

SLICE OF LIFE



By Terry Moore

This is the time of year when people learn I'm going to the Masters again. So, to save some time let me get a head start on answering the most frequently asked questions about the Masters and what it means to me:

When was your first Masters and what do you most remember about it? I first attended the Masters in 1978 which was won by Gary Player. Somehow my Dad obtained practice round tickets through a business contact. My Dad brought his camera and I remember him taking pictures of the eventual champion (who won his next two events) as well as a photo of me with Masters member (and ABC-TV College football analyst) Frank Broyles. What struck me the most about Augusta National was its beautifully rolling topography. Television gives you little idea of how hilly and undulating the course really is.

What year did you first cover the Masters for Michigan Golfer? That was in 1984, the year Ben Crenshaw won his first Masters. I

was a nervous rookie Editor and writer but Jack Berry was nice enough to show me the ropes. The Press room was the sorely outdated and now thankfully departed Quonset hut which squeezed in the writers like cigarettes in a pack. And oh yes, it seemed everyone was smoking and typing away back then. I stayed with some guys from Grand Rapids who rented a large home and who were able to obtain tournament badges. It was a grand week.

What's your routine for covering the Masters? I like to go out on the course as soon as I can. There's not a more beautiful spot in the world in April than at the Masters when it's in full bloom in beautiful weather. I walk the course, try to notice the subtle changes and new amenities and let it all soak in. Early in the week I sit in on the player interviews to get a feel and a sense of how they see the course and their prospects. And I never miss the Chairman's state-of-the-tournament press meeting held on Wednesday. The year of the Hootie-Martha showdown it was a riveting session.

How do you follow the action out on the course? Depends on the weather and whom I'm with but I usually check out certain favorite vantage spots on each nine. I'll walk some holes and follow a few groups but then I like to sit in a shady part of a grandstand and watch the action flow by. I like the grandstands on holes # 3, # 5 and # 8. But I also like to watch the put-



Gary Player won the 1961, 1974 and 1978 Masters.

ting on # 6. Last year, I watched Tiger play a remarkable shot with his wedge while on this undulating treacherous green in order to spin his ball and check it near the cup which was falling away from him. To me that shot epitomized not only Tiger's phenomenal talents but also the fierce and ungodly pace of the greens.

What about the back nine? Well, all first-time visitors to the Masters are blown away by the beauty found on the back nine. It begins with the huge fairway bunker on # 10 with its blinding white sand (actually it's called feldspar which is a quartz byproduct) set against the deep green colors of the fairway and shadows from the towering pines. Until they moved it due to the lengthening of the 14th tee, the grandstand near the 13th green afforded wonderful viewing of this

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dramatic golf hole. For several years, it was also the favorite spot for Alister Cooke, the noted writer and longtime host of PBS Masterpiece Theatre. Cooke once said: “The best thing about Eisenhower’s Presidency was his Jeffersonian conviction that there should be as little government and as much golf as possible.”

What are your favorite player memories? Unfortunately, due to family commitments, I wasn’t there for the Nicklaus win in 1986 which for many writers is still tops. But for emotion, I would rank Crenshaw’s second Masters title in 1995 following the untimely death of his teacher and mentor Harvey Penick. And could there be a better lead quote from a champion than Ben’s poignant, “This week Harvey was the 15th club in my bag.”

Okay, have you ever played Augusta National? Yes, one of the perks of covering the Masters is the

opportunity to enter a media lottery every ten years and see if your name is one of 40 lucky media types to play the course on Monday following the event. My name was drawn in 1995. After being instructed to be at the course by 7:30 am, I teed off around 8:30 on the tenth hole. I hit a decent tee shot but absolutely topped my second off a downhill super tight lie. I hit into the “watery grave” on # 12 and again on # 15. I was chopping

at it badly. But I settled down on the front side and made birdie on # 2 and played solidly the rest of the day. Thankfully, I switched my return flight home to Tuesday so I could enjoy the six-hour round without worry about catching a flight. I even had a nice chat with then Masters Chairman Jack Stephens who came out to watch various groups play a few holes. But what’s special about playing on Monday is that you have the same pins and virtually the same



Ben Crenshaw won the Masters in 1995 and captained the Ryder Cup team at Brookline Country Club in 1999.

conditions as the last round of the Masters. Few Augusta National guests if not members can make that claim.

What did you do after you finished playing? Well, my playing partner and I had lunch outside near the putting green and we felt like kings in this privileged setting. Then we went inside to the pro shop and innocently inquired about playing a few more holes. The

assistant pro listened politely and then said something to this effect with stinging diplomacy: “We’re happy to have you gentlemen play the course today but your round is officially over.”

What’s especially appealing to you about the Masters? The attention to detail and the sense of decorum always stand out to me. There’s no price gouging, the lack of commercial sponsors, the throw-back and manned scoreboards, the patron picnic areas, well-mannered and knowledgeable galleries, and the delight of absolutely no cell phones.

Any special memories you’d like to share? Well, I had the good fortune to strike up an acquaintance with famed golf writer Herb Warren Wind who was always friendly and a consummate gentleman. During the final round of the ’88 Masters, we walked a few holes together.

I remember we were behind the 4th tee at the par-three and I used my binoculars to watch eventual Sandy Lyle on the green knock in a long and unlikely birdie putt. I narrated what I saw to Wind and he said with such delight, “Isn’t that magnificent?”

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