

A man with white hair and glasses, wearing a light-colored suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie, stands on a green golf course. To his left is a yellow flag on a green with the number '9' on it. The background consists of lush green trees.

Michigan
GOLFER

Spring 2004

**Michigan's
Golf**

**Photo:
W. Bruce
Matthews**

Architects

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SPRING 2004

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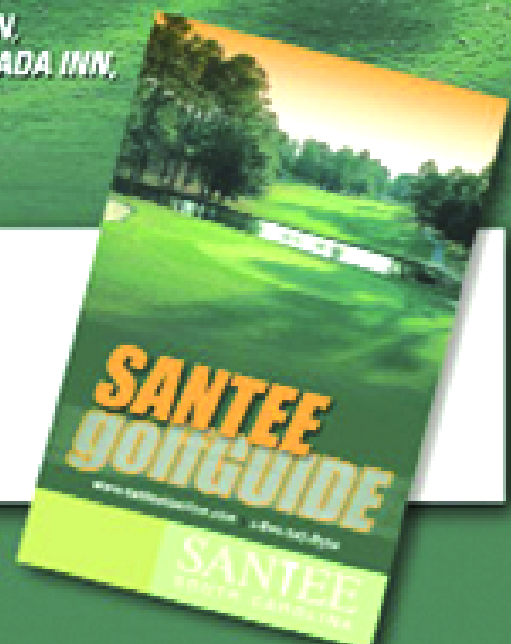
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MICHIGAN GOLFER

Publisher/Editor

Art McCafferty
artmccaf@glsp.com

Editor Emeritus

Terry Moore

Managing Editor

Kelly Hill
kehill@ameritech.net

Chief Information Officer

Jennie McCafferty

Internet Service Provider

Pat & Rick Rountree
Dundee Internet Services, Inc.

Director of Information Technology

Katie Delcamp
katie@glsp.com

Writers at Large

Susan Bairley
Jack Berry
Craig Brass
Tom Doak
Greg Johnson
Bradley S. Klein
Vartan Kupelian
Jon Maddern
Norm Sinclair
Mike Shiels
Ron Whitten

Contributing Editors

John Bebow
Mike Duff
Jim Neff
William Shelton
Mike Terrell

Writers

L'anse Bannon
Margaret Bowers
Rick Coates
Liza Dypka
Sam Fullerton
Dennis Grall
Thad Gutowski
Gary Holaway
Janina Parrott Jacobs
Mickey MacWilliams
Brett Marshall
Judy Mason

W. Bruce Matthews III
Herschel Nathaniel
Bernice Phillips
Dave Serino
Ken Tabacsko
Kelly Thesier
Marc Van Soest
Phil Winch
John Wukovits

Photo/Video

Kevin Frisch
Dave Richards
Carter Sherline
Clarence Sormin
Brian Walters
Joe Yunkman

Representatives

Brian Manning
B.J. Erwin

Director of Accounting

Cheryl Clark

Web Development

ZebraFish Studios
zebrafishstudios.com

Director of New Media Development

Trevor Zylstra

Copy Editor

Rose Zylstra

Office Assistant

Erica Miller

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is produced by

Great Lakes Sports Publications, Inc.

GLSP Advertising & Business Office

3588 Plymouth Road, #245
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
734.507.0241
734.434.4765 FAX
info@glsp.com
glsp.com

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In This Issue

VOLUME 22 • SPRING 2004 • NUMBER 2

4 **Golf Architects: They Build the Stuff That Greens are Made Of.**

9 **Michigan Golfer Television Show Interviews: Golf Course Architects**

10 **The Perfectiona and Parfection of Notre Dame's Tyrone Willingham**
by John Wukovitz

12 **Par Fives — Risk and Reward**
by John Bebow

14 **Michigan Golfer Television Show 2004-2005 Program Schedule**

16 **Michigan Hosts the Big Break Series on the Golf Channel**
by Bernice Phillips

18 **Slice of Life**
by Terry Moore

Michigan Golfer - May/June issue

Coming May 2004

Michigan's Great Architects, Part II:
Jerry Matthews
W. Bruce Matthews III
Walter Hagen — The Detroit Years
Upper Peninsula Golf
Indiana Golf

Golf Architects: They Build the Stuff That Greens are Made Of



Grand Haven Golf Club, the home course of W. Bruce Matthews, begins to take shape.

The openings of new Michigan golf courses is now down to a trickle from the deluge we had just five years earlier. This year, College Field, Hawk's Eye, Hawk's Ridge and Angels Crossing are scheduled to open along with some others, like Port Huron CC that have gone through renovation or preservation. But that's about it.

The building boom of the 80's and 90's that added hundreds of golf courses to our state's inventory and gave rise to our national ranking as a golf destination has quieted. Those were the salad days of golf course architects, much like the 1920's and 1950's were before.

The huge firms of Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Art Hills and Robert Trent Jones and later, his sons, Rees and Robert Trent Jones Jr.; expanded their firms during this period to accommodate this frantic building boom. Michigan architects; Jerry Matthews, W. Bruce Matthews III, Harley Hodge, Ray Hearn, Ron Otto and Mike Husby to name but a few, split off of established firms or started their own.

During this respite, we thought it might be prudent to take a look at our golf inventory in Michigan and benchmark it, but take that look through the eyes of the architects.

We have chosen W. Bruce Matthews and Robert Trent Jones for the first of our series, on "Michigan's Golf Course Architects". Both were born at the turn of one century and died as a new one was to begin. We hope you enjoy our words, and just as importantly, the online video we direct you to as well. While it is always interesting to study and write about the accomplishments of architects, it is quite another thing to offer readers the opportunity to become viewers by clicking on a link.

Part 1 - W. Bruce Matthews and Robert Trent Jones

W. Bruce Matthews

By L'anse Bannon
with Paul Fullmer

W. Bruce Matthews lived a full and robust life, wringing every drop of pleasure and purpose out of it. He was born in 1904 and died in the year 2000.

Paul Fullmer, Executive Secretary, American Society of Golf Course Architects, penned an article in their association publication that commemorated Mr. Matthews's life. "Bruce represented the almost gone, but certainly not forgotten, era of golf that endured the harsh years of the Depression. That's when an aspiring golf course architect had to make due during the lean years, as Bruce did by working as the general manager and superintendent of Green Ridge Country Club in Grand Rapids. Golf course architecture had to be done in his spare time.

When Bruce entered the Society, members were somewhat puzzled by his background. Who is Bruce Matthews? Architect? Owner? Club Manager? Superintendent? Well, he was all of those... and proudly so.

As much as anyone, Bruce Matthews was "Mr. Golf in Michigan." Surely, golf and Michigan could not have had a better ambassador."

We list here but a portion of the offices held and awards given to Mr. Matthews during his professional career.



Grand Haven Golf Club

1956

Club Managers Association of America (Member: 25-Year Club)

1956-1960

Michigan Turfgrass Foundation — President

1961-62, 1962-63 & 1963-64

Club Managers Association of America President — 25-Year Club

1970

Michigan Club Managers Association Life Membership

1970

American Society of Golf Course Architects Regular Member (1970)
Fellow (1981)

1978

Western Michigan GCSA

1981

Michigan Turfgrass Foundation

1991

GCSAA Distinguished Service

Award

1993

Michigan Golf Hall of Fame Inductee

1996

Michigan Golf Course Owners Association Lifetime Achievement Award

W. Bruce Matthews will also be noted for the Michigan architectural dynasty that he created. His son, Jerry Matthews and grandson W. Bruce Matthews have successfully followed in his footsteps. The total contribution of the three architects is marked by the Matthews name on hundreds of Michigan golf courses. Later on in our series, we will address the careers of both Jerry and W. Bruce Matthews III.

This list of courses that W. Bruce Matthews, did or worked on by himself or with his son Jerry is as follows:



Jerry Matthews

Courses Designed or Worked on by W. Bruce Matthews

Blossom Trail Golf Club
Brookshire Country Club
Dun Rovin
Essex Golf & Country Club
Forest Akers Golf Course
Green Ridge Country Club
Hidden Oaks Golf Courses
L. E. Kaufman Golf Course
Manistee Golf & Country Club
McGuires Evergreen Golf Course
Salem Hills Golf Course
Sandy Ridge Golf Course
Scott Lake Country Club
Sunnybrook Country Club
Tyrone Hills Golf & Country Club
West Ottawa Golf Course
White Birch Hills Golf Course
Winding Creek Golf Course

Indian Hills Golf Course
Indian Lake Country Club
Indian Run Golf Course
Kalamazoo Elks Country Club
Knollwood Country Club
Lake O' The Hills Golf Course
Lakepointe Country Club
Lakes of the North Golf Course
Lakewood Shores Golf & Country
Lincoln Hills Golf Course
Midland Country Club
Mitchell Creek Golf Course
Mt. Pleasant Country Club
Pine River Country Club
Plum Hollow Golf Club
Shenandoah Golf & Country Club
Southmoor Golf Course
Spring Lake Country Club
St. Clair Shores Country Club
Stoneycroft Hills Country
Sugar Springs Golf Course
The Pines at Lake Isabella
Traverse City Golf & Country Club
University Park Golf Club
Walnut Hills Country Club
Washtenaw Country Club
White Lake Country Club
Wolverine Golf Club

Courses Designed or Worked on by W. Bruce Matthews & Jerry Matthews

Antrim Dells Golf Club
Birmingham Country Club
Blythefield Country Club
Bonnie View Golf Course
Cadillac Country Club
Candlestone Inn Golf & Resort
Cascade Hills Country Club
Country Club of Detroit
Crockery Hills Golf Course
Crystal Lake Golf Course
Falcon Head Golf Club
Fellows Creek Golf Club
Flint Elks Country Club
Godwin Glen Golf Course
Grand Blanc Golf Club
Grand Haven Golf Club
Hidden Oaks Golf Course
Highland Hills Golf Club
Independence Green Golf Club

In the winter of 2001, W. Bruce Matthews III had the opportunity to reflect upon the life of his grandfather during a visit to our studio. In our story, you will find out that he was fondest of his own Grand Haven GC and his work at Forest Akers for his beloved MSU. You will also hear him talk about the day he spent in his youth helping his grandfather by picking up sticks in the fairways. The imprinting of W. Bruce Matthews III had begun. Well, enough of this writing see for yourself and enjoy.

<http://michigangolfer.tv>



W. Bruce Matthews III

Robert Trent Jones

By Art McCafferty

As a youth, Oakland University tuition payments, an insatiable hunger for fast women, fast cars and adult beverages, took most of my money and left little to support my golf addiction. The courses I selected were based on their affordability. I remember how wonderful it was when I discovered that a new nine hole course, Bogey Lake GC, had opened up their original nine and offered mid-week play of \$1 a day. Now that was my kind of course.

Somehow during this scholarly and hedonistic life style, all the stars in the heavens lined up one week and I found myself and a group of buddies playing The Heather course at Boyne Highlands. It was an absolutely overwhelming, mind blowing experience for all of us. We had never seen a course like The Heather ever.

The architect of the course was Robert Trent Jones. Everett Kircher had the vision to hire him to design it and northern Michigan golf was changed forever. Jones, one of the most prolific golf designers in the world, had, as his final tally, designed over 350 golf courses in 45 states and 35 countries.

Jones was born in 1906 in Ince, England, a town on the Trent River. Bobby Jones at the time inserted the Trent and Robert to distinguish himself from his friend and colleague Bobby Jones, early in his career. He purportedly said to Bobby Jones, "There is only room for one Bobby Jones."

He was to work with Bobby Jones on Peachtree CC in as well as Augusta National, when he did some work on the 11th and 16th holes. He changed them from indifferent to bold and memorable.



Robert Trent Jones

His breakout work occurred when he reworked the Oakland Hills CC for the US. Open in 1951. He retained the original routing of Donald Ross, but filled in all of his original bunkers. He then created new ones and put them out from 230-270 yards from the tee and also added his signature water haz-

ards here and there.

Jones impact on Michigan has been substantial. He left us three courses that continually rank in the top 100 course in the U.S; The Heather, Point O' Woods in Benton Harbor and, finally, Treetops in Gaylord. And besides turning a very playable Donald Ross course



On hand for the grand opening of the Robert Trent Jones course at Treetops in July 1987 were (l to r) architect Robert Trent Jones, owner Harry Melling, and head pro Rick Smith.

into The Monster at Oakland Hills, he also did some work on the Country Club of Detroit. He became “The Open Doctor” because of his work and punched up a number of courses that had fallen behind the times in their appearance and competitiveness.

At Baltusrol, Jones did a redesign for the 1954 U.S. Open. Some of the members indicated that he had made the 4th hole too hard for them. He took up the challenge by going to the 4th hole and aching the new 185-yard, par-3. “See gentlemen; it’s not that difficult,” said Jones.

When he died on June 14, 2000, he left behind a legacy of more than 350 courses in 45 states and 35 countries. We list here the four Michigan courses he built or redesigned along with a few others for which he was famous.

The Dunes Golf & Beach Club,

Myrtle Beach, S.C. 1948
 Oakland Hills CC, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 1951
 Golden Horseshoe Golf Club (Gold Course), Williamsburg, Va. 1963.
 Mauna Kea Beach Golf Course, Kamuela, Hawaii. 1965.
 Spyglass Hill Golf Course, Pebble Beach, Calif. 1966.
 Club de Golf Valderrama, Sotogrande, Spain. 1975
 Ballyunion (Cashen Course), County Kerry, Ireland. 1984
 The Heather, Harbor Springs, Michigan
 Pointe O’ Woods, Benton Harbor, Michigan
 Treetops, Gaylord, Michigan 1987

We now would like to take you on another journey. You can experience Mr. Jones by visiting each of the following three links. In our three part video series, Jones will tell you about his philosophy of golf,

his early days in the business, the growth of golf throughout the world, his building of the Heather and his battles with Everett Kircher over the design, his building of Treetops, his hole in one shot on Baltusrol, the impact of modern golf equipment and his contribution to golf: water hazards.

He will also share with you, conversations he had with his friends Alister MacKenzie, Bobby Jones and his admiration for his boyhood hero, Walter Hagen. Enjoy.

Part I

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001show/s/show19/show19qt.html>

Part II

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001show/s/show20/index.html>

Part III

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001show/s/show21/index.html> *MG*



Robert Trent Jones with one of the most famous golf holes in Michigan, the Sixth at Treetops.

Michigan Golfer Television Show Interviews: Golf Course Architects

Paul Albanese

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/show19/index.html>

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show22/index.html>

Steve Forrest

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2002shows/show19/index.html>

Ray Hearn

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/show21/index.html>

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show8/index.html>

Arthur Hills

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/show13/index.html>

Harley Hodge

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/show12/index.html>

Mike Husby

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2002shows/show6/index.html>

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show18/index.html>

Robert Trent Jones

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show19/index.html>

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show20/index.html>

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show21/index.html>

W. Bruce Matthews

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show16/index.html>

W. Bruce Matthews III

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show3/index.html>

William Newcomb

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show1/index.html>

Jack Nicklaus

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/the-bull/index.html>

Rick Robbins

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show33/index.html>

Charles Scott

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show27/index.html>

The Perfectiona and Parfection of Notre Dame's Tyrone Willingham

By John Wukovitz

The campus of the University of Notre Dame glistens in the mid-morning sun as I drive up for the interview with head football coach, Tyrone Willingham, who has agreed to discuss his love for golf. Towering trees throw their shade on the multi-colored flowers that line the paths, and small groups of visitors meander about the campus's landmarks.

Not surprisingly, football dominates many of the landmarks' themes. Coach Willingham's office rests directly across from the stadium, where Knute Rockne, the Four Horsemen, Paul Hornung, Ara Parseghian, and Joe Montana worked their miracles. Statues honor athletic director Ed "Moose" Krause and football coach Frank Leahy. Even the university's 14-story library, built to further advanced thought and research, is more commonly associated with a stone mural that students have labeled "Touchdown Jesus" for the way its main figure raises his hands as if indicating six points.

Fortunately, I thought, our interview will be conducted in a more pastoral locale—the school's 7,011-yard Warren Golf Course. Surely there, on a gorgeous, demanding layout designed by Ben Crenshaw, away from the football and the memories, Willingham could escape the pressures associ-



Notre Dame's Tyrone Willingham

ated with being Notre Dame's head coach, relax, and have some fun. Instead of the football coach or analyst, I would chat with Tyrone Willingham, the regular person, as if the two were separate entities.

Not so. You learn immediately that Willingham views every endeavor in the same fashion—as an opportunity to learn and to instruct. The golf course, like the football field, is yet another classroom where education and challenges take place. As Notre Dame assistant football coach and close friend, Bob Simmons, states, "Golf is a reflection of him. He's there to be the

best that he can be."

Willingham first took up the sport in 1978 when he worked as a graduate assistant for the Michigan State football staff. At the urging of fellow coach, Sherman Lewis, who recognized the value of golf in building relationships and recruiting for the football program, especially with alumni golf outings, Willingham played his first round. He began with a 14 on a par-4 hole, which only whetted his appetite to conquer the demanding game.

When his busy schedule permits, Willingham plays three times a during May-July. He claims his current eight handicap is low for his talents, but states that he usually shoots between 78 and 84 on the difficult par-71 Crenshaw layout.

Not surprisingly for an introspective football coach, Willingham loves the mental aspect of golf. "He thinks about every shot," says Simmons. "His course management is one of his strengths." Simmons adds that Willingham's length off the tees supplements a sound putting and chipping game.

Two aspects of the course particularly appeal to the coach in Willingham—Notre Dame's 10th hole, a par-5 tester that, at 495 yards, temptingly offers the chance to either go for the green in two or lay up in a safe area, and the multiple-layered greens which impartially reward accuracy and punish errant shots. It is just as he would



The 16th hole at Notre Dame s Warren Golf Course.

have it in football—develop a strategy, then rely on execution for success or failure.

Willingham’s philosophy does not vary whether it relates to golf or football—he approaches each shot or each play as if it is the only important matter, but once it is done, he moves on. “In golf, I want every shot to be the best it can be, but as soon as that shot is over, it’s over. It is similar to what I teach my players. It is this play that is important.”

As another foursome walks down the 16th fairway, Willingham explains that while he plays golf for both enjoyment and competition, it is

the competition that brings him the fun. He does not understand those who can play the sport and not care about their score, for that is his method of challenging himself to do better. “Some guys say they’ll take any score in golf,” says Coach Simmons. “That’s not Coach Willingham! He wants to be the best. If he can improve, he wants to.”

Willingham notices many similarities between golf and football. “If you want to be good, you need attention to detail. In golf, if you just go up there and hit the ball, you may have chosen the wrong club or misjudged the wind. In football, players have to be aligned properly. If a split is too great, then a player

cannot properly execute the play.”

“The basic fundamentals in golf are alignment, alignment, and alignment,” he adds with a laugh. “It starts with hands, then it goes to feet, lower body, upper body. If one can get perfectly aligned and bring the club face back on line, they will have success.”

Golf, like football, thus provides the same thrill that Willingham seeks in any endeavor—to be the best he can be at that moment. “It’s fun to compete. Not that you have to win all the time, but the real fun is competition.” One quick conversation with the likable coach shows that he lives that philosophy every moment of his life. *MG*

Par Fives — Risk and Reward



The 16th at Eagle Crest Resort

By John Bebow

The risk of being a Michigan golfer is having to shovel the driveway in that first fickle week of April. The reward, sometimes, is an early thaw and extra rounds in March. No matter the weather, by afternoon of April's first or second Sunday our location is awfully predictable — in front of the television, watching the back-nine heroics at The Masters.

History has taught us to expect thrills and spills from Augusta's par fives. Through the annual flurry of birdies and eagles at 13, we wince and remember Curtis Strange's second-shot dump into Rae's Creek, which started his fatal slide down the leaderboard a number of years ago. And as we honor Gene Sarazen's legendary double eagle at 15 in 1935, we chide Chip Beck's boring 1993 lay up, which sealed his fate as an also-ran.

"With a great risk-reward par five you want a hole where you can make a three or a four or a five or a six or a seven," says renowned, Toledo-based golf course architect Arthur Hills. "These are holes where every time you go for a green it's fraught with interest. The ideal examples are Number 13 and Number 15 at Augusta."

Augusta's a long way from Michigan, especially in early April, but we have our share of holes where eagles and double bogeys seem equally likely. With eyes toward spring, here are a number of Michigan holes where you might play the hero's role this year:

No. 16, Eagle Crest Golf Club, Ypsilanti

Water, water everywhere, and nary a drop to drink. Instead, a parched throat is the logical impulse after the first look at this short, 475-yarder at the Eastern Michigan University course. The drive must clear a marsh while avoiding heavy woods left and Ford Lake immediately to the right. A big, straight drive is half the battle. To get home in two, players must hit a very straight, very high long iron or fairway wood to a small, boulder-encased green. Oh, by the way, Ford Lake protects the green on three sides.

"If the risk pays off, you'll definitely have a makeable eagle putt," says Bruce Cunningham, men's

golf coach at EMU. However, Cunningham preaches to his players to play it as a three-shot hole.

"The fairway is so narrow that players who get in trouble off the tee seem to take more risk on the next shot," Cunningham says. "Then the hole seems to have a snowball effect."

Or a snowman effect.

No. 3, The Bear, Acme

If any Michigan hole resembles the tempting dangers of Augusta it might be this one. At 528 yards from the blues (472 from the whites), this is a softie compared to much of the brutal Bear. A good drive leaves the low handicapper about 200 yards to the green. But a creek cuts in front of the large putting surface and an eight-foot-deep bunker also yawns at you in front.

No. 14, Travis Pointe Country Club, Ann Arbor

When architect Bill Newcomb designed Travis Pointe he didn't envision the 518-yard 14th as much more than a decent par five.

"We knew the longest hitters could always get there," Newcomb says. "But now, with the better equipment every third player can get there."

A small round green is tucked in behind a pond and a tricky bunker complex. While Travis Pointe is a private country club, it has hosted many public tournaments. And in tournament play the 14th tee is usually moved up to induce risk-taking.

No. 5, Mistwood (Blue Nine) Lake Ann

Here's a chance for the average golfer to play the hero. It plays 479 yards from the whites and

the tee shot is a little bit downhill. Hit it into the 40-yard-wide fairway and you face an approach over a couple bunkers and a pond on the right to an 8,000-square-foot green. A lot of players go for it.

No. 9, Faulkwood Shores, Brighton

Gamblers will love this one because it's a great place to decide a skins match. On many weekends Faulkwood's nines are reversed so that No. 9 actually plays as the finishing hole. It's a welcome respite after one of the toughest collections of holes in the state. With a slope rating of 140 from the tips, Faulkwood offers only a couple breaks. On the ninth (or 18th on the weekends), a fairly open driving area tempts players to end the round with a bang. Once in the fairway, they face a Donald Ross-like visual hazard — a sunken creek which makes the green appear much closer than it really is. Avoid under-clubbing, clear the creek and a short incline to the green, and you'll face a flat putt for eagle.

No. 6, Pilgrim's Run, Pierson

Pilgrim's Run sixth hole is a perfect example of a risk-reward par-five. Design consultant Mike DeVries is rightfully proud of this hole that begins from an elevated tee that looks out toward a wide fairway bisected by a yawning bunker. A strong tee-shot will leave a player with a 220 yard shot to an elevated green with trouble lurking left and right. Eagles are possible here as are doubles, just the right mix for a reachable and daring par-five.

This is an edited reprint from the archives of the MG. John Bebow is now a reporter for the Chicago Tribune. MG

The Michigan Golfer Television Show

<http://michigangolfer.tv>

2004 - 2005 Program Schedule

- **The Tom Izzo and Steve Mariucci Golf Classic**
- **The Ryder Cup Series**
- **Ken Devine's Last Hurrah**
- **Arthur Hills and the Michigan Golf Trail**
- **Ireland: The Destination of the 2006 Ryder Cup**
- **Upper Peninsula Golf-The Other Michigan Golf Mecca**
- **2004 Great Lakes Junior Masters Golf Championship**
- **2004 Bank of Ann Arbor Futures Golf Classic**
- **"The Concession" --Jack Nicklaus and Tony Jacklin**
- **Gene Sarazen and Shell's Wonderful World of Golf**
- **The Big Break at Treetops**
- **2004 Bay Mills Open Players Championship**
- **Arnold Palmer's Turning Point Invitational**
- **102nd Western Amateur**
- **Chuck Kocsis - The Best There Ever Was**
- **Michigan's Golf Pioneer: Everett Kircher**



Chuck Kocsis



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2004 GLJM TOURNAMENT ELIGIBILITY

Entries are open to male junior golfers who;

- (a.) will not reach their 21st birthday by midnight July 2, 2004 and,
- (b.) Have an up-to-date USGA Handicap Index not exceeding 8.5.

Entries are subject to rejection any time (including during the tournament) by MSAGA. The reason for rejection may include unbecoming conduct or poor sportsmanship. There are no residency requirements to enter.

International Players: International players are encouraged to participate, but must conform to the USGA Rule (1-10) Rules of Amateur Status.

2004 GLJM TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

Competitions shall be conducted in two stages;

1. Championship Qualifying: 18 holes stroke play qualifier on Monday and Tuesday, June 28 and June 29, 2004 to determine the low 64 players for match play positions. Ties settled by play-offs for all positions until the field of 64 is filled.

2. Match Play: For the purpose of determining places in case of ties after Qualifying. Those matches will be determined by player order on the public scoreboard summary and by performance in the play-off. All matches are at 18 holes.

First Day Match Play - Wednesday, June 30, 2004, 7:00 A.M. First Round Matches. 12:00 P.M. Second Round Matches

Sweet Sixteen - Thursday, July 1, 2004, 8:00 A.M. Third Round.
1:00 P.M. Quarterfinal Round

Final Four - Friday, July 2, 2004, 8:30 A.M. Semifinal round.
1:00 P.M. Championship Round

The Future Master's competitors will qualify on Sunday in age groups. The lowest eight scorers in each age group will play match play for the championship Monday and Tuesday mornings. Championship Matches Wednesday morning. Age groups: 7-9: 10-12-13-14. The tournament committee reserves the right to determine the amount of participants in each age division, if there is a shortage of competitors competing in the 14 and under.

FORMER CHAMPIONS

2000 - Brian Downing
Northville, MI

2001 - Mark McIntosh
Gaylord, MI

2002 - Shaun Page
Jackson, MI

2003 - Brandon Duff
Goodrich, MI

2004 - YOU!!

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PRIZES 2004

FIRST PRIZE - Champions Replica Trophy and custody of the Championship Silver Claret Jug Trophy for the ensuing year, subject conditions as MSAGA may establish.
Plus a **\$300.00** merchandise certificate.

RUNNER UP - Silver Medal +
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Merchandise certificates will not be awarded to any contestant with Michigan High School eligibility left.

CONTACT FOR CHAMPIONSHIP INFO

Michigan State Amateur Golf Association

1208 Burr Street
Jackson, MI 49201-1806
Phone: (517) 782-7594
E-mail: skillplay@aol.com



Michigan Hosts the Big Break Series on the Golf Channel

By Bernice Phillips

Michigan has a rich history of televised golf. Throughout the years, we have had national and international audiences viewing the likes of the PGA Championship, the US Open, The Buick Open, The Carling World Open, Ford Senior Players Championship, Shell's Wonderful World of Golf, The Par 3 Shootout, Bay Mills Open Players Tournament, TPC Championship and the U.S. Amateur. On a statewide level, we have had Golfing Michigan, Golfing the Great Lakes, Beat the Pro, Michigan Golf Live and our own Michigan Golfer Television Show, which, in a sense, is world-wide.

This year, we were treated to additional coverage by being the site of one of golf's reality shows, "The Big Break" which was produced at Treetops Resort, and proved to be "highly successful",

Photos of Rick Smith (opposite page) and Anthony Sorentino (above) are courtesy of the Golf Channel.

according to Matt Friedman, publicist at The Golf Channel.

Friedman indicated that while there was not a Nielsen rating for the show, the feedback they got was substantial enough to call it a hit, Paul Beachnau, Director of the CVB from Gaylord, said, he has all kinds of people talking to him about the show.

The series featured 10 reasonably good golfers who underwent a series of golf skill tests that resulted in eight of them being eliminated. Golfers had to hit a golf ball down a highway at a target, hit punch shots through panes of glass, hit balls into a moving vehicle with a big barrel for a target, hit blind wedges over walls hopefully onto greens, hit to par three holes, make long and short putts and finally compete in a match play round for the win.

The final show of The Big Break had the final two contestants, Anthony Sorentino of Rochester Hills and Justin Peters of Florida, fighting it out in match play. The winner was awarded four entries on the 2004 Canadian Tour.



Anthony Sorentino

Alas, the match was over far too soon for our local lad, Anthony Sorentino, as Justin Peters prevailed.

Rick Smith hosted the series, with major sponsorship coming from the Ford Motor Company.

Vanessa Bell and the Michigan Golfer TV cameras caught up with Rick at the PGA Merchandise Show and our reporter, Brian Manning, interviewed 2nd place winner, Anthony Sorentino, who was a guest speaker at an Eastern Michigan University class. This is what they had to say about the Big Break. <http://michigangolfer.tv/2004shows/show5/>

SLICE OF LIFE



By Terry Moore

Pardon the interruption, but I must get a few things off my chest.

Usually a nice, comforting essay about some aspect of golf is in order for

this column but spring fever and the emergence of the Michigan golf season have gotten the better of me. There have been so many incidents and media tempests surrounding the game that I must jump in and offer my two cents worth.

Ken Venturi and his book: You know the story by now. Venturi reviews his storied golf career by including a section about the '58 Masters saying in so many words that eventual winner Arnold Palmer knowingly broke a rule on the 12th hole involving an embedded ball. Reading the full text of the section (excerpted in *Golf Magazine*), Venturi makes some interesting and challenging observations about the incident. But the upshot of all of this, in the world of public opinion, is that Venturi calls "The King" a cheater and not deserving of his '58 Masters title. My two cents worth is that Venturi must've received some terrible advice and counsel from somebody on including his version of this long-forgotten incident, especially since he never brought it up before in all of his years as a CBS analyst and Masters commentator. Instead, one can imagine the book publisher (and certainly the publicist) gleefully welcoming the inclusion of the Masters incident. "Hey, this should sell more books!" This underlying moral is best summed up by paraphrasing a quote by the iconoclastic Michael Moore in a recent documentary titled *The Corporation*: The rich man will sell you the rope to hang yourself with if he thinks he can make a buck.

Johnny Miller and his commentary. Miller is the preeminent color analyst in golf. No one else is even close for making salient, bold and usually intelligent observations. I remember once talking to one of the assistant producers for NBC Golf who said Miller has such acute perceptions that he can consistently tell a player's errant shot by merely listening to the audio feed of how the ball is struck. Wow, that's as spooky as Dustin Hoffman in the movie *Rain Man*! But Miller is that sharp and that perceptive. But my two cents on Miller is that he gets too enamored with himself and his lofty reputation. Case in point was his comment last month about Craig Parry's swing, describing it so disparagingly that it would make "Ben Hogan puke." Of course, Parry got the ultimate last laugh by holing out a spectacular eagle at Doral's 18th hole in the playoff. Truth be told, Miller had a long vacation between his last '03 telecast and his first '04 one. So when he got to Doral and his 2004 debut, Miller must've felt some subconscious need to get "on the board" with his fan base and/or the *USA TODAY*'s influential sports television critic Rudy Martzke. Why even earlier during Doral telecast, Miller said something about how annoying it had been for him to watch the winter golf telecasts where announcers were constantly talking over the putts. Gee, now Miller is even into Martzke's turf! Miller is a terrific commentator but not everything that pops up in that fertile and original golf mind needs verbalization.

SI Golf Plus Tour Player Survey: *Sports Illustrated* hit a publishing ace a decade ago when it started *Golf Plus*, its golf magazine-within-a-magazine. It's an excellent section with some of the best writers and features around. For the past several years, it has conducted a PGA Tour player survey on a number of topics, most of which are purely entertaining-e.g. "Best-looking Tour wife or girlfriend?" (Elin Nordegren, Tiger's fiancé, in a runaway (bride?)); "Which TV commentator would you like to strangle?" (Johnny Miller in a land-

slide—see above.) This year while polling 72 players, it included the question of "Who is the most overrated instructor in golf?" Treetops affable and omnipresent teacher Rick Smith topped the list at 30%, followed next by David Leadbetter at 29% and then Butch Harmon at 21%. My two cents worth is that some Tour players can be insanely jealous and resentful at times of anyone's success derived from outside the ropes. (They're even more jealous of success inside the ropes!)

In many ways, Tour players prefer swing gurus, like Smith, to mirror their job edict for caddies: show up, keep up and shut up. Admittedly, Smith and other celebrated instructors are often over-exposed. But isn't that more the fault of national golf magazines, *The Golf Channel*, and network TV all who gladly collaborate with them on over-emphasizing swing techniques and analysis? And to be fair to Smith, this survey was taken before his star pupil Phil Mickelson's resurgent play and early Tour win in January. Mickelson credits Smith and Dave Pelz (who finished fourth on the nefarious list) for an off-season re-haul of his game and course management. As such, *SI Golf Plus* should have at least noted somewhere when the survey was completed. Instead, being "edgy" and having some "bite" often take editorial precedence nowadays in even the best publications. Most importantly to me, however, was how Smith handled this rare public relations setback. Although Smith admitted he was "hurt" by the player survey, he was quoted in *USA TODAY* as saying simply, "I've just got to believe in my guys and trust in their faith in me." And in a nice defense of his close friend, Mickelson added in the same article, "He's (Rick) a tremendous teacher. He doesn't teach a system. He teaches each person a swing they can execute the best." Let's see now: Phil's play this year has been steady and strong while Adam Scott, Harmon's student, wins the Players Championship. Anybody for a survey recount?

A member of the Golf Writers Association of America, Terry Moore can be reached at tmoore@usxc.net MG

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