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Dramatic finish expected at East Lake Tour Championship to decide wide open FedExCup race

By Mike Blum

For the first three years of the PGA Tour's FedExCup Playoffs, the Tour Championship at East Lake had little or no impact in determining who finished first in the season-long chase for the \$10 million bonus that goes to the player who tops the final points list.

All that changed last year when Tour officials re-worked the format and points distribution for the Playoffs, ensuring that no player would be able to lock up the title before the first tee shot was struck at East Lake.

The 2011 Tour Championship will be played Sept. 22-25, with the top 30 finishers in the FedExCup standings after the first three Playoffs events competing for an \$8 million tournament purse and a whopping \$35 million in bonus money, the bulk of which will go to the Tour Championship participants.

Last year, both the Tour Championship and FedExCup titles came down to the 72nd hole at East

Lake, with **Jim Furyk** securing a clutch par on the demanding par-3 finishing hole to edge **Luke Donald** by one stroke for the tournament title and **Matt Kuchar** for the FedExCup championship.

There was no dominant player on the PGA Tour in 2010 and the 2011 season has been a repeat in that regard, leaving the competition for a FedExCup title wide open coming into the Playoffs.

Nick Watney finished the regular season No. 1 in the points standings, just ahead of **Steve Stricker**, **Webb Simpson** and Donald, who all finished within 50 points of the leader. Only eight other players were within 500 points of Watney, with that total the number of points awarded for a regular season victory.

The points distribution changed dramatically once the Playoffs began, with the winner earning 2,500 points, five times the number for a regular season victory and almost 600 more points

[See Tour Championship, page 6]



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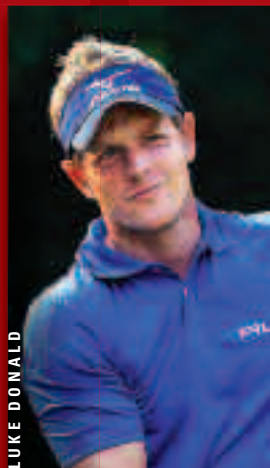
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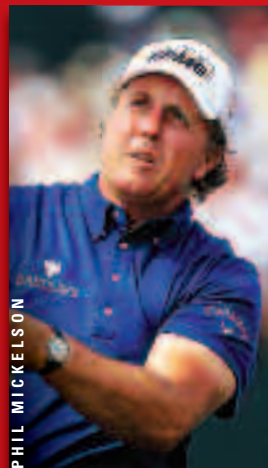
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“How Good is your Up-and-Down Game?”

By Ernie Boshers
PGA Director of Golf
The Georgia Trail at Sugarloaf

Just what is an up-and-down? An up-and-down is the term used to describe getting the ball from where it is to up on the green and down into the hole utilizing only two strokes. Typically this is used to describe when a golfer is just off the green and chips or pitches the ball close enough to the hole to make the putt. This statistic is measured on the professional tours. The players that are very efficient at this are generally the players that are on the leader boards.

This stat is particularly important to you as the amateur because this particular area can save lots of strokes and dramatically lower your scores. The typical amateur that misses the green and finds himself in a rough, un-even lie around the green will plop the ball out on the green in one or two shots and then take two, three or more putts to get the ball into the hole. Using simple math, the amateur has taken 3, 4 or 5 shots and the skilled up-and-down player has only taken two. These additional strokes over the course of many missed greens quickly add up to a frustrating score vs. an acceptable or even great score.

The best place to start improving your up-and-down game or “short game”, as it is commonly called; is believing its

importance to you. Many of my articles and others you read have been targeting how to hit the ball farther and straighter. All of these were designed to teach you to not miss the green. However, we are human and we are going to make mistakes. We are going to miss greens.



The understanding and proper practice of this part of the game can really benefit the best players and most assuredly help the typical amateurs. Very few golfers have the capability to hit the ball as far and as straight as professionals we see on TV. However, we all have the capability of hitting the correct shot from just off

the green and hitting it close enough to make the putt. All of us have that capability. I say again... All of us have that capability.

We don't have the technique and have not practiced the shot thousands of times but we have the capability. I can't count the times that I have witnessed a superior golfer beaten by a good short game opponent. Anyone that has been around the game of golf knows the value of the short game.

The technique to a deft short game is pretty simple. There are four principles to follow to improving your short game:

- The shot should appear effortless, smooth and contain no “hit.” (Getting rid of the “hit” in your swing is more of a challenge than you might think. We'll

address that in other articles.

- Your body must remain still as to not add unexpected power from your wrist, weight shift or turning of the body.
- The short game must contain imagination and creativity.
- Practice, Practice, Practice!

You must hit lots of shots with several clubs in order to understand how they work and what each one does. A PGA Teaching Professional can guide you through this and many other parts of the golf swing that will save you strokes. This is rewarding because you have the capability.

As with any training in any sport, you must have fun and your practice should be productive. Play competitive games with a fellow golfer at a practice range. Each taking turns trying to get the closest to a target. How many in a row can you get in a 10-foot circle? My favorite is trying to land a ball into a 5-gallon bucket that you can get at any hardware store. I spent countless hours competing against my Dad in our backyard seeing who could get the first one in the bucket. Good luck and have fun learning and improving this part of your swing.

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Tour Championship back at East Lake

[Continued from the cover]

than Watney amassed prior to the Playoffs. Theoretically, the player who entered the Playoffs at 125 in the standings could have advanced to No. 1 with a victory in the first of three Playoffs events.

Dustin Johnson won the weather-shortened Barclays to jump from 19th to 1st in the standings, with runner-up Kuchar advancing from 12th to 2nd. Simpson followed with a dramatic playoff victory in the Deutsche Bank Championship, closing with three straight birdies to move past Johnson in the standings.

The top 70 players after the first two Playoffs events advanced to the BMW Championship at Chicago's Cog Hill Sept. 15-18, with the top 30 at the conclusion of that tournament moving on to East Lake for the Tour Championship.

The 30 remaining players will be assigned pre-determined points based on their position in the standings, with the top 5 assured of winning the FedExCup title with a victory at East Lake. All 30 players will have a mathematical chance to win the title, with the likelihood of that diminishing the lower the player is in the standings.

The Tour Championship has produced a diverse group of winners the 10 times it has been played at East Lake, with **Phil Mickelson** the lone two-time champion. Mickelson, 10th going to the

BMW Championship, will be in the field at East Lake, along with at least two other former Tour Championship winners.

Joining Mickelson, who won in 2000 and 2009, will be **Vijay Singh**, who won in 2002 after losing in a playoff to **Hal Sutton** in the first Tour Championship at East Lake in 1998. Singh was 14th going to Chicago. **Adam Scott** (2006) will also make it to East Lake after a tie for 8th in Boston. He was 16th.

Camilo Villegas (2008) needed a tie for 6th in the Barclays to jump from 109 to 51 and was 47th after the Deutsche Bank Championship. Defending champion Furyk was in danger of not making it to East Lake, standing 60th after the Barclays, but placed 6th in Boston to move up to 35th. **Retief Goosen** (2004) was eliminated after finishing last among players who made the cut in New Jersey.

Tiger Woods (2007) did not finish in the top 125 in the regular season standings, and failed to qualify for the Playoffs.

Woods' victory at East Lake four years ago came on a soft, defense-less layout, with his 72-hole score a record 23-under 257. It was the sixth straight time the winning score was at least 11-under, with journeyman **Bart Bryant** winning with a 17-under total in 2005.

After Mickelson out-dueled Woods down the stretch in 2000, the five

succeeding Tour Championships at East Lake featured extremely low scoring on the part of the champion. There was also no suspense at the finish until the course was renovated and the surfaces of the greens were changed prior to the 2008 tournament.

The results have been totally positive, with the winning scores the last three years in the more appropriate range of 7-to-9-under and considerably more excitement coming down the stretch.

The addition of 150 yards has put a little more bite into East Lake's par-70 layout, but the big change was the switch from bent grass greens to ultra-dwarf Bermuda, which gave East Lake much firmer putting surfaces while retaining their speed.

The 2008 tournament produced an exhilarating four-man battle down the stretch, with Villegas winning a playoff over **Sergio Garcia**. Mickelson and **Anthony Kim** finished one shot back. Garcia was 53rd going to the BMW Championship with Kim knocked out in Boston.

Mickelson repeated his 2000 finish '09, firing a final round 65 to come from behind, again taking down Woods in the process. Last year, Mickelson was not a factor at East Lake and Woods failed to qualify, with Furyk the dominant force.

Furyk's opening 67 left him just one shot off the lead shared by Donald, **Geoff Ogilvy** and **Paul Casey**. A second round 65 pulled Furyk into a tie with Donald, with Ogilvy one back in 3rd. Despite settling for a third round 70, Furyk had the lead to himself after 54 holes, one ahead of Donald and Goosen, who gained ground with a 66.

After three perfect days of weather, a drenching rain marred the final round, delaying play for two hours with the final group still on the opening nine. The only player to make a serious move at Furyk's lead was Watney, who shot 30 going out on the heels of a 28 on the back nine the previous afternoon.

Watney closed within one of Furyk's lead as he made the turn, but did not make another birdie, falling back with bogeys on the final two holes. After a birdie at 15, Furyk was three in front and seemingly safe, but bogeyed 16 and 17 and needed a sand save at the 18th to edge out Donald, who birdied three of the final six holes, but failed to birdie the par-5 15th and bogeyed 16.

The 2011 FedExCup Playoffs began without some name players, and others were knocked out before the third Playoffs event in Chicago. Woods, Casey, **Louis Oosthuizen**, **Angel Cabrera**, **Ben Curtis** and **Justin Leonard** were among those who did not qualify for the Playoffs.

Stuart Appleby and Goosen did not make it past the Barclays, with the list of players eliminated after the Deutsche Bank including **Padraig Harrington**, **Ian Poulter**, **Trevor Immelman**, **Graeme McDowell**, **Ben Crane**, **Stewart Cink**, **Davis Love**, **Scott Verplank** and Kim.

Ernie Els, who was outside the top 125 going to the final regular season event in Greensboro, barely qualified for the Playoffs at 118, and narrowly survived each of the next two weeks, moving up to 99 after the Barclays and 68 after the Deutsche Bank. **Ogilvy** needed a birdie on the 72nd hole in the Deutsche Bank to sneak into the third Playoffs event at 69.

The big move from outside the top 70 at the outset of the Playoffs was made by **Chez Reavie**, who vaulted from 87 to 9 after losing to Simpson in the Boston playoff. He has clinched a spot at East Lake, while Els and Ogilvy will need to either win at Cog Hill or come pretty close.

The top 5 on the points list after the BMW Championship will control their own fate at East Lake. If any of the five win the Tour Championship, he will also win the FedExCup. Simpson had the lead after Boston, followed by Johnson, Kuchar, Donald and **Brandt Snedeker**, who tied for 3rd in each of the first two Playoffs events.

Jason Day, Watney and Stricker held down the next three spots, followed by Reavie and Mickelson, who tied for 10th in Boston with his new belly putter.

Other prominent players who have already punched their ticket for the Tour Championship are bombers **Gary Woodland** and **Bubba Watson**; Georgians **Jonathan Byrd** and **Charles Howell**; **K.J. Choi**; **Hunter Mahan**; PGA champion **Keegan Bradley** (despite missing both Playoffs cuts); and **David Toms**.

Masters champion **Charl Schwartzel**, who skipped the Barclays, was 27th after the Deutsche Bank, with PGA Championship runner-up **Jason Dufner** 29th.

Among those just outside the top 30 going to Chicago were Furyk (35), **Zach Johnson** (36) and **Rickie Fowler** (37).[Ⓜ]



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Georgians competing to advance to East Lake

Several in good position to make it to Atlanta

By Mike Blum

The Tour Championship has been played 10 times at East Lake Golf Club, and there have always been at least few players in the field with Georgia ties.

This year will be no different. Three players were in the top 13 in the FedExCup standings after the Deutsche Bank Championship led by No. 3 **Matt Kuchar**, and all were locks to qualify. Bubba Watson was 12th and **Jonathan Byrd** 13th, and will join Kuchar in the field when the top 30 gather at East Lake for the Tour Championship Sept. 22-25.

A fourth Georgian – **Charles Howell** – was almost certain to make it to East Lake, standing 21st on the points list after a lengthy stretch of excellent play throughout the Summer (see story, page 12).

Five more players with ties to the state were in the top 70 after the Deutsche Bank Championship to qualify for the BMW Championship at Chicago's Cog Hill Sept. 15-18, with five Georgians eliminated from the Playoffs after the tournament in Boston. Three others, including 2009 FedExCup Playoffs winner **Heath Slocum**, were knocked out after the Barclays, the event Slocum won two years ago.

Making it to East Lake is one thing. An average of three Georgia



Jonathan Byrd

SCOTT HALLERAN, GETTY IMAGES

residents, natives or players who competed in college in the state have played at East Lake since the Tour Championship was first hosted by the Atlanta course in 1998. Five qualified in 2007, the first year of the FedExCup.

The greater challenge is handling East Lake's renovated layout, first done by Rees Jones in the mid-1990s. A tweak several years ago included replacing the stressed bent grass greens with an improved modern strain of Bermuda, which putts similarly to bent but is able to retain its firmness in the often oppressive Atlanta summer heat.

The one Georgian who has enjoyed some recent success at East Lake has been **Zach Johnson**, who moved from his native Iowa to St. Simons Island several years ago. Johnson has qualified for the Tour Championship five times in the last seven years, tying for 2nd in 2007 and finishing T9 last year.

Johnson has thrived in his adopted home state, winning the BellSouth Classic at TPC Sugarloaf in 2004 and '07, and taking home a green jacket from the Masters in '07. He almost made it a three-fer in Georgia in '07, shooting 15-under 265 at East Lake including a course record 60 in the third round. Unfortunately for Johnson, **Tiger Woods** won that year with a 23-under total, with Johnson eight shots back in 2nd.

Coming into the Playoffs, Johnson was 32nd on the points list, but missed the cut in the Barclays and fell to 40th before a T16 in Boston moved him up to 36th. Johnson has played

consistently excellent golf over the last four months, recording four finishes of 6th or better, three on a trio of highly respected courses (Quail Hollow, Colonial and Firestone).

Augusta native **Howell** has come the closest of any Georgian to winning at East Lake, finishing two shots behind **Vijay Singh** in 2002. Howell also was 2nd to **Chad Campbell** at the Champions Club in Houston in '03, the last time the Tour Championship was played somewhere other than East Lake.

Howell has played at East Lake just twice since, finishing 24th or lower in his two starts, the last one in 2007. Howell has been gradually moving up the rankings since mid-June with four top-5 finishes in that span, cracking the top 30 at the end of the regular season and advancing to 21st going to Chicago.

Kuchar, the former Georgia Tech standout who moved from Atlanta to St. Simons last year, was 2nd in the standings after a runner-up finish in the Barclays. Kuchar was 2nd in the FedExCup last year and has followed his breakout year of 2010 with an equally outstanding showing this season (story, page 10).

Jonathan Byrd, who moved to St. Simons from his native South Carolina, moved up from 24th to 12th with a 5th place finish in the Barclays. His lone Tour Championship appearance came in 2007, and he will be looking for a better finish than 23rd this time. Byrd won in Las Vegas late in 2010 thanks to a hole-in-one in a playoff, and opened this season with a victory in the Tournament

of Champions in Hawaii.

Byrd nearly added a second win in 2011, losing in a playoff in Charlotte to former Clemson teammate and fellow South Carolina native **Lucas Glover**, the latest tour player to move to St. Simons. Glover, the 2009 U.S. Open champion, has not done much since then with the exception of his win at Quail Hollow. He fell from 40th in the standings to 45th after missing the cut in the Barclays and held his position in Boston. Glover has qualified for the Tour Championship three times, posting top 10 finishes in 2006 and '09.

Former Georgia Bulldog **Watson** has made it to East Lake two of the last three years and will be back for a third time. He fell from 8th to 16th in the standings after missing the cut in the Barclays, and was T16 in Boston, leading after 54 holes before closing with a 74. Watson has won twice this year (San Diego and New Orleans), but his only top-20 finish other than that was in the WGC Match Play Championship, where he reached the semifinals. Watson finished last in his first Tour Championship start in 2008 and improved to T17 last year.

Chris Kirk is looking to achieve the rare feat of qualifying for the Tour Championship as a rookie, coming into the Playoffs 33rd on the points before a missed cut at the Barclays dropped him to 41st. He was 43rd after Boston. Kirk, a member of Georgia's NCAA Championship team in 2005, lives on St. Simons Island after growing up in Woodstock. A win in the Viking Classic is the highlight of his outstanding rookie season that includes a runner-up finish to **Phil Mickelson** in Houston.

Cameron Tringale, **Kris Blanks** and **Blake Adams** all began the Playoffs just inside the top 70. Tringale, a recent Georgia Tech golfer in his second season on the PGA Tour, has quietly put together a successful season, notching four top-10 finishes, three since mid-June. He closed with scores of 63-67 in the Barclays to finish T32, moving up from 64 to 55 on the points list, and was 66th after Boston.

Blanks saved his season when he finished 2nd in the Canadian Open, losing to **Sean O'Hair** in a playoff. Blanks, a native of Warner Robins and a former

[See Georgians, page 27]

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Kuchar follows career year with similar results

Making another strong run at FedExCup title

By Mike Blum

How does a tour player follow up what is by far his best season as a professional?

For **Matt Kuchar**, the answer has been relatively easy. Just play like his career season never really ended, flowing seamlessly into the next one.

With the exception of one week during his first full season on the PGA Tour in 2002, Kuchar's first 8 ½ years as a pro were pretty ordinary. After winning the Honda Classic as a rookie, Kuchar faded from view for the next seven or so years, finally emerging as a competitive member of the PGA Tour in 2009.

Competitive is not an adjective that was expected to be attached to Kuchar following a stellar college and amateur resume and a bright start to his pro career that saw him bypass Q school and win just a few months into his rookie season.

Kuchar finally put together a productive full season on the PGA Tour in 2009, but it was 2010 where he really made his mark, leading the FedExCup standings until **Jim Furyk** slipped past him by winning the Tour Championship at East Lake.

Although Furyk denied him the \$10 million bonus for winning the

FedExCup, Kuchar's "consolation" prize was \$3 million for finishing second, on top of the \$4.9 million he earned for his play on the PGA Tour in 2010, which placed him on top of the money list at the end of the season.

After finishing second to **Dustin Johnson** in the Barclays, the opening Playoffs event for the FedExCup, Kuchar is again contending for the title, standing second behind Johnson in the points standings with two events remaining before the Tour Championship.

Kuchar's showing in the weather-shortened event in New Jersey was the latest in a long stretch of outstanding efforts over the past two seasons by the ex-Georgia Tech star, who has arguably been the most consistently successful American player over that span.

In 2010, Kuchar led the Tour in scoring (69.6), top 10 finishes (10) and in the all-around category. He picked up by far his biggest career victory in the Barclays (played on a different course in the metropolitan New York area), and followed up by tying for 11th and 3rd in the next two Playoffs events. He notched his first two top 10 finishes in a major (the U.S. Open and PGA) and played solidly in the other two majors.

Other than a disappointing showing in the Tour Championship, there wasn't much else for Kuchar to be unhappy with regarding the 2010 season.

About the only concern was whether he would be able to repeat his stellar play when the PGA Tour started back up after a short break at the end of the year, with Kuchar spending his brief off-season settling into his new home on St. Simons Island after moving from Atlanta.

In his first three starts of the year, Kuchar placed 6th, 5th and 7th, and made a run at a title in the WGC Match Play Championship, reaching the semifinals before losing to

eventual champion **Luke Donald**.

Kuchar has continued his relentlessly excellent play throughout the season and entered the Playoffs in 12th place on the points list, just behind his standing coming into the Playoffs in 2010 (9th).

The 2011 Playoffs again began at the Barclays, where Kuchar was the defending champion. The 2010 victory was his third on the PGA Tour, but as with his first two wins, he was unable to defend his title on the course where he won.

The Honda Classic moved to a new venue after he won the tournament in 2002, and the Turning Stone Classic was played for the last time in 2009, the year Kuchar won the Fall Series event.

The Barclays is rotating around several courses in the metropolitan New York area, which does not allow for a defending champion to come back to the course where he won the previous year.

"It's a bit too bad to have won three times and never have defended on a course that I won on," Kuchar said prior to the tournament. Despite that, Kuchar said, "I think it's great, what they are doing with the rotation with four courses.

"You don't get a course, say Pebble Beach, being the Dustin Johnson Invitational, or the John Deere being the Steve Stricker Invitational. Guys may do well at a certain site, but if they change up the course, it makes it fair for the entire field."

Playing on a different course (Plainfield CC this year, Ridgewood CC last year), Kuchar was again in the hunt, battling Johnson for 18 holes in the third and final round, coming up short by two strokes.

Kuchar began the final round with a one-stroke lead, but fell behind despite shooting 4-under on the front, as Johnson turned in 6-under 29. Kuchar pulled even for the last time with a birdie at the 11th, but back-to-back bogeys at 12 and 13 dropped him two behind Johnson. The two both parred in from there.

Finishing second was worth \$864,000 and 1,500 points, putting Kuchar in position to repeat his first place finish on the

money list (he was 4th after the Barclays) and make another run at a FedExCup title.

"First is a heck of a lot better. I know that," Kuchar said in response to a question regarding the benefits of a runner-up finish.

"I'm certainly excited to have another shot. After finishing number one on the money list, finishing number one in stroke average, it's tough to put new goals out there. Finished second in the FedExCup, and I know I can go higher than that. It's only one spot but it is doable.

"So that's been a goal; to try to jump up that one more spot. Now I've put myself in position where a few more good weeks and I've got the Tour Championship to try to get to that number one spot."

Kuchar is again involved in the competition to amass as many points as possible before the top 30 players advance to East Lake with a pre-determined number of points based on his standing after the BMW Championship, the final Playoffs event before the Tour Championship.

"I think it's gotten better and better as the years have gone on," Kuchar said of the FedExCup points system. "In the last couple of years they haven't tweaked it at all. I think they have been pretty happy with the format.

"As a player, I understand the gist of it; five times the points. There's a lot more movement going on. It's a fun format. I think it does give you a bit of that knockout. The last week was fun to watch the guys right on the bubble."

Kuchar can consider it "fun," not a word that **Justin Leonard** (No. 126) would likely use to describe the battle in Greensboro last month for a berth in the Playoffs. Kuchar's own sights are set a little higher.

"It's definitely helped with some of the excitement," Kuchar says of the overall FedExCup format and its hefty financial payout.

"Gosh, having \$10 million on the line is pretty exciting." 🍀

"That's been a goal, to try to jump up that one more spot."

—2010 FedExCup runnerup Matt Kuchar



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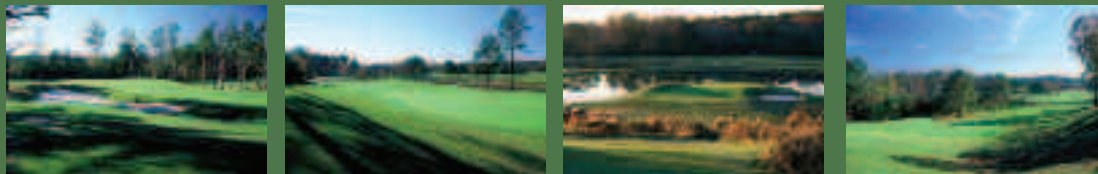
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Augusta's Howell closing in on return to Masters

Equipment change after 2010 paying off

By Mike Blum

When **Charles Howell** turned professional in 2000, he did so with more expectations than any player since **Tiger Woods'** "Hello, world," introduction four years earlier.

The week before turning pro, Howell finished second in a Nationwide Tour event in Greensboro. In his third start on the PGA Tour, he placed third in the John Deere Classic.

Howell, who won the NCAA individual championship in his farewell to college golf, was one of just a handful of players to play his way onto the PGA Tour without going to Q-school or playing the Nationwide Tour, turning in a series of strong performances in 2001 to earn his Tour card.

In his first two full seasons on the PGA Tour, he finished 9th and 14th on the money list, picking up his first victory in 2002 and taking second in the Tour Championship later that year as well as in 2003.

Howell was right around the top 30 on the money list in both 2004 and '05, and after an off year in '06, came back the next year to capture his second title in Los Angeles and return to the top 20 in earnings for the season.

All of Howell's significant accomplishments that year occurred before the end of March, and after his torrid start he faded from the limelight. Howell has been heard from a few times in the four-plus years since, but never in any of the game's premier events.

Over the past three years, he's placed 69th, 46th and 60th in earnings, not exactly what someone with Howell's talent and work ethic would consider successful showings.

As a result of his respectable but unexceptional play over the past three seasons, Howell has not just been a non-factor in golf's biggest events, he has rarely been a participant.

Howell has not qualified for the Masters or U.S. Open since 2008. He last played in a World Golf Championships event in 2009. After earning a spot in the Tour Championship four times in his first six seasons on Tour, Howell hasn't been back to East Lake since '07.

That may be about to change.

Howell was 26th in the FedExCup standings heading into the Playoffs, with the top 30 at the end of the three Playoffs events making it to East Lake. He shot 64 the final day in the Barclays to tie for 18th and move up to 22nd on the points list.

The 32-year-old Augusta native has his sites set on East Lake, but his real focus is

on the event in his home town a little more than six months after the Tour Championship is played.

"East Lake is a big deal to me, but it's also a ticket to the Masters," Howell said a few days before the recent PGA Championship during an appearance at Country Club of the South for his equipment maker Mizuno.

"I hate missing Augusta. I watch it in front of the TV at home and it's just awful. It's a tournament you've got to watch if you're not playing, and I want to get back there."

Things weren't looking especially promising on that front until early June of this year, when he suddenly broke out of a rut of solid but not quite outstanding play. In his first 17 starts of 2011, he finished between 8th and 22nd a total of nine times.

But in three consecutive starts in Memphis, the AT&T National in Philadelphia and the John Deere Classic, Howell tied for 3rd, 3rd and 5th, earned almost \$750,000 and was all of a sudden a relevant player again. In the final event before the Playoffs, he tied for 4th in Greensboro to push his earnings for the season past \$2 million. He was also 26th on the money list coming into the Playoffs.

With top-30 finishes in both the British Open and PGA Championship, Howell had his best showings in majors since 2005, and is one strong start away from earning a spot in the field at East Lake, which would also result in that coveted Masters invitation for 2012.

Howell says the primary reason for his improvement this season is that "my iron game is better. I'm hitting more greens in regulation."

Following the end of the 2010 season, Howell decided to change equipment, and checked out several possible manufacturers before settling on Mizuno. After seven years playing Callaway equipment on Tour, Howell made a switch after the 2007 season, which included some particularly ugly ball striking stats despite his outstanding results early in the season.

Howell's GIR stats were consistently solid in his three seasons with Bridgestone, but his putting numbers were not good in 2008 and '09 before he put together surprisingly excellent numbers in both the scrambling and putting categories in 2010, with his results not matching his standing

in several key statistical categories.

"The transition has been great for me," Howell said. "My relationship with Mizuno means the world to me.

"I can control the ball out of the rough and I'm not catching big flyers."

Howell has never been an especially accurate driver, and this year is no exception. He ranks around 160th in hitting fairways, but was 23rd in GIR. More surprisingly, he was also 23rd in the new putting category, as well as 4th in scrambling, areas that have not been considered among his strongest assets. As a result of the those numbers, Howell was ranked among the top 10 in scoring and was 24th in the all around category, with his low standing in driving accuracy the only reason he was not higher in that stat.

After three seasons that were admittedly not among his best, Howell said he "took a look at my career," after the 2010 season "and wanted to make a switch in equipment. I wanted to go with what was the best in all categories, and Mizuno kept coming up.

"I looked back at the history of the game, and Nick Faldo did fairly well with them. I felt my iron game needed to improve, and for me to take the next step, I had to do that."

In addition to the change in equipment, Howell made another switch this season which has also paid benefits for the Augusta native.

"At Harbour Town, I hit it great but I probably had 400 putts," he said, only slightly exaggerating. "My caddy said he had seen enough and it was time to switch."

Howell began using the belly putter in New Orleans, describing it "like a first date. It took about three weeks to get used to it."

Shortly after, Howell began his recent stretch of outstanding play, which he credits more to his ball striking, which has placed "less stress" on his work on the greens.

Despite not playing up to his potential in recent seasons, Howell managed to maintain a positive attitude while waiting for his game to return to the standards he set early in his professional career.

"It's nice to see the work pay off," he says. "I needed to see something."

Howell turned in a very respectable effort in the PGA Championship, tying for 26th at 1-over 281. He shot 68 in the second and fourth rounds, and after completing 72 holes, assessed his play as "all right. I played well today. It's Sunday in a major and you want to play well." 🏌️

"East Lake is a big deal to me, but it's also a ticket to the Masters."

—Augusta native Charles Howell

Charles Howell





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EXCELLENCE IN MOTION



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Charlie Yates GC helping to 'grow the game'

Standout executive layout has plenty to offer

By Mike Blum

Atlanta has several excellent executive golf courses stretching across the metro area from Duluth to Sandy Springs to Smyrna, but for quality of layout and conditioning, it's hard to beat the Charlie Yates Golf Course at East Lake.

The par-58 layout is part of the revival of the East Lake community started by Atlanta developer Tom Cousins in the mid 1990s. The front nine at Charlie Yates GC opened in the Fall of 1999, with the back nine completed a year later.

The course is located across the street from the renovated East Lake GC, with famed golf course architect Rees Jones also handing the design work for Charlie Yates. The executive course was built on land that was originally the site of East Lake's second 18, and is located in proximity to several of the new facilities that are part of the area's revival, including a charter school, the local YMCA and a modern apartment building that

wound up having an impact on the routing of the course.

Daryl Batey has been the PGA golf professional at Charlie Yates since it opened, and says the course perfectly fits the PGA's directive of "growing the game."

A number of area youngsters and adults who ordinarily would never have any involvement with golf have been introduced to the game through Charlie Yates GC and the facility's First Tee program.

The course also provides a quality option for those living inside the perimeter, where golf options are limited, and is a terrific venue to introduce juniors and women to the game with its modest yardage and compact setting.

Batey points out that the

The layout of the course is first rate, with the only difference between it and regulation courses the number of par 3s and absence of length on the four par 4s. There were originally five par 4s on the Charlie Yates course, but the tee on the 17th had to be abandoned because of the definite possibility of stray drives making contact with an apartment building that was a little too close to the fairway.

The hole is now a fairly lengthy par 3, one of four on the course that measures between 173 and 205 yards from the back tees.

From the forward tees, Charlie Yates is a friendly 2,428 yards, with the 17th the only one of the 14 par 3s longer than

The front nine is the more difficult of the two by a wide margin, with only one of the six par 3s shorter than 150 yards from the back tees, and the shortest of the group no soft touch.

The scenic, downhill 4th is just over 100 yards from the blue tees, but a front bunker that covers much of a wide, shallow putting surface that drops off to water beyond will test your short iron distance control.

Dense foliage to the left of the first hole and all the way down the right side on the second strongly discourages shots in their direction, with the first of the par 4s (No. 3) also on the narrow side from tee to green.

The last three par 3s on the opening nine are all very stout holes, starting with the 201-yard 5th, which has water running the length of the hole on the left and sand and mounds to the right.



7th hole at Charlie Yates GC



Atlanta skyline visible from 15th hole



Charlie Yates GC head professional Daryl Batey (left) offers instruction

difficulty of the game frequently results in golf's newcomers giving up not long after they start, but Charlie Yates is the antidote to that malady.

The Charlie Yates head professional says those new to the game "can have some success here. It's not so long, it's convenient and affordable. But it's challenging enough for people who play at a higher level."

Being associated with East Lake, Charlie Yates also provides outstanding playing conditions, with Bermuda fairways and bent grass greens that match those at the top daily fee facilities around the metro area. The bunkers are of championship appearance and caliber, with the zoysia grass along the edges providing a glimpse of the playing conditions at East Lake.

132 yards. The par 4s top out at 260 from the front tees, averaging a little over 300 from the tips, with the overall yardage 3,357, a comfortable number even with a handful of stout par 3s. The middle tees are listed at 2,904 yards, providing a bit of a break on a few of the tougher holes on the course.

Although there are only four par 4s on the course, Batey points out that most players "will need their whole bag" to play the course, thanks to the variety of yardages on the par 3s.

"It's a fair test," he says, but one that provides more enjoyment than challenge. "If we can get players out here one time, they'll be back."

Charlie Yates features leagues for women and seniors, and offers special rates for juniors and seniors, with rates as low as \$16 (walking) for juniors and \$25 with cart for seniors on weekdays.

The 173-yard 7th heads uphill, with drop-offs from an elevated green, which features an upper tier in the back. Most of the putting surfaces are of ample size, and while the bent grass surfaces lack the speed of the new Champions Bermuda surfaces at East Lake, they have enough movement and speed to give your putting touch a healthy workout.

The parallel 8th (205 from the back tees) is sharply downhill, with water all the way down the left side and bunkers flanking both sides of the green.

The last five holes on the front represent the toughest stretch on the course. The tee shot on the par-4 5th must carry water, which also hugs the left side, with the approach shot having to negotiate an extremely deep green with some roll to it. The 9th is the second uphill hole on the front, with a pond in front of the tee and more thick foliage lurking just off the left edge of the fairway.

[See Charlie Yates GC, page 27]



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Bradley captures exciting PGA in playoff

Edges out Dufner in battle at Atlanta AC

By Mike Blum

Those who were surprised that **Keegan Bradley** – or someone like him – won the 2011 PGA Championship at Atlanta Athletic Club have not paid much attention to either the history of the event or the major championship winners at AAC.

Bradley is the latest unlikely PGA champion over the past 20 years or so, joining the likes of **Wayne Grady**, **John Daly**, **Rich Beem**, **Shaun Micheel** and **Y.E. Yang**.

Of the four majors played at the Athletic Club – three PGA Championships and one U.S.

Open – all were won by players who had yet to win a major. Bradley became the second rookie to win at AAC, joining 1976 U.S. Open champion **Jerry Pate**.

Bradley also extended the streak of first-time major champions to seven straight, and was the 13th different winner in the last 13 Grand Slam events.

Thanks to Bradley's victory, the U.S. winless streak in majors was halted at six, with Bradley also making some history as the first player to win a major championship while using a belly putter.

The PGA Championship has been known over the last dozen years for wild finishes that occasionally produce an unexpected winner. While the 2011 edition of the event was pretty much devoid of marquee names, it did not lack for a thrilling finish, although that seemed unlikely to be the case with leader **Jason Dufner** standing on the 15th tee with a seemingly comfortable 4-stroke lead.

But Dufner, who had dominated the Athletic Club's fearsome foursome of finishing holes the first three rounds, bogeyed three of them in succession the

final day. Meanwhile, Bradley bravely recovered from a triple bogey at the 15th that seemingly had taken him out of contention while all but ensuring Dufner the championship trophy.

With birdies at 16 and 17, Bradley made up five strokes on Dufner in the span of just three holes, with both scoring solid pars on the demanding 18th to send the championship to a three-hole playoff. The two major championship novices, who finished tied after 72 holes at 8-under 272, turned in a superb display of clutch ball striking in the playoff, both hammering drives in the fairway and firing at the flags, hitting every

hole in regulation.

But Dufner was done in by his putter, which failed him after an otherwise excellent effort on the day, including a bogey save at the 15th after his tee shot splashed down in the pond fronting the green of the 259-yard par 3. Bradley, playing in the group in front of Dufner, hit his tee shot at the 15th into some thick rough just over the green. He chopped his second shot from a nasty lie past the pin and into the water, resulting in a triple bogey that dropped him from two

behind Dufner to five shots off the lead. "I just tried to steady myself on the tee and I hit the best drive of the week on 16," Bradley said. He fired his second shot to within birdie range and holed the putt, closing within three of Dufner after the leader bogeyed 15.

When Bradley holed a bomb for birdie at 17 and Dufner bogeyed 16 after an errant second shot into a greenside bunker, the margin was down to one with all the momentum having swung in Bradley's direction.

Dufner cited the approach to the 16th as the shot that cost him the most. "Being in the middle of the fairway, I should hit that green. Didn't. Probably one of the worst iron shots I hit all week."

Dufner was fooled by the speed of the green at 17 and three-putted for bogey, a result he would repeat in the playoff.

"You would think the second time around it would be a little bit better, but it was actually worse."

After his 3-putt in regulation on 17, Dufner dropped into a tie with Bradley, and both hit the fairway and the green at 18 for pars that forced the third three-hole playoff in the PGA Championship over the past eight years.

After both players again found the fairway with their tee shots on 16, Dufner nearly hit the flagstick with his approach, with his ball coming to rest about 8 feet above the hole. Bradley responded, placing his approach inside Dufner, with an easier uphill putt of 4 feet.

Dufner pulled his attempt left, Bradley holed his, and for the first time all day Dufner was out of the lead. He fell two back when he again watched his birdie try at 17 race well past the cup, while Bradley carded a solid par.

Bradley seemingly locked up the victory with a bold approach to the 18th that did not carry the rock walled lake guarding the green by much, but Dufner landed his second right next to Bradley's ball to keep his slim hopes alive. Dufner's birdie putt just trickled over the lip for birdie, but Bradley rolled his putt within tap-in range for a par and the victory, the second of his likely Rookie-of-the-Year season.

"It feels unbelievable," Bradley said to

open his champion's media interview. "It seems like a dream and I'm afraid I'm going to wake up here in the next five minutes and it's not going to be real.

"It's an honor to be champion of the PGA. My father is a PGA member and it's just great."

Bradley's first PGA Tour victory came in late May in Dallas in the Byron Nelson Classic, when he overcame some of the toughest conditions in a PGA Tour event this year, winning in a playoff over **Ryan Palmer**.

He was in contention again the week before the PGA Championship in the WGC Bridgestone Invitational, but played his last seven holes in 6-over to plummet down the leader board.

Bradley began the final round one shot behind co-leaders Dufner and **Brendan Steele**, another rookie who also picked up a win earlier this year in Texas, his coming in San Antonio the week after the Masters.

Steele shot himself out of contention with four bogeys on the front nine, leaving Dufner and Bradley as the primary protagonists, with several more prominent and experienced players hanging within range of a possible meltdown by either or both of the two major contenders.

Denmark's **Anders Hansen** quietly worked his way up the leader board after beginning the day four shots back. Birdies at 11 and 12 pulled him within two of the lead, and he followed a bogey at 16 with a birdie at 17 that lifted him to a finish of 3rd at 273, just one out of the playoff after a closing 66, the low round of the day.

Veterans **David Toms**, **Scott Verplank** and **Robert Karlsson** tied for 4th at 285, with Karlsson making the most serious move of the trio before a late fade. A pair of brilliant iron shots at 10 and 12 produced a birdie and an eagle, getting him to 6-under on the day and 8-under for the tournament, just one off the lead.

But bogeys at 16, 17 and 18 doomed Karlsson's hopes when three pars would have earned him a spot in the playoff.

Toms, the 2001 PGA champion at AAC, went 6-under on the vulnerable middle nine of the course (holes 5 to 13), but was 3-over on the demanding start/finish at the Athletic Club and settled for a 67.

Verplank gave himself a chance when he holed a bunker shot for birdie at 16 to get to 7-under, but his tee shot at 17 caromed off the rock roll fronting the green and

[See PGA Championship, page 29]

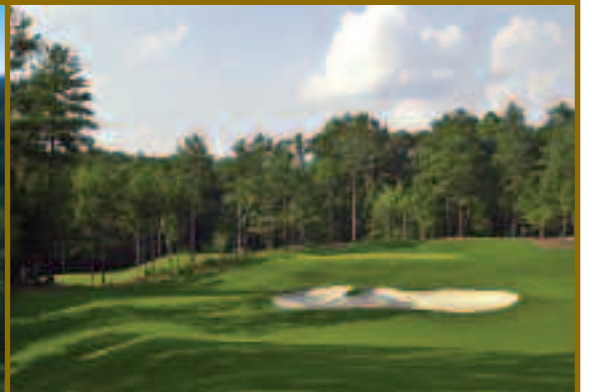
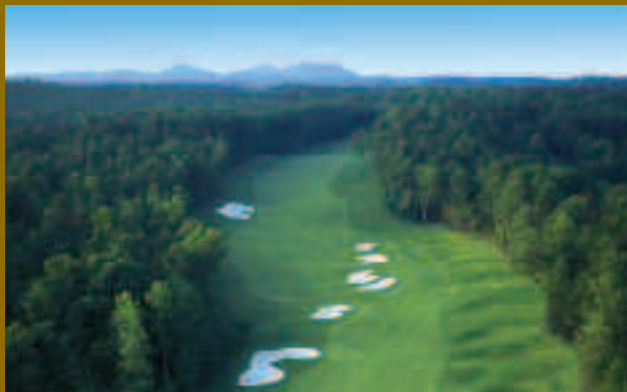
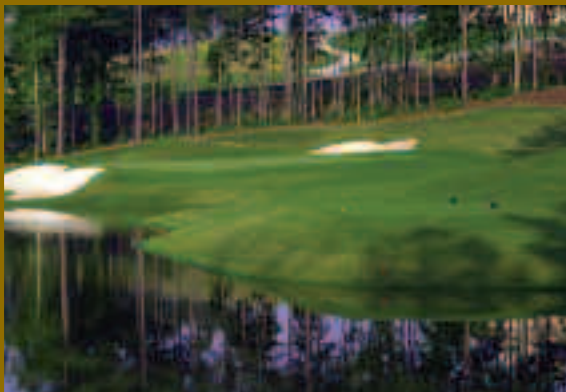
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Little known names steal show in PGA

Bradley, Dufner's play too good to ignore

By Mike Blum

“Who are those guys?” That question was originally asked by Paul Newman in the classic movie “Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,” referring to the skilled but unseen trackers who were closing in on Newman and pal Robert Redford.

It was also likely on the minds of untold numbers of spectators and viewers of the 2011 PGA Championship about the two players who were the event's stars for the final three days.

Keegan Bradley and **Jason Dufner** were not exactly household names entering the recent event at Atlanta Athletic Club, and even after the tournament are still pretty much a pair of unknowns to the ill-served readers of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's sports section.

Bradley was essentially ignored by the AJC contingent at the tournament, barely getting a mention after shooting 64 the second day to tie Dufner for the lead. Although he began the final round one shot out of the lead, Bradley's name was totally absent from the AJC's Sunday coverage, which focused on the 18th hole, mobile devices and ancient history.

Finally forced to write about him after he won the PGA Championship, the AJC toned down its **Tiger Woods** obsession for a minute to give

Bradley a grudging 15 inches (maybe a littler more) of column space.

Now we know that he's Pat Bradley's nephew and was a competitive ski racer as a youngster (snow, not water. He's from Vermont). He's a proud New Englander and an unabashed advocate of the belly putter, becoming the first to putt in that fashion to win a major championship.

Bradley was not a total unknown coming into the PGA Championship. He was one of five rookies to have already won on the PGA Tour this year, winning in impressive fashion in a playoff in the Byron Nelson Classic.

He has been a solid performer throughout his rookie season, posting nine other top-25 finishes, moving up to 4th in the FedExCup standings with his PGA championship and 29th in the World Rankings after beginning the year 329.

Bradley, 25, was a college standout at St. John's, but did not make much of a national mark playing at a school not known for its golf program. After notching a pair of wins on the Hooters Tour, the first shortly after he turned pro, Bradley qualified for the Nationwide Tour in 2010 and enjoyed an excellent rookie year, running off four straight top-5 finishes late in the season to wind up 14th on the money list, earning him a spot on the 2011 PGA Tour.

“Ever since I was ten years old, I've kind of flown under the radar,” Bradley said after his victory at Atlanta Athletic Club. “I had what I thought was a pretty good college career, but I never really got

noticed. Same in junior golf and kind of the same out here.”

Bradley's talent hasn't gone unnoticed by everybody. He is long off the tee (top 20 in driving distance), one of the game's straighter hitters considering his length and a decent putter. He and Dufner led the PGA field in greens in regulation, a testament to their ball striking skills and an indication that the two who played the best at the Athletic Club finished the highest.

Just not the most famous.

As for Dufner, he has toiled on either the PGA or Nationwide Tours since 2001, and is playing his sixth season in the last seven in golf's major leagues. A native of Cleveland, Dufner made his way South to attend college, walking onto the golf team at Auburn. He won three times in college, was all-SEC three times and nearly qualified for the Masters as an amateur, losing to **Trevor Immelman** in the finals of the 1998 Public Links Championship at Torrey Pines.

Dufner made it to the Nationwide Tour within a year of graduating from Auburn with a degree in economics, winning as a rookie in Wichita after beginning the year with no status on the tour. He won again in Chicago in 2006, playing his way onto the PGA Tour for a second time with a top-10 finish on the Nationwide money list.

After three PGA Tour seasons in which he never finished higher than 140th in earnings, Dufner enjoyed a breakthrough year in 2009, placing 11th in the final FedExCup standings. He recorded six top 10s, including a tie for 2nd behind **Steve Stricker** in the Deutsche Bank Championship, one of the Playoffs events.

Dufner slipped a bit last year, with his best showing coming in the PGA Championship at Whistling Straits, where he finished a mostly unnoticed two strokes out of the **Martin Kaymer-Dustin Johnson** playoff, tying for 5th.

The 34-year-old Dufner nearly scored his first PGA Tour win this year, losing in a playoff in Phoenix to **Mark Wilson**. He recorded three top-10 finishes in May, but missed the cut in his four starts prior to the PGA.

Dufner is regarded as a quality ball striker who doesn't hit it prodigious distances off the tee or make a boatload of putts. He put those skills on display for most of the tournament at the Athletic Club.

“Again, ball-striking was good today,” he said to the media after the final round. “I played really good golf yesterday, 18 holes. Today, 14 or 15 holes. You can throw in 18. I think that's a pretty good par there in that situation.”

“There's a lot to be gained from this week. I'm disappointed now but I think once I get home and get some sleep, I'll be over it. I know that's hard for you guys to believe, but the show goes on.”

PGA news and notes:

Fast start for 40-somethings: The final three rounds belonged largely to unproven players like Bradley, Dufner and **Brendan Steele**, but the first day was all about a quartet of veterans, none of whom supposedly had the length to take on the par-70 Atlanta Athletic Club layout that measured between 7,236 yards and 7,357 yards each day.

Steve Stricker fired a blistering 63 to lead fellow Cheesehead **Jerry Kelly** by two, former PGA champion **Shaun Micheel** by three and 47-year-old **Scott Verplank** by four. Stricker fell back the next day with a 73 but was only three back going to the final round before a lackluster 73 left him tied for 12th at 279. Verplank followed his opening 67 with scores of 69-69-70 to earn a 2012 Masters invite with a tie for 4th.

Final round flop honors went to Steele, who went from T1 to T19 with a 77.

Comeback kid: Bradley, whose second round 64 was bettered only by Stricker's opening 63, made two comebacks of note before overcoming his triple bogey at 15 the final day with birdies on three of his next four holes.

He was 3-over after four holes on Thursday, but rallied for a 71. After beginning the final round with a shaky



Keegan Bradley



Jason Dufner

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Keppler ends long victory drought

Takes Section title at Sea Island GC



By Mike Blum

From 1993 to 1996, **Stephen Keppler** was the Georgia PGA's dominant performer. He was the Section's Player of the Year all four years, won a bunch of tournaments, was a frequent contender in the PGA Club Professional Championship and grabbed some national headlines when he almost won the PGA Tour BellSouth Classic in '95.

Then all of a sudden, Keppler stopped winning. He continued to play well in Georgia PGA events — particularly in the Section Championship at Sea Island GC — as well as in the national CPC. But his victory total came to a near halt after he won his third Section Championship in 1996.

Over the next 15 years, Keppler collected exactly two wins in Georgia PGA events. He won the Section's qualifier for the CPC (now called the PGA Professional National Championship) in 1998 on his former home course at Summit Chase, but he endured almost six years without a title before capturing the final Eddie Wiggins Classic at Landings GC in Warner Robins, his 12th Section victory.

Coming into the recent E-Z-GO Georgia PGA Championship at Sea Island GC's Seaside course, Keppler had gone more than seven years without a win. It wasn't for a lack of opportunities. Over the last five years Keppler had finished 2nd, 2nd, 2nd, 3rd and 3rd, with

his three runner-up finishes coming on each of the three exceptional layouts at Sea Island GC.

Keppler, who turned 50 earlier this year, admitted the thought that he would not win again had entered his mind, but he kept putting himself in position. He posted solid top-10 finishes in each of the four Section events he entered this year, but still no victories.

Until the 2011 Section Championship.

With three rounds in the 60s on the demanding par-70 Seaside layout, Keppler finished with a 6-under 204 total, two strokes ahead of **Bill Murchison**, who won the Championship at Berkeley Hills earlier this Summer and contended in the Georgia Open.

Only four players finished under par in the tournament, with Keppler the lone player to shoot in the 60s in each round. He took a one-shot lead over Murchison after 36 holes with a 4-under 66, which matched the low round of the day and the tournament.

Keppler, the Director of Golf at Marietta Country Club, matched his opening score of 69 the final day, the low round in windy conditions. That gave Keppler his fourth Section Championship title, with the first three coming in 1990, '94 and '96.

"It's more of a relief than anything," Keppler said a few days after his drought-breaking victory. "I finally did it again after coming close so many times the last five or six years."

Keppler had no ready explanation why he won after so many years of near misses. Never known as someone who spends much time on the practice range, Keppler hasn't changed in that regard. Although he is playing a little heavier schedule than in recent years largely due to his recent status as a senior, he still competes less than most of the other top players in the Section.

Despite his long stretch without a victory, Keppler came into the Section Championship feeling good about his game.

"I had played pretty good this year," he offered. "Just not good enough to win."

Of his play at Sea Island GC, Keppler gave himself good marks across the board. "I drove it really good, I hit my irons good and I putted pretty good."

Keppler held the lead going to the final round, but four of the Section's elite players were right behind him. Murchison (68-68) was one back, **Tim Weinhart** (69-68) and **Sonny Skinner** (69-68) were two off the lead and first round leader **Clark Spratlin** (66-72) trailed by three.

Spratlin was the only one of Keppler's challengers to make any sort of move on the front nine, with Keppler carding birdies on holes 2, 5 and 8 to build a sizeable 5-stroke lead.

Through the first 44 holes of the tournament, Keppler had made just one bogey, along with a double bogey on his final hole of the first round. His lone bogey in the second round came on a three-putt, but Keppler suffered three three-putts in a four-hole span immediately after his birdie at No. 8.

All of a sudden, a once comfortable 5-stroke lead was reduced to two. Although Keppler did not feel like he was letting the tournament slip away, he was concerned with his shrinking lead.

"I said, 'aw, come on. You're not going to give it up again'."

All of Keppler's three-putts came from long range, and he pointed to the increasingly windy conditions for his inability to get his approach shots closer to the hole.

"That's what made it difficult. The wind was blowing about 20 miles per hour and birdies were hard to come by."

Despite the problems caused by the ocean breezes, Keppler missed only two greens all day. After the stretch of three bogeys in four holes, he began hitting it closer to the hole on Seaside's testy putting surfaces. He retained his 2-shot lead down the stretch until he clinched his victory with a birdie at the par-3 17th.

Murchison birdied the last two holes to trim Keppler's final margin to two, finishing at 4-under. Weinhart also carded a birdie at the 17th to take 3rd at 3-under. Both players shot even par the final day. Like Keppler, Spratlin bogeyed holes 9 and 10, and wound up 4th at 2-under after a third bogey on the day at 17. He

also closed with a 70.

Skinner and **Craig Stevens** tied for 5th at 211, with **Danny Elkins** 7th at 212. Four of the top seven are seniors, with Elkins and Spratlin giving Georgia Golf Center two of the top seven finishers.

Rounding out the top 10 were: **Jeff Hull** (8th, 213); **Chris Shircliff**, Standard Club, (9th, 214); and **Kyle Owen**, Dunwoody CC, and **Chad Gilligan**, Reynolds Plantation (T10, 215). Owen shot 66 in the 2nd round, with Shircliff and Gilligan carding 67s that day.

Although he entered the final round one shot in front, Keppler did not take a defensive approach.

"I did not feel like I was protecting a lead. The first two rounds I had made some birdies. If I was struggling off the tee or with my irons, I might have had a different mindset. I felt like I could make some birdies and widen the gap."

That's exactly what Keppler did, until a few shots impacted by the wind left him with some putts of 40 feet or longer.

Between family and work responsibilities, Keppler has missed his share of tournaments in recent years, and that's still the case. He is eligible for the first time to compete in the PGA Senior PNC, but a conflict with an event at Marietta CC will keep him from entering the Section's qualifier.

Keppler will also miss the Georgia PGA PNC qualifier this Fall due to another conflict, which will cost him a spot in the nationals next year. The winner of the Section Championship earns a spot in the PGA PNC unless he was not entered in the PNC qualifier. Since Keppler wasn't going to play in the qualifier, he didn't sign up for it, and will be unable to make a 14th career start in the event.

The bigger concern for Keppler is the Senior PNC, which would give him an opportunity to compete in the Senior PGA Championship. Keppler has played in the PGA Championship four times thanks to his play in the PNC, which included three top 10s and two other top 20s.

"I'm a little disappointed, but I'm OK with that," said Keppler. "That's the way the cookie crumbles. Marietta Country Club takes first precedent. There are some events I can pass on, but this is not one of them." 🍪

"It's more of a relief than anything."

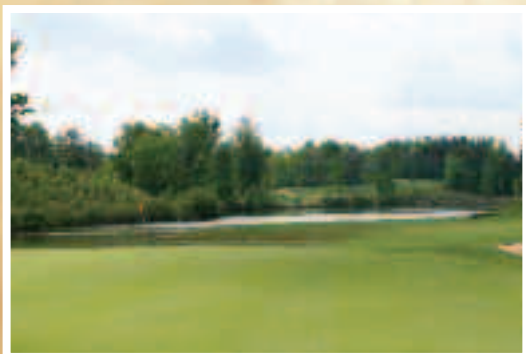
—Stephen Keppler after winning for the first time in seven years

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Expect the unexpected in Match Play event

State's top club pros compete at new site

By Mike Blum

Since the Georgia PGA held its first Match Play Championship in 1980, the event has been one of the most unpredictable in the Section, with a wide variety of winners and occasional changes in format.

For much of the tournament's history, the early rounds were held at various sites around the state, with opponents coming to a mutual decision on what course would host their match. The last two or three rounds were played at one site, but in recent years, the event has been staged on one course over three days, with competitors playing two matches each day to whittle the 64-man bracket down to two for a championship match.

Match Play Championship Preview

Callaway Gardens served as host for four years from 2006-2009, with the event moving to the University of Georgia course last year. The tournament was scheduled to return to the UGA course for the 2011 Match Play Championship, which is scheduled for Oct. 3-5, but has been switched to Chattahoochee GC in Gainesville due to the heat-stressed conditions of the UGA greens.

This will be the 30th anniversary of the Match Play Championship, which was not held for two years in the late 1990s as the Section pondered changes to the format.

Since it was revived in 2000, only one player has captured the title more than once, with **Clark Spratlin** winning three times in a four-year span from 2001-04, making a strong run at four in a row when he lost in the semifinals in '03.

Spratlin, an instructor at Georgia Golf Center, has remained a consistent presence in the event since capturing his third

victory in 2004, but has made it to the semifinals just once since, that coming two years ago at Callaway Gardens.

Last year at UGA, Spratlin was upset in the third round by Cuscowilla assistant **David Webb**, who also eliminated another former Match Play champion, Chicopee Woods' **Greg Lee**. Webb, playing in the event for the first time, made it to the semifinals before losing to another former champion, **Tim Weinhart**, who came up short in his bid to take home a second Match Play title.

Weinhart lost in the finals to Country Club of the South instructor **David Potts**, who knocked off three former champions en route to his victory. Potts defeated fellow CCoS instructor **Shawn Koch** in the third round and veteran tour player/instructor **Sonny Skinner** in the semifinals before defeating Weinhart 3&1 in the finals.

Last year's tournament was played in the Spring,

country's club professionals, will follow later in October and likely will determine the 2011 Player of the Year.

Spratlin and Weinhart are among the players in contention for Player of the Year honors, as is **Craig Stevens**, one of a handful of players to win the Match Play Championship twice. Stevens' last victory in the tournament came in 2000, when he defeated Weinhart in the finals at Sea Island GC.

Stevens, an instructor at Steel Canyon in Sandy Springs and a two-time Player of the Year, lost in the finals to Spratlin in 2002. He has advanced to the semifinals three times since, but has not been able to match Spratlin with a third title. Stevens lost in the third round last year to UGA head professional **Matt Peterson**, who won the tournament in 2009, the last time it was played at Callaway Gardens.

Peterson was ousted in the quarterfinals last year by Skinner, who won the tournament in 2006, the first year Callaway Gardens hosted the event. Peterson has been a force in the tournament over the last four years, reaching the finals in 2007 before losing to Lee.

Lee, who lives in the Athens area, has a strong record in the tournament apart



Craig Stevens



Clark Spratlin

from his victory. He lost to Spratlin in the finals in 2001, and has advanced to the semifinals twice and the quarters three times in addition to his two trips to the finals over the past decade.

The other player who would have been competing on familiar turf is **Jeff Hull**, an instructor at the UGA course in recent years who was recently named the assistant coach for the women's golf team at Georgia. Hull has been to the semifinals

twice and the quarterfinals on two other occasions since 2005, but has not made it as far as the finals. Hull, who lists the Georgia Open and Section Championship among his Georgia PGA titles, lost in the third round last year to Rivermont head professional **Matthew Evans**.

Hull, the 2007 Georgia PGA Player of the Year, was 5th on the points list with three tournaments left in 2011, but his new duties as assistant coach for the women's team could impact his own playing schedule.

Stevens, who last earned Player of the Year honors in 2001, was 3rd on the points list with three events left on the 2011 schedule. Weinhart, an instructor at the Standard Club, was just behind Stevens in 4th place and looking for his first Section title of the year. Weinhart won the Match Play Championship in 2005 at Governors Towne Club, and has been a finalist twice and to the semifinals on two other occasions since 2000.

Koch, the Director of Instruction at Country Club of the South, has been a major factor in the tournament over the past four years, winning at Callaway Gardens in 2008 and reaching the semifinals in both '07 and '09. The three years he did not win he lost to the eventual champion, going out in the third round last year against fellow CCoS instructor Potts.

Last year's tournament at UGA featured strong showings by several players who had never been factors in the tournament previously, beginning with the tournament champion and semifinalist Webb.

Evans and Atlanta Athletic Club assistant **James Harris** both reached the quarterfinals, with Evans knocking out Hull in the third round.

In the 2009 tournament at Callaway Gardens, the two surprise names in the late rounds were Brookfield CC instructor **Michael Parrott**, who lost to Peterson in the finals, and Towne Lake Hills assistant **Bill Murchison**, who lost to Peterson in the quarterfinals after knocking off Stevens in the first round.

Murchison, who did not play in the tournament last year, was the leader in the points standings with three events to play, but had some of the Section's top players just behind him.

The players will be seeded by their standing on the points list, and will play two matches each day. The top-seeded players may receive first round byes if the 64-man bracket is not full. They will compete on the renovated 7,000-yard Chattahoochee GC layout, originally designed by Robert Trent Jones, Sr., opening in 1960. 🏌️

New Site The tournament, originally scheduled for the UGA course in Athens, has been moved to Chattahoochee GC in Gainesville.

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Jones leads veteran U.S. team into Solheim Cup

Atlantan adds youth with surprise captain's pic

By Mike Blum

Long-time Atlanta resident **Rosie Jones** will take ¾ of the 2009 U.S. Solheim Cup team with her to Ireland for the 2011 matches, which will be played Sept. 23-25 at Killeen Castle.

Nine of the 12 players from the victorious 2009 team return, with the U.S. winning 16-12 on home turf after entering the final day singles tied 8-8. The nine returning players qualified on points along with **Stacy Lewis**, who will be one of three rookies on the U.S. squad.

The American team is led by **Cristie Kerr**, one of just two U.S. players who have competed in more than three Solheim Cups. This will be the sixth appearance in the event for Kerr, whose career record is 9-10-2.

Among the most surprising qualifiers is 51-year-old **Juli Inkster**, who said her 2009 Solheim Cup appearance would be her last and was picked by Jones as an assistant captain.

Inkster's finish on the points list for the team (9th) is an indication of the lack

of depth among Americans on the LPGA Tour, as she is enjoying a respectable season, just not one you would expect would earn her a spot on the squad.

Christina Kim, who claimed the 10th and final qualifying berth, has yet to record a top 10 finish in 2011, but held on to her spot to make the team for the third time.

Both Inkster (15-10-6) and Kim (5-2-1) have excellent Solheim Cup records, as does **Paula Creamer** (8-2-4), who has been outstanding in her three appearances. The U.S. has won each of the last three Solheim Cups and holds an 8-3 advantage in the competition, winning two of five times in Europe and all six in the U.S.

Rounding out the U.S. qualifiers are **Angela Stanford**, **Morgan Pressel**, **Brittany Lincicome**, **Brittany Lang** and **Michelle Wie**. Both Wie (3-0-1) and Lang (1-0-2) were unbeaten in their first Solheim Cup starts in 2009, with Wie amassing more points than any of her teammates.

Lewis, who won the Kraft Nabisco Championship earlier this year, placed 2nd behind Kerr in qualifying for the

team, and will be a key performer on a squad which has only three players (Inkster, Kerr and Stanford) older than their mid-20s.

However, with nine of the 10 qualifiers having Solheim Cup experience, Jones opted for two rookies as her captain's choices, one of which was an unexpected selection. **Vicky Hurst**, 21, finished 11th in the points standings and is an emerging star in her third season on the LPGA Tour. Her selection by Jones was expected.

The outside-the-box choice was that of **Ryann O'Toole**, who is a rookie on the LPGA Tour this season and had played all of seven LPGA events in her career at the time of her selection. O'Toole made her first mark as a pro golfer with a tie for 9th in the 2011 U.S. Open, and followed that up with a tie for 5th in Portland, the final event before Jones made her two picks.

Hurst also tied for 5th in Portland, while the player considered the most likely possibility along with Hurst missed the cut.

Writing in her "Captain's Corner" blog, Jones offered some thoughts on her selection process two weeks before making her choices.

"For two years since I was named captain, I have always imagined that the last couple weeks leading up to the points list would play itself out and that the most deserving players would stick out like a sore thumb, making the picks a given."

Hurst had not done much on tour this season until her T5 in Portland, while O'Toole began the season with limited LPGA status, playing her early tournaments in 2011 on the Futures Tour.

Katie Futcher finished 3rd in the Kraft Nabisco, was in the top 15 in both the U.S. and British Opens, and was 11th on the points list before being passed by Hurst. Despite her solid showing in the British, the 6-year LPGA player was bypassed for a player who badly missed the cut in her first start after making the team while Futcher notched another top 15 finish in a high profile tournament.

Wendy Ward and **Pat Hurst** (no relation to Vicky), both veterans with Solheim Cup experience, were also bypassed, as Jones opted for youth and power, with both Vicky Hurst and

O'Toole ranked among the top 10 in driving distance.

As a player, Jones was on the Solheim Cup bubble in 1998.

"I had a good two years," she wrote on her blog. "But I was on the bubble and time was running out. Knowing that my pick was on the line, I felt the heavy weight of pressure as I missed the last two cuts before the cutoff."

Sure that she had played her way out of captain Judy Rankin's possible picks, Jones was expecting the worst when Rankin approached her just before announcing her selections. To her surprise, Rankin told her she had made the team, opting for Jones' heart, experience and total body of work over her recent unimpressive results.

As a captain, Jones went in a different direction, with O'Toole almost certainly the least tested player (male or female) to ever to represent the U.S. in international team competition.

Jones was a seven-time Solheim Cup selection, including the first ever event in 1990 and six in a row after missing out in both 1992 and '94. The U.S. went 5-2 with Jones on the team. Jones had winning records in five of her seven appearances, and had an overall mark of 11-9-2.

While the U.S. has seven players among the top 20 in the world rankings, **Suzann Pettersen** is the only European player ranked higher than 19th.

The European side has five players with considerable Solheim Cup experience, five rookies and a pair of Solheim Cup sophomores. Several of the Euros are little known on this side of the Atlantic, but the team features a solid core of veterans (Pettersen, **Sophie Gustafson**, **Maria Hjorth**, **Catriona Matthew**), along with 2009 LPGA champion **Anna Nordqvist**.

However, the remainder of the squad is mostly untested, other than **Laura Davies**, who has played in every Solheim Cup but has lost most of the game that made her a European stalwart throughout the event's history.

Both teams are likely happy they don't have to play against a team from the Far East. Six of the top 10 players in the world are Asian, and if you include Australia's **Karrie Webb**, 16 of the world's top 25 would be vying for spots on a 12-player team. ☺

Not the Ryder Cup. Unlike the Ryder Cup, the Solheim Cup has been held mostly by the U.S., which is 6-0 on American soil and 8-3 overall.



Cristie Kerr



Paula Creamer



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Corn claims title in Assistant event

Brian Corn of Peachtree GC won the Georgia PGA Callaway Golf Assistant Championship at TPC Sugarloaf, posting a pair of 69s for a 6-under 138 total.

Tying for 2nd at 141 were **Bill Murchison** of Towne Lake Hills and **David Potts** of Country Club of the South. The top three finishers earned spots in the 2011 Callaway Golf Assistant PGA Championship, which will be played Nov. 3-6 at PGA GC in Port St. Lucie, Fla.

John Duckworth of The Manor, who led after an opening round 68, was 4th at 142, with **Tim Weinhart** of the Standard Club 5th at 143.

Stevens wins by 11: The Georgia PGA's Senior Division held its championship recently at Sea Palms Resort on St. Simons Island, with Atlanta instructor **Craig Stevens** winning by 11 strokes in the 36-hole event.

Stevens, who teaches at Steel Canyon in Sandy Springs, shot 61-64—125, 17-under on the Sea Palms layout. Tying for 2nd at 136 were Augusta CC head professional **Tommy Brannen** and River Pointe instructor **Sonny Skinner**.

Roger Mack was 4th at 140, with **Chuck Little** 5th at 141. Tying for 6th at 142 were **Bob Burk**, **Danny Elkins** and **Charlie King**.



Brian Corn

Jackson captures GSGA Senior title

Macon's Jimmy Jackson won the recent GSGA Senior Championship, played at Forest Heights in Statesboro. Jackson shot 70-74-72 for an even par 216 total, closing

with a birdie on the 18th hole of the final round to finish one stroke ahead of Kennesaw's **Bill Leonard**, who shot 74 the final day. Leonard had taken the 36-hole lead with a second round 69.

Ron Woeghe of Greensboro was 3rd at 219, with three players tying for 4th at 220. Finishing with 220 totals were **Don Marsh** of Johns Creek, **Matt O'Brien** of Decatur and **Bob Kulp** of Savannah.

Pictor wins again: Marietta's **Brenda Pictor** won the GSGA Senior Women's Championship for the third straight year and fourth time overall, taking the 2011 title by 11 strokes at Brookstone CC in Acworth.

Pictor shot 76-69—145, with **Cheryl Grigg** of Sea Island and **Jane Duggan** of Atlanta tying for 2nd at 157.

GWGA Championship: In the Georgia Women's Golf Association Championship at Lake Oconee's Cuscowilla GC, Carrollton's **Sarah Butts** won with a 223 total, one stroke ahead of **Caitlin Watts** of LaGrange. The two were tied for the lead after 36 holes at 150, with Butts shooting 73 the final day and Watts carding a 74.

Amira Alexander of Alpharetta and **Kathryn Fowler** of Americus tied for 3rd at 229, with Macon's **Taylor McGraw** and former champion **Laura Coble** of Augusta 5th at 230. **Brenda Pictor** was 7th at 231, followed by **Tess Fordham** of Metter (232), **Danielle Davis** of St. Simons Island (234) and **Abby Johnson** of Buford (235).

Noll tops qualifiers for U.S. Mid-Am

Dalton's David Noll claimed medalist honors in a U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship qualifier at Macon's Brickyard at Riverside course. Noll shot 66 to earn medalist honors by two strokes.

Tying for 2nd at 68 were **Michael Standard** of McDonough and **Doug Stiles** of Athens. **Jeff Knox** of Augusta was 4th at 70, with **Kris Mikkelsen** of Atlanta tying for 5th at 71. **Michael Morrison** of Roswell shot 72 to tie for 7th, and earned the final qualifying spot in a playoff.

Several other Georgians qualified out of state for the U.S. Mid-Am, which will be played Sept. 17-22 in Texas. Augusta's **Jason McKenzie** was co-medalist in Baton Rouge, La., with a 71. **Chris Chuck** of Roswell shot 66 in Jacksonville to finish as low qualifier, with Augusta's **John Engler** tying for 2nd at 70. In Okatie, S.C., Augusta's **Brad Jones** and Savannah's **Scott Weeks**



Georgia Senior Champion Jimmy Jackson



GSGA Senior Women's Champion Brenda Pictor

got two of the final three spots in a playoff, with **Corey Huss** of Evans failing to advance from the playoff.

Senior Am qualifying: In a U.S. Senior Amateur qualifier at Governors Towne Club, **Bill Leonard** shot 70 to share medalist honors. **Wayne Monroe** of Bremen and **Dave Nicholls** of Roswell shot 71 to tie for 3rd and advanced from a 5-players-for-3-spots playoff. Also shooting 71 but failing to qualify were **John Davis** of Atlanta and **Brian Johnston** of Duluth.

Jack Kearney of Peachtree City was medalist in a qualifier in Connecticut, with Greensboro's **Frank Travetto** qualifying in Illinois. The U.S. Senior Amateur will be played in Virginia Sept. 10-15.

Women's Mid-Am qualifying: Two Georgians were among three players who qualified at Rivermont CC for the U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship. **Brenda Pictor** was medalist with a 75, with Marietta's **Margaret Shirley** 3rd at 78. Shirley recently left her position as assistant coach for the UGA women's golf team to become the assistant coach at Auburn, her alma mater. The championship will be played Sept. 17-22 in Virginia.

Women's Senior qualifying: In a U.S. Senior Women's Amateur qualifier at Sea Island GC's Retreat course, **Cheryl Grigg** was medalist with a 75. **Mary Riley** of Perry was 2nd with an 80, with **Darlene Wehrnyak** of Lawrenceville taking the 3rd spot in a playoff over Stone Mountain's **Ginette Spinucci** after both shot 82.

Susan Rheney of Greensboro qualified in Massachusetts, with former Georgians **Patsy Ehret** and **Nancy Smith** both qualifying in Florida. The Senior Women's Amateur will be played at the Honors Course in Chattanooga Sept. 10-15.

Henley, English out early in Am

Both Russell Henley and Harris English lost in the 2nd round of the U.S. Amateur at Erin Hills in Wisconsin in the final amateur appearances for the two recent Georgia Bulldog standouts before the Walker Cup.

Henley tied for 3rd in stroke play qualifying with scores of 66-69—135, and won his opener 3&1 over **Kevin Dougherty**. English was T31 at 73-67—140, and won his opener 3&1 over Walker Cup alternate **Andrew Yun** of Stanford. English was 2-down twice on the front nine, but ran off five birdies in a 7-hole stretch to take control of the match.

In the second round, Henley lost on the 21st hole to Walker Cup teammate **Patrick Cantlay**, while English was ousted by **Bobby Leopold** 4&3. Leopold had eliminated the medalist in the first round and was in control all the way against English, who did not play nearly as well as he did in his opener.

Henley had three birdies in a 5-hole stretch on the back nine to take a 2-up lead with two holes to play, but Cantlay went birdie-birdie on 17 and 18 to send the match to extra holes. Both players eagled the par-5 first hole, with Cantlay winning with a par on the third extra hole. Cantlay, who plays at UCLA, reached the finals, losing to SMU's **Kelly Kraft**.

English and Henley were the only two Georgians who made it to match play in the U.S. Amateur.

Also competing were: UGA golfers **Michael Cromie**, **Bryden Macpherson** and **Keith Mitchell**; **Paul Haley**, **James White**, **Seth Reeves** and **Anders Albertson** of Georgia Tech; and Kennesaw State's **Jeff Karlsson** and **Matt Nagy**. Others included **Christian Raynor**, **Jay Degenhart**, **Blaine Woodruff**, **John Engler** and **Scott Davenport**. Haley, a recent Tech grad, was part of a 20-man playoff for the final four spots in match play.

Women's Amateur: In the U.S. Women's Amateur in Rhode Island, Kennesaw State golfer **Ket Preamcheun** reached the second round of match play before being defeated. **Margaret Shirley** narrowly missed qualifying for match play, with Athens' **Yugene Lee** also competing in the championship.

In other recent amateur events:

In the Oglethorpe Invitational at Wilmington Island Club in Savannah,

Augusta State golfer **Taylor Floyd** of Macon shot three consecutive 69s for a 207 total, winning in a playoff. Savannah's **Brendan Gillins**, Floyd's teammate in Augusta, tied for 4th at 210.

In the Porter Cup, Haley tied for third at 269, one shot out of a playoff, with English 6th at 271 after closing with scores of 66-65. In the Cardinal Amateur in Greensboro, N.C., Nagy was 2nd at 203, closing with back-to-back scores of 66 to finish four shots behind the winner.

Swafford captures eGolf Tour title

Hudson Swafford became the fourth member of Georgia's 2011 NCAA runner-up team to win a tournament this year outside college, taking a recent eGolf Tour event at the Rock Barn Resort in Conover, N.C.

Swafford joined fellow 2011 graduates **Russell Henley** and **Harris English** in winning professional tournaments. But unlike Henley and English, who won Nationwide Tour events as amateurs, Swafford has already turned pro and collected a paycheck of \$30,000 for his victory.

Swafford's win came in dramatic fashion, as he eagled the 72nd hole, playing the final five holes in 4-under par. He shot 69-67-65-65 for a 21-under 266 total to win by one stroke. Former UGA teammate **Brian Harman** of Savannah tied for 3rd at 268, and had the final round lead before a pair of late bogeys. Harman shot 62 in the second round and was 7-under through 13 holes the final round, settling for 67.

In a previous eGolf Tour event in Ninety Six, S.C., Covington's **Jonathan Fricke** placed 2nd at 17-under 270, carding scores of 65-72-67-66 to finish two behind the winner and earn \$12,000. Recent UGA golfer **Adam Mitchell** tied for 4th at 272 with Swafford T9 at 274 and Harman T13 at 275.

Hooters Tour: Southern Hills in Hawkinsville hosted a recent Hooters Tour event, with **Phillip Pettit** of Murfreesboro, Tenn., winning with a 23-under 265 total, shooting 64 the final day.

Former UGA golfer **David Miller** tied for 3rd at 268, with **Reid Edstrom** of Norcross 6th at 271. Edstrom led after 36 holes with opening rounds of 64-65, but closed with scores of 70 and 72.

Miller and Edstrom also contended the following week in a tournament in Alabama. Miller tied for 2nd at 17-under 267, four behind the winner, with Edstrom 5th at 270 with four rounds of 68 or better. Miller and Jonesboro's **Hank Kim** shared the 36-hole lead at 131, but Kim fell back with scores of 74 and 70 and

ended up tied for 15th.

It was the fourth straight top 6 finish and sixth overall this year for Edstrom, who is 9th on the Hooters Tour money list with almost \$58,000.

Silvers captures 5th Peach State win

Savannah's **Mark Silvers** won his fifth Peach State Golf Tour title of 2011, taking a 54-hole tournament at Callaway Gardens. Silvers shot 68-61-71 for a 16-under 200 total on the Mountain View course, which hosted a PGA Tour event for a decade.

Silvers and Dalton's **Matt Hughes**, who shot 67-65-68, tied at 200, with Silvers winning with an eagle on the third playoff hole. Silvers, who received \$10,000 for his victory, leads the tour in earnings with more than \$60,000, with Hughes 4th on the money list.

Jay McLuen of Forsyth, who is 3rd in earnings, was 3rd at Callaway Gardens with a 204 total, with **Brett Munson** of Evans 4th at 205. Evans is 2nd in earnings with \$35,500.

Hughes won the most recent Peach State event, shooting 67-69—136 at The Orchard in Clarkesville to finish one ahead of McLuen. Hughes holed a 20-foot putt on the final hole for the victory. **Major Manning**, who grew up in Clarkesville, was 4th at 139.

Munson won a playoff at the Brickyard at Riverside in Macon, needing two extra holes to defeat **Adam McKenney**. Both players shot 138 with birdies on the final hole. Munson shot 69-69 to score his third victory of the season and McKenney closed with a 66. Hughes was 3rd at 141, with first round leader **Jordan Mitchell** of Atlanta T4 at 142 after an opening 66.

Jimmy Brandt won a Peach State Tour event at Jones Creek in Augusta with a 203 total that included an opening round 63. Silvers was 2nd at 206.

At Alpharetta Athletic Club's East Course (formerly Crooked Creek), **Bryce Ledford** shot 67-65—132 to win by two strokes. Hughes and McLuen tied for 3rd at 135.

Futures Tour: The Futures Tour made its first appearance in several years in Georgia, playing a recent tournament at Hawks Point in Vidalia. **Sydney Michaels** won the tournament easily, posting a 9-under 207 total to finish eight strokes ahead of the runner-up.

Jonesboro's **Lacy Agnew** tied for 19th at 222, with **Garrett Phillips** of St. Simons Island T37 at 225. Alma's **Ashley Medders** missed the cut by one shot, with UGA golfer **Emilie Burger** of Hoschton missing by two. 🍷

Georgians

[Continued from page 8]

assistant professional at The Landings in Savannah, was 68th going to Boston, but missed the cut and fell to 80th.

Adams, also a second year PGA Tour member who played his college golf at Georgia Southern, tied for 10th in Boston to move up from 81 to 57. It was Adams' fourth top 10 since the U.S. Open, including a tie for 3rd recently in Reno. Adams, who moved from the Lake Oconee area to a more rural setting near Swainsboro, was 67th at end of the regular season, but lost 14 spots in the standings after a missed cut in the Barclays.

Ryuji Imada, **Davis Love**, **Stewart Cink** and **Bryce Molder** began the Playoffs in the 80s in the FedExCup standings, but all lost ground after the Barclays and failed to make it past Boston.

Imada made the cut in both Playoffs events, but finished near the bottom both weeks. Imada, a member of Georgia's 1999 NCAA Championship team, has a pair of ties for 3rd this year in Dallas and Memphis, but has only one other finish better than 30th. He qualified for the Tour Championship in 2008 after winning the final PGA Tour event at TPC Sugarloaf.

Love qualified for every Tour Championship except one from 1990-2006, but has not been back to East Lake since. Love had four straight top 8 finishes in one stretch, but placed last in the field the last time he played in the event. The long time St. Simons Island resident has enjoyed a solid 2011 season with seven finishes of 16th or better, but did not have the one big week required to make a move up the FedExCup standings.

Charlie Yates GC

[Continued from page 14]

The back nine is much more forgiving, with a string of par 3s under 150 yards from the back tees and a short and inviting par 4 (No. 13) that offers little resistance to scoring other than a bunker along the right side of the fairway and another short of the green.

A large front bunker provides a significant obstacle on the 180-yard 17th, with sand surrounding the green at the downhill 18th, which offers a revealing view of the changing nature of the East



Blake Adams

STAN BADZ / PGA TOUR / GETTY IMAGES

Duluth's **Stewart Cink** did not make the cut in the Playoffs and finished 98th in the standings. Cink has a number of solid showings this year, but his best finish is a tie for 9th, the second straight sub-par season for the former Georgia Tech standout.

Fellow ex-Yellow Jacket **Troy Matteson** fell from 84 to 97 after the Barclays, but led after a 65 the first round in Boston. However, the Atlanta area resident shot 77-78 the final two days, tied for next to last and finished 99th in the standings.

Bryce Molder, **Vaughn Taylor** and **Heath Slocum** all qualified for the Playoffs, but were eliminated after the first tournament. Molder fell from 91 to 101 despite making the cut in the Barclays, with Taylor and Slocum both failing to move up after starting the Playoffs outside the top 100. Taylor will need a very strong showing in the four Fall Series events to retain his exempt status for 2012. 🍷

Lake community. A green with some movement also requires your attention if you have hopes of finishing an enjoyable round in successful fashion.

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Connelly captures Callaway event

Justin Connelly of McDonough won a Georgia PGA Junior Tour event last month at Callaway Gardens, posting two rounds of even par 72 for a 144 total. It was Connelly's third Georgia PGA Junior Tour win this season.

Justin Matthies of Decatur was 2nd in the 16-18 age group at 145, followed by **Ryan Elmore** of Dunwoody, who shot a second round 69 for a 146 total, and **Connor Edwards** of Newnan at 147.

Nicholas Mineo of Cumming was the 14-15 winner and tied for 2nd overall at 145 with scores of 70-75. **Brett Barron** of Suwanee and **Nickolaus Budd** of Woodstock tied for 2nd at 147, with Budd tied with Mineo after 18 holes, opening with a 70.

Ben Womack of Midland shot 73-80—153 to win the 11-13 division, two ahead of Atlanta's **Will Chandler**.

Annie Swords of Newnan shot 76-76 for a 152 total to edge **Kayley Marschke** of Suwanee by one stroke in the girls division. Swords won the 15-18 age group by 12 shots over **Courtney Lowery** of Greenville, with **Devin Stewart** of Peachtree City 3rd at 166. Marschke was the 11-14 winner.

In the final Summer Series event of 2011, Atlanta's **Michael Coletti** shot 2-under 70 at White Columns to finish one stroke ahead of **Tae Kim** and two in front of **Spencer Cokely**, both of Duluth.

Dawson Kipniss of Milton was the 14-15 age group winner at 72, one ahead of Barron. **Jake Lawson** of Atlanta shot 75 to edge **Ben Huckaby** of Bishop by one. Girls winners were **Darby Gentry** of Braselton (82, 15-18) and **Mary Claire Solomon** of Johns Creek (90, 11-14).

Georgians sweep all 5 SJGT titles

The Southeastern Junior Golf Tour wrapped up its 2010-11 schedule last month with its Championship event at Saugahatchee CC in Opelika, Ala. Georgians took first in all five divisions.

Preston Riner of Johns Creek was the boys 16-19 winner by five shots with scores of 74-70-70—214. **Colby Hipp** of Chatsworth was 3rd at 221. **Jake Fendt** of Suwanee shot 220 to win the 14-15 age group by one over **James Clark** of Columbus. **Mercer Clark** of Columbus was 3rd at 223.

In the 12-13 division, **Spencer Ralston** of Gainesville shot 72-73-69—214 to finish five ahead of Milton's **Walker Bottomley**. **Emee Herbert** of Johns Creek shot 223 to win girls 15-19 by three strokes, with **Anne Buchanan** of Athens posting a 237 total to win the 12-14 age group by 19 shots.

The season-opening event on the 2011-12 schedule was played at Albany's Doublegate CC, with Georgia juniors again winning all five divisions.

Billy Shuman of St. Simons Island shot 74-67—141 to edge out Albany's **Joshua Crews**, who led Shuman by five strokes after an opening 69 but finished one behind him after a 73 the next day. **Andrew Eunice** of Moultrie and **Sean Murphy** of Decatur were 3rd in the 16-19 division at 145.

Jacob Joiner of Albany shot 143 (72-71) to win the 14-15 age group by three over **Tyler Dallas** of Valdosta. **Spencer Jordan** of Statesboro won the 12-13 division by six shots over **Hunter Dunagan** of Martinez with a 152 total.

Ji Eun Baik of Newnan was the girls winner at 149, one shot ahead of Tifton's



Annie Swords



Justin Connelly

Brittany Jarrett. **Sabrina Long** of Alpharetta was first in 11-14 at 159.

Lewis takes first in AJGA tourney

The American Junior Golf Association conducted two recent tournaments in Georgia, with Savannah's **Joe Lewis** taking the second of the two at the Frederica Club on St. Simons Island.

Lewis put together rounds of 68-67-70 for an 11-under 205 total to finish one ahead of **Parker Derby** of Columbus, who closed with scores of 64-69 after a first round 73. Lewis, who will play his college golf at Mississippi, scored his first AJGA victory in his final start as a junior, with his win keyed by an eagle on the 15th hole in the third round.

Michael Pisciotta of Alpharetta was one in back of Lewis after 36 holes, but shot 75 the final day and ended up in 4th place at 211. **Davis Parker** of Augusta was T6 at 213, with **Shea Sylvester** of Roswell and **William Anderson** of Atlanta tying for 9th at 215. **Tyler Young** of Kennesaw tied for 11th at 216, and **Jack Gibbs** of Evans was 14th at 217.

The top Georgian in the girls division was **Jordon Daniel** of Newnan, who tied for 5th at 224. **Michaela Owen** of Alpharetta was 10th at 229.

The previous week in the E-Z-Go Vaughn Taylor Championship at Jones Creek in Augusta, Lewis tied for 2nd with a 1-over 217 total, four strokes behind the winner. **Zachary Healy** of Norcross tied for 8th at 223, with **Riley Davenport** of Woodstock, **David Yowell** of Marietta and **Emmanuel Kountakis** of Augusta all tying for 11th at 224. **Michael Hines** of Acworth was T15 at 225.

Jessica Hoang of North Augusta, S.C., was the girls winner, shooting 73 in all three rounds for a 219 total and a 3-stroke margin over **Rachel Dai** of Suwanee. Owen was 4th at 230, with **Eunice Yi** of Evans tying for 7th at 235 and **Elizabeth Kim** of Martinez 10th at 237.

Mitsunaga wins in Birmingham

Roswell's **Rinko Mitsunaga** won an AJGA event at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail course in Birmingham, finishing with a 2-over total in the rain-shortened tournament. Mitsunaga shot 75-73 the first two rounds, and was 2-under for the nine holes played the final day, finishing with a 179 total to take the girls division by four strokes.

Rachel Dai was 6th at 192 and **Paula Hong** of Duluth tied for 7th at 193. **Ji Eun Baik** placed 10th at 193.

In the boys division, Alpharetta's **Zack Jaworski** finished with a 2-over 185 total in the 45-hole event, five strokes behind the winner in a tie for 2nd. **Justin Connelly** tied for 7th at 188, with **Anders Olsson** of Mableton T12 at 190.

In other AJGA events:

Tripp H'Doubler of Atlanta tied for 7th in the boys division in Philadelphia, with **Wyatt Larkin** of Morganton T7 in a Junior All-Star tournament in Austin. In the girls division of that event, **Kayla Jones** of Alpharetta was 4th with a 232 total.

State Parks Junior Tour: Winners from last month's Georgia State Parks Junior Tour event at Arrowhead Pointe in Elberton included: **Seth Sanders**, Macon, 149 (boys 14-19); **Ben Huckaby**, Bishop, 156 (12-13); **Joshua Toole**, Vidalia, 172 (10-11, 3rd win this year); **Brantley Barker**, Albany, 74 (8-9, 4th win); **Hannah Barger**, Elberton, 152 (girls 14-19, 3rd win); **Rylie Marchman**, Waynesboro, 175 (12-13); **Erin Peters**, Canton, 180 (10-11, 5th win)

Winners from the previous event at Jekyll Island: **Tyler Joiner**, Albany, 142 (boys 14-19, 2nd win); (2nd place, **Jacob Joiner**, Albany, 144; 1 win, 2nd 3 times); **Jeremy Wood**, Loganville, 160 (12-13); **Thomas Hogan**, St. Simons, 147 (10-11); **Hannah Barger**, 154 (girls 14-19); **Juliana Collett**, St. Simons, 165 (12-13, 4th win). ☺



Joe Lewis

PGA Championship

[Continued from page 16]

into the pond, leaving him with a double bogey and an even-par 70 on the day.

Until his late ride on the bogey train, Dufner held up extremely play playing under the pressure of leading a major championship for the first time.

He began his round with a string of pars, taking the lead with a pitch and putt birdie at the 6th, which played at 289 yards the final day, 140 yards shorter than its standard length. Bradley pulled even with a birdie at the 8th, but Dufner matched him minutes later to reclaim the top spot by himself.

Bradley again pulled even when he hit his second shot to the par-5 12th to within eagle range, but Dufner answered with birdie putts at 12 and 13 to move two in front. His lead doubled when Bradley tripled the 15th, but things turned rapidly after Dufner's 5-wood drifted right and into the pond guarding the green at the treacherous par 3.

Despite the triple at 15, Bradley still

held onto hopes that a comeback was possible.

"I remember walking off that green going 'the last four holes are so tough here that somebody could have a five-shot lead and it doesn't matter'."

Bradley could have folded after the triple bogey, but was determined not to let that happen.

"I just kept telling myself, don't let that hole define this whole tournament. I had played so well and I just didn't want to be remembered as the guy who tripled that hole and went on to bogeying or something."

Bradley followed his perfectly-played birdie at 16 with a putt in the 40-foot range at the 17th, responding with his only major display of emotion the entire day. It was a putt Bradley said he will "never forget the rest of my life."

Bradley and Dufner vaulted themselves into contention the second day, when they shot 64 and 65 respectively to share the 36-hole lead at 135. They were paired together the next day, with Dufner carding a 68 to remain tied for the lead, this time with Steele, and Bradley shooting a 69 to begin the final day just one back. 🍌

PGA notes

[Continued from page 18]

double bogey, birdied three of the next five to shoot 69 and stay in the hunt.

No Georgia contenders: Four Georgians posted solid showings at the PGA, but none seriously contended.

Matt Kuchar (St. Simons/Georgia Tech) was low among the state contingent, tying for 19th at 280 with a best effort of 68 on Saturday, falling back at the finish with a pair of late bogeys.

Charles Howell (Augusta) and **Bubba Watson** (UGA) were T26 at 281, closing with scores of 68 and 69 respectively. Watson, a playoff loser to **Martin Kaymer** at Whistling Straits last year, birdied four straight holes early in his round Thursday to take an early lead, but went 7-over over his last 10 holes and never got back in contention despite a pair of torrid birdie runs over the weekend.

Chris Kirk (Woodstock/UGA) closed with back-to-back 69s to tie for 34th at 282 in his first PGA Championship appearance after making the cut on the number at 4-over 144. Also making the cut were **Bryce Molder** (Georgia Tech)

and 2012 Ryder Cup captain **Davis Love III** (Sea Island), with Love a factor after 36 holes at 139, just four off the lead. But Love's weekend scorecards were filled with bogeys and doubles and he wound up ahead of just two players.

Missing the cut were **Jonathan Byrd** (Sea Island), **Cameron Tringale** (Georgia Tech) **Heath Slocum** (Alpharetta), **Stewart Cink** (Duluth/Georgia Tech), **Ryuji Imada** (UGA), **Larry Nelson** (Marietta) and Atlanta area teaching professional **Craig Stevens**, the lone Georgia PGA member in the field.

After closing with a 43 on the back nine Thursday en route to an 80, Slocum made a run at making the cut with birdies on four of his first seven holes on that nine Friday, but settled for a 67. Cink had five birdies in an opening 69, but did not have a birdie in the second round, closing with a double bogey and bogey on 17 and 18 after being on the cut line with two holes to play.

Nelson, who won the 1981 PGA at AAC, shot 78-75 in his farewell to major championship golf, while Stevens also shot 153 for 36 holes, managing to put five birdies on his scorecard along with four double bogeys and 10 bogeys. 🍌



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Course Reviews

RiverPines Golf (Public)

4775 Old Alabama Rd., Johns Creek; 770-442-5960; www.riverpinesgolf.com

STAFF: Phil Wagoner is the PGA Golf Professional; Mike Perpich is the PGA Director of Instruction

PAR/YARDAGE: RiverPines is a par 70 with five sets of tees: Black (6,602 yards); Blue (6,284); White (5,785); Silver (5,193) and Red (4,291).

COURSE RATING/SLOPE: 71.1/132 (Black); 69.4/127 (Blue); 67.2/119 (White); 69.3/119 (Silver/Ladies); 64/1/105 (Red).

ABOUT THE COURSE: One of the most popular and well-respected daily fee courses in Atlanta for the past two decades, RiverPines offers a consistently enjoyable overall golf experience, beginning with an excellent, well-conditioned Denis Griffiths design. RiverPines also has a fun, 9-hole par 3 that is great for juniors and novice golfers and one of Atlanta's finest practice facilities, headed up by the highly-regarded Perpich. The staff is friendly and efficient and the fees are affordable, with the course one of the easiest to walk thanks to its compact, non-developed setting. With five sets of tees, there are multiple options for almost every level of player, with the yardages a bit deceptive in both directions. As a par 70 with only two par 5s, the yardages on the scorecard make the course seem more inviting than it is, thanks to several stout par 4s. However, with multiple tee boxes on each hole, some of the holes can play shorter than indicated. Apart from the handful of hefty par 4s, length is not what River Pines is about, with Griffiths' layout presenting the opportunity to post a score you'll be happy with as long as you don't bite off a little more than you can chew. With a mostly tame group of par 3s and only one of the two par 5s much of a threat, the challenge comes from the par 4s, many of which require accuracy off the tee with several testy approach shots. There are quite a few hazards in play, starting with the par 4s that begin each nine, with small wetlands areas protecting both greens. The 10th is one of several short-ish par 4s where club selection and precision are vital from the tee, with errant tee shots on the tighter holes exacting penalties. There are also several challenging approaches to greens protected by hazards, but none on holes of serious length, with the par-5 17th an interesting but perplexing risk/reward short par 5. The greens complexes are gentle and there are plenty of scoring opportunities, but the tougher par 4s will keep you from going too low.

Fairways of Canton (Public)

400 Laurel Canyon Parkway, Canton; 770-720-1808

STAFF: Nathan DeVictor is the PGA Golf Professional; Brett Gratz is the Superintendent

PAR/YARDAGE: Fairways of Canton is a par 70 with four sets of tees: Black (6,500 yards); Blue (6,000); White (5,400) and Green (4,600).

COURSE RATING/SLOPE: 72.3/135 (Black); 69.7/129 (Blue); 67.0/121 (White); 67.9/119 (Green).

ABOUT THE COURSE: Fairways of Canton opened in 2007 but shut down in less than three years, as its overly demanding layout did not meet with public approval and other aspects of the facility left much to be desired. Rocky Roquemore, who helped design many of the newer Canongate courses, had done plenty of good work in the Atlanta area, but Fairways of Canton was not well received. Atlanta-based designer D.J. DeVictor, part of the company that has taken over operations of the club, handled the renovations of the course, which recently re-opened after being out of commission for a year. DeVictor has made it a much more playable layout, removing bunkers and trees to widen the course and make it more forgiving around the greens, although plenty of trouble still remains, especially off the tee. DeVictor has done an admirable job, but several holes remain extremely challenging and may require another tweak. Apart from a handful of par 4s, the layout is very playable, and a few of those holes may not be par 4s for much longer. The boomerang-shaped 15 and perilous downhill 7th are listed as par 4s, but will play as par 5s for all but the lowest handicappers, with the 7th offering a small target over a wetlands area with little bailout room and trouble behind. Other than those two holes and the 3rd, another treacherous par 4 with water seriously in play off the tee and on the approach, DeVictor has made Fairways of Canton a reasonable test, but one that is likely more of a challenge than the modest Course Rating/Slope numbers would indicate. There are a number of short and inviting par 4s and a scenic and reachable risk/reward par-5 18th, with the par 3s a fairly strong group. Some interesting greens complexes remain, and the new mini-verde Bermuda surfaces have some growing in to do along with the fairways, but the course is headed in a positive direction after its early struggles. 🍌

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