



# GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER®

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Dear Subscriber:

## The 103rd P.G.A. Championship The Ocean Course, Kiawah Island

IT WAS ASTOUNDING—IN A BEWILDERING WAY—to watch Phil Mickelson play as he did, for the contenders to come and go until they ran out of opportunities, and for the golf course to demand so much but less than it did 30 years ago when it made its competitive debut.

Mr. Mickelson, a self-proclaimed genius, is an accomplished performer who shares a mutual admiration with most spectators and a passionate professional golfer who, with his karma-come-to-me grimace, closely resembles George Bluth Sr. [Jeffery Tambor] in *ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT*.

The P.G.A. Championship, conducted by the P.G.A. of America—the club professionals *not* the tour—has always placed the protection of their competitive field from embarrassment on the golf course at the top of their list of concerns. This is an apprehension not shared by the other major championship administrative bodies. This championship's Local Rules—addressed on page three of this letter—revealed their concern.

When a course as difficult as the Ocean Course so prominently presents itself for the third time in 30 years, it may seem idiotic to suggest that it was more difficult as originally built than it was for this year's P.G.A. Championship. At 7,876 yards, played up and down winds of 9 to 16 m.p.h. on playing surfaces bordered by water and sand, it was a powerful test. The evolution of the rough, however, particularly that which borders the putting greens, and that which adjoins the first cut of rough, was less demanding than in the past.



Mr. Mickelson hit the fairway from the tee only 55 percent of the time and still made 22 birdies. Last month at Augusta, Hideki Matsuyama hit 64 percent of those fairways and made just 13 birdies. These numbers also say something about the severity—speed and contours—of the greens.

Regardless of the lacunae in the performance statistics, all the players, as Brooks Koepka continually points out, were playing the same course under nearly the same conditions and the same rules. Mr. Mickelson ultimately set himself apart by playing the par 5s five shots better than Mr. Koepka and four shots better than Louis Oosthuizen. A remarkable advantage.

After 36 holes, Messrs. Mickelson and Oosthuizen were tied at 5-under with Mr. Koepka just one shot back. Only Sam Snead, age 54, was older than Mr. Mickelson, 50, when he shared the lead into the third round of the 48<sup>th</sup> P.G.A. Championship at Firestone (South) in 1966. Mr. Snead, however, lingered but did not last when he scored 75 in the third round to Al Geiberger's 68.



## Fiddly Lies in Sandy Areas

Saturday's play in perfect weather (74 degrees/10 m.p.h. southeast wind) resulted in 70s for both Mr. Mickelson and Mr. Koepka (each with five birdies), and a remorseful 72 for Mr. Oosthuizen. Mr. Mickelson went out with a stunning 32 strokes that included four birdies. His in nine started with a birdie at the 10<sup>th</sup> giving him a five stroke lead. Then came bogey at the 12<sup>th</sup>, and a double bogey (with his tee shot in the water) at the 13<sup>th</sup>. In just three holes, his lead fell from five to only one. All in all, moving day did not move much. Mr. Mickelson finished round three with a one shot lead over Mr. Koepka and two ahead of Mr. Oosthuizen.

Sunday broke bright and sunny once more with temperatures in the low 80s and wind gusting to 16 m.p.h. this time from the southwest. Bookmakers favored Mr. Koepka 6 to 4 to win; Mr. Mickelson 3 to 1.

With Messrs. Mickelson (-7) and Koepka (-6) playing together in the last group, the focus was with them although Mr. Oosthuizen, playing just ahead with Kevin Streelman, could not be ignored.

At the 1st, Mr. Koepka's birdie was answered with a bogey from Mr. Mickelson, a two-shot swing that exchanged the lead. The lead exchanged again at the 2nd, when a birdie by Mr. Mickelson was responded to with a double bogey by Mr. Koepka. At the 3rd and 6th, it was Mr. Mickelson's turn to bogey; but he recovered with birdies at the 5th and 7th.

Mr. Koepka's game became rather flat after his double at the 2nd. He finished the front at 1-over (-5 for 63 holes), while Mr. Mickelson played the front in par (-7 for 63 holes); as did Mr. Oosthuizen (-5 through 63 holes).

Back nine, Sunday afternoon. This time the earlier back-nine holes were more pivotal than the closing holes.

- At the 10<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Mickelson birdied to go 8-under, both Messrs. Koepka and Oosthuizen bumbled bogeys and found themselves four back.
- At the par-5 11<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Koepka bogeyed again to go to 3-under. The other two made pars. Mr. Mickelson remained ahead by four.
- At the 12<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Oosthuizen made birdie to the others' pars, and the lead was reduced to three.

• Disaster struck at the 13<sup>th</sup>, when Mr. Oosthuizen's drive went left into the dismal rough requiring an 85-yard pitch out to the fairway. His third went into the water greenside, penalty shot, drop on green, plus two putts equaled a double bogey six. Both Messrs. Mickelson and Koepka carded bogeys moving Mr. Mickelson's lead back to four.

With just five holes remaining, the opportunities for gaining on the leader diminished. Ever present in such adrenaline-filled moments, the opportunity for demise rises inversely to the reduction for positive gain. But there was no demise.

• At the par-3 14<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Mickelson lost another stroke to par, while the others stayed steady. The lead became three.

• At the 15<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Koepka birdied to join second place position with Mr. Oosthuizen at 3-under.

• At the par-5 16<sup>th</sup>, all three players birdied.

• The infamous 17<sup>th</sup> predictably (per Mr. Dye) demanded a championship play of 242 yards downwind made even more difficult by the pressure of it being the final two holes of the championship.

The honor belonged to Mr. Koepka, as a result of his birdie at the 15th. Mr. Mickelson, with a two stroke lead, had the advantage of watching Mr. Koepka's play drive that finished on the green, 48 feet from the hole. Mr. Mickelson's ball—adrenaline infused—ran through the green into long grass. He pitched to 20 feet, two putted for bogey, and took a two stroke lead to the 18<sup>th</sup> tee.

The control of Mr. Mickelson's golf ball was surpassed only by the control of his mind and nerves.

	Par 3s ALL ROUNDS				
	5 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	TOTAL
P. Mickelson	-3	E	+2	+3	+2
B. Koepka	-2	E	E	+1	-1
L. Oosthuizen	+1	-1	E	+3	+3

	Par 5s ALL ROUNDS				
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	TOTAL
P. Mickelson	-3	-4	-2	-2	-11
B. Koepka	+2	-3	-2	-3	-6
L. Oosthuizen	E	-2	-4	-1	-7

### 2021 P.G.A. Championship Top Finishers' Statistics 72 HOLES

	EAGLES	BIRDIES	BOGEYS	DOUBLE BOGEYS+	FAIRWAYS HIT	GREENS IN REG.	PENALTIES	PUTTS PER HOLE
P. Mickelson	0	22	12	1	55%	64%	3	1.652
B. Koepka	2	16	12	2	54%	67%	0	1.688
L. Oosthuizen	1	14	7	2	52%	69%	3	1.74

## Major Championship Local Rules à la the P.G.A. of America

Further to the point of never wanting to embarrass their members, the P.G.A. of America adopted three local rules in particular for the championship at Kiawah:

- Bunkers were deemed not to be bunkers—rather *sandy areas*. This allowed practice swings and, therefore, conditions to be tested in what used to be bunkers. The Committee's goal was to prevent the confusing of bunkers with sandy areas and any penalties that might occur from that confusion, which was the case at Whistling Straits in 2015, that cost Dustin Johnson the title.

- Distance measuring devices were permitted for the first time in a major championship. This simply made things easier. Again, not the purpose of a major championship.

- Embedded ball relief was permitted only in grassy areas cut to fairway height or less. Relief is never permitted in the Rules for a ball embedded in sand. At the Ocean Course, where sand is everywhere, eliminating relief in the rough made confusion and, therefore, penalties less likely.

## The Story Dye Loved to Tell About Building the Ocean Course

Pete Dye relished telling his story of the Ocean Course's construction in the wake of Hurricane Hugo [September 1989]. He told it frequently in the tumult

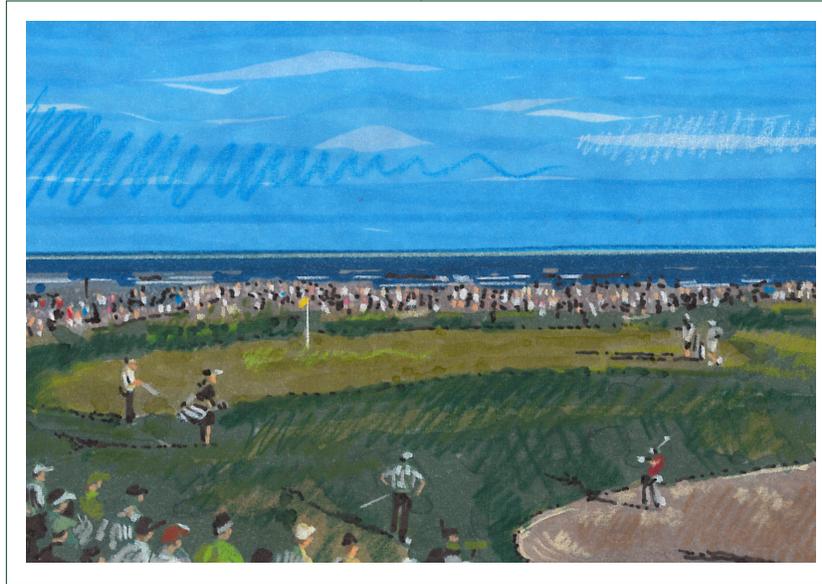
and attention the course received following the Ryder Cup. A bit later, when it became politically incorrect to tell it, he stopped.

As Hugo's landfall became an imminent threat to coastal South Carolina, most businesses closed and prepared for the hurricane to pass.

Mr. Dye foresaw the interruption of fuel, food, living necessities, machine parts, etc. to the isolated

Kiawah coastline in the wake of the Category 5 storm.

Therefore, before the storm's arrival, he chartered boats and barges, outfitted them with all he would need to resume building the course and sustaining his crew, and brought it all to sheltered moorings near the job site. Once the storm passed, Mr. Dye and crew were quickly back at work while various bureaucratic inspectors were unable to reach the area for weeks. Much was accomplished, and needed to be, in order for the Ryder Cup to be played just two years on.



THE OCEAN COURSE BY TAG GALYEAN

## Impressions of the Ocean Course 30 Years Ago Its Severity Brooked Little Tolerance for Less-Than-Perfect Ball Striking Is it Golf or a Masterpiece of Cubism?

KIAWAH ISLAND, NOV. 1991 — Returning to play the Ocean Course the week following the Ryder Cup, we expected to be abused but, nonetheless, remained insatiably curious to see how it plays for more prosaic players.

The two Ryder Cup teams have been described as having undergone “three days of physical and mental abuse” from the course. Opinions we have heard range from “the worst course I have ever seen” to “it’s my favorite, I love it”.

Frankly, we have been somewhat at a loss to assess our own feelings but have reached the conclusion that this

may not be a golf course as traditionally perceived. It is a mixture of many pleasing and simultaneously offending elements.

Pete Dye is clearly a well-studied student of linksland golf, [NOTE: The Ocean Course is a seaside course not a linksland course. A links course finds its topographical character from terrain naturally shaped by the retreating sea. In the Ocean Course's case, those characteristics were artificially modeled by machinery.] and at Kiawah he appears to have taken those elements of linksland golf courses that he feels are important and exaggerated them

so the golf world will never doubt but that Mr. Dye knows what they are. However, in the process, the course became a visual exaggeration not dissimilar to Pablo Picasso's analytical cubism.

Taken as individual cameos, the holes are enticingly scenic with gorgeous mounding, wide, lush land areas, intriguing bunker shapes, and long ocean vistas with shrimp boat silhouettes bobbing beyond the sea oats and breaking waves. However, it can be unfulfilling when, for the fourth or fifth time on the front nine, you strike the ball well and on-line with a mid-iron only to be penalized. Landing in the relative center of the green, the ball then runs over the green, gathers speed down the shaved Bermuda grass plateau collar, and comes to rest in a sand area from whence you are asked to play, at times with a tuft of tall grass behind your ball, back up the hill into grain of the Bermuda grass collar, and onto the undulating green. At first, it occurs to you that this golf is too difficult. But gradually the thought seeps in that perhaps there is no reason to be angry at the golf course because this may not be golf at all. It may be a different sort of game like Australian football or Irish curling.

Determining whether or not the Ocean Course is a golf course is perhaps the best reason to play it. Whatever it is, it is intriguing, perplexing, scenic, and awkward—either a chimera or a new frontier where no one has dared go before. Mr. Dye, like Mr. Picasso, should be praised for his technical virtuosity, incredible originality and prolificacy, but that does not mean this is necessarily a golf course.

#### A Few 1991 Ryder Cup Recollections

- Sunday morning's fly-over by the Concorde was a stirring and impressive bit of gamesmanship. The unmis-



For P.A.M.:

Narrator: *"After being arrested, George [Bluth] Sr. found a loophole in the Mexican judicial system ..."*

George Sr.: [holds up wad of cash] *"Have ..."* [clears throat]

George Sr.: ... *"I have money."*

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

takable, supersonic silhouette banking slowly down the course at what appeared to be 1,500 ft. forced all eyes skyward on a dazzling symbol of pride for the European side and their supporters.

- Bernhard Langer's hole-in-one on the 17<sup>th</sup> during Thursday's practice round best demonstrated the effect of competition and pressure. By Saturday, most players were happy just to stay out of the water.

- The pressure was formidable: Mark Calcavecchia (1989 Open Champion) halved after being dormie 4, finishing triple bogey, bogey, triple bogey, bogey; Hale Irwin (three time U.S. Open Champion) three putted the 17<sup>th</sup>, chunked his chip on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and then watched Mr. Langer (1985 Master Champion) miss a five foot putt for the match. Much of the unrelenting pressure can be attributed to match play.

- Pressure continued into October [1991]—this time financial—with Landmark Land Company (Kiawah's owner) deciding to place the companies that oversee their golf communities under the Chapter 11 protection of the bankruptcy law.

The Office of Thrift Supervision then seized Oak Tree Savings (Landmark's owner) charging that Landmark's Chapter 11 move would "have a deteriorating impact on the stability" of the thrift.

- A European tour official gave us his opinion that the venue provided no focus: The gala party was an hour away in Charleston, the clubhouse was too small to hold anyone but the officials and players, and the course was miles away from the nearest accommodations. He said the Belfry is a mediocre course but a good hub; Muirfield Village a good course and a good hub; and Oak Hill should be an outstanding venue in 1995.

Yours vy truly,

Gary A. Galyean  
Editor & Publisher

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