the belief that what I could conceive, I could achieve. It's the greatest gift you can give a child.

My older brother, Ian, was a tremendous influence on me. I remember at 8 or 9 trying to run a five-mile course with him, but I fell down less than halfway, exhausted. I cried, "Ian, I can't make it." He yanked me to my feet and very sternly told me, "You

can do anything you want to. Remember that. There's no room for 'can't' in this life." Then he kicked me on the backside to emphasise the point. Ever since, if I've ever been tempted to say *I can't*, I feel that kick again.

A golfer's true greatness is revealed not when he's playing his best, but when he's not and still manages to win. For all his talent, Tiger has shown even more will, and so often when he was fighting his swing he still found a way. There were many times in tournaments when I was lost, hitting absolute rubbish, but I would get the ball on the green and make the key putts. How does that happen? Desire. Tiger has always had more of that than the players he's beaten. You feel as if he cares more than anyone else. I was told that when I played, I gave that impression.

Tiger has hit so many amazing shots under pressure. Often, with some players more than others, pressure can destroy performance. But I've found it's amazing how the intense pressure of the crucial moment, when something special is required, produced the best shots of my career. I don't know if you can say it's luck if you continuously did that. Talent, maybe?

Obviously I'm pulling for Tiger – I am a big Tiger Woods fan. But I think we could look back and say that his downfall was striving for too much perfection. He was on the way to being the best player the world had ever known. He wins the US Open by 15 shots, and shortly after he's having lessons and changing his swing. There is always a limit, and I don't think he could have got better. I pursued better technique my whole career – my only regret is a lost chance to learn from Ben Hogan – and it's a capricious thing that often doesn't lead to improvement. Golf is such a very, very intricate game, and there is a limitation.

LEE TREVINO

A REASON FOR EVERYTHING

Tiger, like me, is obsessed with golf. People have to understand that he made himself what he is. He wasn't born with that. Superstars make themselves that way. When you want to be the best, you gotta do something extra. You can't just do the same thing that everybody else is doing. All the great ones do that. I outpractised them. The better I did it, the more I'd like to see it, and the more I practised.



WOODS IN DECEMBER 1996, FOUR MONTHS AFTER TURNING PRO AND SHORTLY BEFORE HIS 21ST BIRTHDAY.

'A GOLFER'S TRUE GREATNESS IS REVEALED NOT WHEN HE'S PLAYING HIS BEST, BUT WHEN HE'S NOT AND STILL MANAGES TO WIN.'

—GARY PLAYER

The secret is, everything that you do, there's a reason. The good players figure out the *why*. Why that ball's doing that. And why you can do this. Most people don't do that.

I played a hook with a pretty swing until I came back from the Marine Corps and saw Ben Hogan hitting fades at Shady Oaks. After that, I figured out a way to play to avoid the left side. See, I play with two flags. I aim at this flag, but I hit it at that one. I'll stand here, and I'll go like this (simulates his open stance). I'm looking right at the target. I don't have to do this (looking more over his left shoulder from a square stance). And then I played a block fade. You have to, if you're aiming left. It's in your mind, it's in your makeup, it's in your body. Putted the same way. Copied Jack Nicklaus, the greatest putter I've ever seen.

You have to respond to the target.

During the swing, I look for the target in my subconscious mind. You can't think when you swing. The more you think, the worse you'll play. What's happened, unfortunately, and I mean no disrespect by this, is that people who are teaching are getting way too crazy with too many little movements and muscles. You can't let too many people mess with you. Mr Palmer had it right when he said, "Swing your swing."


Tiger outsmarted himself. He didn't realise that if he just maintained, he would still be winning everything. Instead, he wanted to do something else. He got bored. He wasn't satisfied winning by 15. He wasn't satisfied by winning 30 percent of his tournaments. It was too easy for him. He was actually too good, and it got in his way.

Here's what Butch Harmon told me. I said, "Tiger?" He said, "Lee, I can't teach him anymore. He knows more than I do about the swing. You can't believe what he knows about this thing."

Because Tiger dissected it like me. He knows why it happens this way when you do a certain thing. But like Butch said, "There are some guys that want somebody watching over them."

I didn't. Jack told me one time, "You're the smartest golfer I ever met." That was the best compliment I've ever had. Ever had.

You never stop dreaming it. I love the art of it. I love the people. And still being able to go out and perform. With Tiger, it's even more so. It would be very easy for him to say, "I don't even want to mess with it." I mean, his retirement fund alone has got more money than AT&T. So no, he loves the sport, he loves competition, he loves to win, he loves to play well. That's his whole thing. If Tiger does not hurt anymore, I think he'll play until he's 50, and then he'll play the majors on the Champions Tour.

One of the greatest feelings in the world is when you're out of pain. When my L-5 nerve was completely trapped, I was in that bed upstairs for three months. Wasn't able to even put my pants on. I could not move. Then (after a 2004 procedure to implant a spinal spacer), no pain. It was like cutting me loose with 31 flavours. Tiger is going to be the same thing. He lost his body, but he didn't lose his talent. And the longer he goes with no pain, the more confidence he's going to build. And then he's going to get up one day and say, "I'm back, baby!" 



BULOVA

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GENTS WATCH
VALUED AT
R7 000

Answer this question:

What is the full name of the founder of Bulova?

One lucky reader stands a chance to win a Bulova Marine Star gents watch valued at R7 000.

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Bulova, an American brand, is known for its innovation, craftsmanship and advanced technology. Since 1875, when founder Joseph Bulova opened his store on Maiden Lane in downtown Manhattan, Bulova has remained true to his legacy – mastering the classic art of timekeeping while always embracing the future. The sporty Marine Star is highly functional, yet refined enough to pair well with office or weekend wear.

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—

'Protecting his spine is more important than ever. That's why Tiger is not bending back at the end of his swing.'

FINISH

MAKING A WISE MOVE

► Let's face it: Lower-back problems are common to many golfers, not just the pros, instructor Jim McLean says. "Knowing that, you've got to do everything you can to protect your spine." Copying the end of Tiger's swing is a good idea. "It's a great finish for a guy with a bad back. Look how upright he is. The right shoulder is higher than the left. And if you drew a line from his right ear to the inside of his left foot, it's a straight line – there's no reverse-C look to his spine. That means no extra pressure on the lumbar discs." ► As you get older, having this straight-and-balanced finish is going to add time to your playing career. "Let that club finish resting on your neck and shoulders," McLean says. "Tiger is standing tall. Good to see he's swinging like a champion again."

HOW TIGER CHOOSES HIS EQUIPMENT

The 14-time major champion brings a meticulous approach to club-testing

BY MICHAEL JOHNSON

HAVING WATCHED TIGER WOODS TEST EQUIPMENT in 2003 and given the opportunity again in December, I was eager to find out how his approach had changed. It turns out, it hasn't. Instead of projecting as a 42-year-old seeking a magic elixir to boost his aging game, Woods displayed the same exacting attention he did as a 27-year-old at the peak of his powers. This was Woods' first official testing session since joining TaylorMade in January 2017, and he and the company's research and development team spent nearly two hours on the range at Medalist Golf Club in Florida, minutely analysing his equipment specs. ▶ "That's a lot higher," Woods called out on his first swing with a TW prototype, muscle-back blade 6-iron, comparing it to the ball flight of his current 6-iron. For Woods, ball flight is everything. In the 2003 session, he said, "If I look up and don't see the ball right where I expect it to be, then we have a serious problem." But not an insurmountable one. Keith Sbarbaro, TaylorMade's vice president of tour operations, tells Woods that it could be the centre-of-gravity location, and he and his team would measure Woods' old set and match it.

Woods is likely to notice anything amiss, having used the same club specifications for decades, only changing the lie angle when a swing change called for it. He also said in his early years as a professional that it was necessary for him to go through eight or nine sets and pick clubs from each to get the centre of gravity just right.

Despite the trajectory issue, Woods was pleased with what he saw. The look of the club, especially at address, is very important to him. Woods prefers an iron with a longer blade length, thin sole and squared-off toe. His TaylorMade prototype was spot-on. "The look is sweet," he said. "It feels great going through the ground; feels fantastic. Everything is right."

Moving on to drivers, Woods hit the majority with impressive velocity. His launch conditions featured ball speeds of 290 kilometres per hour and spin rates from 2 200 to 2 400 revolutions per minute with a launch angle of 11 to 13 degrees – all highly respectable. His carry distance often reached 288 metres.

Woods started with the TaylorMade M2 he has been using, before trying the

M4 model. The newer M4 produced similar ball speeds, but a higher ball flight. "It looks a touch open. It's floating out there, but it has a more solid sound and feel," Woods said.

He then tried the new M3, a club with a technology called "twist face," because the face is twisted slightly to produce optimum performance on mis-hits. Asked if he noticed it at address, Woods said: "I don't see it at all, but the idea makes total sense."

Starting with a 9.5-degree model, Woods felt the club was too upright. A change was made to an 8.5-degree head, which sat flatter. After a few swings, Woods still wasn't satisfied, saying it didn't look right. As with his irons, the look of the driver is vital. "I know when I'm wagging it," he said. "If I feel it matches up to me, it frees up my swing."

Sbarbaro then suggested an M3 440 at 9 degrees – a club with a slightly smaller head. After a couple of waggles, Woods flashed his trademark smile and said, "I like it a lot." A few swings in, Sbarbaro made a tweak, adjusting the two movable weights on the sole all the way forward. On the next swing, Woods tattooed one:

294 metres of carry, 15 degrees of launch, 2 100 rpm of spin – nearly perfect.

After about 90 minutes during which he hit close to 100 balls, Woods was closer to some new clubs, though his set makeup (driver, 3-wood, 5-wood or 2-iron, depending on course, 3-iron through pitching wedge, 54- and 60-degree wedges and putter) is likely to remain unchanged. Before any decisions, Woods insisted there was work to do, mostly on the course. "Right before the Hero, I had a 3-wood I was using last year," he said. "On the range, I hit it fantastic. On the course, I couldn't hit it. It had too much toe droop right before impact. When I tried to turn it, I'd hit this toe pop-up. The golf course showed that. It's not just about making it look good (on the range)."

As with any testing session there were some lighter moments, like when Woods said he used Confidence irons as a kid until he saved enough money to buy a set of Mizunos. His keen sense of feel was on display, too. Woods cast aside the last driver he hit because of an air bubble in the grip only he could feel. To the last swing, the same old Tiger.



DOES TIGER STILL DOES TIGER STILL

▶▶▶▶▶ REWIND TO 2015. Site: the Waste Management Phoenix Open.

During that tournament, Tiger Woods put on a short-game exhibition that was stupefying. Skulled chips, flubbed chips, even bunted chips when he seemingly could rely on nothing else. That performance and others around the same time left many experts thinking what his former instructor, Hank Haney, succinctly declared, “Let’s be serious: Tiger Woods has the yips.” ▶ They’re the four scariest letters in golf. When you realise that something neurological might be impairing a part, or parts, of your game, feelings of fear, terror, helplessness – even surrender – are soon to follow. Some golfers never recover, which makes Tiger’s latest comeback all the more interesting. ▶ Are the issues he had with chipping two years ago still lingering? Have they got better or worse? We asked Golf Digest Teaching Professional Josh Zander to analyse Tiger’s chipping action from the Hero World Challenge in late 2017. Like Woods, Zander is a former Stanford University golfer, and he has monitored Tiger’s game for more than 20 years. ▶ “Of all the stuff I’ve looked at, I think this photo (*left*) says a lot,” says Zander, who still teaches at Stanford. “His arms are soft; his grip looks light, and he’s picturing the shot. When you’re in performance mode, this is what you look like. He’s not thinking about his swing; he’s thinking about what he wants the ball to do. That’s not the look of someone who has the yips.”



HAVE THE YIPS? HAVE THE YIPS?

AN ANALYSIS OF HIS CHIPPING



IMPACT

**'A WEAKENED
LEFT-HAND
GRIP HELPS
HIS CLUB
GLIDE ALONG
THE GRASS.'**



TO BE CLEAR, Woods wasn't perfect around the greens at the Hero World Challenge, his first tournament in nearly a year. He mis-hit several chips, including one or two that looked like the action someone with the yips might employ, letting the leading edge of the wedge's clubface dig into the turf and get stuck. But his short game improved as the tournament went on, and Woods finished tied for ninth in the 18-player event at eight under par. ▶ "The chunking? It's probably coming from the one thing I would tweak," Zander says. "He's got a little too much forward shaft lean as he approaches the ball. This negates the forgiving design feature in wedges – the bounce – that allows the club to skim along the grass and not get stuck in the turf." ▶ You do want to hit wedge shots with a slightly descending blow, Zander says, but it's a bad idea to have more degrees of shaft lean than the club has degrees of bounce. "In this photo (*above*) he's got some shaft lean but isn't getting his hands too far forward. It's a fine line, though. If I were him, I'd practice chipping right-arm-only. Chipping with your trail arm trains you to swing through impact with the shaft more vertical so you can use the bounce."



THE MOST CONSISTENT CHIPPERS move their heads towards the target in the through-swing, which is what Tiger's head is doing here (*below*), Zander says. This suggests he's not worried about getting the ball airborne – the typical fear of someone with the yips. ▶ “You can easily mis-hit it if your head moves back and towards the ground,” Zander says. “Do that, and you've changed your distance from the ball. You'll have to pull in your arms to save the shot.” ▶ Another thing to note is the position of Tiger's sternum, Zander says. It gets ahead of where it was at address. He's not hanging back trying to lift the ball. “I also like how his eyes follow the shot. He wasn't locked down; an indicator he's thinking about the shot and not swing mechanics.” ▶ He does a lot of other things worth copying, Zander says, such as having a narrow and open stance, rotating his body through impact and having a weak left-hand grip (back of the hand facing the target) to help use the club's bounce. “But I keep going back to what he's doing before address,” Zander says. “He looks like he has external focus, meaning he's thinking about the landing spot, the break, etc. He's in a performance state.”—RON KASPRISKE



RELEASE

**'TIGER'S HEAD
ROTATES
TO FOLLOW
THE SHOT.
HE'S NOT
LOCKED DOWN.'**



HOT LIST

DRIVERS

DO YOU WANT MAXIMUM ADJUSTABILITY? OR ARE YOU LOOKING TO SIMPLIFY?
EITHER WAY, YOUR MISSES HAVE NEVER BEEN HOTTER



CALLAWAY
GBB ROGUE/SUB ZERO/DRAW **R7 999**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★½

VERDICT If last year's Epic was Callaway's sports sedan, then the Rogue is its monster truck. The jumbo look, featuring Callaway's largest triaxial carbon crown ever, shouts forgiveness. The internal "jailbreak" structure, 25 percent lighter, provides power: Two titanium bars run from the crown to the sole behind the face to stabilise the head so mis-hits fly like centre shots. Saved weight is used to add forgiveness to each of the three versions, including the spin-controlling Sub Zero model with adjustable sole weights and a heel-weighted Draw version.

COMMENT So stable, no energy lost at impact. If you can't get your spin down, buy this. The ball speed is noticeable.

CALLAWAY
GBB EPIC/SUB ZERO **R7 999**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★

VERDICT The Epic family of drivers, Callaway's most successful launch since the 1990s, set out to change how drivers flex. Two titanium bars behind the face connect the crown to the sole, keeping the flexing at impact confined to the face. The result is maximum ball speed across a wider area of the face. Lightweight composite pieces in the crown and sole freed up mass for a rear sliding weight on the sole in the standard model, and front and back weights in the lower-spinning Sub Zero. The newest addition is the Star, which uses a shaft that's about a third lighter than typical shafts to help provide extra swing speed.

COMMENT It has a balanced feel, so you know where the head is at all times. You can feel the speed.



EPIC BALL SPEED

HAS GONE

ROGUE



NEW REVOLUTIONARY JAILBREAK TECHNOLOGY

Delivers Exceptional Ball Speed in a Larger, More Forgiving Head Shape.



ROGUE





COBRA
KING F8/F8+ R6 499
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★

VERDICT Cobra uses automated computer milling to form its titanium face inserts. This saves weight and allows the face to feature subtle curvature for more speed and higher launch on mis-hits. The high-launching F8 and low-spin F8+ have lightweight carbon-composite crowns and movable sole weights (slice-fighting on F8, spin-controlling on F8+). A 3-degree range of adjustability on the hosel means one head fits all.
COMMENT I like the muted sound. Soft and responsive.



TAYLORMADE
M3/440 R8 000
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★

VERDICT Forget that the M3 has nearly 13 000 adjustable settings and terrific off-centre-hit stability. Forget the carbon-composite panels in the crown and sole that are 25 percent thinner and lighter. What's truly different is the twisted face design. Inspired by studying more than half-a-million shots, TaylorMade believes traditional face designs fail typical golfers, so it reshaped the face into subtle contrasting curves from high-toe (more open) to low-heel (more closed) to help shots fly straighter.
COMMENT I could move so many things to get the exact flight I wanted.



PING
G400/LST/SFT/MAX R6 499
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★

VERDICT The company famous for forgiveness keeps pushing the limits. The G400's four models include the standard, low-spin LST, the slice-fighting SFT and new oversize Max that sets a new standard for stability. The large front-to-back shape and thin crown work with a tungsten weight deep in the sole to make these Ping's most forgiving heads ever, even though all but the G400 Max are smaller than any G-series driver in history. Each driver features those familiar drag-reducing ridges on the crown to make the large head glide through the air like a driver a third smaller.
COMMENT I toed one severely and still hit the fairway. Easy to hit straight and long.



TAYLORMADE
M4/D-TYPE R7 000
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★

VERDICT The least-complex TaylorMade driver's priorities are forgiveness and ball speed. Carbon composite in the crown combines with a light, thin face to save weight. But rather than use those grams for movable screws, the M4 pushes that mass lower and further back for a higher launch and stability on off-centre hits. And because of a pair of struts, the sole slot is more than 20 percent longer, adding more zip across the face. Like the M3, the face's contrasting curves help mis-hits go straighter. The D-Type version could be your anti-slice solution.
COMMENT Forgiving, easy to draw. It sets up powerfully at address.



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Engineered with a patented insert, and special crown and weighting system that only PXG would use. The result is optimal launch, spin and distance coupled with incredible sound and feel.

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TITLEIST
917D2/D3 **R6 499**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★½

VERDICT It's not surprising our player-testers used the word classic 10 times to describe the 917 series, but the drivers have present-day tech, too. The hosel's 16 independent loft-and-lie settings provide 112 ball-flight options across the line's two heads and seven lofts. There's also a weight in the sole that can be adjusted to promote a draw or fade, and the angled shape means there's less chance of increasing spin or forfeiting stability on off-centre hits. Finally, the new sole channel works better than in the 915 model, primarily because of selective thinning in the heel-and-toe portions.
COMMENT It has a fighting trajectory that muscled through the air. Nothing wasted about the design.



MIZUNO
ST180 **R5 999**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★½ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★

VERDICT The size reveals the ST180 to be the more forgiving of Mizuno's two new drivers. But there's a problem with some large drivers: Their higher-than-ideal centre of gravity can create too much distance-sapping ball spin. So how does Mizuno get low spin and forgiveness? Internal weighting is concentrated low because of a deep weight pad in the back, a thin crown that features an internal waffle pattern and a wave sole that puts more material down low. The distance that comes with all of this forgiveness is a superplastic titanium alloy (strong and resiliently flexible) that can be made selectively thinner.
COMMENT Good distance and easy to control the spin.



MIZUNO
GT180 **R6 999**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★½

VERDICT With two movable weights, three weight tracks, a sliding chip on the sole to tweak its appearance at address and 4 degrees of loft adjustment on the hosel, the GT180 is the most changeable driver in Mizuno history. But the secret that makes all this movement more powerful is a specially treated, high-strength titanium alloy in the face. SP700 is 10 percent stronger than the titanium typically used in drivers, allowing for more varied thicknesses in the face, which leads to more consistent distances on off-centre strikes.
COMMENT It has a low flight and exceptional distance.



CLEVELAND
LAUNCHER HB **R5 000**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★

VERDICT Cleveland is having none of golf's complex moving parts. The throwback design – no adjustable hosel, no movable weights – might seem basic, but simplicity serves a purpose. Most golfers, Cleveland engineers say, need forgiveness on mis-hits and a higher launch. Here, all the weight saved from not having adjustable features is pushed low and deep for higher launch and added forgiveness for off-centre hits. A stepped crown and sole are designed to enhance the flexing of the face for better distance.
COMMENT It was very forgiving on my bad swings.

PXG
0811X/LX **R13 200**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★½

VERDICT PXG uses thermoplastic elastomer (TPE) in its hollow-iron designs to allow for thinner faces. But thin faces aren't a problem in driver designs, so why use that material here? Simple: It weighs less than metal and performs an efficient function. Instead of using internal rib structures of metal that would position weight too high, engineers layered the TPE right above the sole to control sound and save weight. A carbon-composite crown saves more weight, so these are lower-spinning drivers than PXG's original 0811. Ten adjustable sole weights let you tweak direction and spin.
COMMENT I got that boring ball flight I love. I never felt like I was going to lose one high and spiny to the right.



FAIRWAY WOODS

WITH EXPANDING OPTIONS, SIZES AND LOFTS –
PLUS DRIVER-LIKE PUNCH – GOLF'S MOST VERSATILE METALWOODS
ARE BETTER THAN EVER



CALLAWAY
GBB EPIC/SUB ZERO/STAR R4 999
PERFORMANCE *** INNOVATION *******

VERDICT THESE ADOPT THE STRONG YET LIGHTWEIGHT CARBON-COMPOSITE STRUCTURE FROM THE SUCCESSFUL EPIC DRIVERS. THE SAVED WEIGHT IS PUSHED LOW ON THE STANDARD AND STAR VERSIONS TO HELP LAUNCH THE BALL HIGH, AND REALLOCATED AS FRONT AND BACK ADJUSTABLE WEIGHTS ON THE SUB ZERO MODEL. POWER COMES FROM CALLAWAY'S CUPFACE DESIGN, A THIN RIM EXTENDING THE FACE AROUND THE CROWN AND SOLE TO CREATE MORE CONSISTENT FLEXING ACROSS THE FACE.

COMMENT POWERFUL IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN DESCRIBE THIS CLUB. IT LAUNCHED THE BALL OUT THERE WITHOUT A LOT OF EFFORT. THE BALL SPRINGS OFF THE FACE. EVEN MY WORST SWINGS HAD DECENT DISTANCE.

CALLAWAY
ROGUE/SUB ZERO R4 999
PERFORMANCE *** INNOVATION *******

VERDICT THIS IS THE FIRST FAIRWAY WOOD TO HAVE THE "JAILBREAK" TECHNOLOGY THAT MADE THE COMPANY'S EPIC DRIVERS SO POPULAR. TWO BARS BEHIND THE FACE BRACE THE CROWN AND SOLE, STIFFENING THE BODY SO THE FACE TAKES ON MORE OF THE LOAD. THIS CONCENTRATES THE FLEXING IN THE FACE TO HELP MIS-HITS FLY LIKE CENTRE-FACE HITS. THE BARS ALSO WORK WITH THE COMPANY'S CUPFACE TECHNOLOGY, WHERE THE FACE WRAPS AROUND THE BODY, TO BOOST DISTANCE.

MEANWHILE, TUNGSTEN-INFUSED WEIGHTING IS USED TO CONTROL SPIN.

COMMENT I LOVE HOW THIS SITS. I'M AS CONFIDENT OFF THE FAIRWAY AS ON A TEE. THERE IS NO BALLOONING.





COBRA
KING F8/F8+ R3 599
PERFORMANCE *** INNOVATION ****½**

VERDICT TO GET THE PICTURE HERE, TURN THESE OVER TO SEE THE PARALLEL SOLE RAILS. YOU'VE SEEN THIS FROM COBRA FAIRWAY WOODS BEFORE TO IMPROVE TURF INTERACTION, BUT THE RAILS ARE NOW CLOSER TOGETHER AND CENTRED TO IMPROVE STABILITY. THEY GET PROGRESSIVELY TALLER THE HIGHER THE LOFT, TO BETTER ALIGN WITH HOW YOUR ANGLE OF ATTACK GETS STEEPER WITH HIGHER-LOFTED WOODS. THE F8 AND F8+ HAVE HIGH-STRENGTH STEEL FACE INSERTS AND SOLE WEIGHTS (BACK IN THE F8 FOR HIGHER FLIGHT; FORWARD IN THE F8+ FOR A FLATTER TRAJECTORY).

COMMENT YOU FEEL THE RAILS WORKING. IT CUTS THROUGH THE TURF AND LEAVES YOU WITH CLEAN IMPACT.



PING
G400/SFT/STRETCH 3 R4 299
PERFORMANCE **½ INNOVATION *******

VERDICT PING REALISES OFF-CENTRE HITS ARE A PART OF YOUR GAME, SO THE G400 ADDRESSES THIS THROUGH NEW MATERIALS AND SHAPES, INCLUDING AN ULTRA-THIN CROWN. THE FACE INSERT IS MADE OF C300 MARAGING STEEL, THE SAME TYPE OF STEEL USED IN LANDING GEAR FOR LIGHT AIRCRAFT. THAT MAKES FOR A THINNER, MORE FLEXIBLE FACE, WHICH PROVIDES MORE BALL SPEED AND HELPS LAUNCH THE BALL HIGHER.

COMMENT I LIKE HOW THE TURBULATORS BECOME A SUBTLE ALIGNMENT AID.



PXG
0341X R9 600
PERFORMANCE *****
INNOVATION *****

VERDICT BUILT TO BE LOWER-SPINNING THAN THE 0341, IT USES A CARBON-FIBRE CROWN TO LOWER THE CENTRE OF GRAVITY. A THERMOPLASTIC-ELASTOMER INSERT INSIDE THE CLUB IS DESIGNED TO CONTROL SOUND AND SAVE WEIGHT. THE SOLE FEATURES NINE ADJUSTABLE WEIGHT SCREWS. THE SILVER ONES ARE MADE OF TUNGSTEN, AND THE BLACK ONES ARE TITANIUM. YOU CAN MOVE THEM AROUND TO GET THE FADE OR DRAW BALL FLIGHT YOU DESIRE. THE ADJUSTABLE HOSEL LETS YOU CHANGE LOFT BY PLUS OR MINUS 1.5 DEGREES.

COMMENT IT DOESN'T HAVE THE HIGHEST FORGIVENESS, BUT IF YOU PUT A GOOD SWING ON IT, YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED.



TAYLORMADE
M3 R5 000
PERFORMANCE **½**
INNOVATION *****

VERDICT WE'VE SEEN SLIDING SOLE WEIGHTS ON TAYLORMADE FAIRWAY WOODS THAT CAN BE SET TO PROMOTE A DRAW OR FADE. BUT NOW A SLEEKER DESIGN OF THE WEIGHT TRACK, WITH LIGHTER CARBON-COMPOSITE PANELS IN THE CROWN AND SOLE, MOVES THE CENTRE OF GRAVITY FORWARD AND LOW TO HELP REDUCE SPIN. NO LESS IMPORTANT, THAT CURVED SLOT IN THE SOLE IS LONGER THAN IN LAST YEAR'S M1 TO MAKE THOSE LOW-FACE IMPACTS HOTTER.

COMMENT I LIKE THE SIMPLICITY OF THE ADJUSTABILITY. AGGRESSIVE TRAJECTORY.



TAYLORMADE
M4 R4 000
PERFORMANCE **½**
INNOVATION **½**

VERDICT THE MORE FORGIVING OF TAYLORMADE'S FAIRWAY WOODS MIGHT BE LARGER, BUT ITS REAL IMPROVEMENTS ARE HIDDEN. LAST YEAR'S M2 USED A SINGLE INTERNAL WEIGHT LOW AND TOWARDS THE REAR THAT RAN ALMOST THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE FACE. IN THE M4 IT'S LARGER AND SPLIT. THAT CREATES HIGHER STABILITY ON OFF-CENTRE HITS. THE CHANNEL ON THE SOLE IS ALSO LONGER THAN ON THE M2 TO IMPROVE HOW MUCH OF THE FACE FLEXES.

COMMENT IT WAS EASY TO GET IN THE AIR – EVEN WHEN I DIDN'T HIT IT FLUSH.



TITLEIST
917F2/F3 **R3 999**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★

VERDICT The speed on these fairway woods comes from an improved, flexing sole channel and a variable face insert. The face design increases ball speed in the sweet spot and adds forgiveness away from the centre. The F2 is larger, making it more forgiving, and the F3 is smaller, so it's more workable. The face is wider and deeper on the F3, which has strong lofts designed for better players.

COMMENT This handled like a dream, even off the deck. It launches consistently, and my dispersion was great.



MIZUNO
ST180 **R3 999**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★

VERDICT An internal waffle pattern thins out the crown. The weight saved goes into the wave structure on the sole. The purpose of the waves is to improve how the thin, high-strength steel face insert flexes. Notice the first large wave, the one closest to the face? It's designed for better energy transfer while letting the smaller waves behind it absorb shock. The 4-degree adjustable hosel means these two fairway woods cover a loft range from 13 to 20 degrees.

COMMENT Weighting and balance felt good. Good on low strikes: I still got good distance.

GD TESTED : + 10 METRES



OLD VERSUS NEW: DRIVERS

ARE THE NEW CLUBS REALLY THAT MUCH BETTER?

How much better are the new drivers? Through player testing with Foresight Sports' GCQuad launch monitor and robot testing conducted by Golf Laboratories, we

matched the newest clubs against what research says is the average replacement cycle for drivers, irons and wedges. In our tests against four-year-old drivers – on off-centre

and on-centre hits – the new drivers won 78 percent of the time. The biggest gains were on toe and low impacts, which saw an average of eight- and 10-metre gains, respectively. But even with USGA rules limiting spring-like effect, centre strikes were going further, too – about five metres on average – thanks to today's lower-spinning, better-launching models. Your results might vary, which is why you should always take your old driver with you when you're trying something new.



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- 2-PIECE CONSTRUCTION

NEW SOFT FEEL™

TAKE YOUR PERFORMANCE FURTHER

Super low compression, ultimate feel.



SWITCH TO BETTER. SWITCH TO SRIXON.

H Y B R I D S

YOU KNOW HYBRIDS HAVE MADE YOUR LONG IRONS NEARLY OBSOLETE, RIGHT? WELL, NOW THEY'VE GOT FACES THAT FLEX LIKE DRIVERS. ENJOY



CALLAWAY
EPIC R4 499
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★½

VERDICT IF THE CROWN LOOKS SIMILAR TO THE EPIC DRIVERS AND FAIRWAY WOODS, IT'S BECAUSE THE SAME ULTRALIGHT CARBON COMPOSITE IS USED. THAT LIGHTER TOP MAKES ROOM FOR AN ARCING TUNGSTEN WEIGHT LOW INSIDE THE HEAD TO HELP THE BALL LAUNCH HIGHER WITH LESS SPIN. LIKE THE FAIRWAY WOOD, IT'S ALSO POWERED BY THE COMPANY'S CUPFACE DESIGN: THE FACE WRAPS AROUND THE CROWN AND SOLE WITH A THIN RIM THAT FLEXES SO THAT OFF-CENTRE STRIKES FLY LIKE ON-CENTRE HITS. AVAILABLE IN FOUR LOFTS WITH AN EIGHT-WAY ADJUSTABLE HOSEL.

COMMENT THE BALL JUMPS OFF THE FACE, AND IS FORGIVING ON MIS-HITS.

CALLAWAY
ROGUE/ROGUE X R3 999
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★

VERDICT THE FIRST HYBRIDS TO FEATURE CALLAWAY'S "JAILBREAK" TECHNOLOGY. TWO INTERNAL STEEL BARS DIRECTLY BEHIND THE FACE BRACE THE CROWN AND SOLE AND STIFFEN THE BODY. THIS CONCENTRATES THE FLEXING ACROSS A WIDER AREA OF THE FACE FOR MAXIMUM BALL SPEED AND DISTANCE. THE COMPANY'S TRADEMARK CUPFACE TECHNOLOGY PROVIDES EVEN MORE FLEX ON THOSE NOT-DEAD-CENTRE HITS.

COMMENT THE WAY IT GLIDES THROUGH THE TURF IS PRETTY GREAT. THE WIDTH OF THE TOE GIVES YOU CONFIDENCE.



COBRA
F8/ONE LENGTH R2 799
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★½

VERDICT LIKE THE F8 FAIRWAY WOODS, THE HYBRIDS USE SOLE RAILS TO KEEP THE HEAD SQUARE AND GLIDING THROUGH THE TURF. THE RAILS ALSO ADD WEIGHT LOW TO HELP YOUR SHOTS LAUNCH HIGHER. ALL THAT EXTRA WEIGHT IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE COBRA USES A HIGH-STRENGTH, LIGHTWEIGHT 455 STEEL FACE INSERT AND A SMALLER HOSEL. COBRA IS OFFERING A SINGLE-LENGTH VERSION (ABOUT THE LENGTH OF A STANDARD 7-IRON) IN THREE LOFTS. IT HAS MORE STABILITY AND A LOWER CG FOR HIGHER LAUNCH THAN THE STANDARD VERSIONS.

COMMENT THE RAILS LET YOU GET DOWN AFTER THE BALL TO HIT SOLID, HIGH-LAUNCHING SHOTS.

PING
G400 R3 699
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★

VERDICT PING MAKES THIS THE HIGHEST-LAUNCHING AND SOFTEST-LANDING HYBRID IN PING'S HISTORY BY USING A DENSE SOLE WEIGHT IN THE BACK AND A STRONG AND THIN MARAGING-STEEL FACE INSERT TO INCREASE FLEXIBILITY AND BALL SPEED. FIVE LOFTS ARE AVAILABLE — FROM 17 DEGREES FOR BETTER PLAYERS WITH FAST SWING SPEEDS TO 30 DEGREES FOR SLOWER-SWINGING GOLFERS LOOKING TO REPLACE THEIR 6-IRONS

COMMENT JUST PUT THIS IN YOUR BAG. THERE'S NO NEED TO FIGURE ANYTHING OUT. IT HAS A POWERFUL SOUND THAT WILL MAKE PEOPLE STOP AND TAKE NOTICE.



THE TRAVELLING GOLFER

Heinrich du Preez is a multiple Guinness world record holder when it comes to golfing achievements. He was the first golfer to play a round of golf on all six continents in five days. He plays off 9, and in 2016 had three holes-in-one, at the Gary Player CC (seventh), Serengeti (15th), and Pearl Valley (third).



BUSHVELD GOLF AT SEASONS LIFESTYLE ESTATE

The Hartbeespoort Dam area boasts some fantastic courses, from the Jack Nicklaus designed Pecanwood on one side of the dam, to the 9-hole Sandy Lane on the opposite shore. I like to visit the area as often as I can. Just a 40-minute drive from Pretoria, it feels like you have ventured into the far outskirts of Limpopo.

Playing the old Brits course, renamed Seasons Lifestyle Estate, you get a true bushveld feel. Impala, Springbok, Blesbok, Eland, Zebra and Blue Wildebeest roam the fairways. Close encounters happen on nearly every hole, as they are used to golfers.

Seasons has steep hills on the first nine. I walked the course once and swore I would never try that again. With these extreme inclines you get to tee boxes with magnificent views over the landscape. Mountain on the one side, and open plains on the other. The older second 9 was constructed on flatter land, with water in play on some holes.

The golf estate on the property has blossomed into one of the most sought after places to live in the area. A development

like this always means more money, which benefits the golf club. The clubhouse has been upgraded and the pro shop is more upbeat.

I have played in many golf days at Seasons, and the prize giving dinner is always a treat. The restaurant is on the top floor, overlooking the course. With a true bushveld sunset, you cannot help longing for a boma braai, a few good friends, and a couple of cold ones.

My fond memories of the course include making my third albatross on the par-5 fourth hole. With an elevated tee box, the highest point on the course, you look down into a valley, with your ball getting serious hang time off the tee. A tight fairway, lined by trees left and right, with out of bounds close on the right. The second shot can be daunting, as the green is at the same height as the tee box.

I have seen many a player underclub, not taking the severe slope into consideration. And the slope is filled with trees and boulders. Behind the green, OB stakes protect the houses there. I hit 3-wood off the tee, then 5-wood. I could not see the ball land on the green, let alone go in the hole. My playing partners, Blackie Swart and Pieter Smith (both musicians), and Darren Kelfkens (Joe from



Egoli), reached the green before I did.

I do not believe in the odds of having an albatross or a hole-in-one. It's always a 50/50 shot for me. 50% says it will go in, and the other 50% says it will miss. I was lucky on this day.

Whenever you are close to Harties, and looking for a true bushveld golf experience, pop in. Club manager Willem Gravett and Rob Robbert are two of the best hosts in the industry, and will make you feel at home. My tip: Don't rush, enjoy the course, enjoy the scenery. It's why we play this game.



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PXG
0317X **R8 000**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★

VERDICT BY USING CARBON FIBRE FOR ITS CROWN INSTEAD OF STEEL, PXG SAVED WEIGHT ON TOP AND REALLOCATED IT LOW AND FURTHER FORWARD. THE LOWER CENTRE OF GRAVITY MEANS YOUR SHOTS WON'T SPIN AS MUCH, AND THEY'LL LAUNCH HIGHER, A GOOD RECIPE FOR DISTANCE. INSIDE THE SOLE IS A HONEYCOMB PAD OF THERMOPLASTIC ELASTOMER. IT ABSORBS UNWANTED VIBRATIONS. THE SEVEN PORTS ON THE SOLE LET YOU MOVE THE WEIGHT TO TAME YOUR HOOK OR SLICE.

COMMENT THE FACE IS VERY RESPONSIVE, BUT YOU ONLY GET THAT "WOW" FACTOR WHEN YOU HIT IT DEAD CENTRE.



TAYLORMADE
M3 **R4 000**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★

VERDICT TINY CHANGES EQUAL BIG BENEFITS — LIKE THE SCREW ON THE ADJUSTABLE HOSEL THAT WEIGHS A THIRD LESS THAN IT DID ON LAST YEAR'S M1. THIS PROVIDES MORE ROOM TO POSITION THE CENTRE OF GRAVITY FORWARD, AND FREES UP ROOM TO MAKE THE SLOT IN THE SOLE WIDER FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE ON STRIKES THAT OCCUR LOW ON THE CLUBFACE. THE 30-GRAM SLIDING WEIGHT ALSO MAKES IT SIMPLE TO DIAL IN A DRAW OR FADE.

COMMENT THERE'S NO VIBRATION; IT JUST ROCKETS. THIS CLUB WILL HIDE A MULTITUDE OF SINS IN YOUR SWING.



TAYLORMADE
M4 **R3 500**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★

VERDICT THE M4 DOESN'T HAVE A WEIGHT TRACK, BUT YOU CAN'T SEE IS A WEIGHT PAD INSIDE THE BOTTOM OF THE CLUB. LAST YEAR IT WAS ONE LONG PIECE, BUT BY SPLITTING IT INTO TWO, THE CLUB IS MORE STABLE AT IMPACT. THIS DEEP POSITION HELPS SHOTS LAUNCH HIGH LIKE THE COMPANY'S HYBRIDS ARE KNOWN AND LOVED FOR. EXTERNAL RIBS STIFFEN THE SOLE TO CONTROL SOUND.

COMMENT THIS HAS A SLEEK, FUTURISTIC LOOK. ITS BEST QUALITY IS THE DISTANCE.



TITLEIST
818H1/H2 **R3 999**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★

VERDICT THE SOLE CHANNEL IS BETTER IN TWO WAYS. THERE'S A CUT-THROUGH OPENING FOR OPTIMAL FLEXIBILITY, AND AN ELASTOMER TO COVER IT. THAT MEANS THE FACE CAN FLEX WHILE GLIDING THROUGH THE TURF. A WEIGHT CARTRIDGE IN THE SOLE LETS YOU ACHIEVE THE BALL FLIGHT YOU WANT. THE NEW MODELS ARE SLIGHTLY SMALLER THAN THE 816 BUT MORE STABLE WITH A HIGHER LAUNCH

COMMENT I LOVE THE TIMELESS SHAPE. A FUSION OF OLD-SCHOOL STYLE WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY.



COBRA
KING OVERSIZE **SPECIAL ORDER**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★

VERDICT COBRA ENLARGED THE CLUBHEAD TO INCREASE STABILITY AND FORGIVENESS ON OFF-CENTRE HITS. MAKING THE FACE MORE EFFECTIVE ON LOW-FACE STRIKES IS ITS L-SHAPE — WHERE THE FACE WRAPS INTO THE SOLE. HOWEVER, A LARGER CLUBHEAD GENERALLY EQUALS A HIGHER CENTRE OF GRAVITY, WHICH LEADS TO MORE BALL SPIN AND A LOWER LAUNCH. NOT GOOD. SO COBRA ADDRESSED THIS PROBLEM BY MAKING THE CROWN OUT OF A THIN, STRONG CARBON COMPOSITE AND ADDING AN INTERNAL TUNGSTEN WEIGHT LOW AND DEEP IN THE HEAD TO CONTROL LAUNCH AND SPIN.

COMMENT YOU DON'T HAVE TO SWING HARD TO GET THE BALL FLYING.



CALLAWAY
BIG BERTHA OS **R3 999**
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★

VERDICT ANOTHER CALLAWAY CLUB WITH CUPFACE TECHNOLOGY IN WHICH THE FACE WRAPS AROUND THE CROWN AND SOLE TO HELP IMPROVE DISTANCE ON OFF-CENTRE STRIKES. THE LARGE FACE AND GENEROUS SIZE CREATE A FORGIVING SHAPE, ENHANCED BY STABILISING SOLE RAILS AND A WEIGHT SCREW DEEP IN THE SOLE. MAKING THE CLUB EVEN MORE FORGIVING ARE FIVE AVAILABLE LOFTS AND AN EIGHT-WAY ADJUSTABLE HOSEL. COMBINED, THAT'S 40 POSSIBLE SETUPS FROM 18 TO 33 DEGREES.

COMMENT IT GETS THE BALL UP EASILY AND HAS GREAT CARRY.



MIZUNO

CLK

R2 999

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★½

VERDICT MIZUNO USED A HIGH-STRENGTH MARAGING 1770 STEEL FOR THE FACE TO MAKE IT AS THIN AS POSSIBLE. THIS MEANS MORE FLEX FOR DISTANCE AND SAVED WEIGHT FOR HIGHER FLIGHT. THE WAVE FEATURE ON THE SOLE PLACES MORE MASS LOW, LEADING TO A HIGHER LAUNCH WITH LESS SPIN. FOUR LOFTS WITH EIGHT-WAY ADJUSTABLE HOSELS MAKE IT EASY TO FILL YOUR DISTANCE GAPS.

COMMENT THIS SHAPE IS EXACTLY WHAT A HYBRID SHOULD LOOK LIKE.



SRIXON

H65

R4 000

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★½

VERDICT THOUGH ITS LOFTS ARE LIMITED, THESE HYBRIDS ARE DESIGNED TO DIAL IN THE RIGHT BALL FLIGHT. THAT NOTCH IN THE CROWN THAT RUNS PARALLEL TO THE FACE DEEPENS IN DEPTH AS THE LOFTS INCREASE TO HELP YOU LAUNCH THE BALL WITH MORE SPEED. AN INTERNAL WEIGHT PAD IS FURTHER BACK IN THE LOWEST LOFT TO ALSO HELP WITH LAUNCH. THE WEIGHT PAD THEN SHIFTS FORWARD IN THE HIGHER LOFTS TO CONTROL SPIN. THE HIGHER LOFTS ALSO FEATURE A MORE ROUNDED SOLE TO INCREASE WORKABILITY.

COMMENT IT HAS A NICE, CLEAN LOOK. THE WHOLE FACE FEELS STURDY. IT GETS UP IN THE AIR WITH PLENTY OF ZIP.



WILSON

C300

TBA

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
INNOVATION ★★★★★

VERDICT DARK LINES ON THE CROWN AND SOLE ARE ACTUALLY HOLES IN THE HEAD FILLED WITH THERMOPLASTIC URETHANE. THAT COMPOUND ISN'T RIGID, SO THE HOLES GIVE THE METAL AROUND THEM – INCLUDING THE HIGH-STRENGTH STEEL FACE INSERT – THE TENDENCY TO FLEX MORE AT IMPACT FOR MORE DISTANCE. SOLE WEIGHTS AND AN ADJUSTABLE HOSEL LET YOU ACHIEVE YOUR PREFERRED BALL FLIGHT.

COMMENT I WANT THESE TO REPLACE MY LONG IRONS, THEY'RE MUCH MORE PLAYABLE.



YOUR SECURITY BLANKET
UTILITY CLUBS ARE LONG IRONS YOU CAN HIT

AT LAST YEAR'S OPEN, JORDAN SPIETH USED TITLEIST'S 718 T-MB 3-IRON – A UTILITY-IRON-STYLE CLUB – FOR THE NOW-FAMOUS SHOT FROM THE RANGE ALONGSIDE THE 13TH HOLE AT ROYAL BIRKDALE. THE SHOT

DISPLAYED THE DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCH A CLUB AND WHY IT'S A SUITABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR CONVENTIONAL MIDDLE OR LONG IRONS THAT PRODUCE A LOWER BALL FLIGHT. ALTHOUGH THE METHODS VARY, THE TECHNOLOGICAL GOAL OF ALL

UTILITY IRONS IS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME: AMPLE MASS COMBINED WITH LOWER AND DEEPER CENTRES OF GRAVITY TO HELP GET THE BALL AIRBORNE, FAST-FLEXING FACES, AND THE VERSATILITY OF IRONS. MANUFACTURERS HAVE RESPONDED BY PROVIDING A NUMBER OF OPTIONS, LIKE PING'S G400 CROSSOVER AND MIZUNO'S MP-18 FLI-HI. OTHER COMPANIES HAVE FOLLOWED WITH SIMILAR IRON-REPLACEMENT VERSIONS. YOU MIGHT NOT HIT A SHOT LIKE SPIETH, BUT YOUR PALMS ARE LIKELY TO SWEAT LESS OVER A LONG-IRON SHOT – AND THAT'S A START.



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NEW Z-STAR® SERIES

TAKE YOUR PERFORMANCE FURTHER

Tour-validated technology for players that demand ultimate performance.



SWITCH TO BETTER. SWITCH TO SRIXON.

WINNING LETTER

LET'S GET RID OF LUSH GREEN FAIRWAYS

Regarding the Cape water crisis (March), there is no doubt that the dry firm courses in the Cape make for more enjoyable golf. Low running shots into the wind or even downwind are possible. Not to speak of extra distance. Many of us are now looking at golf courses differently and no longer expect soft green fairways. Give us firm, true greens and we can enjoy the game more.

Not all Cape courses are short of water. Some have invested to secure their own supply or have sufficient storage capacity, others are lucky to have supply from a water treatment plant. The overwatering tendencies at some Cape Town courses have never been more evident. Those with water are overwatering to the extent where I played a course (Rondebosch) a few weeks ago that was nearly as wet as after a winter shower!

Royal Cape is short of water yet it's an absolute pleasure to play

because the greens are good and fairways firm. Great in the wind. Strand is watering less, and the course is the best I have seen it.

However, overwatering is also a national problem. The Gary Player CC at Sun City had preferred lies due to wet fairways and they had not had any rain!

Greenkeepers and committees should realise that the playability of a course is as important as its appearance and condition. Condition is not lush, soft fairways. It may look great but there is no enjoyment in a shot stopping short of a green because of overwatered approaches. It's also no fun hitting from a wet patch in the fairway.

A course is in great condition when the greens run true, tees are level, and fairways firm. This can be achieved without using megalitres of water. Let's save water and increase the enjoyment factor!

Anton Bezuidenhout, Cape Town

DURBANVILLE HAS COME A LONG WAY FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS



The inclusion of Durbanville Golf Club in the Top 100 for the first time is a deserved tribute for a club that was once derided for having one of the worst golf courses in the Cape.

This is a club that has worked awfully hard over the last 20 years to give their members a course they could be proud of.

Durbanville today is a sprawling urban area of Cape Town, but in 1967, when the decision was taken at a public meeting to build a golf course, it was still quite rural. There were rugby, cricket and tennis clubs, and the members of these formed the nucleus of the future golf club. It's a golf club that today really serves the surrounding community well, embracing not just golfers but many social members.

Most big city courses are developed by specialised construction companies, but Durbanville was built by its members and their families!

The history of the club, known as "The Jewel of the North," researched by Johan Slabbert, recounts that it took nearly four years to build 18 holes on a site that was originally covered in dense bush, full of alien species, and infested with cobras.

That knowledgeable Mowbray GC professional, and useful course designer, the late Ken Elkin, provided a routing plan. Grass for the fairways and tees was sourced from local farms. Members used to spend weekends planting the grass by hand, planting trees, and shaping the greens and tees. Picnic lunches were packed, and members used their own garden equipment to help clear the course. A tractor was acquired, and a rudimentary reticulation system laid. Slabbert asks in his book whether any other golf course in South Africa has been built by the physical labours of their members and families.

The course was officially opened on July 3, 1971, and it was rough and ready. Members brought their own lawnmowers to prepare the greens and fairways for the big day, and a caravan served as the halfway house, as there was not yet a clubhouse. The first fourball off the first tee comprised Elkin and three of the prime movers in getting the course built, Malcolm Hand, Noel Vann and Geoff Hart-Davies. The prizegiving was held at the Oxford Hotel in Durbanville, birthplace of the club and the unofficial clubhouse in those early years.

Built on clay, the course baked hard in summer, and became water-logged in winter. However, the official opening in 1972, after the clubhouse was completed, was attended by none other than the Prime Minister, B J Vorster, a keen golfer, who hit the first shot.

Thomas Souness, Cape Town



The par-3 third hole at Glendower during the SA Open.

GLENDOWER NO 2? QUESTIONABLE RANKING

I'm stumped by Glendower's move from 12th to 2nd in the Top 100 rankings over the last four years given that the course hasn't undergone any upgrade or design changes since 2008, not to mention the state of the club's damaged waterways due to flash flooding in the past two years. What makes the improvement even more questionable is that it has taken place at the very top of the rankings, which is the hardest improvement to achieve.

The only ranking criteria that could have resulted in this change is course conditioning, which only makes up 1/8th of the scoring. The hosting of the SA Open may help in short-term conditioning for a few months of the year, and perhaps hosting the tournament enlightens the panel as to other ranking criteria improvements, but this would apply to any other top course which hosts a professional tournament.

Surely hosting a pro tournament, outside of the potential short term conditioning benefits, shouldn't affect the ranking of a course?

Did the GD panel get it wrong in 2014 or 2016 and 2018? Otherwise there appears to be external interference in the ranking of Glendower related to its hosting of the SA Open, which obviously discredits the rankings.

Cary Ledac, Gauteng

BREAKING YOUR AGE

Victoria Country Club member Pat Trimborn achieved a significant milestone in his golfing career on February 24 when he broke his age for the 100th time. Pat, a former Springbok cricketer – he played four tests as a pace bowler against Australia in 1967 and 1970 (11 wickets) – has achieved this at the age of 77. He is a 5-handicap, but was a 4 just recently, having posted two 71s at VCC in January.

Now retired at Howick in the KZN Midlands, Pat plays most of his golf these days at Victoria CC, although he still returns regularly to his old home club

at Royal Durban. He was an outstanding sportsman, having played cricket, golf and bowls for Natal teams over the years.

He regularly breaks his age on the golf course. He did so for the 70th time in May last year, and was in the 90s by the end of December. With everybody at the club waiting in anticipation of the big day when he would score his century, on Feb 21 he turned in level par, but shot 78 in testing conditions. Three days later he walked off the 18th a proud man with a 76.

Mark Truter, Golf Director, Victoria CC, Maritzburg

Glendower's successful hosting of five SA Opens has indeed raised its profile and helped it climb the rankings as a quality championship layout. Respect for the course has grown. Regularly hosting a national championship does boost a course in rankings everywhere around the world if that course proves up to the task. Think of those links in Scotland and England which have benefitted from hosting the Open Championship. Would the Gary Player CC at Sun City be as prominent in the rankings today without the Nedbank Challenge? Would Augusta National have got to No 1 in the United States without the Masters?

Big movement inside Golf Digest Top 10 is always possible. Positions are not entrenched. The margin between Glendower, at No 2, and East London, at No 10, is less than two points. South African golfers also sometimes don't give enough credit to our traditional member courses. They exist on lower budgets, endure sizeable course traffic, and have to keep green fee rates affordable. It's encouraging to see the continued excellence shown by Glendower, Durban CC, Royal Johannesburg & Kensington, East London, Humewood and George. These are the only six member courses in the Top 20 which don't have a golf estate or resort element. – **STUART McLEAN**

TOP 100 CORRECTIONS

1 The affiliated green fee for the East Course at Royal Johannesburg & Kensington is R650, and not R990. The higher price is the unaffiliated rate. The East Course was also officially opened in 1939, not 1935. The course was completed by Bob Grimmsdell in 1935, but later re-routed to accommodate the new clubhouse which opened in 1939. Before the re-routing, the two courses at Royal were known as the Old and New.

2 Bryanston Country Club was opened for play in 1951, not 1948. It was originally 9 holes, with the full 18 holes opening in 1955.



Pat Trimborn (right) is congratulated by Victoria CC vice-captain Blake Mackenzie.

Golf Digest would love to hear about other golfers who have broken their age a significant number of times.

OLD EASTERN CAPE CLUB SEEKS COURSE EQUIPMENT



King William's Town Golf Club is one of South Africa's oldest golf clubs. We celebrated our 125th anniversary last year. Our original course was a venue for two of the early SA Amateur championships, in 1896 and 1902. The current course has a link with fame in that it was where Ernie Els celebrated his first victory as a professional, the 1991 Amatola Sun Classic on the old Winter Tour. King also hosted the SA Under-23 Interprovincial in 1988.

Since 1994 this Eastern Cape club has transformed itself into a hub for giving opportunities to golf talent among underprivileged communities.

Like Soweto Country Club, it is one of a handful of golf clubs owned and managed by the historically disadvantaged. A number of our development players have excelled at national tournaments. Last year, our flagship tournament, The Steve Biko Birthday Invitational, attracted 20 black

professional golfers who lent their support to promoting the club.

However, with many past members having relocated to East London, our current membership is not able to contribute sufficiently to the upkeep of the course. Indeed, most members are unemployed or have limited means. We are looking for support from other golf clubs, particularly maintenance requirements, to ensure the perpetuity of golf in the region.

Given that a well-maintained course attracts more golfers, we are keen to improve our standards. If any golf clubs or turf companies can assist us by donating new or used equipment – mowers, tractors, irrigation pipes – we will be most grateful.

Our club will collect it.

Our email: stduna@gmail.com

**Nkosinathi Biko,
King William's Town**

WINNING LETTER PRIZE



Golf Digest and Titleist South Africa have teamed up to offer the sender of the best letter for the month a box of Titleist Pro V1 golf balls and a Titleist cap.

WRITE TO THE GALLERY:

stuart.mclean@newmediapub.co.za. Please include your full name, address and phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity and may be published or otherwise reused in any medium.

NEW START FOR GOLF IN MBOMBELA

Mbombela Golf Club has transformed itself since the assault of a promising 18-year-old black golfer, Jabulani Mabilane, on October 15, 2016, by a white member of the Nelspruit club.

There was a public outcry when no initial action was taken against Mabilane's alleged assailant. The club's sponsor, businessman Robert Gumede (founder of Guma Group), himself once a caddie at the golf club in the 1970s, demanded the immediate transformation of the club, and insisted management act against the member allegedly involved with the assault. He was forced to resign, along with other members of his fourball.

A year later, and Mbombela GC (formerly Nelspruit GC) now has an eight-person committee, plus a President, dedicated to racial transformation at the club. Three are black members. On October 15 last year, the club held its inaugural Anti-Racism Awareness golf day. Gumede hopes the ramifications of the incident will act as a model for change at golf clubs around the country. Mbombela GC has reduced membership fees for low-income earners, to attract more members of the black community.

"We must never forget what sport can do for us," said Gumede. "It can rip us apart or unite us as a country. Mbombela GC has embraced change. It is now a challenge for the SAGA and its membership clubs to emulate us, ushering in transformation and breaking racial division on the fairways."

Bontle Mnisi, Gauteng

Golf Digest learns that membership at Mbombela has fallen from 710 in June 2015 to 491 in February this year.

COURSE WORKERS UNDER FIRE

I usually play golf early morning at various courses in and around Gauteng. I realise mornings are off-peak and when the ground staff carry out maintenance. However, clubs need to educate their course staff about the danger posed by golf balls. Many ignore requests to move out of the way. Recently one of my shots struck a worker on the foot after he failed to move, and he wasn't happy with me. What if the ball had struck him on the head? At a different club, a worker refused to budge from the green on a par 3. Luckily no one hit him.

Theo M Antoniou, Gauteng

RECORD LOW SCORES

Young stars bludgeon upcountry courses



Low scorers at Pecanwood, from left, Oliver Gillberg, Wilco Nienaber and Matt Saulez.

There has been a remarkable spate of low scoring on the premier men's amateur circuit in recent months, with three tournaments this year being won with 72-hole scores of between 22-under and 27-under-par. That included the SA Strokeplay Championship at Pecanwood, a Jack Nicklaus design.

There was a record winning score of 22-under 266 in the Free State Open at Bloemfontein, where two players were involved in a playoff, another record of 25-under 263 in the Gauteng North Open at Waterkloof, followed by 27-under 261 at Pecanwood where Swede Oliver Gillberg broke Richard Sterne's tournament record, which had stood for 17 years, by five shots. Gillberg's closest pursuers were one and two shots behind him. Pecanwood had enjoyed good rain, so the greens were soft and slow. The fairways were wide, the

rough short. Hardly a championship setup. The leading score after 36 holes was 129, shared by two players.

Six of the lowest 12 72-hole totals in South African amateur history have been scored this year.

South Africa is currently endowed with some exceptionally good young players, but this unusual run of low scoring also suggests that the three courses were not up to tournament quality, and presented long-hitting teenagers with too many birdie opportunities. Receptive greens are allowing them to play extremely aggressively.

Golf courses in Gauteng are seemingly particularly vulnerable to being overwhelmed by today's bombers, whether it be amateurs or professionals. Randpark conceded a 23-under winning score of 264 in the Joburg Open, co-sanctioned by the European Tour and Sunshine Tour, and

it was 21-under 267 at Glendower for the SA Open.

Wilco Nienaber (Bloemfontein), 18, regarded as the longest hitter on the amateur circuit, was 66-under-par in three tournaments, winning the Central Gauteng and Free State Opens, and finishing third in the SA Strokeplay. All the courses played to his long-hitting strengths. He had 76 birdies and five eagles. Nienaber's handicap is +5 and even off that low handicap he has still had five exceptional rounds this year.

Garrick Higgs (De Zalze) had 28 birdies in four rounds of the Free State Open, and could only finish second. In three tournaments, which he either won or lost a playoff, Higgs posted 68 birdies and an eagle. Kyle McClatchie, in winning the Gauteng North Open, had 27 birdies and three eagles.



ALBERTSE SHOOTS 27 FOR NINE AT THE ELS CLUB

Dundee GC's Louis Albertse produced the second lowest 9 holes in SA golf when he shot nine-under 27 on the back nine at The Els Club Copperleaf. He began with three straight birdies, had a birdie at 14 and eagle three at 15, then finished with three birdies. He shot 64. Albertse won the IGT Tour event with a total of 202, his second success on the tour. The lowest 9 holes was 26 by Maritz Wessels at CMR on the IGT Tour in 2013.

Total	Course	Event
261	Pecanwood	SA Strokeplay
263	Waterkloof	Gauteng North Open
264	Randpark	Joburg Open
266	Pretoria CC	Tshwane Open
267	Glendower	SA Open
269	Parkview	Bobby Locke
269	Woodmead	Central Gauteng Open

TOURNAMENT WINNERS



JAMES DU PREEZ

African Amateur, Glendower

Scores: 69-70-64-71 (274)

Runner-Up: Christo Lamprecht
74-69-68-66 (277)

How he did it: The 22-year-old from Pretoria CC celebrated his biggest win in golf, playing Glendower's back nine in 31 in his third-round 64. He had 21 birds and an eagle.

Notable: It was Du Preez's first win in almost two years. He was out of golf for 15 months in 2016/17 following a diagnosis for inflammatory arthritis affecting the spine. "There were times when golf was the last thing I thought about. I started working with a friend in the coffee industry, and it brought balance back into my life," he said. Staff at the Tuks High Performance Centre in Pretoria put Du Preez on an exercise programme to strengthen his core muscles and help "straighten" his back. That has helped him remain relatively pain free on the golf course.



DEON GERMISHUYS

Sanlam SA Amateur, Durban CC

Final: Beat Chris Woollam at 39th

How he did it: Germishuys, 18, from Strand, was never up once in the final until he won. Three down after 30 holes to Woollam, 18, a home club member, Germishuys birdied three of the last six holes, including the 18th, to tie the match. In earlier rounds he overcame four different members of the Scottish squad. Two of his wins were at the 20th hole. Woollam, the Proudfoot Trophy winner last year at Humewood, also defeated a Scot in the semifinals.

Notable: The longest final since 1988, when Neville Clarke beat Ernie Els at 40th. The first text Germishuys received after his victory was one from Els, as he is a member of the Ernie Els & Fancourt Foundation. Germishuys had narrowly lost the Cape Province Open title the previous week.



OLIVER GILLBERG

SA Strokeplay, Pecanwood

Scores: 67-62-64-68 (261)

Runner-Up: Matt Saulez
67-64-64-67 (262)

How he did it: The first three, Gillberg, Saulez and Wilco Nienaber, broke the SA Strokeplay record of 266 set by Richard Sterne at Oppenheimer Park in 2001. The winning score of 27-under by Gillberg, a 23-year-old Swede, with 28 birdies and two eagles, was the second lowest 72-hole total by an amateur in South Africa.

Notable: The three between them had 81 birdies and 6 eagles as Pecanwood was torn apart. There was a 62, a 63, and 12 64s, while 60 players finished under par after 72 holes.



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CLAYTON MANSFIELD

Cape Province Open, George & Kingswood

Scores: 68-69-68-70 (275)

Runner-Up: Deon Germishuys 67-66-70-73 (276)

How he did it: Mansfield (Durban CC), 23, with 18 birdies, won for the first time since last year's Boland Open after Germishuys (Strand) bogeyed the final hole.

Notable: Germishuys, 18, had 13 birdies and an eagle the first two rounds, including a first nine of seven-under 30 at Kingswood in his 66 where he began with five straight birdies.



DAVID LANGLEY

Proudfoot Trophy, Durban CC

Scores: 67-70 (137)

How he did it: The 23-year-old Englishman produced a remarkable score in windy weather to win the SA Amateur qualifier by four shots from Scot Calum Fyfe.

Notable: Simbithi's Matthew Hands aced the par-4 18th with a 3-wood to make the 64 qualifiers for the matchplay by one shot.



THREE IN A ROW FOR WILLIAMS

Steve Williams had his third straight win when he took the Senior Players Championship at Sun City, 73-71 at the Gary Player CC by one from former champion Morgan Phillips (Maritzburg 73-72), with Pieter Cooper (Wingate Park 74-72) third ahead of Craig Poulton (KDM) and Derek Piek (Centurion) on 147. Williams is the first person to win the Players and SA Senior Amateur trophies. Andre van Dyk (Langebaan) shot 69-69 at Royal Cape to win the WP Senior Open by six from Herman September (KDM 71-71), with Williams T-6 to end his streak of victories. Dirk van der Merwe (Hermanus) won the Winelands Senior with 74-68 at De Zalze by one from home club member Francois le Roux (73-70).



Steve Williams (left) with Philip Viljoen.



Dino De Abreu won the Ekurhuleni Mid-Amateur with 66-70 at Reading, after a playoff against Johan Krugel (Rustenburg 66-70) and Gideon Kruis (Kimberley 69-67).

Tyran van Lieshout (Ruimsig) shot 70 at Wingate Park to win the weather-affected Gauteng North Mid-Am by one from Louis Moolman (Cathedral Peak) and Ernest Botha (Kempton Park).

GOLF DIGEST AMATEUR RANKINGS (AT MARCH 10)

1	Matt Saulez	Durban CC	1695
2	Malcolm Mitchell	Kloof	1634
3	Therion Nel	Bloemfontein	1358
4	Clayton Mansfield	Durban CC	1146
5	Wilco Nienaber	Bloemfontein	1111
6	Louis Albertse	Dundee	1081
7	Aneurin Gounden	Glendower	1037
8	David McIntyre	Eagle Canyon	1024
9	Martin Vorster	Pinnacle Point	994
10	T Bezuidenhout	Rustenburg	936
11	Deon Germishuys	Strand	923
12	James du Preez	Pretoria CC	846
13	Andre van Heerden	Walker Park	833
14	Jayden Schaper	Ebotse	831
15	Greg McKay	Mt Edgecombe	777
16	Allan Lones	PEGC	748
17	Garrick Higgs	De Zalze	704
18	Dawid Opperman	Pretoria CC	668
19	Darin de Smidt	Krugersdorp	663
20	Christo Lamprecht	Pinnacle Point	656
21	Philip Kruse	Woodhill	652
22	Dylan Kok	Woodhill	633
23	Marco Steyn	Modderfontein	602
24	K McLachlan	Silver Lakes	595
25	Otto van Buynder	Blue Valley	589
26	Siyanda Mwandla	Mt Edgecombe	585
27	Cameron Moralee	Dainfern	553
28	Jason Rossiter	Krugersdorp	546
29	E Lambrechts	Stellenbosch	524
30	Nicholaus Frade	Centurion	516
31	Caylum Boon	Oubaai	496
32	Casey Jarvis	State Mines	473
33	Kyle de Beer	PEGC	458
34	Luan Boshoff	Stellenbosch	458
35	Luca Filippi	Milnerton	453
36	Byron Coetzee	Cotswold Downs	448
37	David Nortje	Els Club	432
38	Keelan van Wyk	Ruimsig	427
39	Christiaan Burke	Potchefstroom	427
40	Emilio Pera	Eagle Canyon	385
41	Jordan Burnand	Ebotse	374
42	Hayden Griffiths	CCJ	352
43	Karabo Mokoena	Modderfontein	350
44	Luke Mayo	Mt Edgecombe	342
45	Keaton Slatter	Royal J&K	334
46	Dean Martin	Dainfern	334
47	Clifford Thompson	Centurion	291
48	Steven le Roux	Wanderers	287
49	Hans-Jurie Human	Oubaai	276
50	Lwazi Gqira	East London	264

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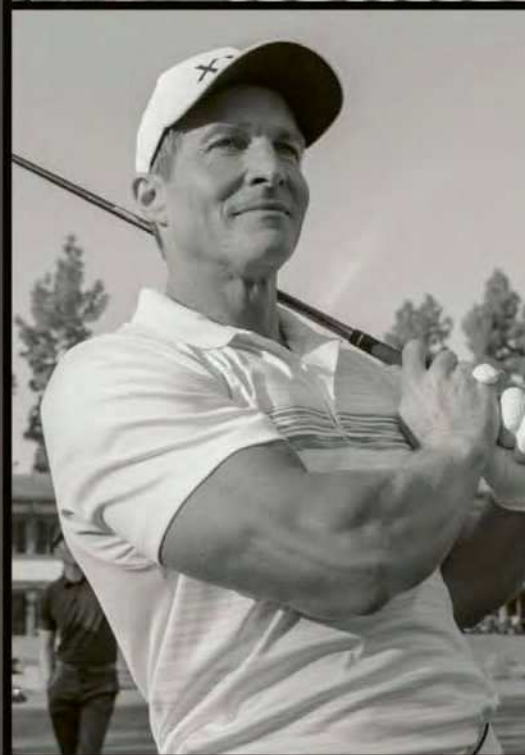
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