

Golf Has Surged in 2020, but Nothing Beats the ‘Tiger Effect’



BY JASON LUSK

The number of rounds of golf played late in 2020 have seen enormous surges versus 2019 as all kinds of golfers — from novices to past enthusiasts reentering the sport — have sought escape from the coronavirus pandemic. But that doesn’t mean 2020 will set the growth record.

Turns out, even this year’s flood of golfers can’t beat Tiger Woods in his youth.

The National Golf Foundation and Golf Datatech, both industry observers tracking rounds played

and trends, estimate in a report released this week that 2020 will end with about a 12-percent increase in rounds played in the United States over 2019’s total round played. That equates to 50 million more rounds played in 2020, the second-highest increase of any year reported.

The highest? That would be 1997, when Woods grabbed international fame with his record-breaking Masters title at the age of 21.

The U.S. saw a jump in rounds

Tiger Effect – PAGE 3

Season of Surprises



Dustin Johnson is the first reigning FedExCup No. 1 to enter the break leading the standings since the wraparound season started. (Patrick Smith/Getty Images)

BY CAMERON MORFIT

Viktor Hovland’s 12-foot birdie putt to win the Mayakoba Golf Classic presented by UNIFIN, the 12th and final event of the fall, moved him up to third in the FedExCup and put a bow on a wildly entertaining fall season.

The fall also provided a lot of answers.

We know whose biohacking has worked. (Take a bow, Bryson DeChambeau.)

We know who won’t stop knocking on the door. (Make

Surprises – PAGE 9

Hovland Birdies the Last Hole To Win Mayakoba Classic

PLAYA DEL CARMEN, Mexico (AP) — Viktor Hovland says his nerves are a jangled mess when he gets into contention. It sure didn’t look that way at the Mayakoba Golf Classic, where he captured another PGA Tour title with another big putt at the end.

Hovland saved par with a splendid 40-yard save from a waste area on the 16th hole, and then he delivered the winner with a 12-foot birdie putt on the final hole to beat Aaron Wise and win for the second time this year.

Hovland – PAGE 5



Viktor Hovland holds up the trophy after winning the Mayakoba Golf Classic in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. (Robert Fedez/Associated Press)

43-Year-Old Angela Stanford Wins Her Home LPGA Tour Event

THE COLONY, Texas (AP) — Angela Stanford won her home LPGA Tour event in front of her parents, closing with a 4-under 67 for a two-stroke victory Sunday in the Volunteers of America Classic.

“I just haven’t had many chances to win in front of them. So to finally do it, it’s so cool,” Stanford said. “I couldn’t even look over at my mom coming up 18 because I was starting to get

Stanford – PAGE 5



As Two Tours Unite, Potential Global Schedule Intriguing for World’s Best

BY REX HOGGARD

Although there remains more questions than answers, last Friday’s announcement that the PGA Tour and European Tour have formed a “strategic alliance” has created plenty of talking points — if not actual opportunities — at the moment.

While the agreement allows for “further collaboration on scheduling,” there were no specifics given, and even those who should have an idea of where the alliance is heading were light on details.

Tours Unite – PAGE 3



Mulligans

News, Notes, Quotes & Anecdotes from the Local Golfing Community

Pittsford’s Ford to Get Primetime Spot in NB3 Junior Golf National Championship Broadcast Wednesday

When the inaugural Notah Begay III Junior Golf National Championship was held last month in Louisiana, Pittsford Sutherland High School sophomore Jayden Ford was there representing all of Western New York.

On Wednesday, Ford will get prime time coverage from that appearance when highlights from the NB3 Junior Championship are broadcast nationally for the first time.

Ford, who qualified for the Championship in a regional

Qualifier held at Turning Stone Resort in September, competed against a field of 36 other top junior girls in the Girls, 14-to-18-year-old division when the National Championship was held in early November at the Koasati Pines Resort in Kinder, Louisiana.

The Championship was recorded but has never been broadcast. It is scheduled to air for the first time this Wednesday, December 9, from 7 to 9 pm on The Golf Channel.

In addition to the action from

the 3-day stroke play Junior Golf National Championship, the broadcast will also feature other highlights from the event, including a long-drive contest, in which Ford also took part.

Local USGA GHIN Score Posting Now Over for 2020

If you are a USGA GHIN Handicap user and a member of the Rochester District Golf Association, the active score posting season for the 2020 season is now over. The RDGA score posting season officially concluded on October 31.

For members of RDGA Member Clubs in the area, that means that any scores made in the Rochester area between now and April 15, 2021 cannot be posted for handicap purposes. However, it is important to note that RDGA members who play in active areas outside the RDGA



NATIONAL COVERAGE: Jayden Ford of Pittsford took part in the long drive contest during last month’s Notah Begay III Junior Golf National Championship in Louisiana, from which this still was taken. The highlights of that Championship will be shown on national TV this week. (Photo: NB3 JGNC)

between November 1 and April 15 must still post those scores. This would include warm-weather areas such as Florida.

Local score posting for the 2021 season at all RDGA Member Clubs will begin on Thursday, April 15. ➡

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Nine Comfortable, High-Performing Golf Shoes We Recommend for the Holidays

BY JOSH BERHOW

Avid golfers are always in need of a good pair of golf shoes.

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The Ecco S-Three golf shoes look like they’d be at home on either a spacesuit or basketball court, but we’re here to let you know that there are in fact golf shoes. These spikeless golf shoes boast ECCO’s soft calf NAPPA leather with GORE-TEX water protection for inclement conditions, but also come with top-notch breathability and comfort. Other features include ECCO’S ZONAL FLUIDFORM™ Technology midsole with 3 different zones feature differing levels of rigidity, an E-DTS® traction system consists of approximately 100 TPU traction bars boasting 800 traction angles. We really dig the neoprene collar areas, which not only add a splash of color and style but also make these shoes among the most comfortable golf shoes we’ve seen this side of the moon.

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ECCO S-Three



TravisMathew The Cuater MoneyMaker



Puma IGNITE NXT Disc

Tiger Effect



Tiger Woods celebrates after sinking a 4-foot putt to win the 1997 Masters with a record-low score of 18 under. He became the youngest winner at 21 years, 3 months and 14 days old. (Stephen Munday/Allsport/Getty Images)

(Continued from Page 1)
played of 63 million in 1997 over 1996, according to Golf Datatech. That year spawned what became known as the “Tiger Effect” as players flocked to the game in the wake of Woods’ inspirational April performance.

Not that 2020 has been anything to scoff at, considering the pandemic and the fact that many courses — and the sport in entire states — were shut down for much of the spring and early summer as coronavirus cases first surged.

Since June, not only have rounds played increased each month versus the same periods in 2019, the rate of increase has climbed significantly. In October 2020, rounds played in the U.S. were up 32.2 percent over the same month in 2019. That followed increases of approximately 14 percent in June, 20 percent in July, 21 percent in August and 26 percent in September.

U.S. golf courses had lost approximately 20 million rounds as courses were closed in the spring, according to Golf DataTech, which at the start of May put total rounds played in a 16-percent hole compared to the same period of 2019. But the increases since June have resulted in an increase of 50 million rounds year to date. October 2020 alone saw an increase of 11 million rounds

over October 2019.

There are other factors besides the pandemic. Good weather certainly has played a role. But the NGF reported that typical fluctuations in rounds played in the U.S. have averaged less than 5 percent per year for more than 20 years, so golf’s position as a relatively safe recreational activity during the pandemic appears to have played the starring role in 2020’s surge.

Despite all the good news, there is still uncertainty about any long-term gains. A large portion of the surge in rounds played has been by juniors and novices, and it is yet to be seen if those players will continue in golf for years to come or if capture rates will decrease. The NGF also points out that not all business segments are equally enjoying the “V-shaped” recovery

and boom in rounds played. For example, resorts that require travel, especially air travel, have not seen the same spikes as locally favored destinations.

And while rounds played at private clubs have soared, that doesn’t necessarily equate to increases in revenues. Dues typically have remained static for existing members, so basically the average cost per round has dropped at many private clubs while maintenance requirements have increased. Meanwhile, food and beverage revenue has dropped for many clubs because players are reluctant to linger in a clubhouse after a round.

Still, all things considered in what has been a terrible year for so many, golf as a whole has proved to be a silver lining as the pandemic continues to storm. 📈
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Tours Unite

(Continued from Page 1)
“I mean, I obviously understand it vaguely,” said Justin Thomas, a member of the PGA Tour’s 16-member player advisory council. “I don’t probably understand the very extreme details of it yet, exactly when certain things are going to happen or why or whatever it might be. I know we’re going to have a PAC meeting I think here coming up, so we’ll be able to talk about it more then.”

That lack of specifics has led to plenty of speculation, and this week European Tour chief executive Keith Pelley added to that speculation when he described a “global schedule” to The Daily Mail. The idea would be to bring the two tours together to leverage the star appeal and financial strength of the PGA Tour and the global reach of the European circuit. While Pelley dismissed social media suggestions that the agreement would lead to a PGA Tour takeover, he did describe potential windows when the two tours would hold co-sanctioned events in the United Kingdom leading up to The Open Championship and again in the fall after the FedExCup.

that would meld the best of both tours into a single schedule without the normal competing-event strings attached would be welcomed by most of the game’s top players.

“It would help us tremendously. We’re more exposed to different places where you can grow our brands personally and become bigger. I think that’s important,” Brooks Koepka said. “It depends wherever they want to go, they make it truly like a global tour. It would be well known around the world, which I think could be super, super big for the PGA Tour and European Tour.”

Koepka is uniquely positioned for whatever comes from the alliance. He began his career on Europe’s secondary circuit, the Challenge Tour, and is still celebrated by the continent. He also understands better than many — if not all — of the current crop of young stars what it means to be a truly global player.

Koepka also understands what the alliance could mean to the European Tour.

“Obviously the European Tour, they need a little bit of help and I think with the way the PGA Tour is stretched, when it comes to sponsors, when it comes to fans, when it comes to all these different things, that’s where the European Tour’s lacking,” he said. “Having an interest, I guess, in the European Tour and bring some of those whether it be sponsors or fans to create the hype around a European Tour event. Sometimes that’s lacking a little bit. ... Maybe to be able to bring more notoriety and bring much more energy to the tour.”

How membership for the combined tours is handled will be a primary question for most players, as well as what happens to secondary events on both circuits. But for a player like Koepka, a global player who un-

derstands the value and benefits of a game that travels, the move is all upside.

The only real question on this front is if others will agree with Koepka.

“I think it depends on the person. Some guys are pretty set in their ways, pretty comfortable,” he said. “I think family plays a big part in that. Other guys are just more comfortable with their family, not traveling as much, getting a little bit older where it’s more important to be home. But I would say the younger guys are definitely more willing to travel and more willing to go over there. I would go in a heartbeat.”

Although plenty of questions remain about the alliance, for the game’s best, any combination of the globe’s two biggest tours is a move worth making. 📈
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Golf Shoes

(Continued from Page 2)

waterproof and stain resistant. The comfortable Ortholite sock-liner is molded and sports a micro suede top cloth. The ultra-light, foam midsole offers comfort and rebound while the TPU spikeless bottom supplies extra stability and traction.

Puma IGNITE NXT Disc

The IGNITE NXT Disc golf shoe from Puma combines state-of-art performance and stylish good looks in a single, low-profile design. Underneath, the Pro-Form TPU outsole is built with an organically-altered traction pattern for improved control and better stability during the golf swing. Inside, the full-length IGNITE Foam midsole provides extreme comfort with a SoleShield TPU for enhanced durability. The flat-knit waterproof upper is

stabilized with PWRFRAME, an ultra-thin TPU frame for lightweight support and better balance. Additionally, the shoe is incorporated with PUMA’s DISC technology for a quick, easy, and secure fit with micro-adjusting dial system.

True Linkswear Eco Knit

Go through your day and play your round comfortably in the True Eco Knit spikeless golf shoe. The shoe is created with sustainable, ultra-light knit yarn, weighing a mere 7.4 ounces and sports a soft cushioned footbed. The upper is breathable and quick-drying to help prevent sweat build up. The versatile outer is comfortable enough for everyday life and offers aggressive treading for excellent performance on the links as well.

Adidas CodeChaos

The Adidas Code Chaos spikeless golf shoe provides a lightweight stable feel. It is constructed with a durable Ad-iwear rubber outsole that features Chaos Traxion with Twist Grip soft rubber. Code Chaos also sports a Torsion X stability bar that offers footing from the ground up and a responsive Boost midsole made with FitFoam. Comfort is found in its textile lining and an INSITE sockliner that also enhances balance. The textile upper provides water protection to keep your feet dry and comes with a 1 year waterproof warranty.

Nike Vapor

The Nike Vapor golf epitomizes versatility, with clean lines and understated styling that makes it easily wearable both on and off the golf course. The low-profile, lightweight, spikeless shoe is constructed with synthetic leather that is durable, simple-to-clean and water-resistant. The Vapor golf shoe also features a bladed rubber integrated traction pattern on the outsole for outstanding gripping power, so much so that it rivals any shoe that comes with removable spikes. The Vapor also comes with a full-length Phylon midsole that is lightweight and responsive, which relieves pressure on your joints as you walk. This is truly a golf shoe that combines style, comfort and traction exceptionally well.

Skechers Go Golf Pro 4 Honors

The Go Golf Pro 4 Honors includes high-quality full-grain, premium upper leather made for durability. The Resamax cushioned insole is ultra-lightweight and highly responsive. The outsole features a dynamic diamond traction plate that provides maximum grip on the grass and also includes replaceable Softspikes.

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Hovland



Viktor Hovland of Norway plays on the 2nd Hole during the final round of the PGA Tour Mayakoba Golf Classic, in Playa del Carmen, Mexico, Sunday, Dec. 6. (AP Photo/Robert Fedez)

(Continued from Page 1)

It was the first time since the Mayakoba Classic began in 2007 that it was won with a birdie putt on the final hole. For the 23-year-old from Norway, it's becoming old hat. Hovland won the Puerto Rico Open in February for his first PGA Tour title by holing a 30-foot birdie putt on the last hole.

"I was shaking there at the end," Hovland said after closing with a 6-under 65. "I thought I lost it after second shot on 16. I made an awesome par there. I knew I had to make birdie on 18."

Wise closed with a 63 and did everything right over the last two holes except make the birdie putts. Tied for the lead, he missed birdie putts from 12 feet on each of the last two holes at El Camaleon Golf Club.

The former NCAA champion at Oregon also was going for his second PGA Tour win, the first one coming at the AT&T Byron Nelson two years ago.

"I played 17 aggressive off the tee. On 18, I hit two great shots," Wise said. "I hit every shot as good as I could hit it. I

just couldn't get them to drop."

Hovland had four birdies in the opening six holes and built a two-shot lead going into the back nine on a course softened by rain that caused a two-hour delay in the morning.

But he made bogey on the 12th hole, and that seemed to create chances for a half-dozen players separated by one shot along the back nine.

Hovland responded with birdies on the next two holes, and he appeared to be in control with a tee shot to 4 feet on the par-3 15th. But he hit a tentative putt to remain tied with Wise, and Hovland thought he was in big trouble when his long iron on the 515-yard 16th hole sailed hard to the right toward trouble.

It came down in the waste area a few feet from the hazard, and he hit a superb sand shot to 4 feet to save par.

Hovland, starting his second season on the PGA Tour after a stellar college career at Oklahoma State, finished at 20-under 264 and moved to No. 15 in the world.

That makes three players in the

top 15 who were still in college a year ago in May. The others are PGA champion Collin Morikawa and Matthew Wolff, a teammate of Hovland's at Oklahoma State.

Adam Long (67) and Tom Hoge (69) tied for third at 17-under 267. Hoge holed a 20-foot birdie putt from the fringe on the 15th hole to get within one shot, but he three-putted from some 70 feet on the tough 16th to fall back. Long lost hope when he sent his tee shot into the vegetation on the 17th hole and took bogey.

Emiliano Grillo, who led after the second and third rounds, closed with a 72 and tied for eighth, five shots behind. Justin Thomas got back to the fringe of contention with a 62 on Saturday, and the world's No. 3 player followed that with a 69, making double bogey on No. 10 to end his chances.

This was the final PGA Tour event of the year, one last chance for players who either qualify for the Sentry Tournament of Champions at Kapalua or lock up a spot in the Masters next year. Neither was an issue

for Hovland, who qualified for Maui with his win in Puerto Rico and was set for Augusta National by reaching the Tour Champion-

ship his rookie season. Austin Eckroat of Oklahoma State had a 67-65 weekend and tied for 12th. 🏆

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Stanford

(Continued from Page 1)

teary eyed. I'm like, 'Just don't look over there, don't look over there.' I would have lost it."

The 43-year-old former TCU star from Fort Worth won her seventh LPGA Tour title and first since the major Evian Championship in 2018. She finished at 7-under 277 at Old American Golf Club in the event that started in bone-chilling cold Thursday.

"It was windy, it was cold, and I think growing up in Texas you have to play in a little bit of cold in the offseason," Stanford said. "The course played really tough, but it just felt like Texas this week, so I was really comfortable out there."

Inbee Park, So Yeon Ryu and 19-year-old Yealimi Noh, tied for the third-round lead, each shot 70 to tie for second in the final tune-up before the U.S.

Women's Open next week at Champions Golf Club in Houston.

Stanford pulled away with birdies on Nos. 13, 14, 16 and 17, and closed with a bogey.

"I really think it boils down to passion," Stanford said. "I just love trying to get better. I think if you love what you're doing and you love your process and you just are loving getting better, then you have to keep going."

Ryu was making her first U.S. start since last year.

"I was quite nervous coming back, even though I played a few good events in Korea," Ryu said. "It was really great to be in contention."

Top-ranked Jin Young Ko was fifth at 4 under after a 70 in her second LPGA Tour start of the year.

"I'm looking for next week,"

Ko said. "I have confidence from this week for next week, so I'm really excited."

Anna Nordqvist (70) and Charley Hull (71) were 3 under. 🏆



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My First U.S. Women’s Open: LPGA Players Tell Stories from Their Championship Debut



Amateur Lydia Ko hits her tee shot on the par-4 14th hole during the second round of the 2012 U.S. Women’s Open.

BY BETH ANN NICHOLS
As the 75th U.S. Women’s Open kicks off this week in Houston, 41 players will be experiencing the game’s ultimate test for the first time. Rookie week at this championship is impossible to forget — the nerve-wracking, awe-inspiring, did-that-just-happen moments are seared in the memory banks. *Golfweek* asked a number of LPGA players to share highlights from their U.S. Women’s Open debuts. It won’t be long now before names like Hinako Shibuno, Yealimi Noh and Bianca Pagdanganan have stories of their own.

Annika Sorenstam, 1992 Oakmont Country Club (T-63)
It was really rainy there. It was so wet that year. That’s when Patty Sheehan and Juli Inkster got in a playoff. The course was known for fast greens. They roll 12 and the members think it’s slow. The first day I only played

four holes; I teed off at like 7:30 at night. The next morning, we were hitting balls warming up, and it was so lush. I was hitting wedges and my divots were huge, thick and heavy. Just mud. I remember just hitting one after another and these divots were flying, and I wasn’t really paying attention to where they were flying. My caddie said maybe you should aim somewhere else. I said why? Well, there’s a player over there giving you the evil eye. I looked over and it was Dottie (Pepper). It had landed on her head like several times, this wet divot. I was like oops.
Maybe not the entry I had planned.

Lydia Ko, 2012 Blackwolf Run (T-39, low amateur)
I know what it was like for my cousin. She fainted that week because it was so hot. And then the next day my aunt fainted. I think that was the first U.S. Open they came to and the last as well. It

was obviously extremely tricky. It’s a golf course I’d seen from Se Ri’s win (in 1998) so it was super cool for me, especially being South Korean-born to go to a golf course where there’s so much history and where she really changed the game and women’s golf. It was cool to kind of see that and go oh, that shot she hit on 18. It is probably, even to this day, maybe the trickiest, or top two trickiest U.S. Women’s Opens I’ve ever played in. I was so nervous that I hit my driver and hit my second shot on the green and I couldn’t line up my putts. I use the line on my ball for putting and I just couldn’t do it. I tried a few times and I couldn’t... I remember putting without a line that first hole.

Morgan Pressel, 2001 Pine Needles (MC)
It’s funny, the things I remember are the rain delays, because it was a time that I was in the locker room with all of these people I had looked up to. It was the locker room, and then there was a little dining room. I never wanted to leave. I just wanted to sit there because it was an opportunity for me to talk and say hi to all these people I had only ever seen on TV.

Maria Fassi, 2015 Lancaster Country Club (MC)
I birdied my very first hole. I honestly don’t remember if I started on 10 or 1, but there was a bunker on the right side and we had talked about it with my caddie, that the bunker wasn’t really in play. I remember flying it past the bunker because of how excited I was. We had a



U.S. Women’s Open Championship, Round One

Mayakoba Golf Classic Purse Payout: Viktor Hovland Earns Nearly \$1.3 Million

The Mayakoba Golf Classic was the final event of the year on the PGA Tour, but just the 12th event of the 2020-21 season. Here’s a look at what champion

Viktor Hovland and the rest of the players who make the cut in Mexico earned in prize money and FedExCup points.
©*Golf Channel Digital*

Finish	Player	FedEx	Earnings (\$)
1	Viktor Hovland	500.00	1,296,000.00
2	Aaron Wise	300.00	784,800.00
T3	Tom Hoge	162.50	424,800.00
T3	Adam Long	162.50	424,800.00
T5	Harris English	100.00	266,400.00
T5	Lucas Glover	100.00	266,400.00
T5	Billy Horschel	100.00	266,400.00
T8	Tony Finau	77.50	203,400.00
T8	Emiliano Grillo	77.50	203,400.00
T8	Carlos Ortiz	77.50	203,400.00
T8	Brendon Todd	77.50	203,400.00
T12	Abraham Ancer	58.00	147,600.00
T12	Max Homa	58.00	147,600.00
T12	Maverick McNealy	58.00	147,600.00
T12	Justin Thomas	58.00	147,600.00
T12	Austin Eckroat- a	-	
T17	Corey Connors	49.00	117,000.00
T17	Patrick Rodgers	49.00	117,000.00
T17	Steve Stricker	49.00	117,000.00
T20	Joel Dahmen	43.00	95,400.00
T20	John Huh	43.00	95,400.00
T20	Jhonattan Vegas	43.00	95,400.00
T23	Daniel Berger	34.07	65,262.86
T23	Tyler Duncan	34.07	65,262.86
T23	Bo Hoag	34.07	65,262.86
T23	Charles Howell III	34.07	65,262.86
T23	Vincent Whaley	34.07	65,262.86
T23	Russell Knox	34.07	65,262.85
T23	Joaquin Niemann	34.07	65,262.85
T30	Chris Baker	27.25	50,400.00
T30	Brian Harman	27.25	50,400.00
T32	Keegan Bradley	22.30	43,056.00
T32	Brice Garnett	22.30	43,056.00
T32	Patton Kizzire	22.30	43,056.00
T32	Kevin Streelman	22.30	43,056.00
T32	Camilo Villegas	22.30	43,056.00
37	Sung Kang	19.00	37,440.00
T38	Nate Lashley	17.50	34,920.00
T38	Hank Lebioda	17.50	34,920.00
T40	Branden Grace	13.50	29,160.00
T40	Brandon Hagy	13.50	29,160.00
T40	Satoshi Kodaira	13.50	29,160.00
T40	Troy Merritt	13.50	29,160.00
T40	Scott Piercy	13.50	29,160.00
T40	Rory Sabbatini	13.50	29,160.00
T46	K.J. Choi	9.25	20,952.00
T46	Doug Ghim	9.25	20,952.00
T46	Charley Hoffman	9.25	20,952.00
T46	Chris Kirk	9.25	20,952.00
T46	Andy Ogletree	-	20,952.00
T46	Kyle Stanley	9.25	20,952.00
T52	Akshay Bhatia	-	17,208.00
T52	Rafael Campos	6.25	17,208.00
T52	Jason Dufner	6.25	17,208.00
T52	Kelly Kraft	6.25	17,208.00
T52	Pat Perez	6.25	17,208.00
T52	Sepp Straka	6.25	17,208.00
T52	Will Zalatoris	-	17,208.00
T59	Ryan Brehm	4.90	16,272.00
T59	Mark Hubbard	4.90	16,272.00
T59	Kyoung-Hoon Lee	4.90	16,272.00
T59	Chase Seiffert	4.90	16,272.00
T63	Austin Cook	4.30	15,840.00
T63	Xinjun Zhang	4.30	15,840.00
T65	J.J. Spaun	3.90	15,552.00
T65	Ben Taylor	3.90	15,552.00
T67	Hunter Mahan	3.50	15,336.00
T67	Quade Cummins - a	-	
69	Michael Gellerman	3.20	15,192.00
70	Keith Mitchell	3.00	15,048.00
71	Harold Varner III	2.90	14,904.00

The **19th Hole** ... News, Notes & Quotes From the World of Golf

Meet Upcoming Golfer Christiaan Bezuidenhout Who Accidentally Drank Rat Poison as a Child




Christiaan Bezuidenhout poses with the trophy after his victory in the South African Open.

BY BEN CHURCH
(CNN) — South African golfer Christiaan Bezuidenhout knows more than most about overcoming adversity. The 26-year-old won the South African Open on Sunday to become the first man to win back-to-back European Tour titles since 2017 but his life could have been very different. When he was just two-years-old, Bezuidenhout accidentally drank rat poison in a grocery store after mistaking it for a can of soda.

In a blog post written for the European Tour in 2019, the golfer says it was a moment that changed his life forever. “As a result of that moment of naivety, I almost died,” he wrote. “The hospital had to pump my whole stomach to get rid of all the poison, but the poison affected the whole nervous system in my body, and one of the long term effects of this led to me having a stutter.” The stutter caused Bezuidenhout to withdraw from social in-


teractions as his self-confidence was affected by anxiety. He was scared to pick up the phone or even answer a question. As a result, he says he suffered from depression and was eventually prescribed beta-blockers by his doctor when he was 14. He says he used the medication, which is supposed to reduce anxiety, for seven years throughout his amateur career but while competing in the British Amateur at Royal Portrush in 2014, Bezuidenhout was randomly chosen for a drug test. He declared taking beta-blockers for his stutter and thought nothing more of it. **‘Inconsolable’** In his 2019 blog post, Bezuidenhout says he then received a phone call from his father who told him he had been suspended for two years for failing the test — a sanction eventually reduced to nine months. The International Golf Federation did not immediately respond to CNN’s request for comment on Bezuidenhout’s suspension and its subsequent reduction. “The worst part of it all were all the stories that came out from people in the golf industry and supposed close friends back home,” wrote Bezuidenhout. “I was accused of using it to

better my performances, which really hurt me and my family. A lot of nasty things were said and I was known as the guy banned from golf for a drug related incident.” After being left “inconsolable,” the South African decided to use his enforced break to develop as a player and return stronger than ever. In his first event back, he won by seven shots and his career has only been heading in one direction since.

He’s now won three European Tour titles and has his eyes firmly set on the majors after winning on Sunday. “It’s unbelievable to stand here with this win. It’s any South African golfer’s dream to win his national tournament,” he said after winning the event by five strokes. “It’s unreal. I’ve fought hard today. Font nine, things didn’t really go my way but I dug deep to come out with a win today.”  ©CNN



Bezuidenhout tees off on the 8th hole during the final round of the South African Open.



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Play Better Golf With Jack Nicklaus



AN A GOLFER TURN TOO FAR DURING THE BACKSWING?

GIVEN CERTAIN PROVISIONS, I BELIEVE THE ANSWER IS NO.

FIRST, THERE MUST BE NO SWAYING, RAISING OR DIPPING OF THE UPPER BODY.

2-21



SECOND, A FIRM FOOTING AND GOOD BALANCE ARE RETAINED.

THIRD, THE HANDS RETAIN COMPLETE CONTROL OVER THE CLUB AT ALL STAGES OF THE ACTION.

FOURTH, THE RIGHT KNEE IS NEVER LOCKED.

2-22



SQUATTING EXCESSIVELY AT ADDRESS CAN BE AS HARMFUL AS SETTING UP TO THE BALL WOODEN-LEGGED.

RESULT IS INvariably AN INCOMPLETE SHOULDER AND HIP TURN AND FAULTY DOWNSWING LEG ACTION.

2-23



STAND TALL, THEN INCLINE FORWARD FROM THE HIPS WITH YOUR REAR END PROTRUDING AND YOUR ARMS HANGING FREELY FROM YOUR SHOULDERS.

THEN JUST EASE YOUR KNEES AND YOU'RE READY TO GO.

2-24



SOME SUPPLE AND ATHLETIC TOUR GOLFERS CAN FULLY COIL THEIR UPPER BODIES WITH VERY LIMITED HIP ROTATION.

THAT'S NOT TO BE RECOMMENDED FOR MOST RECREATIONAL PLAYERS.

2-25



TO MAKE A MAXIMUM SHOULDER TURN, MOST PEOPLE MUST ALLOW THEIR HIPS TO ROTATE PROPORTIONATELY.

YOU'LL ACHIEVE THE PROPER RATIO BY HAVING YOUR HIPS RESPOND TO THE PULL OF YOUR COILING SHOULDERS, NEVER THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

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My First

(Continued from Page 6)

good laugh after that, and then I hit it to 4 feet and made the putt. So I was like OK, first time out here. It was a cool birdie, and a great way to start a U.S. Open.

Stacy Lewis, 2007 Pine Needles (MC)

I was still in college. I had (former Arkansas coach) Kelley Hester caddying for me because she was going to Georgia that summer. I remember I played pretty terrible. It wasn't the best first U.S. Open experience. I remember kind of being overwhelmed by the golf course. It was hard. I just remember not feeling prepared. It was unlike anything I'd ever played before.

As you do it more times, you kind of forget what that experience is like. You almost forget what it's like to be that rookie or to be that amateur that's playing for the first time.

I like seeing the girls here with their dads caddying because that's what I've always had. You try to help them out, but they just need to experience that themselves. I was having a good summer too. I won nationals that year — won the Southern, the Western,

semis at the North & South. I was playing well.

Ally Ewing, 2014 Pinehurst (MC)

My first U.S. Open was Pinehurst. I had won the North & South there the previous summer so qualifying for that was so exciting to me. I'd played well there, and then I just got eaten alive. Pinehurst is just a really distinct golf course. I have never walked away from a golf tournament feeling like I had executed more shots than I was given credit for. So I walked away from Thursday/Friday saying, you know, I hit some really good shots that didn't work out. It's just an unforgiving golf course.

Angela Stanford, 2000 Merit Club (MC)

I played with Carol Semple Thompson. We had played on the Curtis Cup together that year. I remember standing on a tee and I swear she said this is my 27th in a row. (Editor's note: Thompson, an amateur, did not play in 27 consecutive but she did compete in 32 U.S. Women's Opens, her last com-

ing in 2002.)

I remember thinking holy cow... how in the world did she do that? So this (year) is 21 (for me). Just looking back on that, I remember thinking I hope I get to play 10, and this will be my 21st in a row!

And I remember being terrified of Karrie Webb.

Karrie Webb, 1996 Pine Needles (T-19)

What I remember was that (my caddie) said the word patience so many times that I ended up like, I'm sick of hearing the word (bleeping) patience! But that's my biggest memory. I had to learn how to play U.S. Open golf. You know, I'd play well up until then but had not come across a course as difficult. And I wasn't used to making as many bogeys and working as hard for pars. And it is, it's about patience. I think that's still, for me, my biggest battle at any major is patience. I have, at times, been really good and then other weeks be a couple over early and start pressing and thinking about end scores and I know better than that. That's just always



Brittany Altomare tees off on the 15th hole during the second round of the 2009 U.S. Women's Open. (AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar)

going to be my Achilles' heel at majors is patience.

Brittany Altomare, 2009 Saucon Valley (MC)

My dad caddied for me. My grandfather had actually just passed away when I had qualified, like a few weeks before. It was kind of like a special moment, playing in it. I didn't know that you could call and make practice round times. You go and you register and look at

the screens for practice rounds and Lorena had an opening in her group. My dad was like just do it! So literally my first U.S. Open and professional tournament I played a practice round with her. I was more nervous on Monday than I was teeing it up on Thursday. But she was like the nicest person ever. She was engaging with me and asking me questions. It could not have been a better experience. 🏌️‍♀️

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Surprises

(Continued from Page 1)
room for Maui-bound Stewart Cink, Brian Gay, Jason Kokrak, Martin Laird, Carlos Ortiz, Robert Streb and — deep breath — Hudson Swafford.)

We were entertained, again, by Tiger and Phil. Woods made a career-high 10 at the 12th hole at the Masters — then erased most of that mess with five birdies in his last six holes. Mickelson won the Dominion Energy Charity Classic for his second victory in as many starts on PGA TOUR Champions, then carried Charles Barkley on his back for 18 holes.

We saw three new courses, with Houston's iconic Memorial Park in it for the long haul. THE CJ CUP @ SHADOW CREEK and ZOZO CHAMPIONSHIP @ SHERWOOD were stopgaps. Fittingly, there were new course records at all three. Xander Schauffele shot 8-under 64 at Shadow Creek; Richy Werenski 11-under 61 at Sherwood; Hideki Matsuyama 7-under 63 at Memorial Park. (Justin Thomas also shot 5-under 65 at the Winged Foot U.S. Open.)

None of them won. Harry Higgs (Safeway Open),

Scott Harrington (Sanderson Farms Championship) and Brendan Steele (Mayakoba Golf Classic) each made an albatross. None of them won, either. Korn Ferry Tour pro Will Zalatoris made a hole-in-one at the U.S. Open at Winged Foot, then earned Special Temporary Membership on TOUR, a different sort of victory.

We witnessed brawn (DeChambeau at the U.S. Open; Dustin Johnson at the Masters), and brains (three 40-something winners). We saw a salute to the golden oldies (Fred Funk, 64, made the cut at the Bermuda Championship despite averaging less than 245 yards off the tee).

Ageless Bernhard Langer, 63, became the oldest to make the Masters cut. Playing with DeChambeau on Sunday at Augusta, the PGA TOUR Champions star hit hybrids and 3-woods into most of the par 4s; DeChambeau, meanwhile, scraped the clouds with his tee shots and drove the third green. And Bernie beat Bryson 71-73.

Surprising? Certainly. The fall was that.

Cink, 47, won the Safeway Open, breaking a win drought of 4,074 days since the 2009 Open Championship. He is currently fourth in the FedExCup. Last season he was 144th.

Gay, 48, won the Bermuda Championship for his first title in over seven years. Kokrak made 26 birdies and won THE CJ CUP @ SHADOW CREEK for his first win at 35. Because it's like they say: If at first you don't succeed, wait until your 233rd career start.

Laird won a playoff over Austin Cook and Matthew Wolff at the Shriners Hospitals for Children Open, his first trophy since the 2013 Valero Texas Open. Swafford (Corales Punta Cana Resort & Club Championship) hadn't won since the 2017 The American Express, and Sergio Garcia, 40, putted with his eyes wide shut to steady his stroke at the Sanderson Farms Championship. It was his first victory on TOUR since the 2017 Masters, and he pointed to the sky and blinked back tears while remembering his two uncles who had died from the coronavirus.

"It's hard," Garcia said, which

also described so much of 2020.

Ortiz broke through at the Vivint Houston Open in his 118th career TOUR start, marking his first victory of any kind since his three-win season on the Korn Ferry Tour in 2014. Then he broke down. Streb won The RSM Classic six years after winning the 2014 RSM, a stretch of 165 starts.

The fall wasn't entirely about winning; Matthew Wolff was loading up on seconds long before Thanksgiving. The runner-up to DeChambeau at the Rocket Mortgage Classic, Wolff was runner-up to DeChambeau again at the U.S. Open, and in his very next start lost a playoff (Laird, Austin Cook) to finish T2 at the Shriners. Yep, three near-misses in 10 starts. He's ninth in the FedExCup. That's a solid fall; Wolff might even make the season-ending TOUR Championship at East Lake, Sept. 2-5, 2021. If he does, he'll likely run into No. 1 Johnson.

Wait. Him again? Yep, meet the new boss, same as the old boss. The winner of last season's points race is in pole

position yet again. That's because Johnson shot 20 under at Augusta to break the Masters scoring record (Tiger Woods, Jordan Spieth) by two. He also finished T2 at the Vivint Houston Open, and T6 at the U.S. Open. Any questions?

Johnson is 252 points ahead of No. 2 DeChambeau, who along with Mickelson and Adam Scott experimented with extra-long driver shafts. Thomas revealed a grudge match with Charlie Woods, 11, as Justin and dad Mike, and Tiger and son Charlie, anticipate their first-ever appearance at the PNC Championship in Orlando later this month.

Said Thomas, "We'll have that like inner tournament within a tournament."

That was the fall — a tournament within a tournament. Because as great as it was, it was just a taste of 2021, when Dustin and Justin, Viktor and Xander, will return with the rest of them. Happy holidays and see you in Maui for the Sentry Tournament of Champions, Jan. 7-10. 🏌️‍♀️

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