

GOLF PENNSYLVANIA GOLF NORTHEAST

Vol. XXXI No. 1

Spring 2019

Tiger Springs Into 2019

Destination:

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Spring Golf at the South Jersey Shore



The Vineyards Golf at Renault Hole #18

By **MIKE KERN**

Change happens. Sometimes slowly, but almost always inevitably. And there are those instances where the change is downright necessary, a reality the golf world has been forced to come with grips with more and more in what has become a highly-evolving landscape. And the transitions can be hard, in many ways. But the alternative is not an option.

Vineyards Golf at Renault, just off the White Horse Pike in Egg Harbor Township, is one of those places that is experiencing such a new beginning. Several years ago, owner Joseph Milza decided he wanted to sell the property, which includes the vineyard, award-winning restaurant and hotel. For whatever reasons, nobody was interested enough to make it work. So it fell back into the bank's hands. And through the fault of the circumstances, it fell into a period of uncertainty. Because nobody really knew if it would emerge intact, or just go away. As too many facilities have done recently. Then, last December, it was finally taken over by Vivamee Hospitality, a locally-based management company/investment group and value-add land developer run by the husband and wife team of Josh and Melanie McCallen. They've been very successful with other ventures, and they have ambitious plans for their latest challenge. Which can only be good news for golfers and even just travelers headed to the South Jersey Shore for a night, weekend or even more extended stay.

Win-win's can never be a bad thing.

Kevin McCarty is the assistant general manager. He's worked there for most of his adult life. The course has been in place since 2004. The property will soon be celebrating its 150th anniversary, no minor detail. History is something to be cherished. And hopefully that history can now continue and write another chapter.

"We went through some difficult times, no doubt," said McCarty. "But the bank was very gracious. They kept it open. But we think we've found the perfect candidate to really turn this into something special.

"Their specialty is finding distressed properties and breathing renewed life into them. Vivamee literally translates to 'Revive the Soul.' We first met (with them) in early 2018. I must have done close to 150 tours with potential buyers. Out of all of them, Josh and Melanie were the only ones who looked as this as a premier wedding destination. They know the (profit) margins in golf are smaller. But they still see the course as being a big part of the overall product."

Anyone who knows Ron Jaworski and understands his philosophy when it



Ballamor Hole #1

comes to running a successful facility, those sentiments sound very familiar. So there is that.

The 50-room hotel needs to be updated. But that's all part of any process. The golf course will get tweaks but nothing major. Because the Ed Shearon design doesn't need much in the way of upgrading. I've always thought highly of it, and I actually toured it with him when it opened. But it does seem that his Raven's Claw track in the western Philadelphia suburbs gets more attention. And maybe that's the way it should be. But I think they both are terrific. More on the layout later.

"It's going to be a home run," McCarty went on. "They want to make this, using Vivamee as the foundation, into the East Coast's premier vineyard wedding destination. And all that goes with that. They've already closed on 80 weddings for the next year. At one point they were doing over 100 a year. But when you're in bankruptcy, it's hard to get any traction. You can't have that conversation with a bride's father asking him to write a check for \$25,000 when there's a fear that you could close any day and not be here for them. But they're making a big-time investment to make sure the revitalization is everything you could want.

"People's expectations should be high. But you have to restore their faith, in all facets of the business."

And speaking from experience, as someone who judges most of his trips as much by how he eats as how he hits the ball, I can tell you that the food has always been every bit as good as the golf. And how many places can really say that?

"It's always been a very golfer-friendly course," McCarty noted. "During the tough times, we were very aggressive with our pricing, so we still got our fair share of rounds played. And for a resort, it's an unbelievable amenity. We want people to come in for a wedding and take advantage of the whole package. That's more convenient in today's world. We're a one-stop shop. Guests want that.

"Think of it as Disney. You arrive and you don't have to go anywhere else. It's amazing, right? We have a lot of new people in place, in terms of taking care of the golf course. We want to bring the conditions back up. We couldn't always do that, because of the situation we were going through. So our members (around 100) are excited. March was dramatically better than last March. Our guests are telling us that they're can't wait to come back. It's all about the details. And word of mouth. All it takes is one person who goes away unhappy to have a negative impact."

McCarty said the fact that folks can now make legal bets on sports at Atlantic

Spring Golf at Jersey Shore continued on page 5

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Blue Heron Pine – Hole # 10



McCullough's Emerald Links Hole #7

Spring Golf at Jersey Shore *continued from page 3*

City casinos does the complete opposite. And yes, it was a long time coming. So by all means make the most of that.

“I’ll take a cart and drive through the parking lot and I’ll see license plates from New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, a little Delaware,” McCarty added. “They come to go to the shore and hit us on the way back. They come and make a day of it. It’s interesting. You can draw the correlation. It’s not just the weather. And we’re less than an hour from parts of Philly

“The message we have to convey is that we’re (still) here, and we’re going to be better than ever. Rumors can spread like wildfire. And then it’s 10 times harder to get the (right) message out. We’re fully committed. There’s so many components to it. There’s something for everyone. That makes us a little different than most others. We do have options. And it all goes back to the philosophy. Amazing service. Every guest is our No. 1 priority. We want to treat you the right way, so you’ll want to come back. If you don’t, then it doesn’t matter how much money you spend.”

They’re re-branding everything, with a French twist. The hotel is now Chateau Renault. The restaurant is House of Renault. The course is Vineyard National. There’s a new logo, and they’re moving the pro shop across the street so guests will have a better view of the land. Nothing is being left to chance. Which is the way it should be. Especially when you’re making a comeback.

They’re even planning on live music/concerts on warm weekends. And the largest dancing room on the East Coast. Hey, you might as well think outside the box. And think big. Yo, they’re even having the ageless Jerry Blavet hosting events.

“It’s very humbling, to have this opportunity,” McCarty stressed. “At one point we really didn’t think it was going in the direction it is now. I only see it going up. And it’s great to be a part of it.

“I think we have gotten overshadowed (down here) a little bit. Not anymore. I think we’re going to surprise a lot of people. We’re all pulling in the same direction. We want to win. We are unique. To many guests, golf is the most important thing. But it’s not golf alone. We want to be diversified. And we want people to have our eyes on us.”

As far as the golf goes, well it could certainly stand on its own. They have holes with double fairways. As in more than one. They have holes with false fronts. They have holes that make you play over and around water, including a par 3 where the tee area wraps around a pond to offer easier approaches to the higher handicappers. So how’s that for a fair design? They have a hole that bends around

the vineyard. So maybe you can eat a grape as you try to find your errant tee shot. They have blind shots. They have hard holes, and holes you can get without having to be Tiger Woods. They have holes where you can’t put on the wrong side of the green. Or else. The reality is, they have a little something for everything. It’s interesting, and fair. Two things that should keep you coming back.

Shearon actually built the back nine to be the front nine, but Milza switched them around because No. 18 heads back toward the main building. Which makes sense. The ninth is also a wonderful hole. Either way, it works. It’s not the kind of track that’s probably going to beat you up too much, but it can bite you in a hurry, and often, if you’re not careful. And afterward you can head back to your room or lay by the pool or grab a bite to eat that you’re not going to soon forget either. How can you not be a fan of that?

Of course, the best thing about the South Jersey Shore is that there’s more than one place to try your luck. Here’s a few of my favorites. I’m sure some if not most of them are yours as well.

When I know I’m going to Atlantic City, I literally get excited. It’s that good. And it’s always in great shape. Situated right across the bay from the casino skyline, it’s got some great short par 3s where I’ve still made double bogey without even trying too hard. It also has some views on the back side that are remarkable. And much of the closing stretch plays right through that. It’s just a real taste treat. The view from the clubhouse is tough to beat too. When I play there, I know I’ve been on one of the best. It’s as simple as that.

Ballamor, which is inland just outside of Ocean City, is carved out of gently rolling woods. So it’s a totally different experience in those terms. But it offers some really challenging holes as well. And almost every green has multi levels on them, which can make getting down in two quite an undertaking. Once private, it’s now open to the public. Our gain. If you haven’t been, this scenic, serene setting is worthy of a visit.

Blue Heron Pines, the course that started the whole user-free explosion in that area in the early 1990s, has only gotten better since Ron Jaworski took it over about five years ago. It’s become the place to be, not only for the golf but the food and drink. Jaws takes a lot of pride in making everything he touches top shelf, and it shows. It’s got enough tough holes to get your attention, but in general it’s pretty user-friendly. You can definitely have a good time here. And that’s what it’s mostly supposed to be about, right?

Cape May National is as natural as it gets. You can almost get lost in how beautiful the grounds really are. But it has enough trees and water coming into play to make you squirm. Whenever somebody writes about the best 18 holes

Spring Golf at Jersey Shore continued on page 23



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Myrtle Beach & The Grand Strand



Sea Trail Golf Club

By Bob Oliver

MYRTLE BEACH, SC --- Where is the capital of American golf? Depends who you might ask, as various destinations claim the title. But long ago the 90-mile stretch along the Atlantic Ocean centered around Myrtle Beach, SC, laid claim to the unofficial title. Any why not?

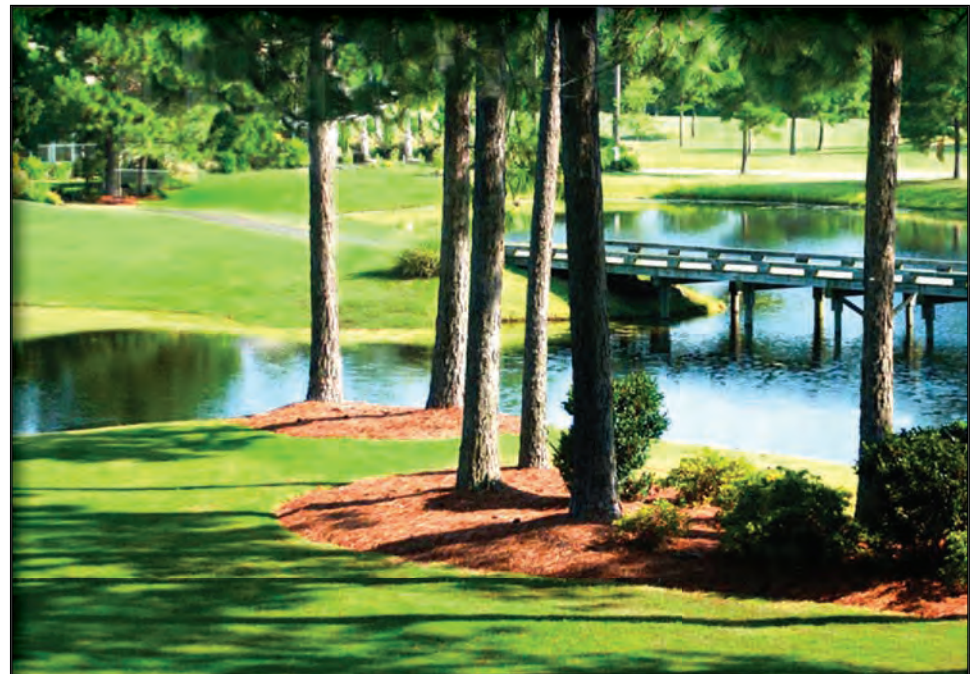
The Grand Strand has, depending on who is counting and what day it is, more than 100 golf courses that tantalize players of all tastes and playing abilities. There are courses designed by the best, including Nicklaus, Ross, Jones, Dye, Garl and Fazio. You name it, they have it, along with great food, sparkling beaches and a bevy of nighttime activities.

While Mother Nature has wielded her wrath in recent years, from Hurricanes to more than 100 inches of rain last year like many east coast venues, the beauty of the Grand Strand is that the great weather outweighs the bad, and even the bad days can be just wonderful.

We found that out in March when visiting the Myrtle Beach area for the first time in more than a dozen years. As Jon Bon Jovi once crooned, "Who says you can't go home again?" Because March or April was an annual home for many years before we visited new and different places. Quite frankly, at the end of the week we wondered why we ever stopped going there.

Yes, there was chilly air. But the hospitality was top notch, the courses first rate, and the overall experience a stellar one.

Oh, there was a difference from the old days. Right off the bat Route 31, a newer bypass, allowed travel north and sound a whole lot easier. The competition for food and lodging as well as green's fees kept prices affordable, and the pace of play on the courses we sampled was in a word



Sandpiper Bay in Sunset Beach

brisk.

In its hayday the Grand Strand – stretching from Georgetown, SC, to the south to above Little River, NC, to the north – was generally accepted to have approximately 130 golf courses. The economic challenges of 2008 along with growth such as roads and infrastructure caused some elimination of courses, as well as a sort of natural selection of some venues being better than others.

These days there are approximately 101 courses available for play, the majority of them open to the public or available with package plans from some hotels. For this trip, we spent most of our time along the gateway to Myrtle Beach proper, areas like Calabash, Loris, Sunset Beach and North Myrtle Beach.

One learns early on that traversing the entire Grand Strand on a single trip isn't time effective, as with some 90 miles of shore line one could spend a lot of time in a vehicle rather than on a golf course. So our return trip saw us centered in the

northern gateway vicinity. And with 135 holes played in six days, golf was the top priority.

"The area provides something for everyone, from golf groups to families who have varying tastes," explained Jamie Roderick, the Director of Golf Operations of **Sea Trail Golf Club**. The Sea Trail golf complex boasts layouts designed by Rees Jones, Willard Byrd and Dan Maples. "We know golfers have a whole lot of choices, so we do our best to provide excellent service to go along with our find golf product."

Similar sentiments could be heard from Tim Tilma, the General Manager of **Sandpiper Bay** in Sunset Beach.

"It's no secret we've been called the golf capital of the United States," said Tilma, a long-time veteran of the Grand Strand. "Just look as you drive to our club. One drives past **Thistle** (27-holes), The Pearl



Thistle Golf Club

Myrtle Beach cont' on page 11

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**Don Allan --
Publisher**

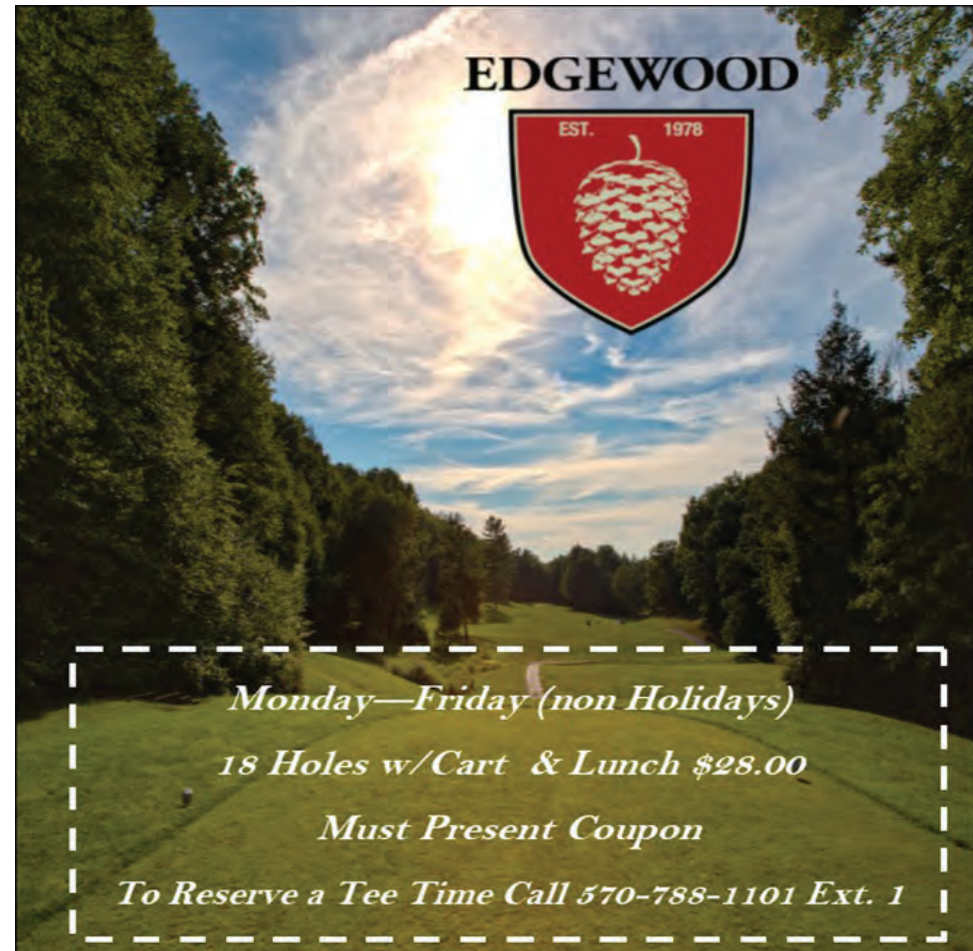


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Theme for 2019 PGA Merchandise Show: Give Golfers More Bang for their Buck



4 Yards More – Players Pack



Antigua Getaway Outerwear Men's



Antigua Getaway Outerwear Women's



Bridgestone e12 Golf Balls

By Tony Leodora "The Traveling Golfer"

There is no denying that 2018 was a tough year for the golf industry – especially on the East Coast. Mother Nature did her best to limit the number of playable hours, which resulted in a drop in revenue for just about every segment of the golf industry. All who enjoy playing the game -- and working in the game of golf -- are looking for some relief in 2019.

Fortunately, many of the companies who produce the products that golfers use have decided to be proactive – providing their own type of relief.

Economic relief could be seen as a common theme in many of the products that caught the attention of the almost 40,000 attendees who flocked to the mammoth Orange County Convention Center in Orlando for this year's 66th PGA Merchandise Show. More than 1,000 exhibitors greeted visitors from all 50 states and from 90 countries around the world. While the show is put on by the professional golfers who make up the PGA of America, the latest trend seemed to be increased attention on the average golfer – the ones who make up the overwhelming majority of the world's 60 million golfers ... and shell out their hard-earned money for new products every year.

A number of the products that caught the eye of our roving research team serve the specific purpose of making the game of golf a bit more affordable. While there still were plenty of \$600 drivers and \$2,000 sets of irons on display, there were some manufacturers moving in the other direction. Tour Edge Golf, in particular its high-end Exotics line, introduced the EXS clubs. Most notably, the high-tech driver is priced at a very reasonable \$299. Precision Pro, a relatively new name in the competitive line of range finders, came out with its new NX9 HD range finder priced more than \$100 less than other high-tech competitors. Bridgestone Golf came out with a new e12 golf ball that combines all of the highest quality and technology, yet sells for less than \$30. These are just some of the value-priced items that attracted attention at this year's "Super Bowl" of the golf industry. Other noteworthy products merely attracted attention because of their amazing style. Even if your score on the golf course is not good ... at least you can look good. And others provided a bit of inventive ingenuity. Now that our team has done all of the research for you, the golfer, enjoy shopping.

4 Yards More – Players Pack

When is having a great product not enough? When it becomes necessary to find a more convenient way to get the product to the public. Greenkeepers, the Philadelphia-based company that specializes in manufacturing a wide variety of golf accessories, hit a home run a few years ago with its 4 Yards More performance golf tee. From the original model, the company advanced to taller tees, tees for fairway woods and tees for hybrids. Now they have found a way to bring the entire line to the public. It's called the Players Pack and it features four different varieties of performance tees in one package.

"What we tried to do with the Players Pack, and it's been widely accepted, is give golfers



Tony Leodora Host of GolfTalk Live



the opportunity to buy a variety of our 4 Yards More tees in one larger package," explained Frank Carroll, president of Greenkeepers. "Many of the golf retail stores carry so many different packages of our tees. Now, you can get everything in one package. It helps the golfer and it helps the retailer." The world of golf technology has come a long way from the days of picking up whatever golf tee was in the bowl on the golf shop counter. Now, most of the best players insist on a performance golf tee. For those who want to try the entire line of 4 Yards More tees, the new Players Pack is the answer. It has a retail price of \$23.95 and can be found in golf stores everywhere. www.gkspikes.com

Antigua Getaway Outerwear

For the last 40 years (Happy Anniversary), Antigua has been an innovator in the world of golf apparel. The Phoenix area-based company has been around a longtime but the last 10 years has seen a quantum leap in their success across the board – especially in the effort of transitioning golf apparel into the casual everyday world. Their new Getaway line of outerwear is a perfect example.

The quarter-zip style for men and full-zip style for women has the rich look and feel of a sweater. However it is constructed of synthetic fabric, leading to easier care and use.

"The whole concept was to make a style that would fit into both categories of a quarter-zip and a sweater," explained Ron McPherson, president of Antigua. "A lot of times in the golf shop it is very difficult to display sweaters because they have to put them on tables. If they hang a sweater, it stretches out of shape. Our new Getaway has the tight quilted look of a sweater but they can hang it because it is a synthetic product."

The women's Getaway model comes in white, black and laguna blue. The men's Getaway quarter-zip comes in white, black, navy and grey heather. Feels and looks like a sweater; wears like a synthetic. "It's amazing to get that all in one product," McPherson continued. "Our design and development team did a great job in combining those and we've had a terrific response to it." Despite the rich look, Anchorage pullovers are reasonably priced at \$84.95. www.antigua.com

Bridgestone e12 Golf Balls

Bridgestone Golf, the Covington, Georgia-based company that manufactures high quality golf balls, is riding a hot streak. A record number of professional golfers, using different models of Bridgestone golf balls, have broken into the winner's circle over the last year. The names are quite familiar – Matt Kuchar, Lexi Thompson, Bryson DeChambeau and, yes, Tiger Woods. The first three are going through the most successful stretch of their careers – while Woods capped an amazing comeback with a victory in the Tour Championship at the end of 2018.

Coincidence? The researchers at Bridgestone Golf don't think it is. Last year they produced high-quality golf balls for the best players. For 2019 they have turned their focus on the average golfer – the ones who buy their golf balls on a regular basis. For that segment Bridgestone has

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Arcadian Shores Golf Club



Glen Dornoch Golf Links

Myrtle Beach & Grand Strand from Page 7

(36-holes) and Sea Trail (54-holes) so there are many options for the player. Our 27-hole facility has a strong resident base and we do all we can to offer a challenging layout, service and pace of play.”

One layout which we hadn't seen in 20 years was Rees Jones first solo design, Arcadian Shores, a layout which at one point was listed among the top-100 ranking of courses in the United States. Ample fairways beckon players, but challenges such as bunkers, lakes and contoured greens make par an excellent score. It was great to be back at this Grand Strand classic course, which also displays beautiful and well-trimmed oak trees.

“We, like all the courses in the area, have been hurt by the more than 100 inches of rain in the last year, but we've gone the extra mile to bring the course back strong,” said General Manager Frank Coughlin. “There has been heavy work done on enhancing the course.”

Arcadian Shores was closed for nearly five months last year, as it totally reworked its greens with Sunday ultra-dwarf Bermuda grass, while also re-paving its cart paths. The greens have matured and are stellar putting surfaces, and the ride around the course contains less bumps. A new circa 2016 clubhouse is an added accoutrement.

“The feedback since reopening has been wonderful, getting positive comments really makes it all worthwhile,” added Coughlin. “People love the greens, and the course, well, it's a strong classic design.”

The Glens Golf Group offers four stellar challenges: Glen Dornoch, Shaftesbury Glen, Heather Glenn and Possum Trot. Each has its own set of design features and each is fun to play.

At Glen Dornoch, a Clyde Johnston creation, one finds a course designed as a tribute to Donald Ross carved through trees and featuring holes along the intercoastal waterway.

There is water to be evaded – ponds, lakes and the intercoastal waterway – on 13 holes and carries over marsh and strategically placed bunkers can be found

on other holes. Add in rolling greens and trees and one has a course where precision is at a premium. The Glen Dornoch clubhouse is a good one, and the service is stellar.

Many courses have invested in protecting their greens in cold weather by purchasing tarps. Tidewater, Sandpiper Bay and Thistle led the way, and as a result the greens were, in a word, superb.

“Some of the area courses were hurt, losing greens, and we just couldn't afford not to protect ours,” explained Sandpiper Bay's Tilma. “We don't use them a great deal, but as you can imagine on those very cold days in the winter it just makes common sense to protect our greens. The feedback has been awesome.”

Likewise, Thistle's General Manager Doug Donner echoed his competitor's statement. “We want to offer that quality experience, and that includes greens devoid of problems. The tarps help our superintendent make that happen.”

Thistle has an immaculate stately club house and Donner prides himself on promoting a player friendly experience. The three nines each offer outstanding challenges put together by designer Tim Cate. Its practice area is top notch, and includes not only a driving range but also short game area and a putting green that mimics undulations found on course.

“We are proud of our facility, and do our best to make our visitors happy, starting with our wonderful clubhouse, our practice facility and our 27 holes of championship golf,” said Donner. “We offer tee times in 10 minute increments. And each and every one of our holes has beauty and challenge.”

On getaway day we picked a course along the northern border of the strand, Aberdeen Golf Club, as we were glad we did. There are 27 challenging holes,

The unfortunate part of our trip was the number of superb courses we didn't sample, from the classic Dunes Golf and Beach Club (No. 3 on Golfweek's places you can play in South Carolina), to Caledonia. Add in True Blue, Tidewater, The Surf Club and Pine Lakes International the Grand Strand has great golf chops. Nobody can sample all the greats of the Grand Strand in one visit.

Still, that just means a return trip is not going to be years away, as we are plotting a return visit sooner rather than later.



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2019 PGA Merchandise Show from page 9

created the new e12 series of golf balls. They come in two models – the e12 Soft and the e12 Speed. And both come at a very economical price of \$29.99 per dozen.

So, how did they come up with the e12 name? “Because it’s twice as good as our old e6 golf ball,” cracked Elliott Mellow, golf ball manager for Bridgestone. When pressed for details, he was quick to back up his claim: “We’re excited about our new active acceleration mantle layer. Historically, all the power in the golf ball came strictly from the core and the mantle just served spin reduction and ball flight optimization. We’ve now found a way to optimize velocity from the mantle as well as the core. Basically, our new ball now has two engines in it, making it faster than a traditional distance ball.” High quality golf balls, at an affordable price. What a concept. www.bridgestonegolf.com

Cleveland RTX4 Wedges

For years Cleveland Golf has been producing the finest wedges in the golf world. The best players use them like finely crafted precision instruments – sending shots in close proximity to the flagstick ... then spinning those shots even closer. But don’t expect the research team at Cleveland Golf to rest on their laurels. They constantly keep tweaking their wedges ... striving for perfection. Jeff Brunski is the Vice President of Research and Development for Cleveland Golf and he is quite proud of the new RTX 4 wedge.

“It’s a beautiful product. The play is beautiful,” said Brunski, during a very busy PGA Merchandise Show week. “It’s funny, we’re working on the next generation of product already but we don’t know what to fix. Everybody keeps telling us not to change a thing.”

Don’t look for wholesale changes in one of the most successful line of wedges in the world. Instead, Cleveland offers the most heavily tour-influenced and diverse lineup of lofts and sole grinds in the company’s history. The subtle changes are what make the difference in the new RTX 4 line of wedges.

“The spin has been increased. We’ve got more grind offerings than ever before,” continued Brunski. “The workability and ability to control shots, get close and score, is unlike any product we’ve made before.” Retail price on the Cleveland RTX 4 wedge is \$139.99 but special prices can be found online for as low as \$109.99. That is another example of a golf manufacturer offering a high-quality piece of equipment at a reasonable price. www.clevelandgolf.com

Copper Tech Golf Gloves

For a number of years the Copper Tech golf glove has been building a reputation as one of the best gloves on the market – for fit, feel, grip and durability. And that’s before the copper-infused glove’s circulation promoting and pain reducing qualities are added to the equation. Golfers everywhere have been singing the praises of the Copper Tech glove. Now the company is adding a dash of style to the line of gloves. New for this year is a splash of color – golf gloves in just about every imaginable color in the rainbow.

“The new look is lots of different colors,” said Lloyd Cohn, president of Copper Tech. “We have 15 new colors throughout the line of golf gloves. Men and ladies can match every possible golf outfit. Now it’s possible to be both practical and stylish, at the same time.”

In fact, the “practical” line of golf gloves have been found to be so helpful in terms of soothing pain and stiffness in the hands that other applications are now available. Copper Tech can now be found in work gloves, gardening gloves and mechanic gloves. The golf gloves are still the backbone of the company. The one-size-fits-most model is available at a retail price of \$19.95. That price becomes even more affordable when considering the fact that Copper Tech

gloves last longer than almost all high-quality golf gloves on the market.

Also, Copper Tech received the Industry Honors award for Product Ingenuity-Emerging Companies from the International Network of Golf at this year’s PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando. www.coppertechglove.com

Golf Pride Tour Velvet Plus 4 Grips

Good golfers know the importance of keeping new and high-quality golf grips on their clubs. Tour professionals change grips a number of times each year. Even the top amateurs seldom go more than a year with the same grips. Golf Pride has been the leader in the golf grip market for a long time. They proudly boast the claim, “Number One Grip on Tour.”

The company also takes the time to explain why you should re-grip: “New grips enhance traction for greater control and clubface awareness and promote an ideal grip pressure, allowing the hands to release at impact for more power.” In addition to lecturing on the benefits of re-gripping, the company also is putting a huge amount of research into producing new and better products. While the entire line of golf grips is diverse, the new Tour Velvet Plus 4 grip is the one that is attracting the most attention.

The Tour Velvet has long been the most popular golf grip on the market, but new technology allows for less taper at the bottom of the grip. A thicker grip under the bottom hand reduces the tendency to grip hard and come over the top through the golf swing.

“We’re excited about this new Plus 4 technology within the Tour Velvet family,” explained Bruce Miller, product manager for Golf Pride. “It’s got a brand new material, more durable and also softer. It also has a re-oriented texture pattern on the grip that provides more traction.” Plus, more Golf Pride putter grips are played on tour than any other. The new Tour SNSR putter grip, with its tour-preferred pistol shape, also has attracted a lot of attention. www.golfpride.com

High Heat 257+

It began three years ago with a new driver and technology, both named the “best” of any new club. The multiple media reviews and rave customer reviews soon followed. In subsequent years fairway woods and hybrids were added to the line. High Heat then was named -- by major media, PGA, and LPGA teaching pros -- as the leading brand in properly addressing the hitting needs of the amateur golfer. All of those exciting introductions have been followed by the new award-winning High Heat 257+ clubs and its revolutionary Three-Trampoline Face Technology. This technology takes advantage of a new USGA Rule change that permits a hotter face outside the sweet spot to provide the same distance on off-center hits as center hits, so the entire face is a “sweet spot.”

High Heat 257+ is the only brand that takes advantage of that new USGA Rule and is considered as having the most revolutionary technology for amateurs since introduction of titanium faces almost 25 years ago. Major media, PGA and LPGA teaching pros rave about how golfers are getting the same distance on hits across the face ... and customers rave about their lower scores. High Heat 257+ is available across the entire line of High Heat clubs – drivers, 3, 5 and 7 woods and 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 hybrids. High Heat clubs reached the pinnacle at this year’s PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando. At the Industry Honors award program, put on by the International Network of Golf, High Heat’s 257+ line of clubs won the top award for Product Ingenuity in the Emerging Companies category. Don’t be surprised in a few years if the High Heat 257+ has moved from the “Emerging Brand” category to the “Leading Brand” category. One additional bonus: all High Heat clubs come with a 30-day full-refund guarantee. www.highheatgolf.com

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Tiger's Victory at 2019 Masters



Tiger Woods Shouts for joy at 2019 Masters

By **MIKE KERN**

Admit it. Deep down, in places you don't talk about at parties, even the haters probably knew there would be another epic moment like this. Because we want him on that wall. We need him on that wall.

It's a truth everyone should be able to handle.

We're talking about Tiger Woods, of course. Easily the best golfer of his generation, and certainly in the conversation for best of all time. As in forever and ever.

To many, he was every bit as big as Michael Jordan. Remember Tigermania, in all its glory?

But that was, well, then.

There were those who thought he would never win another major. Tiger might have been one of them. Not that long ago, he wasn't sure his injured back would allow him to lead a normal everyday life again, let alone be competitive in a sport he defined for well over a decade. He carried around a lot of scars, both physical and mental. Many were even self-inflicted. It happens. And it happened to him in a larger-than-life way.

He's 43 now. His children are 12 and 10. His dad Earl, his trusted mentor, has been gone for 13 years. And Tiger had fallen off the map.

But not any more.

On Sunday at Augusta National, he turned back the clock to win his fifth Masters, 22 years after he'd won his first green jacket with a record-setting 12-shot victory in his first major as a professional. It's also his 15th major, almost 11 years after he got No. 14. And that leaves him three behind Jack Nicklaus on the career count. There was a time when a lot of folks figured Tiger would have 19 before he turned 40. Things change. But they can also change back.

Regardless of how you feel about Tiger as a person, and there's a lot not to like, he's always been great for golf. All you had to do was listen to the galleries at Augusta to know what it meant. The ground was shaking as only few can make it move.



Tiger Woods, in his 22nd Masters appearance, closed with a final round of 70 and finished 13 under par at 275. Credit Doug Mills/The New York Times

It was golf's most indelible day since Nicklaus won the 1986 Masters at 46, six years after he'd won his 17th major and 11 after he'd won the season's first major for the fifth time.

The guy who Nicklaus once said might win as many Masters as him and Arnold Palmer combined (10) has come full circle. Back in 1997 he and his dad shared an epic bear hug, and some tears, next to the 18th green. This time, Tiger celebrated with a daughter and son that had never seen him do this. What they knew of him as a champion was mostly from YouTube. So Tiger let his emotions flow, in an exuberent way. For a guy who rarely lets his guard down, it was a refreshing set of snapshots. Much like when he won the British Open in 2006 not long after Earl had passed, and he broke down in his caddy's arms. Only this was a very different reaction. For all the obvious reasons.

Maybe we shouldn't have been surprised. He had led early on the final nine of last July's Open Championship before fading down the stretch. Then he pushed eventual champ Brooks Koepka all the way a month later at the PGA, where he had to settle for second. And he finally lifted a trophy, for the first time in five years, at the Tour Championship in September. So we can't say we weren't warned.

We also can't say that Tiger has never won a major where he didn't lead after 54 holes, as if that tainted his accomplishments in some way. Details.

This time he trailed Francesco Molinari, the reigning Open champ (who'd played with Tiger in the final pairing at Carnoustie too), by two entering the last round. On a packed leaderboard where it seemed like every other contender had won majors as well. When they made the turn Tiger still was behind. But Molinari would find the water on the par-3 12th, just as Koepka had done in the group ahead of them. And just like that, the game was truly on.

Tiger went in front with a two-putt birdie at the par-5 13th. It was the first time he led all tournament. He wouldn't give it back. There was another

Tiger's Victory at Masters continued on page 19

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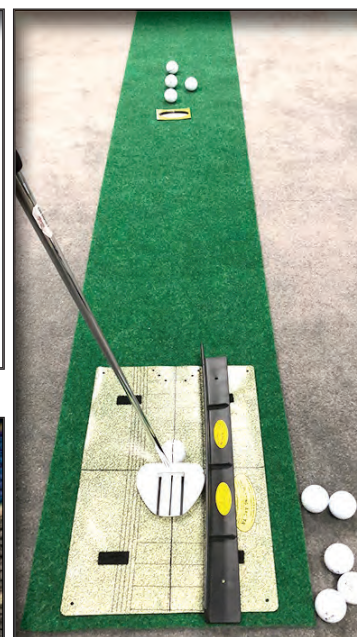
Srixon Z-Star Golf Balls



Nextbelt Braided Belt



Precision Pro NX9-HD Range Finder

Putting Arc T4
with Alignment Mat

Tour Edge EXS Driver

2019 PGA Merchandise Show from page 13

Nexbelt Braided Belt

When a company successfully combines style and practicality, there can be no doubt about the acceptance across a wide range of consumers. That is the story of Nexbelt – the belt with no holes. And it is a short story. Nexbelt exploded on the golf market just a few years ago – attracting a lot of attention at the PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando. The small booth was packed with curious visitors all week, necessitating larger booths in subsequent years. The unique ratchet system, plus the stylish combination of buckles and belts, made it the most popular belt in golf. Technological improvements were introduced to make it the only buckle with stainless steel screws replacing pins for a reliable, stronger, secure hold.

The styles have increased – from the original golf belts that included a ball marker in the buckle ... to the most stylish dress belts ... and, now, to a new line of ultra-casual belts.

Barrett Martens, global sales manager for Nexbelt, unfurled the details on the newest style: “We’ve got a new braided style for 2019. It comes in three new colors – navy, black and grey. This is the first-ever ratchet braided belt on the market.” The braided belt is especially popular to wear with jeans, as well as ultra-comfortable on the golf course. In addition, a new buckle style has been introduced and can be used with many different styles and colors of belts. “We’ve taken our ever-popular Go-In Color series and added a new beveled buckle that is very stylish,” concluded Martens. www.nexbelt.com

Precision Pro NX9-HD Rangefinder

Precision Pro rangefinders have been a sensational story in the golf industry ever since the company was founded by Clay Hood and Jonah Mytro. They asked the simple question, “Why can’t anyone seem to make a quality rangefinder at a reasonable price?” They answered their own question by producing the V400 model – the first sub-\$200 rangefinder. It worked well. Was durable and performed all of the basic functions. Fast-forward five years and they have expanded their line to include the new Precision Pro NX9-HD. It has all the bells and whistles ... yet still beats the price of the competition by more than \$100.

“The NX9-HD is our most advanced rangefinder,” explains company co-founder Mytro. “It comes with high-definition optics, some of the highest optics in the industry, and seven-times magnification. There is a wider viewfinder, so it is easier to see your target. It has an internal locking magnet, so it is easy to click it on to any cart. And it has a two-year replacement warranty – the best warranty in the industry.” With all of those added features, the price on a rangefinder like this should be well over \$400. Most of the ones produced by competing companies are. But the Precision Pro NX9-HD rangefinder carries a suggested retail price of \$329. However, there is a catch. You will have to wait until May 1 for the newest Precision Pro rangefinder to hit the market. Then you will see why it has gained a reputation for being every bit as good ... or better ... than the high-priced brands. www.precisionprogolf.com

Putting Arc T4 with Alignment Mat

The Putting Arc has been around for a long time. Co-founders Dave Hamilton and Top 100 teaching pro VJ Trolino brought the first wooden model of the Putting Arc to the market in 2002. Since that time it has gone through a number of alterations ... and a number of technologically different offspring. Each innovation nudged the Putting Arc closer to its distinction as the No. 1 Training Aid in golf. The original model was followed by the small, portable T3, the popular mid-sized MSII and then with the Deluxe H/D, which has heel/toe capability. The MS-3D followed as a replacement to both the MSII and the Deluxe H/D. It is lighter, more durable and it has the extra advantage of a mirror.

Now Putting Arc has introduced the ultra-portable T4 and the new T4 with Alignment Mat. “This new product is good for the serious golfer who wants to work on his game on the course, at home or in the hotel room,” says Hamilton, an engineer who teamed his talents with the expertise of a Top 100 teaching pro. “Working with the T4 for just five to 10 minutes every day can drastically improve anyone’s putting. It gives perfect alignment and a perfect path to the hole. “It basically lets you practice perfectly whenever you use it,” concludes Hamilton. Proof of the company’s claims can be seen when new World Golf Hall of Fame inductee Jan Stephenson gives one of her many putting clinics. A professional without any endorsement tie to the company, she brings out her Putting Arc first and explains that she never begins any putting session without first working with the Putting Arc. www.theputtingarc.com

New Srixon Z-Star Golf Balls

Srixon golf balls – especially the top-of-the-line Z-Star and Z-Star XV golf balls – have been used successfully by the best professionals and top amateur players from around the world. So why does the company keep tweaking the formula? Easy. The quest for perfection is never-ending. “We recently introduced a new Z-Star and Z-Star XV, our tour platform product, the same exact golf ball that has been winning tournaments around the world for the last few months,” said Jeff Brunski, vice president of research and development for Srixon. “We introduced some new technology. There is a new coating on the golf ball for more spin and a new fast-layer core for more distance. That means lots of exciting stuff, and lots of performance built into those golf balls for the better players.” This marks the sixth generation of Srixon’s premium golf ball line. While many characteristics of previous generations remain, the main new talking point is a SeRM macromolecule material used in the golf ball for the first time. The material is blended into the surface of the ball to optimize damage resistance, impact resistance and vibration absorption. Both the new Z-Star and Z-Star XV balls are available in white and optic yellow. Srixon has been a leader in the movement toward wider use of the optic yellow ball.

And the best news is that Srixon is following an industry-wide trend toward more economic pricing. The premium balls are priced below the suggested retail price of the leading brand. Suggested retail on both the Z-Star and the Z-Star XV is \$39.99 a dozen. www.srixon.com

Tour Edge EXS Driver

For the past 33 years, Tour Edge golf has slowly built quite a successful business, from its headquarters in Batavia, Illinois. Founder Dave Glod has assembled a team of equipment industry professionals dedicated to two different missions: 1) producing a quality line of extremely affordable golf clubs for the everyday golfer and, 2) achieving the highest, cutting-edge technology in its line of Exotics golf clubs. By all reviews in the industry ... and testimonials from tour professionals ... mission accomplished. So, what’s next? Apparently Tour Edge is trying the impossible – creating the highest quality driver at about half the price of other top-end drivers.

“The EXS Driver is just filled with technology, from top to bottom,” explained Dave Glod, president and CEO of Tour Edge. “We start with a carbon crown, which we haven’t done in a while, and a carbon sole in the toe area. What we’re doing is taking weight out of the crown area and the sole area in the toe, and moving a lot more weight to the heel. We have a 9-gram weight in the heel area that really helps the draw enhancement.” High tech design ... aided by high tech materials. “Beyond that we have a VFT Beta Titanium face, which is really expensive technology,” Glod added. But the eye-catching component of this new EXS driver – that matches any other driver on the market pound-for-pound in the technology fight – is the price. “The crazy thing is that we have all of this technology, matching or surpassing just about everyone else in the market, but we put a retail price of \$299 on this driver,” said Glod, in his closing argument. www.touredgogolf.com

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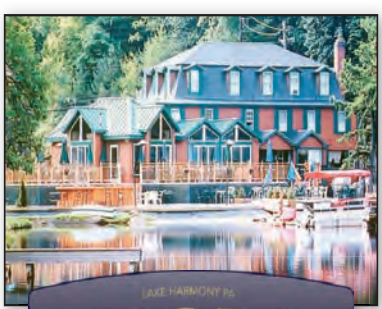
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Tiger Woods, after receiving the Masters' famous green jacket, shook hands with last year's champion, Patrick Reed. Credit Doug Mills/The New York Times

Tiger's Victory at Masters continued from page 15

two-putt bird at 15, followed by a 2 at the par-3 16th, where his tee shot caught the slope perfectly and nearly rolled into the cup.

He used his experience, when others didn't. Maybe they felt his presence. Maybe that's why they made mistakes when he didn't. Through it all Tiger remained patient, and calculating. He wasn't the dominant Tiger who had had once inspired awe. He didn't overpower the field. He executed, with precision. And that was good enough. Which is all that counts.

Koepka, who was trying to win his fourth major in the last seven he's played in, couldn't convert a makeable birdie attempt at 18. That allowed Tiger to finish things off with a safely-played two-putt bogey for a 2-under-par 70 and a 277 total. At that point do you think anyone really cared about the numbers? They were too busy shouting his name over and over, at a place that does that kind of stuff unlike any other. They understood what they had just witnessed. It wasn't Tiger 1997, yet it was pretty damned historic in its own right.

As Tiger made his way to the clubhouse to sign his scorecard, the impact/response was evident. He received congratulations from many of the guys he'd just beaten. He was beaming, and so were they. It's the ultimate show of respect. Many of them grew up idolizing him. Now they're going to have to figure out a way to deal with him on the course. Or at least this latest version of him.

So what does it mean, going forward? The PGA, which has moved to May this year after being held in August, is at Bethpage Black on Long Island. Tiger won the second of his three U.S. Opens there in 2002. In June the U.S. Open will return to Pebble Beach, where Tiger won by 15 in 2000. No doubt he'll become a popular pick to win one or God forbid both. Which obviously is asking way too much. Or is it? We'll soon find out. He should be the betting favorite. For whatever it's worth I have him in a yearlong pool at the PGA, which is usually not a good sign for him. I have that kind of influence.

More to the point, there's the question of long-term ramifications. He's renewed his pursuit of Nicklaus, a race that kept everyone paying attention for so many years. And then we kind of forgot about it. Now we're talking about it once more. Who knows if Tiger can actually do it. For all we know this might be his last major. For the time being, it only matters that he has made us think it could be within his grasp. And you can't put a price on that.

Not many have won majors after the age of 43. You can look it up. He figures to have at least a few good years left. Assuming, of course, his body can hold up. If it



An exuberant Tiger Woods took time to celebrate with his caddy, Joe LaCava. Credit Doug Mills/The New York Times

does, then why wouldn't we think he can win some more? Doesn't mean he will. Just means that the world of golf suddenly became a whole lot more relevant. And fun.

And who doesn't want that? Maybe we should be entitled.

Tiger Woods' 2019 Masters Victory Extends Bridgestone Golf Tour Hot Streak

Tiger Relies on Bridgestone Tour B XS Ball to Win First Green Jacket Since 2005, Giving Bridgestone Its 5th Win of the Season

(COVINGTON, GA) –There wasn't a dry eye in the house as Bridgestone Golf ambassador Tiger Woods put an exclamation point on one of the greatest comebacks in sports history, winning his 15th career major championship at the 2019 Masters tournament. The victory, with Bridgestone's TOUR B XS golf ball, marks Woods' first return to the winner's circle at Augusta National in 14 years and gives him an incredible 5 green jackets for his illustrious career, the second most in history. The win comes 11 years since Woods' last major championship title, and remarkably it is the first ever in which he's had to come from behind. Moreover, Tiger's 2019 Masters triumph is the 5th win of the season for Bridgestone's award-winning TOUR B golf ball family.

Using Bridgestone Golf's TOUR B XS balls, Woods navigated the tight Georgia Pines and slick greens to card a final round 2-under 70 to win by one-shot over a virtual who's who of top players in the world. Woods recorded 22 birdies for the week to propel him to his tournament best 13-under par total.

"I thought it was interesting that Tiger commented that 'it fits' when he slipped on the Green Jacket in the Butler Cabin, and that's basically exactly what he said when he first tried our TOUR B XS golf ball," said Dan Murphy, President and CEO of Bridgestone Golf. "This victory is huge for the game of golf, but beyond what it means for the game as a whole, Tiger's Masters victory is a tremendous exclamation point on an incredible stretch for our TOUR B series balls. Like we do for consumers, we go to great lengths to ensure that our Tour players have a ball that fits their game, and there is no question the TOUR B XS has been a great choice for Tiger."

The Bridgestone TOUR B XS has been a constant in Tiger's bag since he first put the ball in play last year, though Tiger has continued to tweak his club selection during that time. The TOUR B XS fits Tiger's game perfectly as it offers the ideal combination of power, spin and control he demands. The TOUR B golf ball series is a result of Bridgestone's continued commitment to providing premium tee-to-green performance to players of varying swing types. Bridgestone owns over 800 golf ball patents and fully leverages the company's heritage of excellence in polymer science worldwide to design the industry's most cutting-edge golf balls.

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2018 Champion Annie Park - Photo Getty Images Michael Cohen

By MIKE KERN

Annie Park had always known what it was like to get it done on the golf course.

The Long Island native won the 2012 Nassau County High School Championship, as one of two women in the 135-player field. And she did so by breaking the scoring record for the event.

She went to Southern Cal and a year later won the 2013 NCAA Individual Women's Championship, while helping to lead the Trojans to the team title.

The following year she was a part of the victorious United States Curtis Cup team.

Then she won three times in 11 starts on the Symetra Tour, the 10th player to win that many times in a season, and she took Rookie of the Year and Player of the Year honors. But in her second year on the LPGA Tour, after she began suffering from back issues, she missed 10 of 17 cuts. And she lost her full status.

There finally came a time when she considered moving on to something else. Seriously.

"To be honest, I did have a freak-out moment," Park acknowledged. "Where I didn't know what I was going to do. 'I'd had the injury, I'd went through a swing change and I was struggling with the putter. It was really tough. I just didn't know if I wanted to go through (with all the hard work to get back). 'I was looking at other jobs. One was journalism. I had a degree in communications. But I just wasn't sure (about the future)."

That's when she got a pep talk from one of her older sisters, Bo, who's about a decade her senior. Bo had helped Park out often in their lives, both financially and emotionally. They had a bond. And Bo had a simple message to offer.

"She told me why not give it one last shot, at 150 percent," Park, who of course seems like she is way too young to give up on herself so early. "She said that 100 percent wasn't enough. I had to go beyond that, and see what happened. If I failed, at least I wouldn't regret anything. And last year turned out to be that year for me."

She made 16 of 19 cuts, posting three top 10s. But the signature snapshot was no doubt the ShopRite Classic Presented by Acer, where she closed with a 63 – "bombing" in putts from everywhere – to finish at 16-under par, one ahead of Sakura Yokomine. She was ranked No. 236 in the world at the time. The \$262,500 she earned was more than she'd won in her career to that point. She would finish the season with nearly \$550,000, which was good for 40th on the money list.

That's how things can change around sometimes. Even after she came close to not giving herself that chance.

Park, who tied for sixth at the 2016 ShopRite, will be back at Seaview Resort from June 7-9, when the tournament returns once again to the timeless Bay Course just across the water from Atlantic City that was designed by Donald Ross so long ago.

She has been a little inconsistent so far this year, though she did tie for third in Los Angeles last month. And she has put herself in position where she was invited to a weekend retreat in San Francisco for players who are considered potential Solheim Cup candidates. Still, she made the most noise for getting her clubs stolen out of her car before the opening round of the ANA Inspiration, the first major of the season, in early April.

"That's what people remember me for," she laughed recently at the annual media day. "That got more coverage than the win. That's definitely part of my career now."

"When my caddie found out he thought I might withdraw. I was like, 'It's unfortunate, but I will find a way to play.' It was my fault. I thought they were safe. They're probably in a pawn shop somewhere. They have my name on them, so I don't think anyone can sell them or they'll get caught. I've got a new set, they became the backup set, so also gone. It was kind of a lost cause. So you move on."

She's also known for switching to the long putter, mainly out of desperation after trying just about everything else.



2018 LPGA Shoprite Classic Champion Annie Park

"I figured I had nothing to lose," Park said. "It's worked out so far. I'm still trying to get used to it. 'I'd did cross-handed for one tournament as a junior. I used the claw for the longest time. Even won a couple of events with it. I tried the arm-lock at the 2017 (Qualifying) School but didn't like it. I was probably going to go back to the claw again. I tried the belly butter at the Girls Junior. I thought it was harder."

And when you're just trying to survive, well, you're willing to expand your perspective. "I know what it's like to struggle," Park stressed. "I don't know if I've changed, but it's broadened my outlook a little bit. Golf is what I dreamt of doing. I don't know what else I'm supposed to do if I quit golf. That's why I gave it one more shot. I only want to give it my best, give my all."

"It's different at the highest level, but it's still golf. As a professional you're pretty much playing for yourself. There's a different kind of motivation (involved). How do I inspire myself? What is it? That's the biggest thing. When I look back on my experience, I've come a long way."

"I don't think I'll ever forget how painful it was. You learn that it doesn't come easy. I know what to do now. Whether that works out or not ... it's golf, it's life. It's going to happen. If anything, I know a lot more about myself. I know it can be taken away very easily. I know I have to keep working hard, to take the next step. Or even stay where I'm at. Maybe it's the same kind of pressure."

When Park was growing up, she played all the courses at Bethpage State Park, which was 10 minutes from her home. The Black layout there just hosted the PGA Championship, after hosting two U.S. Opens in this century's first decade.

And yes, she has a story.

"When I was like 10 or 11, I got paired up with golfers I didn't know," Park explained. "They're always busy, so that's what happens. And I could tell these guys obviously didn't want to play with a girl who'd just started playing. So I step up to the tee and bombed my drive. And they're trying to hit it so far that they kept missing." Good memories. Wonder how those same guys would feel these days?

Anyway, Seaview is the closest LPGA venue to her family, who were able to see her win. And she's the first player who lived in a ShopRite area to win the tourney. Which, by the way, has raised close to \$35 million for charities in its just over three decades. And remains by far the most important statistic.

"That's very cool," Park said. "We're very grateful to have a sponsor like that."

South Jersey would agree. ShopRite took over that role in the early 1990s.

This year it will have one of its best fields ever. Lexi Thompson, Michelle Wie, Paula Creamer and past two-time winners Stacy Lewis (2012 and '14) and Anna Nordqvist (2015-16) will be your headlines. But there can only be one who has an opportunity to defend.

"I like how the toughness of this golf course can get," Park said. "The fescues, the rough, bunkers, greens. There's so many things, not one specific. I like the narrow fairways. There's some blind shots out there. The wind is unpredictable."

And it's an excuse to see her family. Especially now that she's not surprisingly based out of central Florida for the usual logistical/professional reasons.

"They've always been very supportive," Park said. "(Bo) always told me, 'When you make a decision, make sure it's a decision that you don't want to regret.' You should really think hard, so you're OK with quitting golf at the end. It's the one chance I gave myself. That helped. And if it wasn't meant to be ..."

"The Solheim Cup is a year-end goal. It's on my mind. But if not, there's always another year."

Indeed. So how's that for gaining a newfound outlook. Out of necessity. Good for her. And the game she loves. Which is loving her back once more. Just like old times.

She wears a recently-purchased ring on the fourth finger of her left hand, because that's where it fits best.

"I'm married to myself," she grinned, proudly showing off the attractive piece of jewelry. "I'm married to golf."

Hopefully for a long time.



In a ranking by The Sun News, golf experts voted two holes, #2 and #13, as part of the "Dream 18," a compilation of the best 18 holes on the beach

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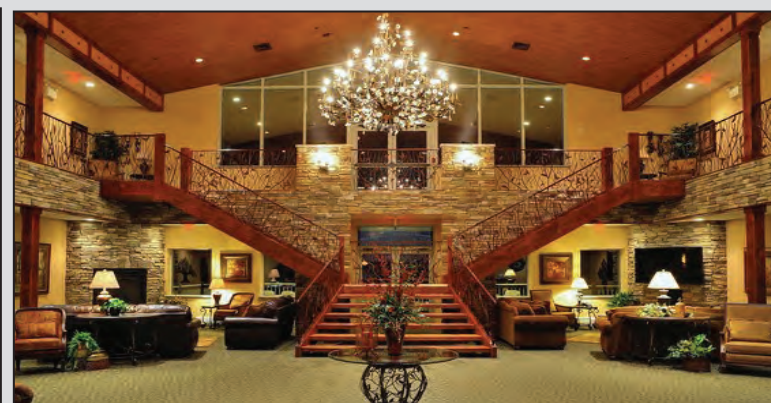
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The Shore Club formerly Wildwood Golf & Country Club



The Seaview Hotel & Golf Club – The Bay Course Hole #2

Spring Golf at Jersey Shore *continued from page 5*

down there, at least a few from this place invariably makes the list. I personally think the 18th is as good as it gets. The par 4 has a green, which you can only get to by hitting your second shot over wet stuff, that will drive you nuts. Seriously. If you two-putt it you feel like you won. And by that time you've probably taken a few body blows along the way anyhow. Good stuff.

McCullough's Emerald Dunes, which was built on a landfill in Egg Harbor Township, has evolved into something really nice. To be honest, the first time I played it I wasn't that impressed. But over time I've come to appreciate it. Some holes are nothing short of big time. Like No. 9, a par 3 of about 165 yards or so that's all carry, heading back to the clubhouse. If that doesn't get your heart pounding nothing will. And there's another par 3 of about the same length over more pond that's just as wow. On the back side they also have a short par 4 that's become one of my absolute funnest (is that even a word?). Long hitters can dare to drive the dogleg right over trees and maybe have an eagle putt. People like me who can't hit it that far anymore (or maybe ever could) punch it down the fairway and then hit some kind of wedge into hopefully birdie op position. If I played that one 18 times and just called it a round trust me I wouldn't feel cheated.

Seaview Resort is of course where they play the LPGA Shop-Rite Classic every year. They play it on the Bay, which has views that rival AC. And that Donald Ross gem hosted the 1942 PGA that Sam Snead won to claim the first of his seven majors. It's a shotmaker's kind of track. You don't need length most of the way around, but the greens are small. And devilish. The wind comes into play early and often, which makes it play tougher than it looks. On the other side of Route 9 sits the Pines, which is the complete opposite. Lots of trees, and doglegs. Bigger greens and wider fairways. And it can be a bear in spots. The homestretch features back-to-back par 3s that will truly test you, at a point in the round where you might not feel like being tested. Too bad. It also has consecutive par 5s at the turn, one of which has water and the other which goes uphill at the end. Neither is a gimme. Just in case, pack some extra balls.

You want difficult? Then look no further than Shore Gate, which can be brutal at almost every turn. Particularly if you play from the wrong tees, which unfortunately I've seen too many people do. And the results are, well, not usually conducive. So do yourself a favor and move up and try to enjoy the round a little bit more. This place has a great group of par 3s. And both the ninth and 18th are terrific ways to end a side. The ninth is a little like Pebble Beach, in that it moves

from right to left while wrapping around water. So your drive, second shot and approach all can be rather nerve-racking. Not that there's anything necessarily wrong with that concept. The 18th, especially at the end of four hours, is grueling in a different way. Even if you hit a good tee shot you're still left with a long iron into a large green guarded by some bunkers. Even if you're on in two there's a decent chance you might walk off with a 5. A par there feels like a birdie.

Twisted Dune is, if nothing else, unique. There is literally nothing like it anywhere else around here. You probably have to go to Scotland or Ireland to find anything it reasonably resembles. So if you're into that, this is your spot. I happen to like it, a lot. And I've played in Scotland and Ireland. It's just hard to describe if you've never experienced that. But if you watch a British Open you'll get an idea. It just keeps you on your toes from start to finish. And there are several holes that are downright memorable. You might not play them all well, but you'll walk off knowing you just did something different. And chances are you'll be back. Because I've found that each time I go there I kind of find out something new about it that I hadn't noticed before. Go figure.

As for the private facilities, there's no shortage of those either. And there's not a bad option in the bunch. Greate Bay used to host the Shop-Rite, and could hold it again tomorrow if need be. They've added some new holes over the years, which has only enhanced the attraction. The closing stretch was annually rated as the LPGA's hardest. Hard to argue with that.

The Shore Club, which used to be Wildwood, is undergoing many changes under its new leadership. Again, they will only make it better. The layout takes you back to another era, and this is one of the places Arnold Palmer frequented when he was stationed there when he was in the Coast Guard. That must have been something. We should always savor those historical angles.

Linwood is another club that has new ownership. I had a chance to play there last summer, for the first time in a long time, and it was way more appealing than I remember. They're trying to do the things that are necessary to attract more members. It's an ongoing battle, in these times. So we root for everybody.

And please don't forget Hidden Creek, which has new people running it as well. Must be a theme. It was good enough to host the U.S. Mid-Amateur a few years back, so what more do you really need to know? I've never had even an average experience there. It has a few holes that I literally can't forget, like the long par 3 where I had a snake encounter (I'm pretty sure it was non-poisonous, but I ran real fast just in case) and then got up and down after taking my free drop. My rules. It's another one of those places that can get my motor humming.

So there you have it. Go down and play. Tell them the midget from Northeast Philly encouraged you. And we'll talk again in the fall.

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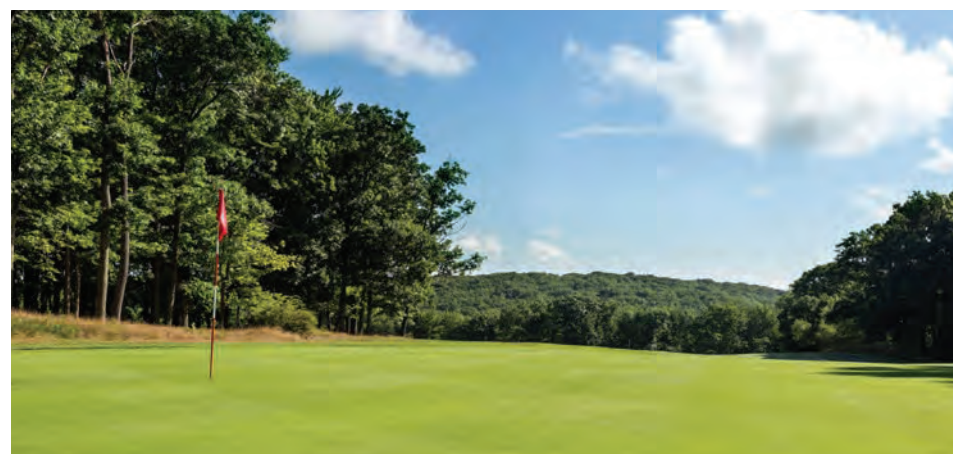
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Jeff Fick - Mike Grabosky	63
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Spencer Lunger – Brian Fruehan	65***
Dustin McCormick – Brian Boyle	65

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Pro Skins

- #6 Chris Zelenka – Patrick Spang
#14 Jeff Fick – Mike Grabosky

Woodstone Pocono Pro-Am Woodstone Country Club Par 72

LOW PRO

Chris Miller	67
Mike Furey (Mahoning Valley)	68
Gregg Meyer (Woodstone)	69
Brian Bergstol (Shawnee Inn)	71
John Pillar (Woodloch Springs)	73

LOW SENIOR PRO

Bob Fritz (Manufactures Golf and CC)	72
Terry Hatch (Hidden Valley)	72
Mike Grabosky (Heidelberg CC)	74

LOW AMATEUR

Eric Williams (Honesdale)	71
Nick Lukow	71
Nate Fry (Whitetail)	72

TEAM LOW GROSS

Gregg Meyer (Woodstone)	63
Mark Monahan (PGA)	64
Mike Furey (Mahoning Valley)	65
Evan Grube	65

TEAM LOW NET

Chris Miller	58
Terry Hatch (Hidden Valley)	59
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Mike Grabosky (Heidelberg CC)	61



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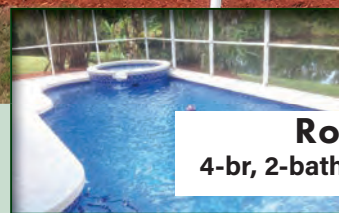
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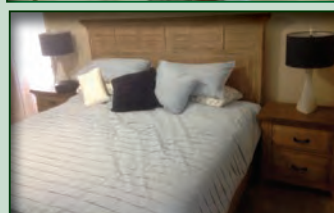
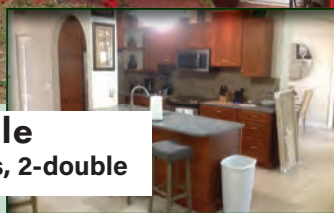
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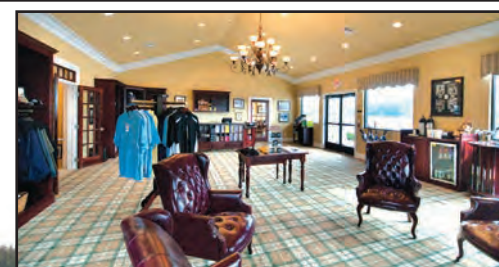


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PGA in May at Bethpage Black



Bethpage Black Hole #18 Photo by Stephen Szurlej

By **MIKE KERN**

For what seems like forever, the PGA Championship has been held in August. You know, “Glory’s last shot” and all that. It’s mostly been the fourth major. In sequence and maybe even in the perceived pecking order, even though it annually has the strongest field in golf. But that’s what can happen when you’re playing at the time when football, even if it’s still the exhibition games, is starting. Not any more.

In a move that was made largely to make sure the FedEx Cup playoffs could be finished by the time the NFL’s regular-season kicked off, the PGA will now be played in May. Which, if nothing else, should give it a little more significance just because. Instead of being at the end, the last chapter so to speak, it’s been thrust right into the middle of everything. And that can only be a positive.

To make way for the PGA’s new schedule slot, The Players Championship moved back to its original date in March. Which I feel was good too, since it gave us something to look forward to a few weeks before the Masters. The Players in May for whatever reason just didn’t seem to work as well, although the weather was better at that time of year in Florida. No matter. The change has been made, and for the immediate future there will be no going back. Plus the fact that because of this they won’t have to possibly move the PGA dates anyway to late July, as happened in 2016 at Baltusrol, since golf became an Olympic sport again. So from those standpoints it makes sense.

Of course May can be a whole different animal when it comes to weather, especially in the Northeast. The ironic thing is, when the U.S. Open was played at Bethpage in 2002 and ’09, the weather wasn’t very conducive at all. Particularly in 2009, when the tournament didn’t end until Monday because of all the wet stuff. So we’ll soon see about how that works out this time.

Bethpage, which was built as a public-works project back in the 1930s during the Great Depression, was an experiment when the USGA brought its marquee event there 17 years ago. By taking the national championship to a public facility that people had been known to line up for the night before on weekends to try and get on, it was symbolically taking the game back to the masses. Or at least



Tiger Woods, in his 22nd Masters appearance, closed with a final round of 70 and finished 13 under par at 275

that was the intended message. And since then it’s taken that major to places like Torrey Pines, Erin Hills and Chambers Bay, with mixed reviews. Yet nobody is denying that Bethpage is worthy. It will be interesting to see what actually happens if Mother Nature finally decides to cooperate for a change.

The 2002 Open, of course, was won by Tiger Woods. It was his second Open title in three years (following Pebble Beach 24 months earlier). He won in near darkness, thanks to a storm front that rolled through on Sunday afternoon. He had won his third Masters in April, and would later almost win the PGA before going into a two-year hibernation while he revamped his swing once again under a new coach.

The 2002 championship was the one where Sergio Garcia was busy regripping his club like 30 times before each shot, and the New York crowds were only too glad to count along with him every step of the way. That was also the year that there was a campaign for the galleries to be nice to Colin Montgomerie, which obviously was never going to become a reality. So be it. It was a gloomy week that Tiger basically saved. That was also the event where some of the shorter hitters had trouble reaching one of the fairways with their drives because it was like a 270-yard carry and the USGA had set the course up as only it can. Which means borderline diabolical. It’ll be interesting to see if it plays much differently with the PGA of America now calling the shots.

Woods, by the way, became just the fifth guy to win the first two legs of the modern grand slam. The others had been Jack Nicklaus (1972), Arnold Palmer (1960), Ben Hogan (1951 and ’53) and Craig Wood (1941). The only one to do it since was Jordan Spieth, four years ago. So there is that.

Tiger finished at 3-under-par 277, three strokes ahead of Phil Mickelson. It’s the only time Lefty came in runner-up in a major to the one golfer of his generation who was better than him. It was Tiger’s eighth major. Obviously he just won his 15th, after an 11-year drought, at this year’s Masters. Sergio would come in fourth, six back, after a closing 74, his second such score of the week. Yes, it happens.

US Open at Bethpage Black continued on page 31

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Spring Meeting Pro-Pro Scramble

Whitemarsh Valley CC - Lafayette Hill, PA Par 71

		Total
Kogelman/Bensel	-10	62
Duffy/Walker	-9	63
Ladden/DiEleuterio	-9	63
Matthews/Pearl	-9	63
Lock/Alunni	-9	63
Hennefer/Kirkpatrick	-9	63
Wingate/Kuzmich	-8	64
Spina/Sautter	-8	64
Beatty/Murosky	-7	65
Calhoun/Anderson	-7	65
Pagett/Pine	-7	65
Bergstol/Hatch	-7	65
Scarborough/Laigle	-7	65
Hertzog/Ottani	-6	66
Cooper/Surette	-6	66
Sheftic/Flesher	-6	66
Fisher/Signor	-6	66
Caruso/Brennan	-6	66
McCormick/Molino	-6	66
Knoll/Viola	-6	66
Miller/Bromley	-6	66

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Bluestone C.C. - Blue Bell, PA Par 70

		Total
Kogelman/Bensel	-10	62
Duffy/Walker	-9	63
Ladden/DiEleuterio	-9	63
Matthews/Pearl	-9	63
Lock/Alunni	-9	63
Hennefer/Kirkpatrick	-9	63
Wingate/Kuzmich	-8	64
Spina/Sautter	-8	64
Beatty/Murosky	-7	65
Calhoun/Anderson	-7	65
Pagett/Pine	-7	65
Bergstol/Hatch	-7	65
Scarborough/Laigle	-7	65
Hertzog/Ottani	-6	66
Cooper/Surette	-6	66
Sheftic/Flesher	-6	66
Fisher/Signor	-6	66

Callaway Golf TPD Championship

Green Valley C.C. Lafayette Hill, PA Par 70

Pro Stableford Media Results

		R1	R2	Total
Alex Knoll	Blue Shamrock GC	32	32	64 (32)
Mike Tobiason	Deerfield GC	35	31	66 (28)
Brian Bergstol	Shawnee Inn and GR	31	35	66 (28)
Rusty Harbold	Philadelphia Cricket Club	35	32	67 (26)
Andrew Turner	Sunnybrook GC	36	33	69 (22)
Rich Steinmetz	Spring Ford CC	35	34	69 (22)
Peter Lovenguth	Applecross CC	34	35	69 (22)
Braden Shattuck	Concord CC	36	33	69 (22)
Mike Ladden	Whitford CC	35	35	70 (20)
Michael Little	Lookaway GC	36	34	70 (20)
Steve Swartz	Out Door CC	35	35	70 (20)
Greg Matthias	Tavistock CC	38	33	71 (18)
Shawn Matthews	Squires GC	36	35	71 (18)
Parks Price	CC of York	38	33	71 (18)
Jesse Williams	The Peninsula	35	36	71 (18)
Chris Duckett	Saucon Valley CC	36	36	72 (17)
Jordan Shuey	West Shore CC	36	36	72 (16)
Dan Marz	Crossgates	36	36	72 (16)
Jason Calhoun	U of Penn	37	35	72 (16)
Eric Kennedy	Overbrook GC	34	38	72 (16)
John Pillar	CC at Woodloch Springs	36	36	72 (16)
Trevor Bensel	Overbrook GC	37	35	72 (16)

Spring Pro-Pro Championship

Fieldstone GC - Greenville, DE Par 71

		Total
Chisholm/Filler	-8	63
Kopelcheck/Kuzmich	-7	64
Moses/Shattuck	-7	64
Matthias/Oakley	-6	65
Clark/Cooper	-5	66
Bensel/Kogelman	-4	67
Duckett/Doughty	-4	67
Fernandes/Sander	-4	67
McNabb/Sheftic	-4	67
Quinn/Ingraham	-4	67
Reilly/Ferguson	-4	67
Debski/Parson	-3	68
Gibson/Goudie	-3	68
Nevatt/Stewart	-3	68
Post/Post	-3	68
Ottani/Price	-3	68
Jensen/Wingate	-3	68
Melton/Hall	-3	68
Turner/Ladden	-3	68
Allan/Sieracki	-2	69
DeAngelis/Hardin	-2	69

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Bethpage Black



Bethpage Black

Bethpage Black continued from page 27

Seven years later the Open returned, which constitutes a very quick repeat by USGA standards. And your winner, in soggy conditions, was Lucas Glover, who beat Phil, David Duval and third-round leader Rickie Barnes by two. Mickelson missed some key short putts coming in. It was the record-setting fifth time he had to settle for second at the event he wanted to win the most. He would make it six in 2013 at Merion, where he again made two mistakes on the last six holes to let it slip away. Glover's winning total was 276, as he closed with a 73. He basically won the thing by shooting 64 in the second round, when Barnes also went low.

Now, as has happened before with places like Baltusrol and Medinah, Bethpage has switched affiliations. That means as part of the package with the PGA it will also host the 2024 Ryder Cup matches, which will be played in the fall. And that could bring about an entirely new set of circumstances. But we can ponder that in another five years.

For the time being, know that all the talk will be on Woods. And justifiably so. Tiger had been off the radar for so long. But he seriously contended at the last two majors last year, before winning the Tour Championship in September, his first victory since 2013. Now he's back on top, if not in the rankings then at least in the minds of much of the public. He will be the betting favorite, whether he should be or not, because of who he is and what he represents. But the last time he won back-to-back majors was 2006 (British and PGA). It just doesn't happen that often. Rory McIlroy and Jordan Spieth have done it the most recently, and neither has won any majors in awhile. Since the U.S. Open is going back to Pebble in June, and Tiger won there by 15 once upon a time, there's probably even some who think he has a shot at making a run at the grand slam. Which of course is impossible, especially for someone who's 43. But he is Tiger, which makes almost anything somehow sound, well, doable.

Again, the weather might well be a factor once more. There's simply no telling. But everyone will have to face the same obstacles, no matter what they turn out to be. I would expect scores to be lower than what they were at the Bethpage Opens. How much lower remains the question. For a course that people can pay to play (and it doesn't cost you a small mortgage, like the Pebbles and Pinehursts of the food chain), it's tough enough. Even for the best players in the universe. That much is not debatable.

Your defending champ is Brooks Koepka, who has won three of the last

seven majors he's played in and very nearly made it four at Augusta, where he finished one behind Tiger despite hitting it into the water at the par-3 12th on Sunday and then missing a makeable birdie putt on 18 that as it turns out would have gotten him into a playoff. Of course that assumes Tiger wouldn't have made a par on 18 if he'd had to, and I wouldn't go that far.

Dustin Johnson, who tied Koepka for second, also is one of those guys who should have the length to have a chance. In case you're wondering, and why wouldn't you be, Tiger tied for sixth with two others, at even 280. That, following an opening 74. He then went 69-68-69. So there is that. Sergio and a still-young McIlroy tied for 10th, at 282. It was a decade ago, but that's still something you can draw upon.

When the PGA was played in August, it sometimes produced unexpected winners. Why ask why. But there was Y.E. Yang (over Tiger) in 2009, Martin Kaymer in 2010 (although he did win the U.S. Open in 2015, between doing little else), Keegan Bradley in 2011, Jason Dufner in 2013 (after losing in a playoff two years earlier) and Jimmy Walker three years back. Yet I guess if you look hard enough you can say that about almost any major. You can't always get Nicklaus or Woods. And in the last decade this one has also been won by McIlroy twice and Jason Day. So maybe it works both ways. For every Shaun Micheel there's a Pdraig Harrington. And so it goes.

And so it will continue, soon, at a place that if nothing else should be energetic. It always is, when an event of this magnitude hits the New York area. Say what you want about them, but the fans in those parts traditionally find a way to turn it into something even extra special. I would expect this PGA to be no exception.

Good for Bethpage. Good for us. And we don't even have to wait until those dog days of summer. Speaking of which, in case you forgot that U.S. Open will be coming back to Winged Foot next year. For the first time since 2006, when Phil Mickelson made a total mess of the 72nd hole as he was going for his third straight major. Now there's a history lesson. But we can revisit that storyline another day, since there's plenty of time. For now, all you need to know is that the man who at long last has officially renewed his pursuit of Jack's magical career haul of 18 majors is going for his second in a row. And when was the last time we could say that? It should be more than enough to carry the conversation, don't you think?

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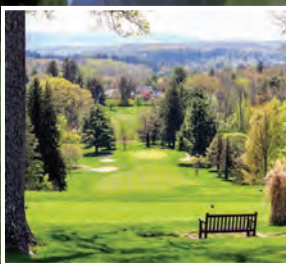
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Alex Beach Outduels Danny Balin in Metropolitan PGA Showcase to Capture 52nd PGA Professional Championship

It was a day the Metropolitan PGA Section Members shined in the national spotlight. There was the Beach and Balin match –and the rest of the field never making a threat for the Walter Hagen Cup. Beach offset a three-putt bogey at No. 5, by stringing three consecutive birdies from Holes 6-8 and added birdies at 13 and the momentous 15th hole.



Balin, a Penn State grad, had four birdies, and grabbed a temporary one-stroke margin at No. 7. But, Beach went on his birdie run to give him a cushion. Balin's chances wilted with three straight bogeys – from Nos. 9 through 11, the latter a one-foot par putt that spun off the hole at 11.

“I can't say that I played bad, I can't say that I played great. I missed two short putts that cost me,” said Balin. “That said, I still hung on and shot a good score on a hard golf course in a tough final round with a lot at stake.

“It's a hard day. It's nice to play with somebody that you know. But at the end of the day, it's golf; it's on you. Try not to think about what everyone else is doing and know that if I play my game that I can beat anybody out here. Not to sound conceited – just knowing my game and given the situation and circumstances, Alex played great.”

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The New IGNITE PWRADAPT Golf Shoe from PUMA



The New PUMA PR Go IGNITE PWRADAPT



The New PUMA PR Go IGNITE PWRADAPT

By Reid Nelson

Loyal readers may have seen this review on our golffa-golffne.com website earlier, but at the time, golf season in the Northeast was winding down as winter was approaching. Now that the 2019 golf season is in full swing – not to mention that Father’s Day is right around the corner – we thought it made sense to include the review in our print magazine because, quite frankly, the product we reviewed last fall is that impressive.

The product we’re talking about is the new IGNITE PWRADAPT golf shoe from Puma. (And no, there’s no misspelling here; that’s really how Puma chooses to name its newest line.)

But before critiquing the IGNITE PWRADAPT, full disclosure demands a couple of admissions up front, in the spirit of transparency. Your reviewer – that would be the person whose name appears in the byline, a lifelong golf enthusiast and career golf writer – is a big Puma fan, despite being a rather recent recruit to the brand. But as one who has owned and worn golf shoes of virtually every make and style, going back to the days when your classic, all-leather saddle oxfords would weigh 10 pounds after just nine holes on wet turf, I’ve never been particularly loyal to any one brand.

But after trying my first pair of Pumas, the stylish and ultra-comfortable TitanTour model, a season or two ago, I suddenly noticed one day that I had three pairs of Pumas in my locker – that should tell you something, right there – a pair in basic black, one white pair and one pair that is sort of a tannish-gray pewter color, a hue for which I’m sure the company had a catchy name but one I cannot remember.

So, when the new IGNITE PWRADAPT was announced, I was anxious to try them out. And once again, Puma has delivered in spades.

When evaluating a golf shoe, there are three factors to consider: comfort, function and style. (Feel free to put these in any priority order you want, but all three are important.) And the IGNITE PWRADAPT gets the highest marks in all three.

Starting with comfort, the IGNITE PWRADAPT is really a shoe within a shoe. Think of sliding your most comfortable bedroom slippers inside a golf shoe. That’s what these new IGNITE PWRADAPT shoes feel like. There’s no “break-in” required; they feel like that the first time you put them on.

Whether you’re talking about the PWRADAPT leather or the Performance Mesh,

the outer material combines with a plush “hybrid bootie lining,” making these new Pumas walk-36-right-out-of-the-box comfortable. (OK, I only walked 18 my first round in the new shoes, but hey, Daylight Savings Time had already ended. Did I mention this review first ran as winter was approaching?) Add to that the IGNITE Foam insole and it’s like walking on air.

As for function, the PWRADAPT is built on Puma’s PWRFRAME. Not sure what the company has against the word “power,” just as I’m not exactly sure what a PWRFRAME is. All I know is the chassis of the shoe provides a stable and secure feeling base on the most uneven, sloping lie. And the seven replaceable Tornado cleats (in Rickie Fowler’s favorite color), combined with countless molded “mini-spikes” in the GripZone Traction sole provide superior gripping power, even in wet conditions.

As for style, what’s not to like about a classy-looking shoe, simply adorned with Puma’s leaping cat logo at the mid-foot. (Personally, I like Puma’s trademark stripe that starts skinny at the heel and widens as it bends downward at the fore-foot, but the springing puma logo has its own subtle statement-making charm.) The shoe isn’t cluttered with stripes or initials that make them look like they’re the property of Fred Johnson. Rather, an uncluttered, clean monochrome look with a contrasting tongue and ankle cuff.

The IGNITE PWRADAPT leather shoe with traditional lacing comes in black or white. The DISC model, with twist-tension closure, is available in black, a dark gray color the company calls Quiet Shade and a dark blue called Peacoat, while the IGNITE PWRADAPT with mesh upper offers the same three options as the DISC model, but adds white as a fourth option. All are priced at \$150 MSRP.

For those who tend to be more adventurous in their pursuit of fashion, there’s even a high-top model that features lacing across the fore-foot, a Velcro strap across the front of the ankle and a knit, sock-like high top sporting the Puma name in bold, all-caps lettering around the top of the cuff. The high-tops are \$200 retail and come in three color options – gray violet/silver, black/silver and the aforementioned darker gray Quiet Shade and lime.

We have not tried the high-tops, but feel safe in saying, regardless of which IGNITE PWRADAPT model you select, expect to enjoy bedroom-shoe comfort, with premium golf-shoe performance every time you tee it up in these new offerings from Puma.

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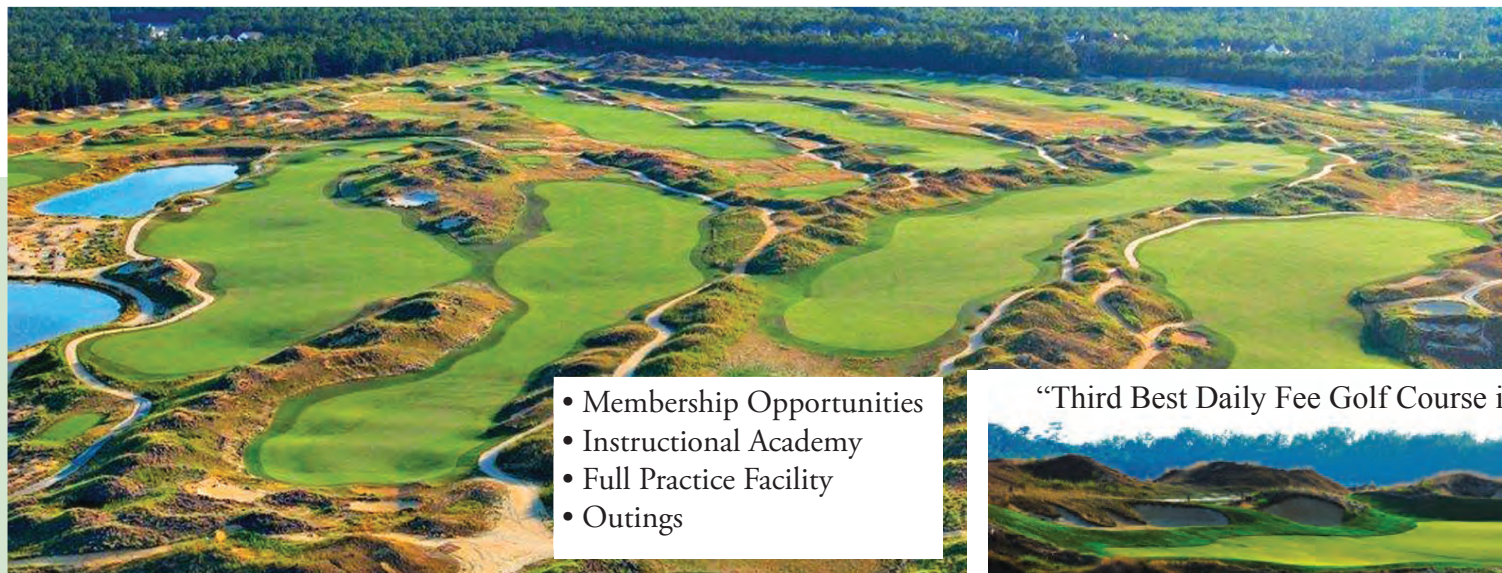
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Jordan Spieth joins Club Champion as Brand Ambassador



PGA TOUR Player Jordan Spieth has amassed 14 worldwide wins in his six-year professional career. A three-time Major Champion



Jordan Spieth joins Club Champion as Brand Ambassador Shares Importance of Custom Fitting for Golfers of All Levels

Contact: Jay Hubbard

Willowbrook, IL - Club Champion, the nation's leading custom club fitting and building company, announces a multi-year agreement with three-time Major Champion Jordan Spieth. Through the partnership, Spieth will educate golfers on the benefits of playing with properly fit equipment and the value of custom club fitting for players of all skill levels. While golfers could benefit from many avenues of fitting, Spieth aligned himself with Club Champion because of their ability to fit and build equipment to professional-level standards.

Spieth, who will be Club Champion's primary brand ambassador, commented, "I'm fortunate to have the Titleist Tour Van out on the road, so I know how important it is to have properly fitted equipment. I'm excited to partner with Club Champion because they really do provide a true tour-level experience that I am confident will help golfers improve their game and ultimately have more fun on the course."

Club Champion is the nation's finest club fitter, builder, and retailer of the best brands in golf, offering nearly every brand of equipment on the market. Currently, they have thirty-nine fitting studios across the United States, with twenty-three additional locations opening by early spring 2019.

Company co-founder and Chairman Keith Bank stated, "We are in hyper-growth mode, and Jordan is the perfect spokesperson for our team. We could not be more excited about adding someone of Jordan's stature, class, and credibility to strengthen our leading position in the industry. He is a true professional in every sense of the word."

According to Joe Lee, Club Champion's co-founder and CEO, "Jordan is a true student of the game. He knows how vitally important it is for golfers of all levels to be properly fit to play better golf, shoot lower scores and enjoy the game more. Tens of thousands of our satisfied customers will attest to our ability to fulfill this mission and we are delighted to welcome Jordan into the Club Champion family."

For more information on Club Champion, visit clubchampiongolf.com or call 888-340-7820.

About Club Champion

Club Champion helps golfers of all levels play better golf and get greater enjoyment from the game. The company utilizes a vendor-agnostic approach, offering more than 35,000 shaft and head combinations from nearly all of the equipment manufacturers.

Customers receive a comprehensive fitting from the best and most highly trained fitters in the industry using state-of-the-art swing measurement technologies. Each club is then hand-built to exacting specifications.

Services include club fitting, building, custom club sales, repair services, personalization, and highly engaging corporate and personal entertainment events. New stores recently opened or to be opened include Portland, San Antonio, Miami, New Orleans, Jacksonville, Manhattan (Wall Street), Milwaukee, Las Vegas, Baltimore, Fort Worth, Sacramento, Tampa, Palm Desert, Oklahoma City, Cincinnati, Columbus, OH; Newark, DE; Agoura, CA (Los Angeles); Rochester, NY; Schaumburg, IL; Bluffton, SC; Fairfax, VA; Bedford, MA (Boston); Buford, GA (Atlanta); Cherry Hill, NJ; and Norfolk/Virginia Beach, VA. For more information about Club Champion, visit

www.clubchampiongolf.com.

About Jordan Spieth

PGA TOUR Player Jordan Spieth has amassed 14 worldwide wins in his six-year professional career. A three-time Major Champion, Spieth joins Jack Nicklaus as the only other golfer with three major championships before the age of 24 (The Masters, 2015; The U.S. Open at Chamber's Bay, 2015; and The Open at Royal Birkdale, 2017 culminating in one of the most memorable finishes in golf history). He has represented the United States on three Ryder Cup teams and three Presidents Cup teams. April 2016, Time magazine named Spieth to its list of the "100 Most Influential People," noting that he "exemplifies everything that's great about sports." His other partnerships with major brands, include Under Armour, AT&T, Coca-Cola, Titleist, Perfect Sense, Rolex, NetJets and Super Stroke.

Symetra Tour Returns To Phila.



Raven's Claw Hole #9

By MIKE KERN

The Symetra Tour will soon be returning to the Philadelphia area for the second straight year.

The dates are May 30-June 2, once again at Raven's Claw, a highly-acclaimed Ed Shearon-designed public course in the city's western suburbs, not far from the King of Prussia Mall.

The Symetra Tour is the women's equivalent of the PGA Tour's Web.com circuit. The Triple-A level, if you will, a stepping stone for many of the better players who've taken their careers to the big time.

This is the Symetra's 39th season. It assumed sponsorship in 2012. Since then it's grown from 16 events to this year's 24, with prize money going from \$1.7 million to over double that. Some 600 Symetra alumni have won over 437 LPGA events.

This season's schedule has the most events in three decades. And 2019 purses are up 27 percent from a year ago. First place here will be worth \$125,000.

The inaugural Valley Forge International was won by Sweden's Louise Ridderstrom, who closed with an 8-under-par 63 for a 54-four hole 197 to finish four ahead of Min-G Kim and Laura Wearn.

The 144-player field will include Ashley Grier, the Assistant Professional at Overbrook Golf Club in nearly Bryn Mawr. She competed on the Symetra Tour from 2007-12.

She became a PGA of America club pro five years ago, and is a member of the Philadelphia Section PGA. In April 2017 she won a points event, the first female to do so in the section's nearly 100-year-old history. She beat 115 male counterparts to take the Callaway Golf TPD Championships at Trump National in South Jersey.

She was one of only two women (out of 312 qualifiers) to compete in the 2016 PGA Professional National Championship.



Ashley Grier, the Assistant Professional at Overbrook Golf Club

"I am extremely excited to be back playing on the Symetra Tour, and to return for a tournament in my local area is a blast," said Grier, who spent two years at Jacksonville University before completing her collegiate career at Central Florida. "It's an honor to be selected by the sponsors (for an exemption) and represent the local community at an event this large. I'm looking to playing in front of the members from Overbrook that come to watch and the local fans supporting women's professional golf."

Admission is free, courtesy of the Women's Golf Association of Philadelphia.

"After a thrilling (debut) in (Montgomery County), we looked for ways to keep raising the bar, and inviting an individual with the credentials that Ashley has made perfect sense," said Mike Bowman, the CEO for Valley Forge Tourism and Convention Board. "She not only has the game to contend, but will bring a passionate fan base to a reputable golf town. We couldn't be happier with how things are shaping up in year two, as we look forward to highlighting (Montco's) 53 golf courses and seeing the positive economic impact the tournament has on the region."

It was estimated that the tourney generated some \$1 million in benefits to the surrounding community. And \$17,500 was donated to charities designated by the Pottstown area Health and Wellness Fund.

"Heading back to Montgomery County for another year is great, especially when we can welcome a former Symetra Tour player and local product to the competition," said Mike Nichols, the tour's Chief Business Officer. "It is awesome to ... see how she continues to impact the game. Ashley's accomplishments speak to the 'Drive On' mentality she has maintained along every step of her career."

There will be a junior clinic May 28, followed by a Meet the Pros Party the next day at SunnyBrook Ballroom and the Pro-Am on May 30.

Trio Shares Medal in MidAm Qualifier



Chris Esbenshade of Bent Creek Country Club, James O'Connor of Penn Oaks Golf Club and Dan Rudershausen of Kennett Square Golf & Country Club, fired even-par rounds of 71 to secure a share of the top spot in a GAP Middle-Amateur Championship Qualifier.

COATESVILLE, Pa. – Three #GAP Mid-Am hopefuls took an unexpected roller coaster journey on Coatesville Country Club's hills and slopes. Their thrill ride led them to a share of medalist honors.

Chris Esbenshade of Bent Creek Country Club, James O'Connor of Penn Oaks Golf Club and Dan Rudershausen of Kennett Square Golf & Country Club were the successful riders Tuesday at Coatesville (par 71, 6,267 yards). All three fired even-par rounds of 71 to secure a share of the top spot in a GAP Middle-Amateur Championship Qualifier.

The cut line stopped at 5-over 76 when all was said and done, resulting in the low 21 players and ties advancing to the championship proper. Rolling Green Golf Club will host the 36th Middle-Amateur Championship on May 22-23.

FINAL RESULTS

NAME	CLUB	SCORE
Chris Esbenshade	Bent Creek Country Club	71
James O'Connor	Penn Oaks Golf Club	71
Dan Rudershausen	Kennett Square Golf & Country Club	71
Zach Dilcher	Hartefeld National	72
Cory Reighard	Llanerch Country Club	72
Jim Donnelly	Merion Golf Club	73
Doug Fedoryshyn	Concord Country Club	73
Robert Harrington	Merion Golf Club	73
Keith Matt	Talamore Country Club	73
Scott Storck	Philadelphia Cricket Club	73
Andrew Keeling	Kennett Square Golf & Country Club	74
Francis Nattle	Philadelphia Publinks GA	74
Brett Wallace	Kennett Square Golf & Country Club	74

Trio tops U.S. Open Local Qualifier at York



Garrett Engle, a Country Club of Harrisburg youngster, used that flurry to finish at 2-under-par 68

YORK, Pa. — A rising 15-year-old, on the wings of an eye-popping 29, joined a pair of touring professionals atop the leaderboard in a U.S. Open Local Qualifier administered by GAP at Country Club of York (par 70, 6,664 yards) Thursday.

Garrett Engle, a Country Club of Harrisburg youngster, used that flurry to finish at 2-under-par 68. Alex Blickle (pictured above) and Matt Hardman, who both compete in mini-tour events, Monday qualifiers and state opens, also posted respective 68s to advance. Connor Flach, an amateur out of Turf Valley Resort in Ellicott City, Md., rounded out the qualifying group with a 1-under-par 69.

The 119th U.S. Open will take place June 10-16 at Pebble Beach Golf Links in Pebble Beach, Calif.

FINAL RESULTS

NAME	CLUB	SCORE
Alex Blickle	Mohnton, Pa.	68
(a) Garrett Engle	Harrisburg, Pa.	68
Matt Hardman	Gettysburg, Pa.	68
(a) Connor Flach	Baltimore, Md.	69
Alternates (in order)		
*Craig Hornberger	Lancaster, Pa.	70
*Brian Bergstol	Bangor, Pa.	70
Failed to qualify		
*(a) Steven Kluemper	Bethlehem, Pa.	70
Trevor Bense	Villanova, Pa.	71
David Hilgers	Hershey, Pa.	71
T.J. Howe	Bellefonte, Pa.	71



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