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McGladrey Classic set for successful sequel

St. Simons event a highlight of Fall Series

By Mike Blum

After a very successful debut, the McGladrey Classic is set for an even better second showing when the PGA Tour returns to Sea Island Golf Club this month.

The tournament is scheduled for Oct. 13-16 and will be the third of four Fall Series events that wrap up the PGA Tour schedule for the year. The season concludes the following week with the Disney Classic in Orlando.

The McGladrey Classic will include a very competitive field for a Fall Series event, with the entire St. Simons Island contingent of PGA Tour players scheduled to participate, as well as just about every player with ties to Georgia.

The second-year event has also attracted an impressive group of major champions and tournament winners, with the quality of the venue a big reason why the McGladrey Classic has already made its case to be considered the premier Fall Series tournament.

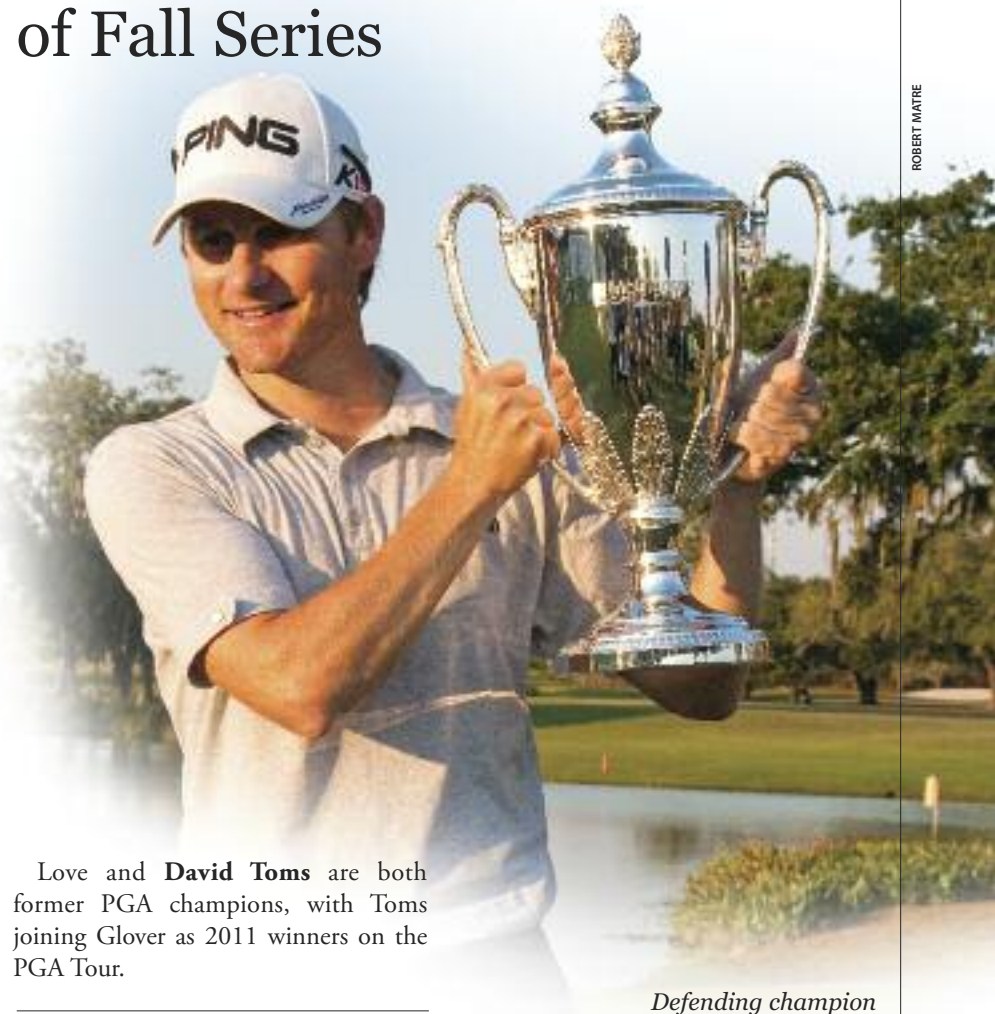
Headlining the field are six players of note who call St. Simons Island home. The group starts with Tournament

Chairman **Davis Love III**, who will be wearing many hats tournament week, including that of player.

Love, who will be the U.S. Davis Cup captain in 2012, is one of several former major champions in the field, with that group including St. Simons resident **Zach Johnson**, whose association with McGladrey also helped bring the event to the Georgia coast.

Also among the major championship crowd is **Lucas Glover**, the most recent addition to the growing list of tour players living on St. Simons Island. Glover is one of several U.S. Open champions in the field, joining **Graeme McDowell** (2010), **Angel Cabrera** (2007) and **Jim Furyk** (2003). Glover won the U.S. Open at Bethpage Black in '09.

With Johnson, Cabrera and **Trevor Immelman** in the field, the tournament has three of the last five Masters champions, with Duluth's **Stewart Cink** heading the list of British Open champions that includes 2010 winner **Louis Oosthuizen**, **Ben Curtis** and **David Duval**, like Cink a former Georgia Tech standout.



ROBERT MATRE

Love and **David Toms** are both former PGA champions, with Toms joining Glover as 2011 winners on the PGA Tour.

[(See McGladrey Classic, page 6)]

*Defending champion
Heath Slocum*



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Getting the golf swing close to machine-like efficiency

By Danny Elkins

*PGA Director of Instruction
Georgia Golf Center*

Your goal as a player should be to develop a golf swing that requires no adjustments at impact. The closer you can get to a machine-like efficiency the more consistent you can be, and the more powerful you can be, all with less effort. And while I will concede that it is likely that no one has fully accomplished this goal to date, the most efficient swings are the ones that have come the closest.

Iron Byron and the Ping Man are two of the mechanical ball striking devices used to test golf equipment. They are capable of hitting perfect shot after perfect shot, OR awful shot after awful shot, depending on their programming. The machines cannot adjust with hand/eye coordination, so ball position is critical to them.

Humans can, and do, adjust for imperfect ball position all the time. Adjustments are available in all six joints: ankles, knees, hips, shoulders, elbows and wrists. When you get that trapped feeling at impact you are adjusting for bad ball position with one, or usually, more than one of the joints. What players feel as lifting their head is always a joint adjustment of some kind. Having given 50,000 golf lessons in my career I can safely say that no one looks up, they *adjust up* in one or more joints. And besides, golf doesn't require hand/eye coordination or the machines above could

never hit a shot.

Faulty ball position can be one or more of the following. You can be too close to the ball, or too far away. You can be too bent over, or be standing too tall. And, you can have the ball too far forward, or too far back.

With the mechanical devices, the end of the club is attached to a fixed point. The measurement from that fixed point must be precisely determined to the golf ball so that the ball is contacted on the intended spot on the clubface, usually the center. For humans that fixed point is the left shoulder (although it moves during the swing it is fixed at address).



The left shoulder to the ball relationship is extremely important. Assuming the left arm stays relatively straight (not rigid, just straight), it essentially functions as the radius of the swing arc. So if the left arm is the radius, the left shoulder then becomes the top of the arc, and therefore the left shoulder, not the left foot, is the piece of the anatomy that needs to be taken into consideration when we discuss ball position.

At impact, the ideal alignment is to have the left arm, left wrist and clubshaft in a straight line. In order to achieve this alignment without adjustment it is imperative that the ball be correctly positioned relative to the left shoulder depending on the club being used.

The driver should be struck at or near the low point of the arc, so the ball should be placed directly opposite the shoulder. Irons are designed to take some turf so they are

played behind the shoulder. And even with the irons the club still goes down the plane to the low point under the shoulder, which is now in the ground. The longer the club the closer the ball to the shoulder and the smaller the divot, the shorter the club the farther away the ball is played from the shoulder and the larger the divot.

To determine where you should stand you must measure the left shoulder to the ball radius by setting up the ideal impact alignment described above; left arm, left wrist, clubshaft in a straight line. To do this set the club on the ground behind the ball with the ball slightly toward the toe. The reason for aligning toward the toe is that the club is in the air at impact, but on the ground at address. That seemingly small difference can make a big difference at 90 mph. Remember, the left wrist is flat when measuring, but not necessarily at address.

Getting to an even more precise alignment requires a bit more explanation that is beyond the scope of this article, but this will be much more precise than most of you are used to. I suspect most of you will feel too far away from the ball at this point, but you will now be able to get more extended through impact and your shots will be more solid as a result. 🏌️

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McGladrey Classic

[Continued from the cover]

Other 2011 winners in the field are St. Simons residents **Jonathan Byrd** and **Chris Kirk**. Next to Love, Byrd is the second most senior member of St. Simons' PGA Tour contingent, with Kirk moving to the area after an outstanding college career at Georgia, which won an NCAA Championship in 2005 during his stay in Athens.

Kirk, who grew up in the metro Atlanta suburb of Woodstock, competed in the tournament last year near the end of an outstanding season on the Nationwide Tour. He played extremely well at Sea Island Golf Club, tying for 15th at 8-under 272.

Another recent addition to the St. Simons list of tour players is **Matt Kuchar**, who moved to the island from Atlanta last year just before the McGladrey Classic. Although Kuchar has yet to win in 2011, he has followed his exceptional 2010 showing with a comparable effort, entering the Fall Series 6th on the money list with a strong of strong showings throughout the year.

Kuchar, Love and Johnson all joined Kirk in turning in solid efforts in last year's inaugural McGladrey Classic. Johnson tied for 12th at 271 with Kuchar T25 at 273. Love shot 65 during the third round to move into contention, but fell back the final day with a 2-over 72 to tie for 33rd at 274.

Although none of the locals came away with a victory, the trophy stayed in state. Alpharetta's **Heath Slocum** collected his fourth PGA Tour title, posting

a 14-under 266 total to hold off a number of challengers who made late runs before most crashed and burned on the tough 18th hole on Sea Island Golf Club's famed Seaside layout.

Bill Haas, who recently won the Tour Championship in Atlanta, was one shot behind Slocum at 13-under, with **David Toms**, **Robert Allenby** and **Arjun Atwal** tying for 3rd at 12-under after all three stumbled at the finish. **Joe Durant**, who held the outright lead early in the final round, tied for 6th at 11-under along with **Bo Van Pelt**, another victim of Seaside's 18th, and Augusta native **Charles Howell**, whose final round 62 was the

low score of the tournament. Slocum shot 66 in each of the first three rounds, moving from three back after 18 holes to two off Toms' lead after 36. A third straight 66 gave Slocum a one-shot lead over Durant and rookie **Troy Merritt** heading to the final round with Toms two back and Haas three off the pace one week after winning the Fall Series opener in Mississippi.

Merritt collapsed with a 41 on the front nine, and Toms broke away from Durant and the rest of his challengers with four birdies in a five-hole stretch to take a three-stroke lead at the turn.

But after making only two bogeys over the first 62 holes, Slocum bogeyed three of his final 10 holes to open the door for several challengers. Toms pulled even with Slocum at 14-under midway through the back nine, but his charge stalled and he fell out of a tie for the lead with a bogey at 16.

Van Pelt, Atwal, Allenby and Haas all got to 13-under late in the day, with Haas closing to within one of the lead when he eagled the par-5 15th. Allenby got to 14-under with his fifth and sixth birdies of the day at 16 and 17, but he and Van Pelt both double-bogeyed the

finishing hole while Atwal closed with a bogey.

Slocum, meanwhile, reclaimed the outright lead when he banged in a 60-footer for birdie from off the green at 16, with his ball hitting the flagstick squarely before plopping into the cup. That got him back to 15-under and enabled him to survive a cautious bogey at the 18th for his narrow victory.

The victory helped boost Slocum to 30th on the final 2010 money list, earning him an invitation to this year's Masters. It was the fourth victory in nine years on tour for Slocum, the most prominent of which came in 2009 in The Barclays, the FedExCup Playoffs opener, where he holed a clutch par putt on the 72nd hole to edge out **Ernie Els**, **Padraig Harrington**, **Steve Stricker** and **Tiger Woods** by one stroke.

Slocum will be back to defend his title, along with the state's sizeable contingent of players. The hottest member of the group is Howell, who is enjoying one of the best seasons of his career and has been a frequent contender in tour events in recent months, finishing just two shots out of a playoff in the Tour Championship.

After not playing in the tournament last year, Cink will be in the field and will be looking to salvage what has been the poorest season of his career. Cink was 91st on the money list entering the Fall Series, with defending champion Slocum also struggling through the 2011 campaign, standing 111 in earnings.

The Georgian most in need of a strong showing in the McGladrey Classic is Augusta's **Vaughn Taylor**, who was 148 on the money list after never being outside the top 100 in any of his first seven years on the PGA Tour.

With the likes of McDowell, Cabrera, Immelman, Allenby and Oosthuizen in the field, the tournament will have a little international flavor to it. McDowell was a member of the 2001 GBI Walker Cup team that beat the U.S. (with Glover, Georgia Tech's **Bryce Molder** and UGA's **Nick Cassini**) at Sea Island's Ocean Forest GC, and will be making his first start in the McGladrey Classic.

Oosthuizen was a late addition to the field, needing to play in two Fall Series events to reach his minimum number of tournaments required for a PGA Tour member. Also in that boat is England's **Paul Casey**, who will be one of the highest-ranked players in the field, but has struggled through a difficult season in which he has been hampered

by an injury.

As of late September, Allenby was the only player in the field who will compete for the International team in next month's Presidents Cup, with Kuchar and Furyk the lone members of the U.S. squad scheduled to play at Seaside.

Tournament officials were hopeful that Haas and **Webb Simpson**, who is battling for the money winning title, would enter the event at the last minute. Simpson is just behind **Luke Donald**, McDowell's Walker Cup teammate a decade ago.

The 132-player field will compete on the 7,055-yard, par-70 Seaside layout, which yielded relatively low scores last year but was far from a pushover, with the cut coming at 1-under 139 and only a handful of scores on the week below 65. (See course review, page 30.)

Among the highlights of tournament week will be a concert by former Hootie and the Blowfish front man **Darius Rucker**, who will perform on Plantation, Seaside's sister course, at 8 p.m. Wednesday after the conclusion of the pro-am.

There will also be live music in the Michelob ULTRA Village on the tournament grounds after play on Friday and Saturday, along with a beer and barbecue cookout. For college football fans attending Saturday's third round, there will be televised games on the big screens in the Michelob ULTRA Village, and spectators are encouraged to wear their team colors.

Tournament Director Scott Reid says ticket sales for this month's event are ahead of last year, with tournament officials "extremely pleased" with how things went last year.

"We got a lot of nice compliments from players, their families, caddies, fans and sponsors," Reid said. "They said it didn't feel like it was a first year event. Now, more people have become aware of the event and it's nice to have one year under our belt."

Both daily and weekly tickets are still available for the tournament and can be purchased at the gate. Like last year, public parking will be at St. Simons' nearby private airport, with spectators taking a brief shuttle ride to the course.

For those unable to attend the tournament, Golf Channel will have four days of live coverage from 2-5 p.m. each day. 📺

For more information on the tournament:
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Byrd flying high compared to one year ago

Las Vegas ace led to best season of career

By Mike Blum

A lot has changed for **Jonathan Byrd** in the past year.

Byrd, who is wrapping up his 10th season on the PGA Tour, entered last year's Fall Series of tournaments outside the top 125 on the money list, the first time he had ever been in that situation at such a late stage of the season.

A 5th place finish in the Viking Classic boosted Byrd back into the top 125, but he came to the inaugural McGladrey Classic in his home town of St. Simons Island the next week in a more stressful position than he would have preferred.

Byrd, who has lived on St. Simons Island since his early days on the PGA Tour, was still in grinding for his card mode, and could not fully enjoy the experience of playing a PGA Tour event so close to home. Byrd made the cut that week, cashed a small check, and then headed back on the road in an effort to solidify his spot on the money list in the final few events of the season.

Three weeks after beginning the Fall Series in a difficult spot, Byrd headed back to St. Simons from a tournament in Las Vegas with a very large check and a memory that will last him a lifetime, while earning him an unforgettable niche in golf history.

Byrd closed out his 2010 season by winning the annual PGA Tour stop in Las Vegas, doing so in rather dramatic fashion. With a three-way playoff between Byrd, **Martin Laird** and **Cameron Percy** about to be halted by darkness, Byrd scored a hole-in-one on the 209-yard 17th hole at TPC Summerlin, the fourth hole of the not-to-sudden-death playoff.

The stunning ace gave Byrd his fourth PGA Tour victory, and he added a fifth about 10 weeks later in the season-opening Tournament of Champions in Hawaii, also in a playoff. Byrd was involved in a third playoff in just over six months earlier this year in Charlotte, but lost to former Clemson teammate **Lucas Glover**.

Unlike last year, Byrd will tee it up in his hometown tournament this month with no pressing concerns. This has been his best season on the PGA Tour, and Byrd is looking forward to closing out the year on a positive note with an eye on 2012.

"I'm looking forward to it," Byrd said of the upcoming McGladrey Classic a few minutes after completing the first round of the recent Tour Championship at East Lake in Atlanta.

"Last year was such a great experience, but I was trying to keep my card and I was under stress. This year I don't have to deal with that and I can just enjoy myself."

my putter, and when I've putted well, I've played well," Byrd said of his 2011 season. "When I've played poorly, I've played pretty poorly. But when I've gotten into contention, I've played well."

"I had a chance to close out two tournaments and I did it, and I almost did it at Charlotte."

At the same time, Byrd has missed nine cuts this season, including all four majors. But the quality of his play on his good weeks has helped offset his occasional struggles, including a stretch that spanned three majors in which the only time he played 72 holes in two months came in an event without a cut.

"The last couple of years were so mediocre; I never got into contention. We're out here to win tournaments and get into contention. You want to see what you can do when you get there. That's what I've done this year."

After winning the John Deere Classic in '07, Byrd went more than three years before notching his fourth PGA Tour victory, and his prospects of ending his winless drought last year appeared slim.

"I was struggling all year," Byrd said. Coming into the Fall Series, he had managed just one top 10, never got himself into serious contention and was outside the top 125 on the money list.

But all that changed with one

better to get into a playoff with **Robert Garrigus**.

This time, no great heroics were required. Byrd carded a pair of pars to win on the second extra hole when Garrigus made bogey.

"Just being confident made the difference," Byrd said of his victory. "I was not one hundred percent and still won. That's the best thing confidence does for me."

Byrd's next playoff did not end quite as well, but the outcome did not detract from the satisfaction Byrd took from the experience.

Playing in Charlotte, not far from where he was born (Anderson, S.C.) and attended college (Clemson), Byrd had the lead heading to the final round. He fell behind his former Clemson teammate, but came back to send the tournament to extra holes with a birdie putt on the 72nd hole that was almost as memorable as his hole-in-one in Las Vegas.

"When I look back on my career, that will be one of the best things I've done on Tour. It was great to play out there in that environment so close to Clemson. I've relived that week a few times, and to make that putt under pressure, I don't look at it like I lost that week."

"I definitely won that week."

With the exception of a strong 5th place finish in The Barclays, the first of the FedExCup Playoffs events, Byrd has not played that well over the past four months. But this year has already been his most successful as a tour player, and he comes into the McGladrey Classic with a

"I had a chance to close out two tournaments and I did it, and I almost did it at Charlotte." —Jonathan Byrd

Byrd was appearing in the Tour Championship for just the second time, with his first appearance coming in 2007 after he won the John Deere Classic, his third PGA Tour victory. For most of his career, Byrd has been known as a streaky player, and this year has been no exception. Byrd has still suffered through stretches when he's missed cuts in bunches, but the weeks he's played well, he's really played well.

In addition to his win in the Tournament of Champions and playoff loss at Quail Hollow, Byrd has notched three other top 10s in high profile settings – the WGC event at Doral, the Memorial and the FedExCup Playoffs opener in New Jersey.

"I've been pretty streaky with

outstanding week in Las Vegas, which became legendary with one swing of his 6-iron.

Byrd's hole-in-one gets replayed just about every time the Golf Channel does a "golf's greatest shots" bit, and he says someone mentions it to him, "just about every day." He says he never gets tired of hearing "what an awesome hole-in-one that was," but his ace in Vegas was more than just one memorable shot.

"Winning in Vegas gave me a lot of confidence," Byrd says, with that confidence carrying over into the following season.

Although he admits that his game "was not that great" when the Tour opened the 2011 season in Hawaii for the Tournament of Champions, Byrd put together four straight rounds of 68 or

much different mindset from a year ago.

"It's hard to put into words, being on the other side of the fence like I was last year."

One of the best things about Byrd's success this season is that he is in all the majors for next year, which he describes as "just awesome."

Byrd did not qualify for any of the four majors in either 2009 or 2010, and while he played in all four of them this year, he did not make a cut in any of them, extending his streak to eight straight missed cuts in majors, dating back to 2007.

In his first appearance in a Grand Slam event, Byrd finished 8th in the 2003 Masters, and that remains his best ever finish in a major. He has made the cut once each in all four, finishing in the top 25 every time he's made it past the second round. 🍌



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Haas steps into East Lake, collects \$11.44 million

Shot from water leads to dramatic playoff victory

By Mike Blum

The 2011 Tour Championship by Coca-Cola had a little bit of everything.

A crowded leader board filled with a diverse group of contenders. Lots of jockeying for position throughout the final round. One player briefly breaking away from the pack before coming back to the field. A healthy mix of heroic shots matched by some wayward efforts and some nervous misses on the quick East Lake greens.

Ultimately it came down to a playoff matching two players who had not won on the PGA Tour this season but had both come close. A lot.

Bill Haas finally prevailed on the third hole of sudden death, outlasting **Hunter Mahan** after a string of clutch pars following some shaky play down the stretch. Both players finished the tournament at 8-under 272, one shot ahead of a trio of players, with three others two back in a tie for 6th.

After a birdie at the 15th, a hole every contender made birdie or better except for one player who really needed it, Haas led by three. But two bogeys over the final three holes opened the door for a sizeable group of challengers in pursuit of a victory and the \$10 million bonus that goes to the winner of the FedExCup.

Mahan, who shared the lead going to the final round, was the lone player able to take advantage of the opportunity, clawing his way into the playoff despite going 21 holes the final day without making a putt of more than five feet. His lone birdie came after a chip to close range at the vulnerable par-5 15th, although he did hole a pair of clutch par putts on East Lake's demanding par-3 18th on the final hole of regulation and the first of the playoff.



The most memorable shot of the tournament was the third by Haas at the par-4 17th on the second extra hole. After driving into a fairway bunker, one of several off-target shots he hit after taking a 3-stroke lead, Haas slightly pulled his second, with his ball rolling through the green and trickling into East Lake, which borders the putting surface.

Fortunately for Haas, his ball was mostly above the water line, enabling him to attempt a bunker-style explosion shot. He executed it perfectly, lofting the shot over a steep slope with a healthy amount of spin, stopping it within a few feet of the cup.

Mahan just missed his sharply breaking putt for birdie, and the two returned to the 18th, where Mahan fanned his tee shot into the right bunker and was unable to save par.

Haas, who missed the 18th green well right in both regulation and on the first playoff hole, was able to putt from just into the back fringe and curled his lengthy birdie attempt within four feet of the cup. After Mahan missed his par putt, Haas holed his to give him his first playoff win

in three tries this year.

"This is very unexpected," Haas said in his post-tournament media interview. "Last week I had a terrible finish on Sunday, a terrible back nine, and tried not to let that get me down.

"I just tried to tell myself try and put yourself in that same situation and try to prove to yourself that you can handle it. Even with all that said, I bogeyed two of the last three. It just happened. I don't know."

Coming down the stretch, Haas was unaware what his status was regarding the FedExCup. He knew he had to win the tournament to have any chance of finishing first in the final standings, but did not know if a victory would be enough for the \$10 million bonus.

When playing partner **Luke Donald** birdied the 18th hole to finish in a tie for 3rd, Haas thought that might have given Donald the FedExCup title. During his TV interview immediately after the playoff, he saw both the Tour Championship and FedExCup trophies next to each other, and noticed that "there was no other player, so I kind of assumed and I looked at my wife and she nodded her head. So that was when I realized."

With FedExCup leader **Webb Simpson** finishing well back in the field (22nd of 30 players), almost every player had a mathematical chance to claim the \$10 million bonus money including Haas, who entered the week 25th in the points standings.

Haas deliberately kept himself in the dark regarding his status relative to the FedExCup.

"In theory, I knew I was playing for it. I'm not going to sit there and say, well, it's a not a million on the line here, there's eleven million; let's put some more pressure on it, because it's not worth it. It's not worth that stress. I was just trying to win that golf tournament."

On a day when only two players shot lower than the 2-under 68 Haas carded, Haas was 4-under through 15 and pulling away from the field. He started his round

with a crisp approach to the first hole for birdie, holed a pair of lengthy putts on 6 and 13, and notched a pair of easy birdies on the two par 5s.

At that point he had made only one bogey on the day, but drove it into the trees and had to pitch out on the 16th. He missed the green to the right on 18 and made another bogey after driving into a fairway bunker at 17, saving par with an excellent shot from the sand.

His third shot on 17 with his right shoe under water will be the one most remembered. But Haas will have fond memories of the slippery 12-footer he holed for par on the first playoff hole, giving him the opportunity to pull off his highlight reel shot on the next.

"If I don't make that 12-footer down the hill, we're not even talking about this water shot."

Haas was around the lead at the end of each day, opening with a 68 to trail Thursday leader **Keegan Bradley** by four. He was three back of **Adam Scott** after a 67 on Friday and began the final round three behind Mahan and **Aaron Baddeley** following a 69. A bogey-double bogey finish knocked him out of a share for the lead, but his opening birdie Sunday erased any thoughts of his poor finish the day before.

For the week, Haas led the field in birdies (22), making five or six in each round.

The 29-year-old Haas is the son of **Jay Haas** and nephew of **Bob Goalby**, and is in his sixth season on the PGA Tour after playing his college golf at Wake Forest. He spent one season on the Nationwide Tour in 2005, and has played the PGA Tour since. He was a mostly anonymous player his first four seasons on the PGA Tour, emerging early last year with a win in the Bob Hope Classic.

Haas added a second win in last year's Fall Series opener in Mississippi, and almost made it two in a row, finishing 2nd the next week in the inaugural McGladrey Classic at Sea Island GC behind **Heath Slocum**.

A second straight win in the Hope barely eluded Haas, who lost in a three-way playoff to **Jhonattan Vegas**. He also lost in a playoff in the Greenbrier to **Scott Stallings**, like Vegas a PGA Tour rookie. Haas has enjoyed a solid season with four

"This is very unexpected. Last week I had a terrible final finish on Sunday and tried not to let it get me down."—Bill Haas

[See Haas, page 13]

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FedExCup format provides thrilling finish

By Mike Blum

Since the FedExCup was added to the PGA Tour in 2007, there have been all sorts of criticisms/suggestions/observations on how the format works/doesn't work/kinda works.

The FedExCup Playoffs will never replace the four majors as golf's most important events, and it won't determine

a champion the way playoffs do in team sports.

But since the format was revised a bit after the 2009 season, it has worked beautifully the last two years, accomplishing exactly what it was designed to without any overt gimmicks.

The FedExCup Playoffs have succeeded in a variety of areas.

It has created four events of stature in a time period when golf has been an afterthought on the national sports scene.

It has brought together the PGA Tour's top players for a four-tournament stretch that has produced plenty of drama for the sport's fans.

The players, with one notable exception, have clearly bought in to it, judging by the efforts the likes of **Ernie Els** and **Padraig Harrington** went to just to qualify.

It saved the Tour Championship at East Lake from becoming little more than an end-of-season cash grab for a select number of players, with little on the line other than a hefty first place check.

And it has provided a reasonable and

exciting conclusion to the PGA Tour season, with a format that may not be perfect but is better than what preceded it and makes more sense than any idea that has been floated as an alternative.

The Tour Championship was in a steady decline in visibility the last few years before the FedExCup was created, as the game's top two players had no problems skipping it despite both having won it previously.

The first few years of the FedExCup produced virtually no excitement as the finish, as the first three winners did so almost unchallenged. The last two years, however, have been banner ones for both the FedExCup and the Tour Championship, with both titles on the line at the end of play.

The new points distribution format was devised to give the players at the top of the standings the inside track to the FedExCup title, but also offered those farther down the list a chance to win if two things happened.

In order to win the FedExCup, a player outside the top 5 in the standings had to win, and needed some help from the leaders.

Considering that **Bill Haas** came from 25th place coming into the Tour Championship, the system achieved its aim. For the second straight year, the No. 1 player arriving at East Lake did not play especially well that week, and gave a lot of people the opportunity to win the title.

The points system can seem a bit convoluted and murky during the back-and-forth of tournament action, but in the end it makes sense. **Matt Kuchar** and **Webb Simpson** both could have won the FedExCup the last two years if they had played better at East Lake. As a result **Jim Furyk** and Haas were able to win the title.

The format rewards those who have played consistently well throughout the season, as well as those who step up their games in the Playoffs. And unless you play really well during the regular season, poor performance in the Playoffs is going to deny you a trip to East Lake.

Until someone comes up with a better system, the current one is working fine. Match play, which is bad for both tournament spectators and TV, is not an improvement. 🏌️



Webb Simpson

Augusta's Howell back in Masters after strong showing at East Lake

Of the players in the Tour Championship field with ties to Georgia, the only one to finish near the top of the leader board was Augusta native Charles Howell, who tied for 6th, just two strokes out of the Haas-Hunter Mahan playoff.

"I finally played my way back to Augusta," Howell said during the Tour Championship. "It's a big relief."

Howell, whose absence from the Masters for three years was a major source of distress for him, can joke about it now.

"I went to the Monday qualifier this year, but there was nobody there," he smiled.

After three-plus seasons playing at a level below what he established in his early years on the PGA Tour, Howell is enjoying one of the best seasons of his career. He qualified for the Tour Championship for the fifth time, the first since 2007, and left Atlanta 25th on the money list with two events remaining on his 2011 schedule – the McGladrey Classic and the season-ending event in Orlando, where he has lived since joining the PGA Tour.

"I played East Lake as a junior and I played in my first Tour Championship here in 2002," Howell said. "I always enjoyed playing here."

Qualifying for the Tour Championship earned Howell spots in other majors next year, and he will be playing in his first U.S. Open since 2009.

"I won't have to play those lovely 36-hole qualifiers for the U.S. and British Opens," Howell cracked.

Howell is also eligible for next year's WGC event at Doral and is in position to qualify for the Match Play Championship in 2012. He last played in both in '08. After languishing around 150 in the World Rankings for several years, Howell is up to 66 after the Tour Championship, just outside the number (64) needed to get into the Match Play event.

Through his first six seasons on the PGA Tour, Howell was a familiar figure in the game's elite events. He played in two Presidents Cup, qualified for the Tour Championship four times, made the Match Play field seven straight years and missed just two majors from 2002-08.

But Howell has mostly been absent from the game's biggest events the past few years, and his stature as one of golf's top young players faded as he turned 30 during that span and was overtaken by the tour's current crop of talented 20-somethings.

Howell took it all in stride, and continued to work hard to regain his lost status.

"It's not the end of the world," he said of

his absence from golf's prime time events. "There are other golf tournaments."

Howell played in several of the second tier events opposite the World Golf Championships, and played well in most of them.

"I like to play," he said. "That's what we do for a living. You might play 30 weeks a year, but that means you've got 22 weeks off. That's a hell of a job."

"People retire to play golf. We're lucky to play and get paid for it. There's no reason not to play."

Howell has played particularly well the last four months, with the Tour Championship his fifth finish of 6th or better in that stretch. He opened with a 67 at East Lake, holing a deft pitch shot for birdie on the tough 18th to close out a bogey-free first round.

After shooting 71 and 68 the next two days, Howell was five strokes off the lead heading to the final round, and seemingly shot himself out of the tournament when he bogeyed the first two holes.

But after four birdies and an eagle at the 15th, Howell was back near the top of the leader board, but bogeyed the 18th when it turned out a birdie would have gotten him in the playoff. 🏌️



Charles Howell

It was a good week for Howell regardless of the outcome. By qualifying for the Tour Championship, Howell earned a spot in the 2012 Masters, ending a three-year stretch in which he had been unable to compete in his hometown major championship.

IMAGES BY ROBERT MATTHE

Haas

[Continued from page 10]

other top 10s, but his season could have been even better without at least four final rounds of 75 or higher when in position for a high finish.

Like Haas, Mahan had enjoyed a solid but winless season coming into the Tour Championship. It was his second runner-up finish of 2011 and his ninth top 10 of the season following two victories in 2010, including the WGC Bridgestone event at Firestone.

Mahan, also 29, is in his eighth season on the PGA Tour and been a standout player each of the last five years, making the last five Presidents/Ryder Cup teams.

"I can't be really disappointed," Mahan said of his close call with victory and the \$10 million bonus. "I was very happy with the way I played today. I just literally didn't make a putt. And I feel like I hit good putts."

"Sometimes things just don't go your way, but I'm not at all disappointed how I played today."

Unlike Haas, who had five birdies the final day, Mahan managed just one, that



Hunter Mahan

coming on the 15th to help him erase a three-stroke deficit.

Mahan collected \$864,000 for his runner-up finish, with Haas taking home the winner's check of \$1,440,000 in addition to his bonus money. Mahan opened with scores of 67-68-66 to grab a share of the lead after 54 holes, but settled for a 71 the final day.

Tying for 3rd at 273 were Donald, Baddeley and **K.J. Choi**. Donald birdied three of the last five holes to make a run at a FedExCup title (he finished a close 3rd), shooting a 69 on Sunday.

Baddeley moved into a tie for lead after 54 holes with a 64 Saturday, matching the low score of the tournament. But he struggled with his ball striking for most of a final round 72, although he gave himself

Bradley, Dufner extend PGA battle at East Lake

Spectators who attended both the PGA Championship and the first round of the Tour Championship might have wondered if they had been transported back in time five weeks to Atlanta Athletic Club.

The opening round ended with **Keegan Bradley** and **Jason Dufner** at the top of the leader board, just as they were at the conclusion of the PGA Championship. Bradley fired a 6-under 64 to take the first day lead at East Lake, with Dufner among a group tied for second at 66.

As a result, the two were paired together in the final group of the second round, but neither played as well as he did the day – or the month – before. Dufner recovered from a poor start to shoot 70, but was 2-over the final two days and tied for 13th at 278. Bradley never got anything going after his opening 64 and played his final 54 holes in 3-over to tie for 11th at 277, carding a 71 in his PGA reprise with Dufner. 🏌️

a chance with an outstanding approach shot for a birdie at the 17th.

Choi also birdied the 17th with a chip-in from long range, but was hurt by two bogeys and a double bogey in a stretch from 8 to 13. A double bogey on the 8th knocked Choi out of a share for the lead, but he tried to rally with three birdies over his final seven holes.

Jason Day, Scott and Augusta native **Charles Howell** tied for 6th at 274. Day, a runner-up in both the Masters and U.S.

Open, closed within one of the lead when he birdied 15, but closed with bogeys at 17 and 18 for a final round 71. Scott rallied with a 68 after losing the lead the previous day with a 74, but was never a serious contender in the final round.

Howell opened the final round with back-to-back bogeys, but gave himself a chance with an eagle at the 15th. A birdie at the 18th would have gotten him into the playoff, but he bogeyed the hole for a 68. 🏌️

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Big changes for Georgia's top college teams

Jaguars, Bulldogs feature new faces in lineups

By Mike Blum

For all three of Georgia's national caliber golf programs, there will be a whole lot of new faces in the lineup for the 2011-12 season.

Augusta State, which won back-to-back NCAA Championships in 2010 and '11, lost all five starters plus its coach. **Georgia**, which lost to the Jaguars in the NCAA match play finals last season, has to replace its three senior standouts off the squad. **Georgia Tech**, which also lost to Augusta in match play, graduated three of its starters, and began its Fall campaign with the two returning starters on the sidelines.

Augusta State

After winning their second straight NCAA title in Oklahoma in June, the Jaguars bid goodbye to all five starters plus coach **Josh Gregory**, who returned to SMU, his alma mater, to become head coach there.

COLLEGE Preview

Kevin McPherson, formerly the women's head coach and Gregory's assistant, takes over with a mostly new roster of players. In its Fall opener at Olympia Fields outside Chicago, Augusta tied for 10th in a 15-team field, with the team's highest finisher tying for 23rd.

Macon's **Taylor Floyd**, a key member of the 2010 NCAA champions, returned to the lineup after losing his starting role last season, but struggled in the opener. Savannah's **Brendan Gillins**, made his first start since his freshman season, and the senior turned in a respectable effort, tying for 30th at 221, two strokes behind **Alex Wennstrom**, who tied for 23rd at 219.

Also in the lineup for the Jaguars was Alpharetta's **Derek Chang**, who red-shirted last year after transferring from Minnesota. Like Floyd, Chang finished well back in his first start for the Jaguars.

Shawn Yim, a sophomore from Buford, and **Cody Shafer**, a freshman from Evans, will be looking to move into the lineup as McPherson tries to replace a talented group that captured two NCAA titles.

The Jaguars have three tournaments

on their schedule this month, beginning with the Brickyard Collegiate in Macon Oct. 7-9.

Georgia

The Bulldogs lost their top three players, including two of the program's all-time greats, but return the reigning British Amateur champion. After a strong showing in the NCAA's last season, **Bryden Macpherson** captured the British Amateur title, and moves up from the lower part of Georgia's lineup to the No. 1 slot this season.

Georgia opened its season last month in the annual Carpet Capital Collegiate at The Farm in Rocky Face, finishing 7th, well behind Auburn's winning total. Macpherson tied for 3rd at 5-under 211, but Georgia had no other player in the top 25.

Freshman **Nicholas Reach** was T27 at 220 in his Georgia debut. Albany's **T.J. Mitchell**, along with Macpherson the lone juniors on the senior-less squad, was T35 at 223. Sophomore **Michael Cromie** was T39 at 224 after an opening 69, with Valdosta's **Sepp Straka**, the second freshman starter in the lineup, well back in his first college start.

The Bulldogs traveled to Newport, R.I., to compete in the Adams Cup against a weak field and placed second, nine strokes behind Central Florida. Georgia led UCF by three going to the final round, but three Central Florida golfers shot 68 or better, while only one Bulldog broke par.

Georgia, which shot 275 in the second round, closed with 287 for a 13-under 851 total. Macpherson again led the 'Dogs, tying for 2nd at 10-under 206 with scores of 66-68 the final two rounds. He was two strokes behind the medalist from UCF.

Reach opened with a 67 and was 7th at 214, with Mitchell T14 at 217, including a second round 69. Straka and Cromie both finished at 221, with Straka carding a second round 68.

Also on the Georgia squad are **Sam Straka**, Sepp's twin brother, sophomore **Brian Carter** from Augusta and Duluth's **Mookie DeMoss**, a transfer from Mercer. The Bulldogs are the defending champions in the Brickyard tournament.



Georgia Tech

When the Yellow Jackets opened their Fall schedule in the Carpet Capital, their lineup did not include 2010-11 starters **James White** and **Richy Werenski**, who both failed to crack the top five in the team's arduous qualifying process.

White, a senior from Acworth who earned All-America honors last season, quickly returned to the lineup, which included two freshmen and two sophomores in the opener, all from Georgia.

Woodstock's **Anders Albertson** and **Ollie Schniederjans**, White's high school teammate at Harrison, enjoyed impressive freshman debuts in the Carpet Capital, with Albertson shooting 5-under 67 the final day to tie for 3rd at 211. Schniederjans also closed with a 67 to tie for 11th at 214, coming back from a second round 77.

Leading the way for Tech the final day was sophomore **Seth Reeves** from Duluth, who fired a 65, cutting 18 strokes off his score the previous day. The Jackets closed with a 14-under 274, the best score of the tournament, to move up to 3rd at 857, six behind Auburn's winning total.

Also in the lineup for the Yellow Jackets was **Drew Czuchry**, a transfer from Akron. Czuchry, who was low for Tech the first day with a 69, is from the community of Auburn. **Bo Andrews**, a redshirt sophomore from North Carolina, was the lone non-Georgian in the lineup.

White was back in action in the Conference Challenge in Iowa, sharing team medalist honors with Albertson.

Both tied for 18th at 220, with the Jackets 8th in the 15-team field at 889, a distant 30 shots behind Arkansas. Reeves played well in the first (71) and third (73) rounds, but suffered through a nightmarish day in terrible weather in between. Schniederjans was also in the lineup, but had a rough three days.

Georgia Tech will host a second event this Fall, the U.S. Collegiate Championship at Golf Club of Georgia in Alpharetta. The tournament will be played Oct. 23-25.



Kennesaw State

If the Owls are going to make their mark at the national level, this will be the year. Kennesaw won its conference title last year and advanced beyond Regionals into the NCAA Championship for the first time. The Owls return the team's top two players and four of the five starters from the Sun Belt championship squad.

Leading the way are seniors **Matt Nagy** of Buena Vista and Sweden's **Jeff Karlsson**, who are both ranked among the top players in the country. In the Carpet Capital, Nagy tied for 17th at 216, with Karlsson T25 at 219. Sophomore **Jonathan Klotz** of Columbus was another shot back at 220, with junior **Ben Greene** of Duluth T30 at 224. Freshman **Austin Vick** of Evans grabbed the 5th spot, but struggled in his first college tournament.

The Owls were 11th in the Conference Challenge, five shots behind Tech with an 894 total. Nagy opened with a 68 and tied for 13th at 218, with Karlsson T22 at 221. Junior **Sam Curtis** of Calhoun, a returning starter, and

[See College preview, page 19]

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Savannah Harbor a standout resort layout

Legends of Golf host friendly to non-pros

By Mike Blum

For a city that is among Georgia's most popular destination locations, Savannah lacked a top notch resort-oriented golf course once its venerable resort facility starting showing its age around two decades ago.

When the Georgia Open moved from its long time home at the Sheraton Savannah Resort after the 1993 tournament, that symbolically signaled an end to the city's days as a golf resort destination.

But it wasn't long before Savannah got back in the resort game with a course that attracted national attention within a handful of years after its arrival.

The Westin Savannah Golf Resort opened in late 1999, and by 2003 was the host site of one of the most prominent events on the Champions Tour – the Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf.

Next year's tournament will mark the 10th at Savannah Harbor, and the course has become one of the most well received on the Champions Tour, with the event finding a home on Georgia's southeast coast after a decade of moves from Austin, Texas, to the southern California desert to northeast Florida.

The tournament is one of a small number of Champions Tour events to be televised by one of the broadcast networks (CBS). That exposure has drawn golfers from far and wide to the outstanding Bob Cupp layout, which has proven to be a worthy site for a tour event, as well as a playable and thoroughly enjoyable course for both its resort guests and local golfers.

Dana Schultz, the General Manager at

Savannah Harbor, says the course gets "quite a bit of play" from visitors who watched the network broadcast "and just saw the players having fun."

The Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf has gone back to its popular team format after being played as an individual stroke play event the first five years it was held at Savannah Harbor.

The course has held up very well against the top Champions Tour players, only once yielding an individual winning score lower than 11-under for 54 holes, several strokes higher than the scores required to win most weeks among the over-50 set.

While Savannah Harbor has proven to be a reasonable test for the Champions Tour players, it is not an overly demanding layout for the average player, and is very easy on both the eyes and feet.

Located on Hutchinson Island just beneath Talmadge Memorial Bridge, Savannah Harbor offers all sorts of wonderful views, including some of downtown Savannah, which is just across the Back River from the course.

The marshland setting is unique among courses in the city, with the marsh bordering most of the holes and providing some splendid scenery. Your appreciation for the natural beauty may diminish slightly if your ball happens to wind up in the tall native grasses or marshy areas that dot Cupp's layout.

With no development on the course, which is compact and has virtually no changes in elevation, Savannah Harbor is an easy walk for both players and tournament spectators. It's also just a short walk

from the Westin Resort, with downtown Savannah a short boat hop across the river.

As would be expected from a course that hosts a tour event, the conditions at Savannah Harbor are consistently first rate, with the course overseeding in November to keep it green during the Winter months and for the tournament, which is held in mid-to-late April each year.

Cupp, an Atlanta-based course designer, is one of the country's most respected golf course architects. His designs span the country, from Oregon (Pumpkin Ridge, Sunriver Resort) to Arizona (TPC at Starr Pass) to New Jersey (Liberty National) to top courses all over the South (Old Waverly in Mississippi, Legends Club in Tennessee, Greystone in Alabama).

Cupp's work in the state includes two of the original courses at Reynolds Plantation (Plantation and Reynolds Landing, formerly Port Armor); Ansley Golf Club's Settindown Creek; Marietta CC; Jennings Mill and Hawk's Ridge.

Savannah Harbor, which he designed with some consulting assistance from the late Sam Snead, is among his best works, evidenced by its adaptability in comfortably accommodating both tour events and regular guest play.

From the very tips, the course can play in excess of 7,200 yards, with the Gold tees around 6,600 and the Silver a little over 6,000. There is also a combination member set of tees at 6,325. The forward tees are listed at 5,261. The Black tees are rated at 74.8/138, with the Golds 72.2/133; the member tees 70.7/130 and the Silver 69.5/125. The ladies tees are 71.0/125.

Other than a few early bunker tweaks made in preparation for the Champions

Tour pros, the course has changed little since it opened, with the nines reversed early on to conform with the tournament routing. The original 9th hole was much more suitable as a tournament finishing hole than the original 18th, necessitating the change.

As a result, Savannah Harbor features some of its most dangerous holes on the opening nine, while finishing with a tough trio – two lengthy par 4s surrounding the most dangerous of the par 3s.

Cupp has provided mostly generous fairways, with no forced carries of consequence and almost all the trouble relatively removed from play. The marsh areas are mainly a concern around the greens, most notably on holes 6 and 7.

With the marsh just off the green on the par-4 sixth, the approach shot is among the scariest on the course. The marsh hugs the left side of the par-5 seventh all the way from tee to green, pinching into the landing area for the lay-up. There is bailout room on the opposite side on both holes, with Cupp offering safer avenues to the green on holes where hazards are lurking.

With an exception or two, most notably on the short par-4 opening hole, Cupp has left the approaches to almost all the greens open, with his bunker patterns varying from hole to hole. Most of the bunkers can be found on the standout group of par 5s, which are all lined by either marshes, bunkers or both, and require accuracy and length to set up scoring opportunities.

Other than 6 and 17, the par 3s and 4s do not present much in the way of danger, with a pair of short and vulnerable par 3s (8 and 15), and a par 4 that longer hitters can take a swing at driving the green (14), measuring 324 from the tips and 292 from the Gold tees.

The putting surfaces are not especially large, and are mostly gentle in nature. Some of the hole locations along the

10th anniversary Savannah Harbor hosts the Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf for the 10th time next year

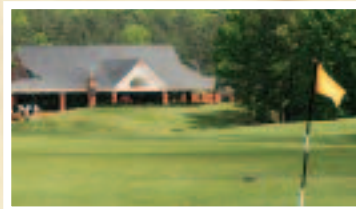
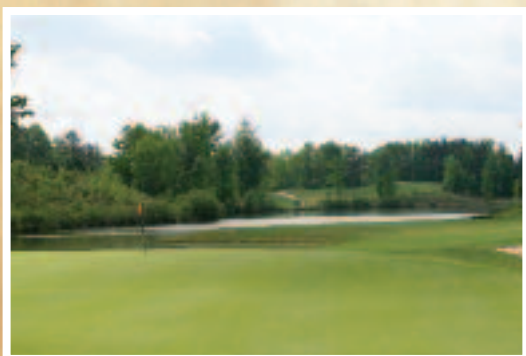
Par-4 14th hole at Savannah Harbor

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Late birdies lift Elkins to Senior PNC title

Scores first Section victory in almost 20 years

By Mike Blum

With only a few events left on the Georgia PGA's 2011 tournament schedule, it has already been a very good year for the Section's men of a certain age.

Craig Stevens and **Stephen Keppler**, who both turned 50 earlier this year, won two of the first three Section majors, and Keppler shared low Georgia PGA member honors in the Georgia Open.

Clark Spratlin, who is not that far from senior eligibility, won the first Georgia PGA event of the year and tied with Keppler for low club professional in the Georgia Open.

With Stevens, Keppler and **Sonny Skinner** all having celebrated their 50th birthdays in the past year, the Section's senior events appeared to be secure for the youngest members of that group. But youth apparently is not that much of an asset among the state's seniors.

Danny Elkins, who has been a senior for five-plus years, edged out the 51-year-old Skinner to score his first Section victory in almost two decades, capturing the E-Z-GO Georgia PGA Championship at Green Island CC in Columbus.

With the victory, Elkins will be one of six Georgia PGA members to compete in the Senior PGA Professional National Championship, played Oct. 6-9 in Virginia. The top 35 finishers in that event qualify for the 2012 Senior PGA Championship.

Elkins, 55, shot a final round 67, carding four of his seven birdies on the back nine. He trailed by four strokes as he came to the final nine, but consecutive birdies at holes 14, 15 and 16 vaulted him past a crowded group of contenders.

With his torrid finish, Elkins finished the tournament at 6-under 136 on the par-71 Green Island layout, which was the original home of the PGA Tour Southern Open from 1970 to 1990 and also hosted a Champions Tour event in 2003.

Skinner, who was the low club professional in the 2011 Senior PGA Championship, was a shot back in 2nd at 137, matching three of Elkins' four birdies on the final nine.

Mike Schlueter, bidding to become a 60-something winner of the event, held the lead for most of the final round, but

carded five bogeys on the last 10 holes and settled for 3rd at 3-under 139.

Elkins was one of the Section's top players around 20 years ago, winning the Georgia PGA Match Play Championship in 1990 and the Section Championship two years later. But other than one team event, he has been winless in the Section since, although he did take first in a recent pro-am at St. Ives that included some of the Section's top players, plus a former Hooters Tour Player of the Year.

"I haven't played much golf the last ten years," said Elkins, who co-owns and operates Georgia Golf Center in Roswell, and is the facility's Director of Instruction. "I haven't been very competitive.

"But to win now, I appreciate it even more than when I won before."

At the age of 55, Elkins decided he was

really important."

Elkins began the final round three strokes off the lead held by Schlueter, the head professional at West Pines in Douglasville, and former Atlanta CC head professional **Bill Johnstone**. Skinner and **Roger Mack** were next at 67, with **Robert Burk** of Valdosta's Stone Creek 5th at 68. Elkins and Stevens were tied for 6th at 69.

Schlueter held steady on the front nine while Johnstone and Mack both fell back. Mack carded six straight pars to open his round, but played the next six holes in 6-over. Johnstone bogeyed four of his first seven holes, but was still

"But to win now, I appreciate it even more than when I won before." —Danny Elkins

going to play more competitively this year and went about getting himself back into playing shape, shedding 25 pounds.

"That made a difference," says Elkins, who like golfers of his age, has also dealt with back issues.

Elkins has some solid showings this year in senior events, and tied for 7th in the recent Section Championship.

"In my mind, this was not unexpected," said Elkins, who admitted that his victory probably took some of his competitors by surprise. "I had been showing signs of playing better."

Elkins made his decision to increase his schedule at a less than opportune time, considering the competition.

Stevens won the Georgia Senior Open by a whopping 8 strokes and was one of just 20 club professionals to qualify for the 2011 PGA Championship. Skinner has a pair of runner-up finishes in the PGA PNC in recent years and was coming off his appearance in the U.S. Senior Open. Keppler, who did not play in the Georgia PGA Senior PNC event due to a scheduling conflict, won the Section Championship two weeks earlier.

"I wait until I'm 55 to start playing more, just at the time Sonny and Craig and Keppy turn 50," Elkins laughed. "Those guys are the cream of the crop. There's no question (beating them) is

within a shot of the lead before Elkins began his back nine birdie binge.

Burk and Schlueter were both under par on the second round through eight holes, but both suffered three bogeys on their next four holes. Through 13 holes, the quartet of Elkins, Burk, Skinner and Schlueter were all 3-under for the tournament, with Johnstone 2-under.

Elkins then responded with his three straight birdies, breaking away from everyone except Skinner, who birdied 14 and 15 but not 16.

Over two rounds, Elkins recorded 11 birdies, and he said eight of them were the result of iron shots that ended up close to hole. He began the final round by hitting his approach shot to the opening hole within a foot of the cup, but gave the stroke back when his tee shot on the par-3 second came back off the green's false front.

Birdies at two of Green Island's group of short par 4s got Elkins to 2-under on the day, but he put himself in difficult position on both 8 and 9 after what he thought were good approach shots and three-putted both for bogey.

At that point, Elkins was four behind Schlueter, who was in the final threesome, two groups behind Elkins.

Not knowing what the situation was relative to the field "is an asset for some people, and maybe it was for me," Elkins

observed. "You can't do anything about it, so I just followed my game plan and played golf."

Elkins hit it stiff again on the par-3 11th for birdie, and reached the short par-5 14th in two, giving himself an excellent eagle opportunity. He picked up another easy birdie at the short, par-4 15th, but had some indecision on the downhill, over-water, par-3 16th thanks to some wind gusts that made club selection difficult.

After settling on a club, he hit his shot exactly where he wanted in the middle of the green, not challenging the precarious right side pin position. He holed the putt of some 30 feet to take the lead for the final time, with Skinner unable to match him after birdies on both 14 and 15.

As the tournament also served as a qualifier for the PGA Senior PNC, Elkins was initially focused on the qualifying aspect, and had some incentive on that account.

Craig Hartle, formerly head professional at Settindown Creek and the Georgia Tech Club (now known as Echelon GC), had already qualified for the Senior PNC out of the Carolinas Section, and Elkins was intent on joining his good friend at nationals.

But once he got in contention for a victory, Elkins' ultimate aim changed a bit.

"I was playing to win," he said. "There's nothing better than that."



Elkins easily qualified for nationals, with the Section sending six players to Virginia this month. It will be an enjoyable experience off the course for Elkins, who will room together with Hartle that week, and will get the chance to indulge one of his interests.

A Civil War history major in college, Elkins will be near where the subject of his graduating thesis lived, and said that is "kind of cool."

Joining Elkins in Virginia will be Skinner, Burk, **Billy Jack**, Stevens, **Russ Davis** and **Wyatt Detmer**. Schlueter elected not to enter the PNC qualifier.

Burk tied for 4th at 141 after a final round 73. Jack, Davis and Stevens all tied at 142. Jack, the head professional at St. Ives, shot 70-72. Davis, the Director of Instruction at Cherokee Town & CC, birdied holes 14, 15 and 16 for a second straight 71. Stevens was in contention midway through the round, but slipped to a 73 after bogeys at 9, 11 and 12.

Detmer, the head professional at Orchard Hills, got the final spot in a playoff over Willow Lake head professional **Gregg Wolff** after both finished at 1-over 143. Detmer birdied the 18th hole for a 70 in the final round, while Wolff bogeyed the finishing hole to shoot 71. 🍷

College preview

[Continued from page 14]

freshman **Jimmy Beck** of Columbus both made their season debuts. The Owls close out their Fall schedule with two events on the South Carolina coast.

Georgia Southern

The Eagles also won their conference championship last season, claiming the Southern Conference title. The team graduated two of its top players, and brought in a large freshman class, with all five signees from Georgia.

Two of them — **Scott Wolfes** of St. Simons Island and **Charlie Martin** of LaGrange — led the Eagles in their Fall opener in Florence, S.C., tying for 12th individually with scores of 1-under 215 on the course where the conference tournament was held. Georgia Southern finished 10th in the 15-team field, but managed to post the low score of the second round (282).

Lewis Gruber, the team's lone senior, is back in the lineup, with redshirt freshman **Matthew Mierzejewski** (South Forsyth HS) also getting a start. **Henry Mabbett** (Griffin), **Zach Hartmann** (St. Simons)

and **Caleb Morris** (Metter) are the Eagles' other three freshman recruits. Sophomores **Will Evans** of McDonough and **T.J. Holley** of Dublin are part of a sizeable roster that should produce some competition within the team.

The Eagles posted a strong 3rd place finish in their second Fall start in Nashville, shooting 4-under 848 to finish just four strokes behind Middle Tennessee. Gruber closed with a 68 to place 5th at 209, with Wolfes T6 at 210 after three rounds of par or better. Martin was 21st at 215.

The Eagles play in the Atlanta area this month, competing in an event hosted by Georgia State at Berkeley Hills CC in Duluth.

Mercer

The Bears first tournament of the Fall came to an unusual ending, when the threat of a bee swarm cancelled the final round of a two-day, 54-hole event in Ft. Worth. A player accidentally disturbed a hive a beekeeper estimated at 75,000 bees and he and others were stung. The beekeeper determined there was a serious danger to the players and the final round was halted.

Hans Reimer led the Bears, shooting

68 in the second round for a 2-under 142 total and a tie for 3rd. Mercer tied for 9th in the 19-team field with a 603 total.

Junior **Thomas Holmes** of Macon and freshman **John Wilson Gordon** of Rochelle were in the lineup for the Bears. Senior **Josh Cone** of Thomasville, the team's top player last year, and returning starter **John Gregory Joseph** of Valdosta did not start in the Bears' opener.

Mercer has only three events on its Fall schedule, hosting the Brickyard Collegiate Oct. 7-9 and playing at Kiawah Island's Ocean Course a week later.

Georgia State

The Panthers struggled in their first start of the Fall, tying for 12th in the 14-team field in Nashville. Alpharetta sophomore **Tyler Gruca** led Georgia State with a 221 total to tie for 43rd. Freshman **Davin White** of Griffin was next for the Panthers at 224 in his college debut.

Senior **Jared Cagle** of Gainesville was also in the lineup for Georgia State, with Cagle's younger brother Grant looking for playing time after seeing action last year as a redshirt freshman.

The Panthers host a tournament at Berkeley Hills in Duluth Oct. 17-18. 🍷



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TRICON GOLF

Road to 2012 PGA begins for Georgia pros

Settindown Creek to host PNC qualifier

By Mike Blum

One of the primary goals for any PGA club professional is to qualify for a spot in the PGA Championship.

Only 20 PGA professionals get that opportunity each year among the thousands of Section members who take their shot at competing in one of golf's four major championships.

For members of the Georgia Section of the PGA, that process begins later this month at Ansley Golf Club's Settindown Creek in Roswell, with approximately 130 Georgia PGA members competing in the Section's qualifier for the 2012 PGA Professional National Championship.

The PNC is the national championship for the country's club professionals, and will be played next year at the Bayonet Black Horse course in Seaside, Calif. Next year's tournament is scheduled for June 24-27, one week after the U.S. Open is played at nearby Olympic Club in San Francisco.

Next year's PNC will again begin on Sunday and end on Wednesday to increase the television exposure for the event, which will be the only live tournament on Golf Channel for the final three rounds.

The Georgia PGA sent nine of its members to the 2011 PNC in Hershey, Pa., and will have nine members in next year's field.

Every Georgia PGA player of note will be in the field with one notable exception. The lone missing name among the leaders in the Section's points standings is recent Georgia PGA Championship winner **Stephen Keppler**, who was unable to play at Settindown Creek due to a scheduling conflict.

Ordinarily, the Section champion from the Georgia PGA earns an automatic berth in the PGA PNC. But since Keppler did not sign up for the Section's qualifier, he is not eligible to compete in the 2012 PNC.

Craig Stevens was the lone Georgia PGA member to make it to the recent 2011 PGA Championship at Atlanta Athletic Club. Any Georgia PGA member who is among the 20 qualifiers for next year's PGA Championship will be playing relatively close to home, with the 2012 PGA scheduled for the Ocean Course on South Carolina's Kiawah Island.

Because the Georgia PGA Professional Championship is essentially a qualifying

event, it has offered an opportunity for some of the Section's unheralded players to enjoy success in tournament play that has been denied them by a relatively small group comprising the Section's elite players.

Craig Stevens, Tim Weinhart, Jeff Hull and Matt Peterson, four of the Section's top players, have won the last five PNC qualifiers (Weinhart was the 2006 and '09 champion, both at Chicopee Woods). But a number of Georgia PGA members who lack the impressive playing resumes of that quartet have joined them in the PGA PNC.

Skinner, Hull and Weinhart were among the nine Georgia PGA members who qualified for the 2011 PGA PNC, along with Section tournament winners **Sonny Skinner, Bill Murchison and Shawn Koch**.

Joining them in Hershey, Pa., earlier this year were three players who have no Section titles in their backgrounds, although one of them has become a familiar face at the national level.

Kevin Roman, an instructor at Cherokee Town & CC, has not competed a great deal in Section events, but has been a consistent performer in the Section PNC qualifier, making it to the PGA PNC each of the last three years.

Gary Cressend, the Director of Instruction at Augusta CC, has a number of top finishes in Georgia PGA events in recent years, but his tie for 4th in last year's PNC qualifier at The Manor was one of his best, and earned him a spot in the 2011 PNC.

The big surprise last year was the play of Marietta instructor **Ted Fort**, a veteran Section member whose 3rd place showing at The Manor was his best in one of the Georgia PGA's points events.

Each year, at least one or two of the players who qualify for the PNC are not among the group whose names are almost always found in or near the lead in the Section's most prominent events.

Among those who qualified in 2009 at Chicopee Woods for the 2010 PNC were Weinhart, who won the event for a second time, along with Hull, Skinner, **Clark Spratlin** and **Greg Lee**, with the latter quartet having 24 PNC starts among them. The qualifiers from the Section PNC also included senior **Wyatt Detmer**, who made his first ever PGA PNC



appearance, along with fellow "rookies" **Bill Price** and **Shea Stancil**.

Savannah area pros **C.W. Canfield** and **Josh Williams** were the first time Georgia PGA qualifiers in 2008 at Crystal Lake, along with Rivermont head professional **Matthew Evans**, who has been an occasional tournament contender in recent years.

Randy Brooks, who will have a home course advantage as the head professional at Settindown Creek, qualified in 2007 along with veteran Atlanta area teaching professional **Brian Puterbaugh**, who was the Section's PNC qualifier champion in 1999 at Lake Oconee's Cuscowilla GC.

Standard Club head professional **Scott Curiel** qualified in 2006 at Chicopee Woods, with Sea Island GC instructor **Victor deSola** among those making it to nationals in '05 at Barnsley Gardens.

Stevens, Weinhart and Keppler have been the Georgia PGA's most frequent qualifiers for the PNC in recent years, with Stevens competing at nationals 14 times and Weinhart and Keppler making 13 appearances each. Stevens won the Section qualifier in 2001 at Atlanta National and in '03 at Barnsley Gardens.

Spratlin has competed in the PGA PNC eight times, with 2004 Georgia PNC winner Lee a six-time qualifier. Hull and Skinner have made five starts each, with Skinner twice finishing as runner-up at nationals, including 2010

in Indiana and 2008 at Lake Oconee's Reynolds Plantation.

The Georgia PGA professionals will be competing on one of the state's most respected courses, with Settindown Creek having served as host of a number of state and national events.

The course has been the site of the Nike (now Nationwide) Tour Championship, numerous U.S. Open sectional qualifiers, a U.S. Women's Amateur and an NCAA Regional championship. Both the Georgia Open and Georgia Amateur have been held at Settindown Creek, along with other Georgia PGA and GSGA events.

Settindown Creek can play as long as 7,300 yards from the tips with a Course Rating/Slope of 76.0/150, but will probably play closer to the Gold tee yardage, which is around 7,000 yards and rated at 74.6/146.

The course presents a variety of challenges, with plenty of hazards in play, typically narrow landing areas and some demanding greens complexes. Scores have been surprisingly low during some of the recent U.S. Open qualifiers, in part because of the absence of rough, but Settindown proved to be a serious test when it hosted the Georgia Open in 2003 and the Georgia Amateur in '07.

The Georgia PGA held its Match Play Championship at Settindown Creek in 2004, with Spratlin taking the title and Weinhart and Lee both reaching the semifinals. 🏌️

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Georgia PGA looks to end losing streak

GSGA has 4 straight wins in Peters Cup

By Mike Blum

The Georgia PGA and the Georgia State Golf Association have been holding annual or biennial matches between the two organizations dating back to 1962.

The matches changed from annual to biennial after the 1987 competition, with the Georgia PGA retaining an advantage that began when the club professionals won seven of the first nine matches.

Peters Cup PREVIEW

This will be the 38th competition between the state golf organizations, with the Georgia PGA ahead in the series 19 ½ to 16 ½. The result of the 1977 match is listed as unknown by both sides.

After the change to playing every other year, the Georgia PGA expanded its lead a bit, winning four of seven matches from 1989 to 2001, taking three of four at Golf Club of Georgia from 1995 to 2001.

The GSGA pulled out a 12 ½ - 11 ½ comeback victory at Atlanta National in '03, and the state's amateurs haven't lost since. The venue moved to the nearby Capital City Club Crabapple Course in 2005, and the GSGA has dominated since, winning the last three

competitions by scores of 15-9, 16 ½ - 7 ½ and 13 ½ - 10 ½.

Originally known as the Challenge Cup, the event's name was changed to the Billy Peters Cup prior to the 2007 matches, honoring one of the most beloved figures in Georgia golf. This year's competition is scheduled for Oct. 16-17.

Needless to say, the Georgia PGA is intent on a little payback, and will field a team that is significantly stronger in an area that has been a weakness in recent years.

"Given when has happened, we want it really bad," says

Clark Spratlin, an instructor at Georgia

Golf Center and a veteran member of the Georgia PGA side in the matches after competing in one competition as an amateur.

Spratlin, who was a participant on winning teams prior to 2003, admits the Georgia PGA has "taken a beating" in recent years. "It's a big deal. We really want to win this thing."

Layne Williams, the GSGA's Senior Director of Rules and Competition, says he has "no idea, I really don't," why GSGA teams have been so successful in recent years. "It may be cyclical."

The GSGA has fielded some strong teams in recent years, but several players who have played key roles on those squads will not be playing when the two teams meet this month.

Among the 16 players competing for the GSGA will be six first time participants in the Peters Cup. Among them are Roswell's **Chris Chuck** and Savannah's **Scott Weeks**, two of four GSGA team members who made it to match play in the recent U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship.

Former GSGA Public Links champion **Mark Sweeney** of Monroe, a third place finisher in this year's GSGA Mid-Amateur Championship, is making his Peters Cup debut, as is **Matt Russell**, a runner-up in the recent GSGA Public Links Championship. The fifth "rookie" among the GSGA's under-50 players is Kennesaw's **Christian Raynor**.

Veterans **David Noll**, **Mark Strickland**, **Dave Womack**, **Michael Standard**, **Billy Mitchell** and former Georgia club professional **Adam Thomas** have all competed in the Peters Cup, as has **Chris Hall**, who is expected to round out the team's under-50 roster. Noll, Strickland and Mitchell won the GSGA's three biggest tournaments this year.

Doug Hanzel, **Jack Hall** and **Bill Leonard** again give the GSGA team a strong senior group, with GSGA Senior Championship winner **Jimmy Jackson** making his first Peters Cup start.

The GSGA has done very well in senior matches in recent years, sweeping all six in 2007. But three of the Georgia PGA's best players have turned 50 in the past year, and two of them will be competing as seniors in this month's

Peters Cup.

Sonny Skinner and **Craig Stevens** will be the Georgia PGA's two seniors in the 50-to-54 category, with **Danny Elkins** and **Ted Meier** the teams 55-and-over participants.

Stephen Keppler, the third top Georgia PGA player to recently turn 50, will continue to compete as a non-senior, and is coming off a recent victory in the Georgia PGA Section Championship, his fourth title in the event and first since 1996.

Other veteran members of the Georgia PGA team are **Tim Weinhart**, **Jeff Hull** and **Shawn Koch**. **Winston Trively** and **David Potts** made their first Peters Cup appearances in 2009. Weinhart will be playing in the PGA Tour McGladrey Classic, and if he makes the cut, will miss at least the first day of the Peters Cup, which consists of eight four-ball matches.

The Georgia PGA's first timers are **Bill Murchison** and **Michael Parrott**, with the possibility that another rookie or two could join them on the squad. The Georgia PGA team was not finalized until after its Match Play Championship Oct. 3-5, with potential rookie **Matthew Evans** leading past Peters Cup participant **Brian Dixon** in a competition for the final qualifying spot.

Two captain's choices will be added to the team, with several players under consideration for the two spots.

In each of their three victories at Capital City Crabapple, the GSGA has led after the first day of team matches by increasing margins. It was 4 ½ - 3 ½ after the first day in 2005, 5 ½ - 2 ½ in '07 and a whopping 6 ½ - 1 ½ in '09. The Georgia PGA managed just a half point in the six matches among the non-seniors, with team's oldest players – **DeWitt Weaver** and **Mike Schlueter** – the only ones to manage a full point.

The GSGA dominated second day singles play in both '05 and '07, outscoring the Georgia PGA by margins of 10 ½ - 5 ½ and 11-5 before the club pros rebounded to take the '09 singles 9-7. Unfortunately for the Georgia PGA, the GSGA had built up such a sizeable lead after the four-ball matches that the singles success of the club pros was nullified. 🏌️



David Noll



Clark Spratlin



Tim Weinhart

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Georgians rank high on Nationwide Tour

Broadaway, Castro in top 25; List, Claxton close

By Mike Blum

With four events left on the Nationwide Tour schedule before the season-ending Tour Championship in Charleston, S.C., late this month, four players with Georgia ties were inside the top 25 on the money list, the ticket to a PGA Tour card for 2012.



Roberto Castro

Three other players were in the top 60, the cutoff for retaining exempt status on tour next year, with several others between 61 and 100, which provides limited status for 2012.

The October schedule for the Nationwide Tour includes stops in Chattanooga, Miami and Jacksonville before the season ends Oct. 27-30 at the Daniel Island Club in Charleston, S.C..

Leading the way is former UGA golfer **Erik Compton**, who has locked up a spot on the PGA Tour next year. Although the 32-year-old Compton has made a number of starts on the PGA Tour over the past decade through sponsor exemptions, he will be a rookie in 2012.

Compton, mostly known as a double heart transplant survivor, has enjoyed his best year as a professional in 2011, and

was 8th on the money list. He scored his first Nationwide Tour win in Mexico and posted a pair of ties for 4th in Panama and California. He had his PGA Tour card for next year secured after his win in June, and has taken it relatively easy since, working in a few starts on the PGA Tour, where he has made the cut in five of six appearances this year.

Augusta native **Scott Brown** was 15th on the strength of four top-3 finishes this season, ending up no more than two shots behind the winner in all four tournaments, the most recent coming last month outside Pittsburgh. Brown, 28 and in his second season on the Nationwide Tour, played his college golf at USC-Aiken and had a huge season on the Tar Heel (now eGolf) Tour before moving up to the Nationwide Tour.

Albany's **Josh Broadaway**, who has the distinction of being pro golf's only cross-handed player, is having his best season in his seventh year on the Nationwide Tour. Until this year, Broadaway had finished higher than 70th just once in his career, but stood at 17 with four top 10s, three top-5s among them. Broadaway notched nine top 10s in 2008, when he placed 36th on the money list.

Broadaway, 33, was 2nd among the pros in Columbus, Ohio, closing with a 65 to nearly overtake recent UGA golfer **Harris English**, who won the event as an amateur. Earlier this year, Broadaway made his first ever PGA Tour start, Monday qualifying for the Honda Classic. He made the cut, tying for 43rd.

Roberto Castro, who is playing his first full Nationwide Tour season, was 18th in earnings, turning in a series of strong showings around a number of missed cuts. In his first 20 starts, Castro, a recent Georgia Tech standout from Alpharetta, missed eight cuts but finished no worse than 19th in all but one of the tournaments in which he made it to the weekend. Castro, who lost in a playoff to Jhonattan Vegas in Wichita last year to earn status on the tour, has a pair of ties for 4th, shooting 65 in the final round in the BMW event in Greenville, S.C., and in Mexico. He leads the tour in final round scoring average (67.2) and in ball striking, which factors in both driving and greens in regulation stats.

Recent Clayton State golfer **Will**

Wilcox played his way onto the Nationwide Tour, as Castro did last year. Wilcox made it into the field in the Stadion Classic at UGA as a Monday qualifier and tied for 3rd in just the third Nationwide start of his young career. He added another 3rd place finish behind Compton in Mexico, but has been quiet since, dropping from inside the top 25 for most of the season to 33.

With three recent top 10s in five starts, Vidalia native **Paul Claxton** has been moving up the money list to 36 in hopes of earning a fifth shot at the PGA Tour. Claxton, 43, is in his 13th season on the Nationwide Tour, and has finished lower than 61st on the money list just once. Claxton, a former Georgia Amateur champion shortly after completing his college career at UGA, was only \$12,300 out of the top 25. The St. Simons Island resident has two career Nationwide wins and currently is 2nd on the career money list, within range of No. 1.

Ringgold's **Luke List** is in just his second Nationwide season, and as he did in his rookie year, was sliding down the money list after a strong start. List tied for 2nd early this year in a rain-shortened event in California, but missed his next four cuts and had played inconsistently since with five finishes between 15th and 21st and four more missed cuts. List, who made a name for himself during a stellar amateur career, had a chance to move into the top 25 in Boise, where he was tied for 3rd heading to the final round. But he closed with a 2-over, tied for 21st and slipped from 41 to 42 on the money list. He rebounded the next week with another strong effort in California, tying for 6th to leap back up to 27th.

Justin Bolli has been jumping back and forth between the PGA and Nationwide Tours in recent years, and is back on the Nationwide Tour after struggling in his third PGA Tour season in 2010. In three of his last four seasons on the Nationwide Tour, Bolli won a tournament and easily qualified for the PGA Tour the next year. But the former UGA walk-on got off to an awful start this year, missing five straight cuts to start the season. Since then Bolli has played consistently, shooting par or better in 40 of 44 rounds, but the former Roswell

resident has just two top 10s and two other finishes of better than 30th to show for it. He was just outside the top 60 at 61.

After four years on the PGA Tour, ex-Georgia Tech golfer **Nicholas Thompson** is also back on the Nationwide Tour, but at 64 on the money list is battling just to retain his exempt Nationwide status for 2012. Thompson has shot some extremely low scores this year but followed up an opening round 63 in Kansas City with a 76 the next day and missed the cut.

Fellow former Yellow Jacket **Matt Weibring** was 78th, splitting his time this season between the PGA and Nationwide Tours. Weibring played on the PGA Tour in 2009, but battled injuries last year and began this season on a medical extension. After enjoying minimal success in five PGA Tour starts, Weibring has focused on the Nationwide Tour of late and has a series of solid showings in recent months.

LaFayette native **John Kimbell** is also outside the top 60 at 68, not doing much since a final round 61 in Louisiana early

[See Nationwide Tour, page 25]



Paul Claxton

English loses Texas playoff

Harris English nearly claimed his first professional title in just his second start as a pro, losing in a playoff to former U.S. Amateur champion Danny Lee in a playoff in a Nationwide Tour event in Midland, Tx.

Both players hit errant tee shots on the first playoff hole, but Lee's ball deflected off a tree into a spot that gave him a chance to go at the green on the par-4 18th. He hit his second shot into a greenside bunker and got up-and-down for par. English had to pitch out from behind some trees and hit his third shot within 7 feet of the cup, but missed his par putt.

English, who won a Nationwide Tour event as an amateur in July, shot 10-under 62 in the third round to get within three strokes of the lead, and closed with a 69 to tie Lee, who came from six shots back with a final round 66. English earned \$56,700, but is still more than \$80,000 outside the top 25, which earns a spot on the 2012 PGA Tour.

Nationwide Tour

[Continued from page 24]

in the season vaulted him into a tie for 4th. Kimbell won in Valdosta as a 38-year-old rookie in 2007, and has played respectably since a sophomore slump in '08, but hasn't made a strong run at a second victory since the '09 season.

Brendan Todd, a member of Georgia's 2005 NCAA championship team, has survived a nightmare year-and-a-half that spanned the second half of 2009, all of 2010 and the first few events of this year. Todd, who won as a Nationwide rookie in '08 and made it to the PGA Tour the next year, missed 28 consecutive cuts in that stretch before a tie for 18th in Valdosta. He followed with four straight solid showings, including a T10 in the BMW event in Greenville, S.C. But since then he's missed 10 of 11 cuts, finishing outside the top 60 the one time he made it to the weekend. Todd, who has settled in Atlanta, is 93 on the money list and dropping.

At the age of 48, Duluth's **Scott Dunlap** is less than two years away from getting a shot at the Champions Tour. After six seasons on the PGA Tour from 1996-2002, Dunlap has played the

Nationwide Tour since with modest success, winning tournaments in 2004 and '08, but never coming really close to returning to the PGA Tour. Dunlap has a handful of successful showings this season, but continues to be plagued by putting woes, ranking near the very bottom of both putting stats. Dunlap was 105 in earnings, but is guaranteed some status next year thanks to his 2008 win.

Former Augusta State golfer **Major Manning**, who has battled injury problems the past few seasons, was just ahead of Dunlap at 103, with most of his earnings this season coming from a tie for 5th in Valdosta.

The two newest Nationwide Tour members are recent UGA grads English and **Russell Henley**, who made their professional debuts last month in San Jacinto, Calif. Both won Nationwide events earlier this year as amateurs and will be exempt on the tour next year if they fail to qualify for the PGA Tour.

Henley tied for 31st in his pro debut and English was 49th. Both will play out the season on the Nationwide Tour, although Henley will require sponsor exemptions because his window for turning pro and becoming an exempt player for this year expired while he was still an amateur. 📍

Savannah Harbor

[Continued from page 16]

edges can be quite daunting, with the middle of the greens almost always a good place to be.

With five par 4s in the 450-to-470 range from the tips, Savannah Harbor does not lack for length, but the course is a comfortable fit from the shorter sets of tees, although it does play its length thanks to the absence of elevation. The member tees can come in handy on some of the lengthier holes, but won't make things any easier if you don't keep your

ball in play.

In addition to the Legends of Golf, Savannah Harbor also hosts events for the Georgia PGA, GSGA and local colleges, and was the site of last year's Georgia Open. Schultz says the course also is the site "of quite a few charity events," with its peaceful setting making it a big hit with almost everyone who tees it up.

With the course and hotel having the same ownership, the two work closely in providing golf packages and other amenities to resort guests. The club also has memberships available along with its resort and daily fee play. 📍

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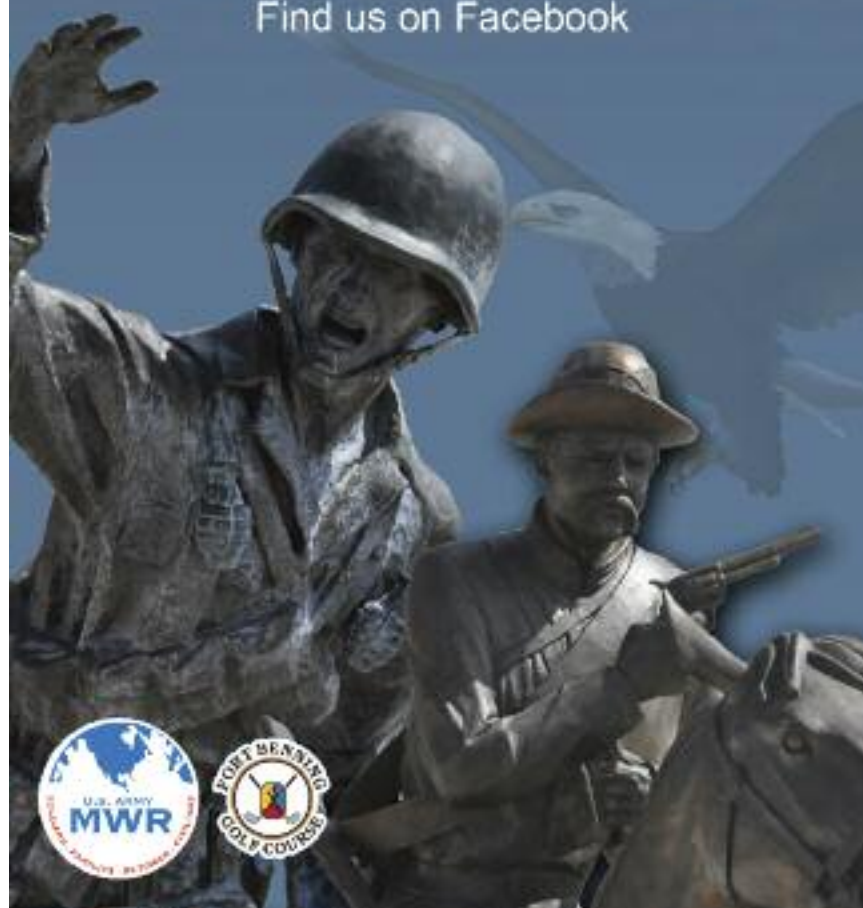
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Engler makes semis in U.S. Mid-Am

Augusta's John Engler came up one match short of giving himself a chance to play in the 2012 Masters, reaching the semifinals before being beaten in last month's U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship in Houston.

Engler won his first four matches in the championship without having to go past the 16th hole. But he lost in the semifinals 6&5 after going 16 holes that morning in the quarterfinals, where he won 3&2.

The 32-year-old Engler played one year on the PGA Tour, but had to give up his professional career after severely injuring a foot in a car wreck. He is limited in how frequently he can play golf, and elected to regain his amateur status when he was unable to continue his pro career.

Engler did not use his injury as an excuse, but had already played six rounds of golf in five days when he went out for his second match of the day in the semifinals.

The former Clemson golfer placed second in stroke play qualifying at 139, and won his first four matches decisively, ending three of them on the 16th hole and one by a 5&4 margin. But he was never in his semifinal match, losing 6&5 to Indiana's **Kenny Cook**, who went on to lose in the championship match.

Seven Georgians made it to match play in the Mid-Am, with Woodstock's **Kris Mikkelsen** reaching the third round and Augusta's **Jeff Knox** winning his first match. Mikkelsen, a former Georgia Tech golfer and ex-tour player, birdied the 18th hole to win his first match 1-up and took his next match 4&3 before losing 3&2. Knox won 2&1 in the first round after being 1-down after 11 holes, but lost 4&2 in the second round to Charlotte's **Paul Simson**, a USGA veteran.

Also advancing to match play were Roswell's **Chris Chuck**, who tied for 13th in stroke play qualifying, Dalton's **David Noll**, Savannah's **Scott Weeks** and McDonough's **Michael Standard**.

Chuck lost his first round match 2&1 to former Augusta State coach **Josh Gregory**, who lost in the second round. Noll lost his first match 1-up, while Weeks and Standard drew tough first round opponents. Weeks lost 3&2 to defending champion **Nathan Smith**, who advanced to the semifinals, and Standard was ousted 5&4 by Simson, who was seeded

4th in the match play field.

Other Georgians who qualified for the event but failed to reach match play were **Brad Jones** and **Jason McKenzie** of Augusta, **Michael Morrison** of Roswell, **Dave Womack** of McDonough, **Doug Stiles** of Athens, **Alan Hampton** of Donalsonville and **Cory Huss** of Evans.

Senior Amateur: Kennesaw's **Bill Leonard** was the lone Georgian to win a match in the U.S. Senior Amateur, played last month in Virginia. Leonard, who shot 146 to tie for 13th in qualifying, won his opening match 2&1 over **Buzz Fly** of Memphis, but lost 3&1 to Texan **John Grace** after leading 1-up after 13 holes. Leonard lost the last four holes.

Also making it to match play was Peachtree City's **Jack Kearney**, who lost his opening match 2-up. **Frank Troveto** of Greensboro, **John Davis** of Acworth, **Wayne Monroe** of Bremen and **Dave Nichols** of Roswell also competed in the event.

Pictor, Rheney excel in women's events

Brenda Pictor and Sue Rheney both had busy but successful Septembers competing in two USGA women's events, with both advancing to match play in each event and making it as far as the quarterfinals in one of them.

Pictor, a Marietta resident, made it to third round of the Senior Women's Am at the Honors Course in Chattanooga, and reached the quarterfinals the next week in the Women's Mid-Am in Virginia Beach, Va.

Rheney, who lives in Greensboro, made it to the quarters in the Senior Am, but lost her opening round match in the Mid-Am.

Pictor tied for 13th in qualifying in the Senior Am, and barely survived her first match, winning with a birdie on the second extra hole. She then knocked out USGA legend **Carole Thompson** 4&3 in the second round, winning the last three holes. But she ran into a hot player in the third round, losing 5&4 to No. 3 seed **Mina Hardin**, who was 2-under for the match.

Rheney was 4-down after nine in her opening match, but won the next four holes as well as the 18th to send the match to extra holes, where she won on the 19th. She won her next two matches 2&1 and 5&3 before losing to Hardin 2&1 in the quarters. Hardin reached the championship match, losing 2&1.



Sue Rheney



Billy Mitchell

Sea Island's **Cheryl Grigg** won her first two matches before losing 5&3 to No. 1 seed **Lisa Schlesinger**. Former Savannah resident **Nancy Smith**, now living in Florida, had to survive a playoff to make it match play, and advanced all the way to the quarters after beating the No. 2 seed in the first round.

Perry's **Mary Riley** missed the playoff by one stroke, with Lawrenceville's **Darlene Wehrnyak** also competing in the championship.

Women's Mid-Am: Pictor made a big splash against younger competition in the Mid-Am, shooting 146 to earn medalist honors by two strokes, and winning three tough matches before being ousted.

In the first round, Pictor rallied from 3-down after six holes and 2-down after 12 to defeat **Carolyn Creekmore** 1-up, taking the 18th with a birdie. She won her next two matches 2&1 and 2-up before again drawing a hot player. She lost to **Ellen Port** 7&5, with Port going on to win the championship.

Augusta's **Laura Coble** and Marietta's **Margaret Shirley** both reached the third round before being defeated. Coble, who tied for 12th in qualifying, rolled to a 6&5 win in the first round and won her next match 3&2 before losing by the same score to former college standout **Tui Selveratnam**.

Shirley, the assistant women's golf coach at Auburn, where she played several years ago, romped 7&6 in the first round and took her next match 2&1 before losing 2-up to No. 6 seed **Virginia Grimes**.

Rheney qualified for match play but lost 5&3 in the first round. Also reaching match play was Atlanta native **Wendi Patterson Golden**, who lost on the 23rd hole after being 3-up after 11.

Mitchell repeats in Public Links

Roswell's **Billy Mitchell** repeated as the GSGA Public Links champion, winning the 2011 event recently at Towne Lake Hills.

Mitchell finished with an 8-under 136 total, three strokes ahead of runner-up **Matt Russell** of Dunwoody. **Chris Minkley** of Kennesaw was 3rd at 141 with **Larry Clark** of Kingston 4th at 142. They were the only players in the field to break par for 36 holes.

All four players were tied after shooting 69 in the opening round. Russell jumped out to an early lead the final day when he eagled the par-5 second hole, and was tied with Mitchell after eight holes.

But while Mitchell was 3-under on the final 10 holes, Russell closed out his round with 10 straight pars. Russell won the Georgia PGA Atlanta Open back-to-back in 1996 and '97, the first time as an amateur, the second after turning pro. He has since regained his amateur status.

Mitchell broke away from Russell with birdies at holes 9, 10 and 11, and matched Russell par for par from there. He had 10 birdies over 36 holes, with a double bogey on the treacherous par-5 18th in the first round his only over-par hole.

Silvers takes 7th Peach State title

Savannah's **Mark Silvers** captured his 6th and 7th Peach State Golf Tour titles this season, winning back-to-back events at Crystal Lake and The Lion.

Silvers, who leads the tour money list by more than \$30,000 with \$67,765, won at The Lion in a playoff over **Chris Narramore**. Both players finished at 14-under 202, with Silvers posting scores of 70-63-69 to take home the \$10,000 winner's check.

At Crystal Lake, Silvers shot 65-66—131 to finish two strokes ahead of Forsyth's **Jay McLuen** and take home \$7,000. Duluth's **Brent Witcher** and Fayetteville's **Wade Binfield** tied for 4th at 136.

Former Georgia Tech golfer **Taylor Hall** won a Peach State Tour event in his hometown of LaGrange, posting a 4-under 140

[See Chip shots, page 28]

Cabin Bluff offers unique outdoor experience

One of the state's newest and most unique golf courses is part of an interesting retreat facility that has been around for more than 80 years, but is just getting established as a diverse destination facility that serves more than an exclusive clientele.

Cabin Bluff, located along the Cumberland River and adjacent to Cumberland Island National Seashore, has been around since the late 1920s, serving as a hunting and fishing destination for wealthy visitors to the Georgia coast looking for some relaxation and a memorable outdoor experience.

The retreat has been modernized without sacrificing its rustic roots, and has added golf to its list of amenities, featuring a Davis Love II designed layout that has managed to fit 18 holes into six corridors thanks to the use of multiple tees and six huge putting surfaces that are arrived at from different angles.

Love says that while the course was designed "in a small area, there's a great variety of holes. You feel like you're doing something that you don't normally do."

In designing the unique and scenic course, Love says he "used the nature that's there. It's one of the prettiest first holes we have anywhere."

The course offers a fun and relaxed golf experience, but golf is just a small part of what Cabin Bluff has to offer.

Hunting and fishing remain the primary draws for the retreat. Ample numbers of quail and deer can be found on the property, along with wild turkeys and the occasional wild boar. The hunting experience includes guides to provide instruction for those new to the sport, with well-trained hunting dogs providing an added element that will enhance your time in the wild, whether you've hunted all your life or for the first time.

The waters of the Cumberland River are highly regarded by avid fishermen, with a wide variety of fish to test your skills against. Charter fishing trips are available for both sport fishing and more casual outings in the inlets and estuaries just off the shores of nearby Cumberland Island.

Other available activities include a sporting clays course, tennis, a pool and



Cabin Bluff's Davis Love designed course



Hunting is a big part of Cabin Bluff



One of Cabin Bluff's rustic cabins



all manner of nature appreciation given the setting of the retreat.

For those taking in all Cabin Bluff has to offer, the facility is limited to 40 guests at a time. The main lodge has been recently updated and along with eight guest cabins provide 20 private rooms with private baths.

The cabins still have their rustic feel, but are also equipped with WIFI and satellite television.

A 1,700-square-foot conference center is well suited for company meetings and corporate retreats, and once work and/or play is concluded for the day, a Southern-style feast awaits, whether it's seafood, fried chicken or hand-rubbed and seasoned tenderloin.

Cabin Bluff is approximately 30 minutes north of Jacksonville, a short drive south of Jekyll Island and St. Simons. For information, visit www.cabinbluff.com, or call 912-729-5960. 📞

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Connelly wins 4th GPGA Junior title

Justin Connelly of McDonough collected his fourth win this season on the Georgia PGA Junior Tour, taking last month's event at Kinderlou Forest in Valdosta by a 5-stroke margin.

Connelly shot 2-under 142 at Kinderlou, the host of an annual event on the Nationwide Tour. He posted scores of 70 and 72. **Andrew Eunice** of Moultrie was 2nd at 147, with **Ajay Patel** of Hahira and **Griffin Joyner** of Kathleen tying for 3rd at 150.

Jared Brooks of Clarkesville and **Tripp Talley** of Valdosta tied for first in the 14-15

age group at 153, with **Brett Barron** of Suwanee 3rd at 155. **Spencer Jordan** of

Statesboro was the 11-13 boys winner at 76-73—149.

Megan Carter of Blackshear was the girls overall winner, taking a playoff over **Darby Gentry** of Braselton. Both players shot 167, with Carter taking first in the 11-14 age group and Gentry the 15-18 winner.

The Georgia PGA Junior Tour plays its final regular event of 2011 Oct. 22-23 at the Georgia Club. The Tour Championship is scheduled for Dec. 10-11 at Sea Island GC.

Pro-Junior: A team from Ansley Golf Club's Settindown Creek won the Georgia PGA Pro-Junior Championship, played recently at the Lake View course at Callaway Gardens.

The winning Settindown Creek team shot 14-under 56 to win the gross division. Finishing second at 62 was Overlook Links in LaGrange, with that team finishing low net. Doublegate in Albany was 3rd at 64.

Representing the Settindown Creek team were pro **Mark Harrell** and juniors **Max Weyrich**, **Garrett Bernhardt** and **Adam Wright**. **Robert Sabia** was the pro for the Overlook Links team, with **Matt Caraway**, **Steven Donald** and **Patrick Strickland** the team's three juniors.

Stackhouse second in AJGA Girls

Riverdale's Mariah Stackhouse placed second in the AJGA Girls Championship, played last month at the Furman University Course in Greenville, S.C.

Harman led by five strokes after 54 holes, but got off to a poor start the final day while Blaum closed with a 66, playing the back nine in 4-under. Harman eagled the 16th and birdied the 17th in the final round, but came up just short.

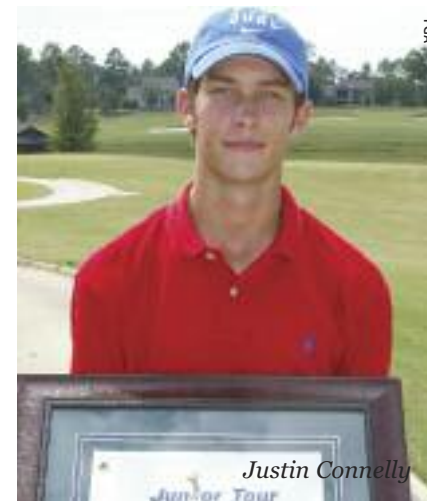
Augusta's **Scott Parel** tied for 10th at 275.

Former Norcross resident **Reid Edstrom** tied for 6th in a Hooters tournament in Elgin, S.C., finishing four behind the winner at 19-under 269.

eGolf Tour: Two ex-Georgia Tech golfers – **Chesson Hadley** and **Taylor Hall** – tied for 3rd in a rain-shortened eGolf Tour event in Concord, N.C. Both shot 133 for 36 holes to finish one shot out of a playoff. 🏆



Megan Carter



Justin Connelly

Stackhouse is the 10th ranked girls junior, with two wins and two runner-up finishes this year, including a tie for 2nd in the PGA Junior Championship recently. Stackhouse shot even par 216 at Furman, closing with a 70 to move up from 10th place. She finished four strokes behind the winner.

Roswell's **Rinko Mitsunaga** tied for 6th at Furman with a 219 total. She was 2nd after 36 holes, opening with scores of 71-69, but fell back the final day with a 79.

Junior Solheim Cup: Stackhouse was one of the two Georgians to represent the U.S. in the Junior Solheim Cup, played in Ireland just before the Solheim Cup.

Joining Stackhouse on the team was Milledgeville's **Ashlan Ramsey**, who hit one of the most important shots of the tournament.

In her singles match on the second day of competition, Ramsey hit her tee shot on the par-3 18th hole within a foot of the cup for a birdie to earn a half. That half point helped the U.S. to a 12-12 tie, as the Americans retained the cup by virtue of their win in the U.S. in 2009.

Stackhouse won both her team matches the first day, but lost in singles. Ramsey went 0-1-1 in her two team matches, with the U.S. trailing 7-5 going into the singles, which they won by a 7-5 margin to tie the match.

Baek, Haigwood win SJGT events

Ji Eun Baek of Newnan won the girls division of a recent Southeastern Junior Golf Tour event played at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail Cambrian Ridge in Greenville, Ala. Baek shot 158 for 36 holes to finish one ahead of Valdosta's **Katie Dalton**.

Roswell's **Jessica Haigwood** won an SJGT tournament at the RTJ Golf Trail Lakewood course in Point Clear, Ala., firing a 69 in the second round for a 144 total and a 2-stroke victory. Haigwood trailed by six strokes after an opening 75. **Jordan Daniel** of Newnan was 2nd in girls 12-14 at 155.

Albany's **Tyler Joiner** was the lone Georgia winner in an SJGT tournament at the Country Club of Columbus. Joiner shot 75-74—149 to win the boys 14-15 division by three shots over Atlanta's **Jack Larkin**.

Tying for 2nd in boys 15-19 were **Parker Derby** of Columbus and **Preston Heyward** of Duluth, who both posted 148 totals. In the girls division, **Annie Swords** of Newnan was 2nd at 156, with **Eunice Yi** of Evans and **Taylor Allen** of Lawrenceville tying for 3rd at 159.

Mallonnee, Barger win at Highland Walk

Nathan Mallonee of Lexington and **Hannah Barger** of Elberton were the boys and girls winners of a Georgia State Parks Junior Tour event at Highland Walk in Royston.

Mallonee shot 70-74—144 to finish two strokes ahead of Albany's **Jacob Joiner** in the 14-19 age group. Barger picked up her fourth tournament title in four attempts on the Georgia Junior Tour this year, shooting 153 for 36 holes to easily win girls 14-19.

In girls 12-13, **Rylie Marchman** of Waynesboro won a playoff over **Lauren Lightfritz** of Suwanee after both players finished at 164. Other boys age group winners were **Anthony Whobrey** of Jefferson, (12-13), 161; and **Preston Tepper** of Suwanee (10-11), 148. 🏆

Chip shots

[Continued from page 26]

total at Highland CC to finish four ahead of his closest competitor. McLuen tied for 4th at 147.

Dalton's **Matt Hughes** won at The Orchard with a birdie on the 18th hole for an 8-under 136 total to edge McLuen by one shot. Nationwide Tour player **Major Manning**, who grew up playing at The Orchard, was 4th at 139.

Hooters Tour: Savannah's **Brian Harman** placed 2nd in a recent Hooters Tour event at Mt. Vintage Plantation in North Augusta, S.C., one shot behind winner **Ryan Blaum**.



Mariah Stackhouse

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Course Reviews

Sea Island GC – Seaside (Private/Resort)

100 Retreat Avenue, St. Simons Island; 912-638-5118; www.seaisland.com

STAFF: Eric Schneider is the PGA VP of Golf; Brannen Veal is the PGA Director of Golf

PAR/YARDAGE: The Seaside Course plays to a par 70 with five sets of tees: Championship (7,055 yards); Back (6,657); Middle (6,323); Member (5,880) and Forward (4,978).

COURSE RATING/SLOPE: 73.8/141 (Championship); 72.3/137 (Back); 70.9/133 (Middle); 69.2/129 (Member); 68.8/120 (Forward).

ABOUT THE COURSE: Seaside, one of three exceptional courses of the Sea Island Golf Club, will host the PGA Tour McGladrey Classic for the second time this month, and was extremely well received by the tour pros who competed in the event last year. By tour standards, Seaside is not especially long, adding 50 yards since last year's tournament to play 7,055 yards. Only a handful of the par 4s require the tour players to hit more than a short iron approach, and as a result, scores were on the low side even though the course has only two par 5s. More than half the holes played under par for the tournament, with the average score a shade over 69.3. With mostly generous fairways, superb course conditions and smooth Bermuda putting surfaces, Seaside is a comfortable course for the tour players, but is considerably more of a challenge for the club's members and resort guests. The only concern for the tour players is the wind coming in off the ocean, which borders part of the course. Last year's conditions were quite calm, which also was a factor in the low scoring. The ocean marshes, which are present on a majority of holes, and ever-present sand dunes give Seaside a wonderful natural feel, but are mostly out of play for the tour pros, who are more concerned with the deep green-side bunkers, as well as Tom Fazio's typically strategic fairway bunkering. Fazio extensively renovated Seaside a little over a decade ago, combining one of the original Colt & Allison nines from the late 1920s with Joe Lee's Marshside nine from the early 1970s. The two mesh together beautifully, offering some scoring opportunities on the latter holes on the front side, with much of Seaside's challenge found on the incoming nine, including three of the toughest par 4s among the last five holes, along with the more vulnerable of the two par 5s for a little breather. A visually spectacular course that is a treasure to play for those of modest ability, and a pleasure to walk for tournament spectators thanks to its compact, level nature.

White Columns Country Club (Private)

300 Clubhouse Drive, Milton; 770-343-9025; www.whitecolumnscountryclub.com

STAFF: Mitch Cook is the PGA Golf Professional; Cody Barden is the PGA Instructor

PAR/YARDAGE: White Columns plays to a par of 72 with four sets of tees:

Gold (7,063 yards); Blue (6,517); White (6,015) and Red (5,087).

COURSE RATING/SLOPE: 74.0/140 (Gold); 71.5/132 (Blue); 68.8/125 (White); 70.4/124 (Red).

ABOUT THE COURSE: Once considered the premier daily fee course in metro Atlanta, White Columns converted to private status almost a decade ago, and compares very favorably to the metro area's sizeable number of outstanding private courses. The superb Tom Fazio design provides all the elements you expect from one of his creations: ample fairways, well-positioned fairway bunkers best avoided, and large, undulating greens that will give your putter a real workout. With quite a few elevated tees, White Columns does not play its yardage, with length rarely a serious factor. The generous landing areas enable longer hitters to pull the driver on all but a handful of holes, but the fairway bunkers and occasionally tight tree lines will not treat off-target tee shots kindly. The real action begins with the approach shots, with the size and configuration of the putting surfaces requiring some precision to avoid long and difficult putts. By his standards, Fazio's green-side bunkering is relatively modest, with only a few carries over sand to the putting surfaces, which have lost a little of their contour since the course opened in the '90s, but are still a major part of White Columns' manageable challenge. Fazio's thoughtful and enjoyable design is a solid test for pros and low handicappers from the tips, but is definitely capable of yielding some quality score to both the scratch golfer as well as those whose average score is closer to 90. The key is avoiding big numbers on the handful of holes that have some length, trouble or both. Plenty of scoring opportunities await, including two short and inviting par 5s (6 and 16), a very friendly and scenic par 3 (8) and a host of par 4s that measure under 400 yards from the tips. Holes 7 and 15 are a wonderful pair of short par 4s that offer completely different looks and challenges, but are balanced by several testy two-shotters, two of which are encountered late in the round (14 and 18). A gorgeous but demanding long, downhill par 3 (17) is part of one of the most entertaining finishing stretches of holes around. 🏌️



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