

In This Issue

April 2016

- 2 Met Moments:** MGA President Steve Boyd greeted the captains of the 2017 Presidents Cup after their recent introduction.
- 4 Winning:** Jim Herman's win at the Shell Houston Open threw quite a wrench in his plans for the following week, but it was a very welcomed adjustment.
- 6 Gear:** Protect your eyes and look great on the course this summer with the latest golf-inspired sunglasses.
- 8 Beyond the Met:** Steve Scott returned to Pumpkin Ridge and reminisced on his duel with Tiger Woods 20 years ago.
- 10 Travel:** Incredible golf opportunities around Chicago include links golf, complete with wind of course.
- 12 People:** One of the world's most renowned golf instructors returned home to Westchester County for the Met PGA's Educational Forum.
- 14 Foundation:** The time-honored tradition of caddies continues to be supported and developed in the Met Area with guidance from the MGA Foundation.
- 15 Players:** This decorated Met Area product landed on a big screen in Times Square following his latest Web.com Tour victory.

This page: With spring also comes the time to grind on your game at the local range. Recognize this driving range? Tweet us (@mga1897) with your guess and share photos as you sharpen your game this season.



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CAPTAINS FOR THE CUP

While the 2017 Presidents Cup may be more than a year away, the excitement is already building for the event. On April 12, Steve Stricker and Nick Price were officially introduced as the respective U.S. and International captains for the team competition, which will take place at Liberty National Golf Club in Jersey City, N.J., September 25 through October 1.

This will be Stricker's first year as a captain, but the 12-time PGA TOUR winner can look to build on previous success in the Met Area (he won the The Barclays in 2007 at Westchester Country Club) as he leads the U.S. team. Price will captain the International squad for the third consecutive playing.

Following the announcement, Jimmy Roberts emceed an evening reception held at One World Observatory, where Steve Boyd (pictured center) provided a Presidential welcome to the captains on behalf of the MGA.



A MASTERFUL ACHIEVEMENT

Winning for the first time on the PGA TOUR can have a way of quickly changing your plans. Just ask Jim Herman. The 38-year-old, and former assistant professional at Trump National Bedminster in New Jersey, claimed his first career PGA TOUR victory at the Shell Houston Open on April 3, drastically changing his plans for the following week as he earned the last invitation to the 2016 Masters.

“I was planning on flying (to Florida) last night, and I was going to get home at midnight, see my kids this morning, take my daughter to school, and that’s obviously changed,” Herman said in his press conference at Augusta National Golf Club, one sleepless night after his win in Houston. “It was just going to be a week of rest, get some practice in and get ready for Hilton Head. So that’s changed,” he quipped.

Instead, Herman’s wife, Carolyn, and their two kids made the trip north to Augusta, Georgia for Herman’s first appearance in the Masters. After taking it easy on Monday, Herman did his prep work for the course, enjoyed participating in the Par 3 Contest on Wednesday, then struck the tournament’s first official shot Thursday morning.

Though Herman missed the cut at Augusta, there were plenty of great memories made, including a birdie-birdie start on Thursday that included a chip in on the first. “I can’t tell you how many ovations there have been,” Herman said after his first round. “It’s an honor to be playing out here.”

Herman’s win at the Shell Houston Open led to a great family week at the Masters, including this moment during the Par 3 Contest.



Lens-sational

Wearing sunglasses on the golf course can be a hassle. The wrong pair can prevent you from seeing breaks on the greens, pinch your ears after a couple of holes, slip off your nose while you walk or swing, and fatigue your eyes over 18 holes. It's no wonder many golfers either remove the shades while they swing or don't wear them at all. Fortunately, several new models right all that's wrong with spectacles these days — making them lightweight, comfortable and protective. And that starts with their golf-specific lenses that collectively help you discern various shades of green, allowing you to clearly see the depth of a fairway's terrain and a green's subtleties.

A pioneer in golf lens technology, Oakley sells the Radar EV (\$190) with shatterproof lenses that let you easily and accurately read every contour, and lightweight temples that grip the frame to your face even when you sweat. Sundog's Prime EXT TrueBlue (\$70) features polycarbonate lenses that filter out harmful ultraviolet light, with vents that minimize fogging. And Callaway's Eagle (\$200/mirrored lenses, \$150/non-mirrored) sports glare-free UV ray-blocking polarized lenses, comfortable injection-molded temples, and silicone nose pads that ensure a secure fit during the swing.



Memory Lane

Steve Scott, the head professional at Paramount Country Club in New City, New York, is often reminded of his epic 38-hole championship match against Tiger Woods in the 1996 U.S. Amateur. While most would dwell on the negative of coming up short in such an event, Scott looks back on that week with fond memories and just recently made a return visit to Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club, the site of the historic match.

“It was a neat experience to go back and relive some of the moments. I had a lot of great shots at that golf course,” said Scott, who held a five-hole lead before Woods charged back during the afternoon round of the championship match. What often goes unrecalled is Scott’s outstanding second round 66 during stroke play, as the then soon-to-be sophomore at Florida bounced back from an opening round 79 and then carried momentum into match play.

“It was surreal, going back and seeing everything,” said Scott, who was invited by the club’s management to be a special guest at a member event. “It was really cool to go back and reminisce.” Scott relived the championship week—including the final match which had an estimated 15,000 spectators—by sharing his memories with the crowd. He also gave a clinic to attendees and greeted groups on the course during play.

Scott may have been most excited to share the return experience with his family, including his wife Kristi, who was his caddie during the 1996 Amateur. While their kids (Jeffrey, 7, and Kaylie, 5), may not yet grasp the magnitude of the stage which the big match was played on, Scott relished sharing the return with them.

The trip back to Pumpkin Ridge was Scott’s first time at the course in 20 years. Jeff Sanders (*far right*) guided the discussion as Scott reminisced about the week of the championship.



Pumpkin Ridge general manager Lance Fong presented Scott with a flag to commemorate the 1996 U.S. Amateur.

LAYOVER Chicago

BY TIM HARTIN

With one of the strongest and most diverse economies of any city in the world, Chicago is sure to be a common destination for business travelers. There's also lots of quality golf to be played, and you know what they say about all work and no play. So if you find yourself planning a trip to The Windy City, you'll surely want to set aside time to experience top-notch golf.

COURSES:

1 Cantigny Golf – Each of Cantigny's three nines are aptly named: Woodside for its path through the property's most dense stands of trees, Lakeside for its four lakes which come into play on six holes, and Hillside for its elevation changes. No matter the course combination, Cantigny delivers exceptional conditions and enjoyable scenery.

Nearby: Cantigny is located in Wheaton, directly west of the city and less than 30 miles from O'Hare International Airport. Oakbrook Center and Yorktown Center provide all the conveniences one may require.

2 Harborside International Golf Center – Compared to Muirfield in Scotland by Ben Crenshaw during a Champions Tour stop in 2002, Harborside offers an outstanding links golf experience over 36 holes. Its Port Course is often considered more challenging than the Starboard Course, but both deliver a unique experience and eye-popping views of the Chicago skyline. On the Port Course, the par-3 15th begins a memorable finish along Lake Calumet.

Nearby: All of the attractions of the city are still at your disposal, since Harborside is just 15 miles south of the Chicago Loop. The property also includes an expansive driving range and practice facility for a complete golf experience—all within city limits!

3 ThunderHawk Golf Club – This Robert Trent Jones II layout opened in 1999 and provides a good balance of both forgiving and demanding golf shots in a beautiful setting. Most of its fairways are generous in size, yet greenside bunkers require an accurate approach. Open fronts on most of its greens are a welcoming feature for players of all skills.

Nearby: Though approximately an hour north of the city in Beach Park, it's well worth the trip if time allows. Illinois Beach State Park and Nature Preserve are both just minutes away if you're looking to relax and unwind with a walk along Lake Michigan.

Cantigny Golf offers a serene setting with its three nine-hole courses west of Chicago. Pictured here is the par-5 second on its Woodside Course.

A HOMECOMING for Harmon



After a busy week at the Masters, renowned golf instructor Butch Harmon returned to his childhood home of Westchester County, where he delivered an outstanding presentation at the 54th Annual Metropolitan PGA Educational Forum.

Harmon entertained the crowd for more than two hours during the first portion of the program, which took place at the Westchester Broadway Theater on April 12. The bulk of his presentation shed light on his instructional methods, but Harmon also shared personal stories from his youth—many involving his late father Claude Harmon, who served as head professional at Winged Foot Golf Club—and anecdotes from his experience with both touring professionals and amateur golfers. Harmon's insightful session concluded with an additional hour-long conversation with section professional and host of Golf Channel's "The Golf Fix," Michael Breed. Harmon answered submitted questions from area professionals, discussed trends in the business and spoke about his role as both an instructor and coach for his students.

The homecoming was memorable for Harmon, who said he was humbled by the number of Met Section PGA Professionals in attendance to hear him speak.

"I grew up in this area. This is where I'm from. This is really where I learned to play golf," said Harmon, who won the championship match in the 1961 Met Junior by a record margin of 8 & 7, which still stands today. "I've been trying to get where I could schedule this for a couple years. So I always said if you could give me enough time, it would be an honor to come back here and be with you. I've loved every minute of it."

The crowd loved every minute of it as well, delivering an extended standing ovation to Harmon as his time on stage came to a close.

A NEW CLASS OF CADDIES

The caddie has long served as an important role in golf, not only for the assistance to golfers during a round but also for the skills, character, and relationships developed by the caddie through their experience.

This April, the MGA Foundation conducted its 20th year of Caddie Academies, where juniors are taught the skills and etiquette necessary to make their first loop. This year's academies were a great success as more than 400 participants were introduced to caddieing at nine clubs throughout the Met Area. The free programs include hands-on, on-course instruction and following the session participants are given a certificate of completion that they can present to caddie managers when applying for a position.

"We feel this is a great opportunity for the Foundation to reach its mission of introducing juniors to the game of golf," said Foundation operations manager Lou Cutolo. "I'd like to thank the caddie managers for their help in hosting and teaching at the academies, as well as MetLife for their support of the Foundation and its programs."

SVOBODA

STOCK

RISING



 Nasdaq

Six-time MGA champion Andrew Svoboda blistered Sao Paulo Golf Club for rounds of 64-65-65-67 to claim a one-stroke victory at the Brasil Champions. Svoboda made an eagle and 26 birdies during the week, including a six-footer at the 72nd hole for the outright win—not a bad experience for his first trip to Brazil.

“I wasn’t playing that great ... all of a sudden you win, and you’re in for a good year,” said Svoboda in his post round interview. “It’s crazy how that happens. My career has been pretty up-and-down, but I’ve always felt comfortable out here (on the Web.com Tour).”

After an admittedly tough 2014-15 season on the PGA TOUR, Svoboda’s early season win places him in good position to regain his PGA TOUR status for next season. The victory launched the St. Johns University graduate to No. 3 on the Web.com Tour money list, from which the top 25 will earn PGA TOUR cards for the 2016-17 campaign.

The third victory of Andrew Svoboda’s Web.com Tour career landed the New Rochelle, N.Y., native a larger-than-life spot in Times Square.