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GOLFOBSERVERBLOG Thursday, October 11, 2007

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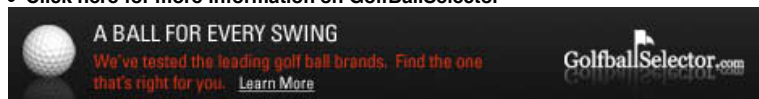


August 8, 2006

By Gary Trask
Editor, GOLFOBSERVER
E-mail me at: Golfersal@aol.com

GolfBallSelector.com takes golf ball technology to the next level

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Golfers of all skill levels are constantly looking for an edge. Whether it's employing that new gadget they saw on an infomercial, spending half their pay checks on the driver they saw Tiger Woods using or spending more time at the range with their trusted instructor than with their loved ones, "golf nuts" put no barriers on what they'll do to shave even a single stroke off their handicap.

But even after going to these great lengths to improve their game, do these golfers ever really take into consideration one of the most vital pieces of equipment to their game -- the golf ball?

Do they really have any idea what brand of ball is best for their swing, or do they simply take the hundreds of ads they see of TV for golf balls as the gospel truth? Just because the Titleist Pro VI is the ball of choice for **Vijay Singh**, does that mean it's the proper fit for the 21-handicap who plays once a week? If you take the time to get fitted for your clubs, shouldn't you fit those new sticks to the ball that works best for your game?

These are the questions that the people at GBT Technologies decided to not just ask, but provide the answers for, by launching GolfBallSelector.com in July. And the company spared no expense and left no stone unturned in doing so.

"The basic idea came from the fact that we don't think there's one single golf ball on the market that is the best golf ball," explains **Gary Esayian**, a partner with GBT Technologies, which stands for Golf Ball Test. "But there is a golf ball out there that is best for how you play the game and how you swing the club. It's that simple."

What wasn't quite so simple was the elaborate testing process GBT Technologies went through in order to conveniently provide golfers a list of the best balls for their specific games. As in-depth as the research was, however, the end result is that visitors to GolfBallSelector.com are provided this list in a matter of minutes after answering a series of questions about their game.

"It was very complex, but it was also very cool to be a part of," **Esayian** says of the process that took about nine months. "We're real excited about the results. The reaction we've got so far from the people who have tried it has been excellent."

GolfBallSelector.com, a joint venture between the high-end club fitting company Max Out Golf and the equipment website Equip2Golf.com, features the Mayes Performance Index (MPI), which is a patent pending performance index and rating system that provides relative comparisons between golf balls. Multiple lines from every major golf ball brand were tested for distance, spin, feel, compression, hardness, durability and price. Using swing robots and actual golfers, each ball was tested using a driver, six iron and wedge. Distance, spin and accuracy data was captured using Max Out Golf's patented IGMS system to measure actual launch conditions. The human testing was conducted not with one "optimum" or "average" swing, but by golfers of varying skill levels.

All of this info was then handed over to a company called Expert Choice, which produces decision support software that has helped Fortune 500 companies from all over the world as well as the U.S. Government since 1983



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... government since 1988.

"It was important to have a third party come in that had no bias to any of the golf ball manufactures," says **Esayian**. "This is all about finding the best golf ball for the individual golfer. It's not about selling a particular brand of golf balls."

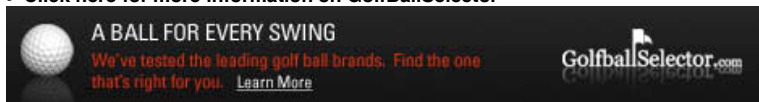
[GolfBallSelector.com](#) fitting process is available for a nominal fee. The standard version is \$19.95 and provides a one-time single fitting session done on-line that uses the custom developed on-line analytical processing tools and techniques to help determine which balls have the right mix of distance, spin, and feel based on a golfer's own individual swing characteristics. A premium version, which carries an introductory price of \$29.95, gives the user access to these tools, plus additional resources in the [GolfBallSelector.com](#) Learning Center for up to a year - allowing a golfer the opportunity to update their profile on a regular basis and review new balls as they become available.

Currently there are 30 different kinds of golf balls in the system, but roughly 12 more will be added in the coming months.

"The response we have got is that people are really surprised that they don't have to be going out and spending so much on the most expensive brand of golf ball because there's another two or three brands out there that are not only easier on the wallet, but better for their overall game," adds **Esayian**. "And this is something that can be beneficial to golfers of all handicaps. We've already had some Tour caliber players give it a try along with guys who are 36 handicaps."

"Not all balls are created equal," says **Mitch Voges**, who along with **Esayian**, is the co-founder of [Max Out Golf](#). "Choosing the ball that makes the most of how you strike the ball can make a surprisingly big difference in your game. Our goal is to provide the real world data that golfers need to make a truly informed golf ball purchase."

• [Click here for more information on GolfBallSelector](#)



This is not a paid advertisement, this is a small project that we believe very strongly in and have been behind since it's idea came about at the start of the year. Once you try this I think that you will think it's pretty neat also.

- Sal Johnson - Publisher, GOLFOBSERVER

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What are your thoughts on this?

May 5, 2006

By **SAL JOHNSON**
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CBS switches to Golf Channel for Saturday finish

One big positive of the third round was the fact that the final two hours of the day were telecasted, even though CBS went off the air at it's allotted time. Between the PGA Tour, Wachovia, CBS and Golf Channel the coverage after 6pm was switched from CBS to Golf Channel in a savvy move in which the golf fan was finally treated right. In the 50 odd years that PGA Tour golf has been televised one of the biggest problems have been networks signing off at a certain time, thus leaving the golf fan without a conclusion to the day's golf.

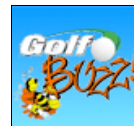
Even with this frustration the Tour has been powerless in forcing networks to stay on, especially on Saturday but one big advantage of having the Golf Channel is the fact that at the last moment telecasts can be thrown to that network. As an example of this, just two weeks ago the LPGA Ginn Open had a rain delay and went three hours over there time period on CBS, but with a deal in which the LPGA Tour bought up the time from Golf Channel golf fans were given a treat as the Golf Channel was able to accommodate the finish.

This week was also a pleasant surprise for fans and we were treated to probably the greatest day this year of good golf. Now before Golf Channel takes credit for this day, we should also credit Wachovia for first paying the costs (estimated to be about \$40,000) and for CBS to agree to stay on. Without these things happening this switch couldn't happen. As much as this is a positive for the Golf Channel it should be remembered that for CBS they had to provide the pictures and instead of giving their 6pm programming a boast of people watching golf they lose all those folks to the Golf Channel.

We can only hope that this will happen more and more. But remember it's just not switching to Golf Channel. They aren't doing this out of the kindness of their hearts to golf fans, there has to be someone to pay the bills for this, so we just hope that the PGA Tour figures out some kind of arrangement between the network, sponsor and Golf Channel to make this a regular affair. Just because this was done today because of the final pairing of Tiger Woods and Vijay Singh it doesn't mean that in two weeks in Atlanta with a final matchup of Ben Crane and Rory Sabbatini this switch will happen if a delay hampers that event. It has more to do with business than what is good for the golf fans, hopefully this is a step in the right direction.

[Click here to post your thoughts or to read what other's think on this matter](#) E-mail us at: Golfersal@aol.com

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What are your thoughts on this?

March 22, 2006

By **SAL JOHNSON**Publisher, **GOLFOBSERVER**E-mail me at: Golfersal@aol.com

So has Kelly Tilghman lost the main anchor job?

[Click here to post your thoughts](#) or to read what other's think of this

Has the marriage that was made in Golf TV Heaven come to an end?
Has the honeymoon ended for Kelly Tilghman as she was mysteriously not present in today's telecast?

It's all so strange that on one of the most important telecasts that the Golf Channel will do for the PGA Tour that their "B" team announcer, Rich Lerner was doing the WGC-CA Championship today instead of their "A" team announcer Kelly Tilghman. Why it's so strange is that it completely comes out of the blue at a time when Tilghman's approval rating is about as high as President Bush's. On top of that, what was all that heavy publicity that they did for the last couple of months? In trying to track down some answers on Thursday evening about the only thing that I could get was that Tilghman will be back at the Zurich Open with Faldo and is scheduled to be the host with Faldo at the Players Championship. Insiders say that Tilghman was more needed to help shore up the Golf Central shows but come on guys, what franchise is more important, Golf Central or your relationship with the PGA Tour? Sorry, I just don't buy it.

But before we do anymore probing we should look at the facts. In my humble opinion it's about as big of a bust as the last female anchor golf saw, ESPN's Linda Cohen, who did women's golf five years ago. Tilghman hasn't been very well accepted in the golfing world for the job that she has done during the Mercedes-Benz Championship, Sony Open, Bob Hope Chrysler and Accenture Match Play Championship. As a matter of fact it seemed at the Match Play that she was getting worse instead of better. She was still feeding us wrong information, not being a very good traffic cop on the show. On top of that Tilghman didn't have anything interesting, new and fresh on the players which is the lifeblood of being an anchor. But most important and what drove everyone crazy was she tried too hard to pitch Nick Faldo lines to make him seem humorous and funny. With all of that Faldo was very forced in his delivery trying to make every line seem funny and what ended up happening was the whole act got very old and as stale as a cheap Las Vegas act.

After the Bob Hope I thought that Faldo was a lost cause who talked way too much and didn't give us a proper grasp of the first three events. Then a funny thing happened, when he did the Buick Invitational sitting next to Jim Nantz he was wonderful. The same at the AT&T. But he fell into his old habits with Tilghman at the Accenture Match Play Championship and with that has started to lose a lot of fans.

With all of that we had something very good happen on Thursday. The combination of Lerner and Faldo was a breath of fresh air for the network that has been way off on their promise of bringing "network quality" programming to golf fans. Today we had a true taste of what a network quality product could be on the Golf Channel, good, crisp, clean announcing in which Lerner was not only a perfect traffic cop for Faldo, Dottie Pepper, Roger Maltbie, Bob Murphy and Steve Sands but was very well versed with information and stats on all players. There was no two ways about it Lerner did his homework big time and gave us a lot of good nuggets of information. More importantly he didn't try to be an Ed McMahon who set up Johnny Carson for years in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Lerner brought us all into the Golf Channel kitchen with Faldo for a cup of coffee and some heart-to-heart talk about golf which has been sorely missing from the Faldo/Tilghman team. For the first time on Golf Channel, Nick Faldo seemed to be on top of his game, commenting and giving us his take of the first round of the WGC-CA Championship.

The Faldo that was on Golf Channel today was great, just like he is on CBS and was with ABC. So it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out the reason, of course he had a partner that steered him in the right direction and in return Faldo gave us a lot of great comments and insight on the day. There is no two ways about it, today's telecast was very enjoyable. So it's easy to see that the future of the Golf Channel is the way today's telecast went which means only one thing Tilghman has to go.

Now of course that brings up the interesting question, what did the genius executives at Golf Channel have in mind by sticking Lerner with Faldo? Was it nothing more than trying to help Golf Central ratings by putting Tilghman on that show at the expense of their relationship with the PGA Tour? Hell no. This was a quiet experiment to see if there was any chemistry between Faldo and Lerner. TV does this all the time and it's a good way to see what works and what doesn't and we saw something that worked today.

Of course the folks at Golf Channel are mum on what the real story is but time will tell. I would be willing to bet the farm that we see more Lerner and Faldo in the near future because it's the right course of action. We can only hope that the executive that has made this decision will also look at the telecasts that were done the first three weeks of the year and do something to improve upon them. I do know for a fact that Peter Oosterhuis has signed up to do four of the seven fall tour events so that is a step in the right direction so who knows, maybe, just maybe Golf Channel will improve and give us a first-class product they promised to do and haven't been able to deliver on. Of course we won't know the answers for several weeks but a couple of things to see is who shows up in New Orleans in mid-April. Will the Golf Channel parade Tilghman back out or will they quietly, like this week bring on the more proven Lerner? More importantly come May during the most important week for the PGA Tour, The Players Championship, will we see Rich Lerner as the host while Tilghman is back in Orlando shoring up the ratings on Golf Central and probably the Sprint Post-Game show? I hope this is the case. Still enquiring minds are waiting for some answers



Photo: © Michael Cohn & Sam Greenwood/Wire Image

Kelly Tilghman and Rich Lerner

but like the old saying goes, you will just have to be patient and tune in next month.

So what are your thoughts on this?

The main question for you, do you think she is any good with Nick Faldo?
Do you think that Faldo is better with Rich Lerner?
Do we think that Golf Channel improves it's telecast having Lerner as the main host instead of Tilghman.
Do you enjoy watching the Golf Channel, if you can get it???

March 22, 2006

E-mail us at: Golfersal@aol.com

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What are your thoughts on this?

January 7, 2006

By **SAL JOHNSON**
Publisher, GOLFOBSERVER
E-mail me at: Golfersal@aol.com

So how did the Golf Channel do?

[Click here to post your thoughts or to read what other's think of this](#) One important storyline for the new era on the PGA Tour in 2007 is the Golf Channel. When the PGA Tour made the announcement last year that Golf Channel was their new cable partner, for a whopping 15 years, just about every media genius wrote its obit before they even aired their first show. In a way this isn't anything new, when the Golf Channel premiered in 1995, insiders snickered at how it wouldn't last the year. Boy how wrong they were.

The same may be said of their new venture, being the only cable partner that the PGA Tour will have. Many, including myself, felt they just didn't have the talent and the resourcefulness to pull it off, but after their first week they have shown us all wrong. Again, just like they have displayed for the last 12 years, they remind us of the Watty Piper children's book "The Little Engine That Could" in which no matter what the odds are on getting up the hill, that little engine will overcome the obstacle and climb the hill

Now this isn't to say that the folks at NBC or CBS have to worry about competing with Golf Channel for the title, best golf show, that isn't the case with what we saw the last four days. But the Golf Channel did bring something into the equation that many other TV entities seem to have lost, that is to make a show important.

After this week the one thing that we can see that will be totally different is the fact that the folks at the Golf Channel have a tremendous passion at what they are trying to do and will do everything in their power to bring that across on the television screen. There are no two ways about it, they are light years better than the crap that ESPN dished us the last couple of years. When ESPN took the leading cable role back in 1999 they tried very hard, bringing in ABC talent Mike Tirico, Curtis Strange (you remember him) and Judy Rankin. But over the years the talent and the drive to do golf the right way diminished to the point that last year they showed us the low moments of television golf with the likes of Karl Ravitch and Charlie Rymer doing golf. It was so bad that even Ian Baker-Finch, who is a great announcer, seemed lost. Their coverage was terrible, their focus wasn't there and it showed in the product that was on the screen

But things are different with the Golf Channel and they showed it this week at the Mercedes-Benz Championship. Their first strong move was to hire Nick Faldo and then pair him with Kelly Tilghman. Of course the pair didn't come off as entertaining as the trio of Faldo, Mike Tirico and Paul Azinger, but they still didn't disappoint. For the first time in an important role, Tilghman did a creditable job at trafficking everything and keeping Faldo as loose as possible. If I could give one bit of advice, Tilghman is still a bit harsh and should study the way Jim Nantz and Judy Rankin do shows. They give a very calm demeanor in which they make the audience feel like they are in a kitchen having a cup of coffee while talking about golf. Tilghman needs to be that way instead



of coming across as authoritative in knowing golf and telling us about it.

As for Faldo he has a special talent of being able to say the right thing at the right time. He has the knack that Peter Alliss has shown for years, that being the gift of gab. Off the top of his head he gives us the information that we want to hear about the players but doesn't mask it under a realm of statistical data that many other announcers do. He is a lot like Johnny Miller in telling it like it is and doesn't worry about weather he will get the cold shoulder from other players for being truthful.



Photo: © Stan Badz/Wire Image

Kelly Tilghman and Nick Faldo

In a way I thought that Faldo would be weak without his sidekick Paul Azinger, sort of like breaking up Abbott and Costello; without Abbott, Costello wasn't very good. But just like the split-up of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, both thrived, and Faldo showed that he could do it on his own.

As for the other members of the Golf Channel team, Mark Roling was his usual steady self doing a fine job, Dottie Pepper again proved that she is a great talent for TV, while Jerry Foltz continues to prove himself as a hidden gem for the Golf Channel. As for newcomer Rocco Mediate, he was very unpolished but again showed the Golf Channel way of "The Little Engine That Could." Mediate had a lot of good comments and thoughts and despite mangling some parts of the English language, did it in a manner that gave a bit of comic relief.

If there is one critical appraisal that I can give about the announcing team, the only fish out of water was Rich Lerner. Yes he is very capable of doing interviews and he can write some elegant lines for taped pieces but to have him be the first thing that you see is wrong. What the producers at Golf Channel are trying to do is make us think of Lerner as the next Jim McKay or Jack Whitaker, two legendary wordsmiths that hosted ABC and CBS shows in the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. Both McKay and Whitaker were great writers that could make words sing on paper, they also had the talent to go live in front of a camera and still be elegant in their presentation making it look like everything is finely scripted. But Lerner just doesn't carry it off and his style is way below that of Jimmy Roberts who is the closest in pulling off the McKay and Whitaker style. Why the producers would put Lerner up first and then do highlights is baffling, we want to hear from Nick Faldo on highlights, not Rich Lerner. The least that we should of had was Lerner doing highlights with Faldo.

As for some technical things, the camera work was top-notch and the placement of shots was good. While ESPN was marred with missed shots, Golf Channel gave us all the action. They also gave us some great things to help enhance the show. One thing that they can't get credit for other than ripping off ESPN is their "Virtual Eye" graphic in showing the hole, with wind direction and slope. Again this was something that ESPN had that helped the telecast and it was very smart on the Golf Channel's part to use it. Another "steal" was the use of Shotlink graphics in showing the scoring zones on holes. This is used by all of the networks, thanks in part because the Tour helps with their Shotlink technology. Another "steal" was the super slo-motion swings that they gave us. Again this technology is good in a telecast, especially the closeup at impact. Unfortunately, what is missing is the proper analysis of the swing the way CBS does it with Peter Kostis, he is a lot better in analyzing a swing than Faldo or Roling.

One piece of technology that they showed for the first time was the Aim Point line in helping show the line of the putt. It was used sparingly on Sunday like it should, but was used a lot in the first three days. The technology has some merit in showing the way putts should go but I think the lesson in that this is something that should not be done live but on tape. If you have the right putt, the right angle and such it looks great but if you don't have these, the effect is lost and looks terrible. It seemed that the producers of Golf Channel got very choosy in picking just the right angles and putts and put it on tape making this a gem to watch.

Some of the other things that were nice was the Pat Green opening with the song "Feels Just Like It Should". But again four days of the same tape got old and they needed to put in some of the video from the first three days to keep it fresher. As for having two "teases," it was a bit of an overkill, one was enough. If I had one problem with the shows it was the tendency to give us too much and trying to give information too fast. One example of a problem was on Friday when K.J. Choi found his ball in some high grass on 15. The ball was found but Choi did not put a mark on it. Instead of letting the action play out, Faldo jumped in thinking that Choi would be disqualified and Jerry Foltz, who was the announcer on the scene, jumped to conclusion that the ball could have been lost. Instead of just keeping quiet and listening to the ruling from the tour, they talked all over the picture, ruining the moment. Another bad scene was on Saturday when Will MacKenzie was just off the green at 13. Mark Roling, who was introduced that moment as the most knowledgeable person about the course, drew a line that he thought the ball would take. Of course, instead of taking it slowly and making sure that MacKenzie would putt the ball, Roling drew the line that wasn't even close to what MacKenzie did chipping it straight to the hole. Talk about egg on an announcer's face, that was it.

Another part of the Golf Channel that has egg on their face is the promotion department. They had commercials running even in the NFL game on Saturday to get people to watch the show. I found these ads inexcusable promoting Tiger Woods going for his seventh straight win even though he wasn't in the tournament. Wonder what happened if someone was living in a cave and didn't get the email that Tiger wasn't in the tournament or if the Golf Channel didn't want to spend the money to redo the spots, no matter what things like this can't happen if they expect to get respect from viewers.

Still these are minor little things that happen during the telecasts, it happens to the best, but for NBC or CBS they don't happen as frequently. Still, what the Golf Channel did was a very creditable job and hopefully will learn what they did right so that they can do it again and learn what they did wrong to make sure it doesn't happen again. More importantly, the Golf Channel is committed to making sure that it does golf the right way and making it a special experience for its viewers. They certainly accomplished that at Kapalua and we can only hope that they get better at their craft and not fall into the same spell that ESPN did in making the product subpar for the viewer

So what are your thoughts on this?

How do you think the Golf Channel did?

Did Kelly Tilghman pass the first test and did she mess with Nick Faldo?

Did you think the production was up to "Network Standards"?

Did you enjoy the show and feel that they showed us the best of the Mercedes Championship and the PGA Tour?

Are you looking forward to watch the telecast of the Sony Open in Hawaii because of what happened this week?

Tell us what you think on the GolfObservers forum, give us your thoughts and answers, we will pass good ones along in future blogs.

January 7th, 2006

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E-mail us at: Golfersal@aol.com

What are your thoughts on this?

December 25, 2006

By **SAL JOHNSON**

Publisher, **GOLFOBSERVER**

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Merry Christmas, are you getting ready for 2007?

[Click here to post your thoughts](#) or to read what other's think of this

In this week of thought and reflection, the first thing that comes to mind was how fast 2006 came and went. Still it was a great year, the first part was dominated by Phil Mickelson and then Tiger Woods

show us the same form that we saw in 2000.

It was also a great year for the European Tour as the men from Europe secured the cup for another two years in the matches held in Ireland. It seems hard to believe but since 1995 the cup has only been on U.S. soil for two of the last 11 years.

2007 also saw a changing of the guard on the LPGA Tour as Lorena Ochoa came out and played better than Annika Sorenstam, who has dominated the LPGA for the last five years. Nobody really knows if this was a freak occurrence or if Ochoa is going to be able to maintain her good play for the long haul.

In other golf news, Vijay Singh wasn't the leading Singh this year as Indian Jeev Milkha Singh won more events (4) than Vijay (1) in 2006, still with a haul of over \$4.6 million Vijay's season was not one to sneeze about

Still in looking at the 2006 season Tiger is again the big news. There is no two ways about it Woods is on a roll and even though he hasn't played on the PGA Tour since September we are awaiting his first tee shot, probably at the Buick Invitational.

But as we embark on 2007 there will be a lot of changes with the new FedEx series, the new TV contracts and the overall attitude towards golf. No matter how we feel towards what the PGA Tour is about to do, we have to give them our full support. The tour is at a crucial part of the road right now that effects all of us weather your a fan or have a business that has anything to do with golf. The success or failure of what happens in 2007 will spell what happens to golf businesses for years to come.

One company that I would love see prosper in 2007 is Golfobserver.Com. We are ending our third year of existence and hopefully we have brought to you the futrue of golf journalism. Since we launched on January 2004, we have had over a half a million users view 10 million page views, not bad for a ragtag team of people that started a website with nothing more than a dream and some hard work.

Over the course of the three years you have seen the faces of our columnist, some of the greatest writers in the game. They have been loyal and more than fair in helping us with our venture. Without them, the site would be very boring and I just want to say thanks to every one of them. We are happy to announce that in 2007 George White, who has been a member of the Golf Channel Website along with Leith Anderson will join us to write about golf and the business of golf.

There are a number of unsung hero's that have never been seen. These are the people that make Golfobserver what it is and I am so proud to be associated with them. People like Brett and Jedd Winn came aboard in April and gave Golfobserver a whole new look, feel, style and future. With their programming and guidances, we have grown to the point that in November and December, our slowest months of the year we had more people get more pages views than in our first year. We also have to thank Judi Casper, who helped in the design work and helping us keep a fresh look with all of her graphic work.

Some other people that sometimes I forget about are Jim and Jeff Cook. These two brothers help in making sure Golfobserver runs so smoothly. Jeff maintains our Golfstats server and makes sure that you have access to the site 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

As for Jim, he has been the person that has put together the mechanics in Golfstats. For Jim this holiday season is very special as celebrates being married to his life-soulmate Kat for a year.

Two other folks that contributed to the success of Golfobserver in 2006 was Will Bealke and Dan Reardon. Both helped with Golfnotebook over the year. I appreciate the hand they gave us with making Golfnotebook the success that it was.

I also have to thank Dan King for the help he gave Golfobserver in the beginning. Dan left us this year and he was missed, I just hope that his new venture is going well and that he is happy in running that.

Also a big thankyou to David Barrett, who is the last of the original gang when Golfobserver started in 2004. He has put up a fair share of Golfnotebooks and his editorial advise has steered us in the right direction more than once. David has done just about anything asked of him, weather it's doing golfnotebook on Mondays or writing columns, he always comes through. All I can say is David, thanks a lot for everything you have done.

Over the course of the year we have also gotten a lot of support from Titleist. Without their help the site wouldn't be able to exist, they have been with us for the last two years and will be the title sponsor of the site in 2007. Special thanks to Mary Lou Bohn and Alicia Murtie who help us maintain the relationship. We also have to thank Travis and Jessica Fox, who have helped with their support on Bogeyman.Com.

Lastly I need to thank two people who have made sure that Golfobserver stays open with there financial support. One is Mitch Voges, who runs MaxOut golf in the Los Angeles area. Back in February when I told Mitch that I needed help in bringing Golfobserver to a new level he was there not only financially but with the knowledge of golf in words of wisdom. He also introduced me to his partner Gary Gesayian who has helped guide Golfobserver through our makeover and helped bring us to a new level. Gary will be a big help to us in 2007 as we continue to grow.

Now I'm not looking to bore you to death, but these folks have been an important part of my life in making Golfobserver a success. But as I sit by the fireplace, with a spiked glass of eggnog I need to mention that my wife Debi had a very important part in this. Right now she is proving the point as I am finishing up this blog while she keeps the kids happy showing them how to get music from the Itune store and installing the new playstation. She has also been important in keeping me motivated and sharp, along with watching our family savings dwindle in keeping Golfobsrver strong.

For the last three years we have toiled long and hard hours on Golfobserver, waking up at all hours of the morning to make sure that you get



David Barrett

Golfnotebook first thing in the morning. Along with all of the hard work we have been rewarded with some good words from you, the viewers. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't get stronger in my convictions that Golfobserver is the future of golf journalism and know that it will be the way millions get their golf news. Again, it wouldn't be possible without you folks and we thank you for all the support that you have given us.

Thanks and happy holidays to you, we look forward to all of your support in 2007.

- **Sal Johnson**

December 25th, 2006

[Click here to post your thoughts or to read what other's think on this matter](#)

E-mail us at: Golfersal@aol.com

What are your thoughts on this?

November 30, 2006

By **SAL JOHNSON**
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BBC closes it's Golf Forum, what a dumb move

[Click here to post your thoughts or to read what other's think of this](#) Two months ago I was a bit taken back when Brett the person that created the new Golfobserver site called to tell me about a problem that had come up. We were still in a transition mode on a temporary server and Brett said that all of a sudden our forum traffic increased about a thousand percent.

I found that very, very strange. How could traffic increase so much in such a short time, did someone post some playmate of the month photos or did someone gain my bank account number and was giving away free money? No it was the announcement that the BBC forum's were closing.

Normally I wouldn't care much about this since most of the people that are on the board are from Great Britain. But the internet has changed the world just like the phone did, now it's just as easy for people in foreign countries to experience different cultures and life styles via the web. But the bottom line is that golf is golf weather it's in the United States, Great Britain or the moon.

In analyzing this I realized how really dumb of a move it was to close down the BBC forum. Since the birth of the internet and public forums, the BBC have maintained these areas of free speech and banter, yes some of it was good and some of it was bad, but the whole premise was for people to just chat away with each other about any topic under the sun. Of course the golf forum was one of 13 sports forums the BBC ran. Most of them like the football (Soccer) board were a bit rough and crude, but the golf board was great fun for close to two thousand people that frequented the board. Unfortunately because of the unruliness of certain boards the Beeb (who really didn't think this one out) decided to close them all down.

Unfortunately all of those that love the Golf board will be effected. What is the shame is that the folks that are on most of the golf boards are an easy crowd and do a good job of monitoring themselves, still the Beeb didn't see this so at high noon the final switch was made and all 13 of the boards closed. Why would the BBC do, as many are calling it, a dumb thing.

In contacting Mother Beeb I was told that the boards had gotten too big and expensive to maintain. When asked to clarify that I was told that the boards had becoming a nightmare with all the traffic on them and they just couldn't be maintained to the standard that the Beeb wanted. I asked them if the golf board was a problem and didn't get a comment but you could sense what this person thought. In being a good employee and taking the company stance this person said that it was a proper decision that wasn't going to be changed.

Boy that was the first time that I have ever heard of an internet company closing down something because it got too much traffic. But as I went back in my memory bank I forgot but this has happened before. A couple of years back Golfonline, the place that I previously worked at did the same thing. Of course it was the cost factor, Golfonline saved a lot of money. But a funny thing happened. Golf Channel.Com found a big influx of traffic that not only was directed towards that forum but towards their other items. After a few months of negative feedback and the lose of traffic, Golfonline reintroduced a new forum that was very restrictive (guys this sounds like BBC's 606 board) and didn't receive anywhere close to the same traffic. After months of people complaining about the new board not being like the old and poor traffic, Golfonline shut the second board down.

So what is the answer on all of this?

Of course everyone could go off to the 606 board which is crap. It isn't golf related and most of the people on it don't know what the game of golf really is. Or you can go off to other boards. Now of course Golfobserver has a board and we would love to get all the BBC traffic on it but many have told us that this board isn't as lively as the Beeb board. They also have said that they may not access this site at work. Well of course I can only build something and promote it, evolution has to take it's course and I hope that happens. As for work, you should try it and see if that is the case, since Golfobserver is so small it may not be on the ban list that several companies have. Still to take the high road on this let me tell you some other boards to go sample since everyone is in lost mode right now:

[Golf Channel](#) has probably the biggest board in golf, it's well maintained and has lots of folks and opinions. But it's biggest problem is that the community is way too big, you can write something and look back an hour later and find that it's lost in all the different other posts. If you like big crowds of strangers that will be strangers and never friends go to this board.

[ESPN & Golf Digest](#) has one, it's a weird marriage between the biggest sports company and the biggest golf publications. The two have this site which has a good mix of folks on it and a lot of golf stuff. Since I haven't been on this site since it went from being a Golf Digest site to a partnership site I can't base a true opinion.

[GolfHelp.Com](#) is a site of nothing but forums and such, unfortunately you can get lost in it.

[GolfBlogger.Com](#) is probably one of the easiest ones to get through and has the right mix of people on it to have lively conversations and banter. Again the site itself isn't very good but the forum is worth going to.

[GolfOpinions.Com](#) could be the best one of the bunch (except for Golfobserver of course) because that is all that's on it, opinions. I guess if I



wasn't on Golfobserver I would probably spend time here, but again people can get lost in it and the news and rest of the site isn't laid out very well.

[GolfMagic.Com](#) is an English site that isn't too big and isn't too small. They are doing a good job in trying to get a community together with good discussions.

So there you have it some places to go. Still I feel that Golfobserver is growing at a fast pace and has a nice forum but it's all a personal touch. Hopefully if enough folks from the Beeb site come and do the same thing that they did on that site it could grow in popularity.

Still it's an unfortunate thing the Beeb did today and I too don't like it, even though I could gain from it. The reason I don't like it is the fact that all of these big companies think nothing more than big profits and ways to get people on a site with less hassle. They tend to forget that some of the most popular sites are the ones like YouTube.Com that gets people together for a banter of different ideas and ways of thinking. I know on a personal level that having the Golfobserver forum has given me a lot of ideas on what people are doing and what kind of news to present. So this short-sided thinking of the Beeb is not in the best interest of their site and they too will find out just like Golfonline found out years ago that it was a mistake.

So what are your thoughts on this?

How much do you hate what the Beeb did?

Is this going to happen at more sites and will we be left with just one big site like Golf Channel.Com in which people won't be able to maneuver and get feedback?

In your minds what would be a perfect type of forum and a perfect type of golfsite?

What does Golfobserver have to do in the future to make it easier for people to post on this site and what does the site have to do in giving you more news to write about?

Tell us what you think on the GolfObservers forum, give us your thoughts and answers, we will pass good ones along in future blogs.

November 30th, 2006

[Click here to post your thoughts or to read what other's think on this matter](#)

E-mail us at: Golfersal@aol.com

What are your thoughts on this?

November 17, 2006

By **SAL JOHNSON**
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Is Michelle Wie doing the right thing?

[Click here to post your thoughts or to read what other's think of this](#)

Wonder what the atmosphere must of been like on the Wie private jet coming back to Hawaii from Japan. For the 17-year-old protege, things seem to be getting very dire these days. On Thursday and

Friday she toured the Kuroshio Country Club in 17 over par during the Casio World Open, making not a single birdie, just 20 pars, 15 bogeys and 1 double bogey. Of the field of 102 she was beaten by all except for an amateur.

You got to wonder if either poppa Wie or momma Wie needs to have a little chat with their daughter and tell her the true facts of life, that maybe this farce of a mission to play against the men, one day playing on the PGA Tour and in the Masters should stop right now. In her last four men's events, the John Deere Classic, the Omega Masters, the 84 Lumber and now the Casio World Open she is a grand total of 52 over par making just 6 birdies, 68 pars, 46 bogeys and 4 doubles for her seven rounds of golf. That is a average score of 79 shots per round, quite an embarrassment.

Now we can excuse her for maybe wanting to play in her home men's event, the Sony Open in Hawaii but in her three tries there she is 16 over par. The question begs the answer, is enough, enough?

The sad part of all this is Wie brings a lot of folks through the turnstiles, having her at the John Deere Classic added close to four thousand extra ticket sales to that event. But how fair is it for other players on the PGA Tour and the credibility of the event or the tour? Rumor has it that European Tour Executive Director, George O'Grady, has had quiet talks with the sponsors of the Omega Masters asking them to reconsider giving Wie a spot in that tournament in 2007.

The question that many are asking now is if Wie is in a terrible slump or maybe she can't cut it against the men? In her first six LPGA events in 2006 she didn't finish higher than fifth and was 40 under par in those events. Just wonder if she would be better served playing with the ladies?

This doesn't mean that she was exempt from bad play in women events in 2006. In her last two LPGA tournaments at the Weetabix Women's British Open and the Samsung she finished T26th and 17th, shooting an average score of 73.37 so maybe she is just in a big slump. Maybe Wie is in a slump, still you have to wonder if this isn't going to have some ill effects as she grows older.

So what is the answer?

Does this fall into the lap of her teacher David Leadbetter? Could his ways not be the best for Wie as she grows older and her body changes. Some say that Wie isn't a good putter, has Leadbetter been lacking in teaching her those skills? If Wie went to say a Butch Harman or a Hank Haney could they resurrect her game?

Should Michelle be blamed for wanting to play in men's events? Or is the problem Michelle's parents who in reality are still responsible for the 17-year-old.

It is rumor that Michelle is going to make around \$10 million dollars this year in endorsements, could the money be ruining her game as it forces her to play in places that she isn't ready to play in yet?

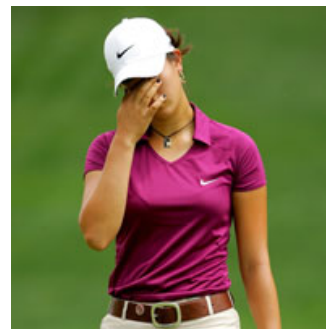


Photo: © Matthew Stockman/Getty Image

Michelle Wie

Wie is the only under age golfer that is able to get appearance fees for events like the Casio World Open, is this becoming a harmful thing. Michelle is probably the only under age golfer that flies around in private jets, could this living high on the hog be detrimental in not giving her any goals when she really becomes a champion? History has taught us in not only golf but other sports that pushing child proteges sometimes have nasty endings, just look what happened to Beverly Klass 40 years ago.

Could the LPGA help by possibly changing it's rules and allowing her to play in more events? Some say that LPGA commish Carolyn Bivens is playing Pontius Pilate on the whole affair saying that the Wie family haven't contacted the LPGA for any special consideration on this manner and it's not her place to do anything about this. Still if Bivens was to allow Wie to play in a lot more events would that help things. Or would the Wie's just take advantage of the situation and still play in men's events and not help the LPGA. In a way Bivens has been criticized for a lot of things in the last year but in this case this could be a no-win situation for her and the LPGA Tour, so maybe she is playing this the right way.

Could this be a case of Wie being over the hill at 17? I personally hope not but she seems to be getting worst instead of better and I wonder if she is close to having competitive burnout?

There are a lot of big question marks on this, I personally think if I were her parents I would let her lead the life of a 17-year-old and play in a limited amount of LPGA Tour events, the Sony Open in Hawaii and maybe U.S. Open qualifying. But going off to Switzerland to play on the European Tour or Japan for the Casio Open or Silvas, Illinois for the John Derre should be reserved for a time when she wins dozens of LPGA titles and a few LPGA majors. I also feel that Wie could be getting too much "champagne wishes and caviar dreams" as Robin Leach once phrased it on the lifestyles of the Rich and Famous. Maybe the Wie's need to downgrade themselves to the back of a plane in economy instead of flying in private jets all over the world.

So what are your thoughts on this?

Do you feel that I am off base on this?

Should Michelle be playing in men's events?

Could Michelle be washed up at 17-year-old?

If you were Michelle's parents, how would you handle all of this, do you think the Wie's are doing the right thing?

Should LPGA Commissioner Carolyn Bivens help by letting Michelle play in more than the 8 events a year?

Should Michelle take a couple of years off and just be a youth again, go off to college and do what Tiger did, get so good in golf that he was ready to go on tour at 20 when he was mentally prepared for it?

Tell us what you think on the GolfObservers forum, give us your thoughts and answers, we will pass good ones along in future blogs.

November 24th, 2006

[Click here to post your thoughts or to read what other's think on this matter](#)

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What are your thoughts on this?

November 17, 2006

By **SAL JOHNSON**

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Great drama at the ADT

[Click here to post your thoughts or to read what other's think of this](#) Hope I wasn't the only one that found today's ADT Championship "great theater"? Of all the golf shows on Friday this year, today's ADT along with the Friday of the Accenture Match Play and the HSBC

Women's Match Play were the only ones worth the time and effort of watching golf on Friday.

What makes the ADT so different is that it's a stroke play event that eliminates players almost like having a cut. The only difference is that with all of the money involved, a million dollar first place check you can see the drama on the players faces as they face elimination.

Maybe it was the way television covered today that made it so interesting. Usually the Friday telecasts never seem to make a big deal about the players that are close to making the cut, unless there is a marquee name on the bubble. But today the focus was more on making it to Saturday than leading at the end of the day.

It does help that on Sunday all scores will start from scratch, that means that any one of the 16 that made it through to Saturday have a chance. Now some may think that this is the wrong time of the year to have this event, since it's the last LPGA tournament of the year a lot could be changed in the money race. If either Karrie Webb or Cristie Kerr wins they also would be the leading money winner of the year. But that is the excitement of all this, there is something riding on success or failure.

It will be interesting to see how Carolyn Bivens reacts to this event. It was the brainstorm of Ty Votaw and was one of his last acts before leaving as commissioner last year. We just hope that maybe Ms. Bivens will get the message and see the success of this foram a change a couple of other LPGA events like this. It's a great way of keeping interest in a tournament for the whole week and a lot more people will want to watch the excitement of someone possibly winning or losing a big purse on the final day.

Could this work on the PGA Tour, absolutely. One of the biggest flaws on that tour is that too many players go out and finish 10th a couple of times and that puts them into the top-125. In looking at this year's top 125 it's interesting to note that Kenny Perry and Kevin Sutherland made it without a top-ten finish. Going a bit deeper, 13 players didn't have a top-five finish this year while 29 players didn't have a top-three finish but still finished in the top-125. Lucas Glover finished 21st on the money list and his best finish was three fourth place finishes.

So maybe a format in which first pays a million dollars with second getting \$100,000 could be just what would perk things up on the PGA Tour. I do know that many people aren't very interested in the way PGA Tour players get paid. Yes the big plum is the first place check of a million dollars but I have never seen the sense of giving out half a million for second, \$400,000 for third and up to \$100,000 for finishing tenth. I would think that we would have better players if tournaments were geared in paying a great first prize and then a lot less for 2nd, 3rd, 10th and 60th. How would golf change if the payout looked like this at a PGA Tour event, a million dollar first place check followed by a \$100,000 second place check followed by a \$50,000 third place check. Then the scale would go down to \$45,000 and lets say tenth place pays \$25,000. Make everything from 10th to 60th around the same amount of money so that last place would get about the same as now but 40th gets about the

same as last. Maybe then we would have players think twice about playing for a check and maybe players would think about winning.

So what are your thoughts on this?

Do you feel that I am off base on this?

Do you think that the ADT Championship has some merit and should be the way other events are done?

Do you feel like me that it would spark a lot more interest in golf, especially in watching it on Friday and Saturdays?

Tell us what you think on the GolfObservers forum, give us your thoughts and answers, we will pass good ones along in future blogs.

November 17th, 2006

[Click here to post your thoughts or to read what other's think of this](#)

E-mail us at: Golfersal@aol.com

What are your thoughts on this?

November 15, 2006

By SAL JOHNSON

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Is the PGA Tour a "Special Experience"?

[Click here to post your thoughts or to read what other's think of this](#)

Last weekend I found myself in a unusual spot. I was among 100,000 of my closet friends sitting on a very uncomfortable bench seat in the driving rain trying to have a good time. I did however have a hot mug

of cocoa to warm the old bones along with passing on some words of wisdom to my 11 year-old son on why in the hell we were doing such an insane act.

We were at the Penn State, Temple game and even though it wasn't much of a game as the hometown team was a 47 to 0 victor, I got a lot out of the experience. The first observation was the fact that even with the crummy conditions and the fact that the God of Penn State football Joe Paterno wasn't among those in attendance, most of those that did attend was having one hell of a time even with all of the rain.

At halftime I struck up a conversation with a person in the row in front of me, who was very excited during the first half. I asked him why he was so excited and he said, "No matter rain or shine, watching Penn State football was a very special experience."

Those two words "special experience" seemed to linger in my mind. That night while in a bar I heard the same thing, what a "special experience" the Ohio State/Michigan game was going to be. The next day while watching the Colts/Buffalo game, the announcer again uttered those words on what a "special experience" Indianapolis was going through.

All of this makes perfect sense, football is the perfect sport for that "special experience" because you only have one game of week, you have six days to get ready for the experience and in the case of Penn State Football, there are only seven home games for the year. So of course every moment is special.

All of this made me think about golf and how we are bombarded with "special experiences" just about every week now. Just a short time ago, 20 years ago things about golf and the PGA Tour was a "special experience". The 1986 season started in January at the Tournament of Champions in LaCosta and every great player was in attendance. Millions of people tuned in on Saturday and Sunday as NBC showcased that event, then millions more watched the following week as Bob Hope hosted his tournament in Palm Springs with a star-studded field of great golfers and celebrities. Not to be outdone a couple of weeks later the folks at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-am celebrated the old Bing Crosby clambake with a star-studded field of both golfers and celebrities and when the tour moved off to Hawaii the following week millions of more people watched the weekend action on NBC. Back then it was a "special experience" for the pros to go off to Hawaii and experience the great beauty of playing in a warm, pretty place. What a lifestyle.

Over the course of the year just about every stop on the PGA Tour had that "special experience" about it, most of the purses were the same in the \$400,000 to \$600,000 range with the winners receiving just under \$100,000 for the victory. For the week there was no Thursday/Friday coverage but on Saturday and Sunday a network beamed home the weekend coverage to people that gathered around their televisions to watch. In looking up the ratings in a old Golf Digest, weekend coverage got three times the ratings that they got in 2006.

In 1986 the networks stop covering golf after the World Series of Golf and even though there were 12 weeks of golf left, most of the marquee names took the time off with some of them playing in the Disney for some family fun. That was the whole point, it was a fun, "special experience".

There was no Tour Championship to end the season along with a special prize for the winner of the Fall Finish. There was no World Golf Championships, no President Cups, no special this or that, no Golf Channel with Thursday and Friday coverage. We got all our highlights on Sports Center and found out the daily scores in our newspaper the next morning. There were no PGA Tour.Com with real time scores and stats, each week I cherished my copies of Golf World and Golf Week that told me about the week's action on each of the tours.

All of that has changed all because the PGA Tour keeps trying to cram down our throat another "special experience" that quite frankly has made golf a "non experience". There is way too much golf on TV with every round covered. We can get scores on the internet and can watch golf 24 hours a day. It also seems that some tournaments based on who the corporate sponsor are more special than the next. Tournaments like the B.C. Open, which was important 20 years ago because of the people that ran it have been chased off the schedule because they can't get a corporate sponsor willing to spend 8 to 11 million dollars for that tournament. 20 years ago the old Kemper Open, played at Congressional Country Club outside of Washington D.C. was a very hot tournament but over the years the tour drove the event away from Congressional to a boring TPC course and finally after years of frustration the Booz Allen closed shop.

After years of always making money in golf, the three networks, USA and ESPN have spent the last four years on the losing end of the tally sheet to the point that ABC, USA and ESPN left the arena of golf.

Of course the players have gotten a lot richer, in 1986 the top-25 players on the money list played in 28 events and earned an average of

\$14,541 an event. This year the top-25 players on the money list earned an average of \$159,774 an event and only played 24 times. It's now gotten to the point that with the money so big, marquee players are picking and choosing what to play in and what not to play, events that were shoe-ins for everybody like the Mercedes Championship and the Tour Championship is a good time to take the week off.

In 2007 the PGA Tour has come up with this special way to make the whole season a "special experience" again. This is called the FedEx Cup and at the end of the series some lucky millionaire golfer is going to walk away with another ten million dollars to his already fatten back account. Again, this is going to make us all very interested in golf to the point that we spend every waking moment having this "special experience".

I just wonder if Tim Finchem ever stops and thinks that maybe he has created too many "special experiences" on the PGA Tour and that in the long run he could be causing some harm for his players and the sport in general. Maybe Finchem needs to attend a college football game and sit on a bench seat in the driving rain to realize what is a "special experience". It's not about having every round of golf being televised and watching the whole world of professional golf win a million bucks each week. Everytime someone came up with a "special experience" in golf my making a first place check of a million bucks, it didn't seem to last very long. Remember the old Johnnie Walker Championship that was played in Jamaica a decade back. Big purse hoping to attract the cream of golf superstardom but in the end it became a non-event that went by the wayside. So is this the future of golf, these big pay days for non-events? The World Golf Championships were about something special but now they will lose a bit of their luster as Finchem launches the FedEx Playoffs.

Will the FedEx playoffs turned into a "special experience" for all of us in 2007 or will it be just another four week tournament stretch that we won't care about. Mr. Finchem, in some cases less is better and I would love to see the PGA Tour play 20 really special events over the course of the year instead of 48 week after week events. What is it going to take before the PGA tour gets the message that for it's survival things like the FedEx series isn't the answer to making the tour a "special experience" again. It's not about how many million of dollars is on the line to win at the this week on the PGA Tour championships. Maybe one day Finchem and the players on the board of directors will realize that less in some ways is better than more.


What are your thoughts on this?

Do you feel that this is a problem? Tells us on GolfObservers forum your thoughts and answers, we will pass this along the good ones in future blogs.

November 15th, 2006

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