

The Met Golfer

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE METROPOLITAN GOLF ASSOCIATION

EXTRA



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April 2013

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This page: Nothing says spring like that first driving range session to get all the kinks out. Photo by John DeTemple.

Play Time

BY A.J. VOELPEL

I tried to make the text message short and sweet for a buddy of mine.

“60s,” it simply stated.

“What do you mean?” he responded. “Promising weather forecast?”

“No man, we’re goin’ low this season!” I shouted back, using my fingers. “Sub 70s early and often!”

Like many (if not all) Northeast amateur golfers, I’m a wishful thinker when it comes to my golf game in the month of April. My optimism levels peak higher than a passenger who’s disembarking from a Carnival Cruise ship.

April is a fresh start, the season’s only mulligan (unless your group plays with a breakfast ball). We can wash away last year’s blunders of bogeys and missed birdies, and begin a new slate.

Early spring is when we put into play the tips we’ve been reading about (hopefully in *Met Golfer* and *Extra*) and test innovative equipment and gimmicks we’ve consumed during the winter. You know; the drivers that are *guaranteed* to do just about everything but the dishes, or your money back.

“This is the year!” we declare to our playing companions. Whether the goal is to break 70, 80, 90 or even 100, the potential in our minds—during this month anyway—is infinite.

Of course tuning in to the Masters doesn’t help our cases. Seeing the pros strut around a course illuminated in blissful shades of greens and pinks, we can’t help but get over eager to wipe down our grips and scrub our grooves. To add to our anxiousness, ESPN now live streams Thursday and Friday action online so we can watch ‘round the clock coverage, even during office hours! (Sorry, Jay and Jeanne.)

But before we begin our neryv quests for lower handicaps and career-best scores, let’s all remember that it’s just a game. If you’re like me, you’ll too reach into your bookcase and grab John Updike’s “Golf Dreams” for an annual reminder of this.

“Golf’s ultimate moral instruction directs us to find within ourselves a pivotal center of enjoyment,” Updike suggests in the passage *Moral Exercise*. “Relax into the rhythm that fits the hills and swales, and play the shot at hand – not the last one, or the next one, but the one at your feet, in the poison ivy, where you put it.”

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Volume 1, Number 4 • April 2013

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Published for the Metropolitan Golf Association by:

Great Golf Resorts of the World, Inc.

2600 Philmont Avenue, Suite 325
Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006
Phone: (215) 914-2071 • Fax: (215) 914-2076

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Grill Room to Green Jacket

BY A.J. VOELPEL

Photo of Jones (left) and Roberts by Frank Christian Collection

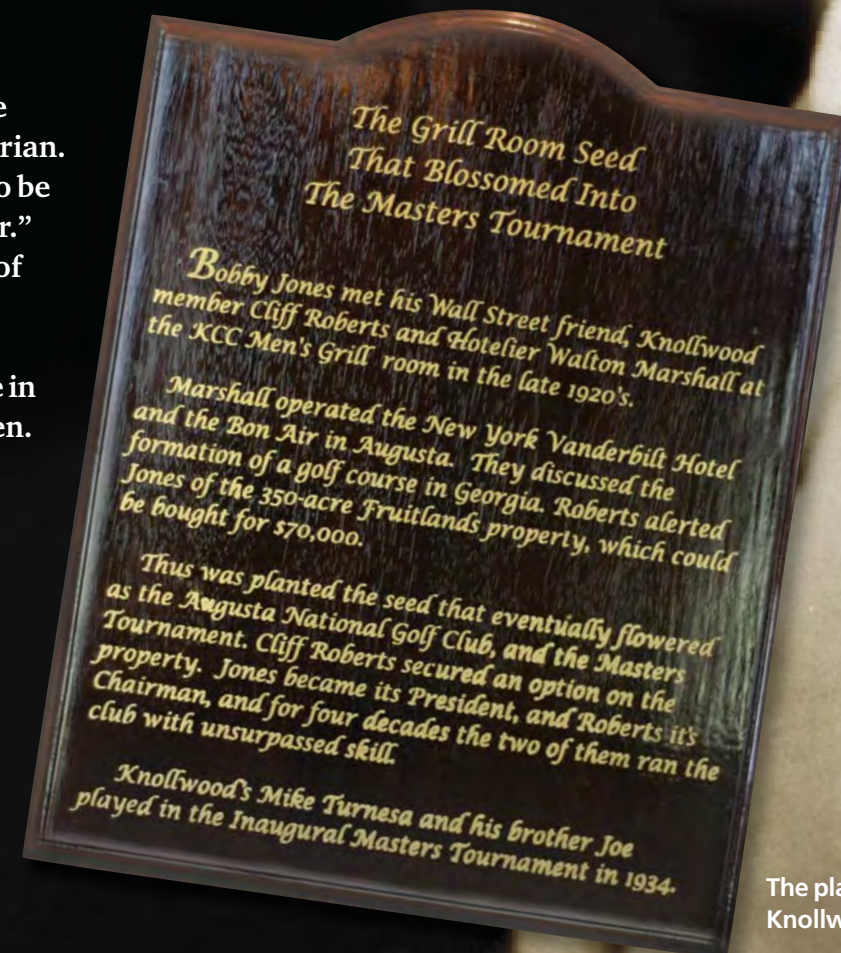
They could've been playing gin and sipping single malt scotch for all we know. Regardless, Knollwood Country Club history tells us that Bobby Jones and Clifford Roberts had initial discussions of what would ultimately transpire into Augusta National right inside the grill room.

Jones frequented the Elmsford, N.Y., private club during the mid-1920s to play in exhibition matches. Roberts, a Knollwood member and stockbroker in Manhattan, was a big-time admirer of Jones' talent. The two were introduced through mutual friend and hotelier Walton Marshall, who operated the elite New York Vanderbilt and Bon Air Vanderbilt in Augusta, Ga.

"Roberts first met Jones there [Knollwood]," says Frank Cali, longtime Knollwood member and the club's historian. "Together with Marshall, the three got to be good friends and all played golf together."

Roberts was one of few people aware of Jones' desire to build his dream course. Among their grill room chatter, Roberts alerted Jones of an orchard farm for sale in Augusta where they could make it happen. Jones agreed with the stipulation that Roberts take care of the finances.

The rest, as they say, is history.



The plaque that hangs in the Knollwood grill room today.

Met Masters

BY A.J. VOELPEL

You could argue that Ken Bakst nearly completed a golfer's entire bucket list on one single Tuesday afternoon in April. Not only was he competing in the '98 Masters (he earned a spot by winning the '97 U.S. Mid-Amateur), but there he was, sharing a practice round on the hallowed grounds of Augusta National with Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus.

"I remember thinking, 'I am having the greatest time playing golf in my life, but this is going to end,'" Bakst said. "It was just so good."

Imagine, that was just one highlight of his week, which also included pairings and banter with the likes of Ben Crenshaw, Seve, Lee Janzen, and fellow Stanford alum Tom Watson (to name a few). He also took full advantage of maybe the greatest perk given to all Masters invitees; unlimited number of practice rounds at Augusta. Bakst said he got in about 20 prior to the tournament.

Decorated MGA competitor Jerry Courville Jr., competed in the '96 Masters (captured the '95 U.S. Mid-Am). His fondest recollection was that his father, Jerry Sr., (for which the MGA Player of the Year Award is named and who was suffering from cancer at the time) was there to see him play.

Ten-time MGA Player of the Year George Zahringer III, who played in the '03 Masters by way of his '02 U.S. Mid-Amateur win at Stanwich, has his own special memories, including the two nights he bunked inside the famed Crow's Nest with his (notable) amateur class.

"During the actual week of the tournament it's like Grand Central Station," he says, noting its location inside the clubhouse. "I was quite a bit older than the college kids, but they were great to be around."

Zahringer, who was 49 at the time (and oldest first-time invitee ever), also joked that the midweek downpours combined with the significantly longer setup made the course feel like it was playing 8,000 yards.

"It was all so exciting," Zahringer says. "Just a terrific week."



COURTESY KEN BAKST



COURTESY KEN BAKST

Above: Imagine opening your mailbox and seeing one of these inside?

Far left: 2003 amateurs (left to right) George Zahringer III, Hunter Mahan, then-Augusta Chairman Hootie Johnson, Alejandro Larrazabal, Ryan Moore, and Ricky Barnes at a Masters dinner.

Left: Bakst plays a tee shot during a Tuesday practice round he shared with Jack, Arnie, and Fred Funk.

This is a place where dreams are made. A place where you can relive history, while at the same time make a little history of your own. A place that can make the impossible, possible. And the unattainable, reachable. This is a place that serves as a constant reminder that we only go around once. And once will never be enough.

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What Happens Next?

BY BRIAN R. MAHONEY

Photo by John DeTemple Jr.

April showers bring... soft, mushy and wet course conditions. In this edition of Rules Extra we witness MGA official, Sen. Bill Nickerson, officiating a singles match during the 2011 Carey Cup at Bethpage Black. Bill is helping to determine if a ball was embedded in its own pitch mark (see Appendix I-B-4 in the Rules of Golf for the local rule for relief for embedded ball “through the green”). Assuming the player didn’t have the luxury of an MGA official present, the proper procedure to follow is (see Decision on the Rules of Golf 20-1/0.7):

- 1) Announce their intention (to opponent or fellow-competitor);
- 2) Mark the position of the ball before lifting it (the ball may not be cleaned in this scenario) and;
- 3) Give their opponent or fellow-competitor an opportunity to observe the lifting.

If it is determined that the ball was embedded in its own pitch mark, the player is **entitled** to relief and the ball may be cleaned and dropped without penalty, as close as possible to the spot where it lay but not nearer to the hole. If it is determined the ball is *not* embedded in its own pitch mark, it must be **replaced**.

Sounds simple, right? It’s only simple if you know the Rules. Now let’s hope April’s showers bring May flowers!



Right Rules

When you need extra touch around the greens, focus on your right hand and your right foot to hit the soft shot

BY BRAD WORTHINGTON Photography by Russell Kirk/Golflinks

A standard greenside bunker explosion and a delicate lob shot both require a high, soft trajectory. The best way to achieve that is by rotating your right hand more on top of the club handle into a weaker grip position (*far left*), which keeps the clubface open and allows the ball to get up in

the air quickly. Make this adjustment before you take your stance, then address the ball with your grip already changed and with the clubface open (*photo No. 1*).

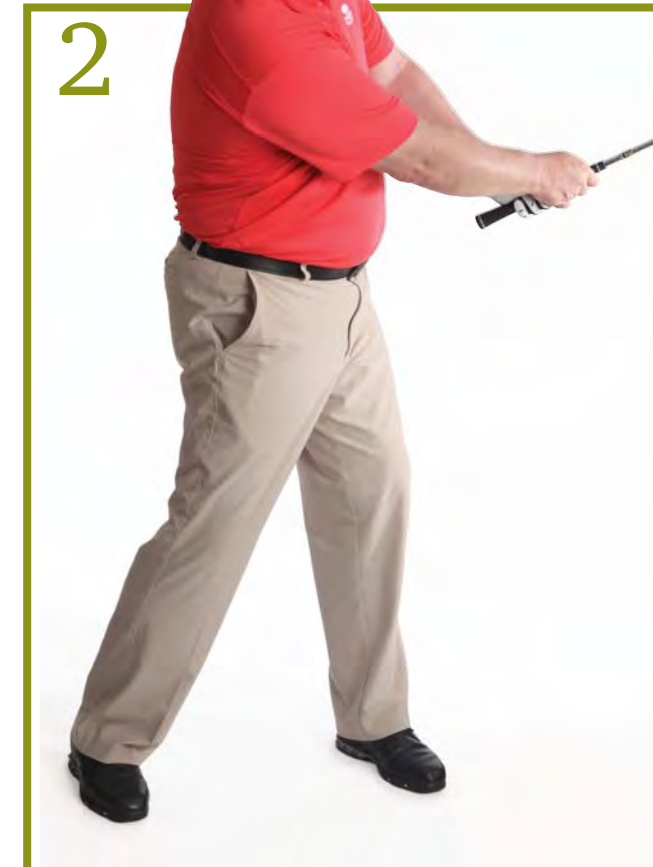
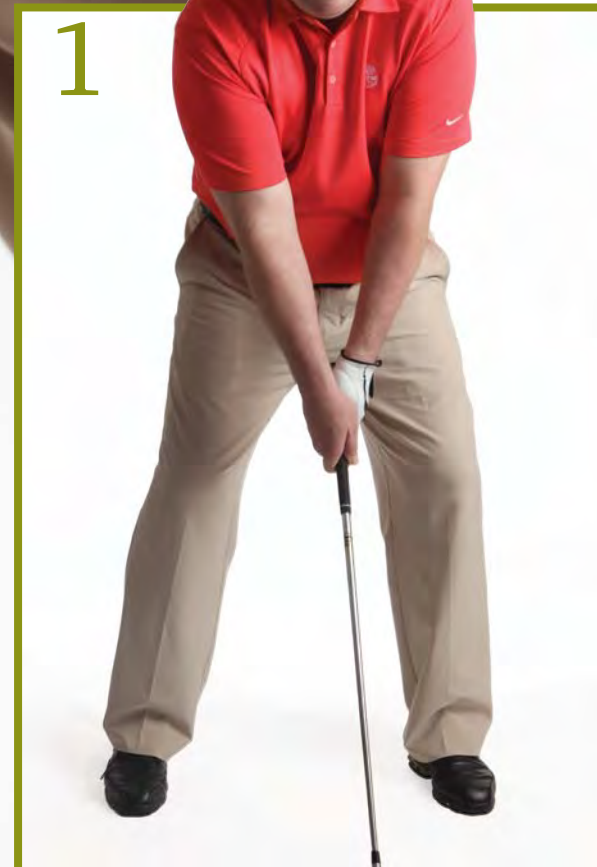
These are the only two shots where I recommend changing your grip. The reason it works is because

most amateurs try to help the ball up when faced with a bunker shot or a lob, which is counterproductive and leads to poor contact. That's not to say this won't take some practice. Any grip change feels awkward at first, but I notice that as people get used to how it feels and see their shots popping up high and landing softly, they take to it pretty quickly.

This was a tip that Tom Nieporte shared with me when I was an assistant pro at Winged Foot, a course where you need to get bunker shots and lobs in the air quickly. The second part of the tip involves the weight shift, or rather, the lack of one. On these touch shots, it's important to prevent your body from swaying back and forth. So keep your right heel on the ground through impact and into the finish (*photo No. 2*), which helps ensure the club strikes the ground in the same place with each shot.

Follow this plan, and you'll be getting up and down from difficult spots around the green with much more success.

Brad Worthington is the head professional at Brooklawn Country Club in Fairfield, Conn., and the president of the Met PGA Section.



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Anchors Away

BY SCOTT KRAMER

With the USGA's looming ban on the act of anchoring a putter to your body, Odyssey's new Tank (\$199) takes a novel approach to stabilizing your arms during the putting stroke. This mallet's components are weighted to counterbalance the putter as a whole, yielding a significantly higher moment of inertia than a conventional putter. Which means it gives you the benefits of anchoring without you actually having to press the butt end into your gut.

The head weighs a hefty 400 grams, and the shaft a meaty 150 grams. That heaviness helps quiet your hands for less wrist action, creating a more consistent pendulum stroke.

Then there's the feel: the Tank's balance point – positioned uniquely in each shaft length (34, 36, 38 or 40 inches) – makes the putter feel comfortable and familiar, with respect to how you hold and use a traditional putter. For added measure, the White Hot Pro face insert aims to provide more consistent performance, sound and feel across the entire face.

The Tank has quickly gained popularity on the PGA Tour, where several pros have become attached to it. Emotionally, anyway.

54 Holes in... Northeast Florida

BY EVAN ROTHMAN

Photo by PGA Tour's TPC Network

Just as it would be wrong to reduce the Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass to its iconic island-green par-3 17th, so too would it be a mistake for the traveling golfer to focus solely on the annual host of The Players. The area in and around Florida's "First Coast of Golf" has much to offer.

GOLF

- **TPC Sawgrass** (tpc.com/tpc-sawgrass), Ponte Vedra Beach. Many would pay just to try their luck on the penultimate hole, but the closer (and several others) also puts hearts in mouth. Next door, the perennially underrated Dye's Valley Course will host this year's Web.com Tour Championship.
- **St. Johns Golf & Country Club** (stjohnsgolf.com), St. Augustine. This much-lauded Clyde Johnston design, carved out of a pine forest yet still buffeted by wind, has hosted multiple PGA Tour Q-Schools.

LODGING

- **Sawgrass Marriott Resort and Spa** (sawgrassmarriott.com), Ponte Vedra Beach. Exclusive access to the Stadium Course is the main draw, but far from the only one. There is the spa, beach club, and recreation options galore on top of the 99 holes of area golf to which guests get access.
- **Omni Amelia Island Plantation** (omnihotels.com), Amelia Island. Its 16-month, \$85-million renovation will be completed this spring; three handsome Audubon International-certified courses and the region's largest pool deck count among the resort's highlights.

OFF-COURSE

- **World Golf Hall of Fame** (worldgolfhalloffame.org), St. Augustine. Your museum ticket includes a shot on the Challenge Hole—a ringer for Sawgrass' 17th—and a loop on the 18-hole putting course. But the hardcore fan will focus on the fascinating historical exhibits, including a 2,000 item-strong permanent collection of artifacts.
- **Fishing.** It's angler paradise here; in-the-know locals point to **Palm Coast Fishing** (palmcoastfishing.com) as an excellent charter option.

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The par-4 seventh was named one of the 100 Best Holes in the World by *Golf Magazine*.

Game On

Photo Courtesy of The European Club

You've likely seen their names atop leaderboards all over the Met Area. The MGA's six-man team (*pictured right*) for the Governor Hugh L. Carey Challenge Cup (*above*), the biennial matches between the MGA and the Golfing Union of Ireland, could be its best yet. From April 27-29, they'll test their mettle at The European Club in Wicklow, Ireland – a renowned true links designed and owned by Pat Ruddy. The MGA will vie for its second consecutive victory over the Irish and first-ever on Emerald Isle soil.



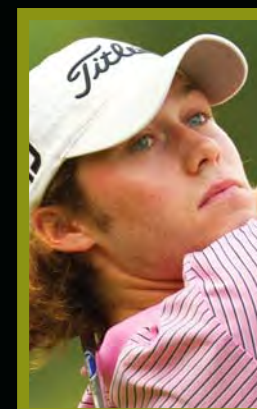
Max Buckley, 23
Westchester CC



Brian Komline, 39
Black Oak CC



Jim Liu, 17
Stone Bridge GL&CC



Mike Miller, 21
Knollwood CC



Joe Saladino, 33
Huntington CC



Cameron Young, 15
Sleepy Hollow CC



Out on Top

Photo by Jim Krajicek

In January of 1988, Rick Vershure received a phone call in Johannesburg, South Africa (where he was playing professional golf) from then Quaker Ridge head pro Jim McLean.

“He said to call Quaker, they’re looking for you,” recalls Vershure. “I knew what he meant. So I called and sure enough I got offered the (head pro) job over the phone in Johannesburg.”

He’s been there ever since, and has amassed a great playing career and reputation as one of the Met Area’s most respected teaching professionals. At the end of 2013, Vershure will conclude his 25 year run at Quaker Ridge and plans to spend a majority of time with his wife Maureen (who’s worked by his side at Quaker) at their home in La Quinta, Calif.

“I’ve had a great relationship with the membership here,” he says. “They’ve been super to me for a long time.”

They sure have, making him just the eighth honorary member in the club’s storied history last year. (For more on Vershure, visit mgagolf.org).