



GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER

THE INSIDE REPORT ON WORLD GOLF

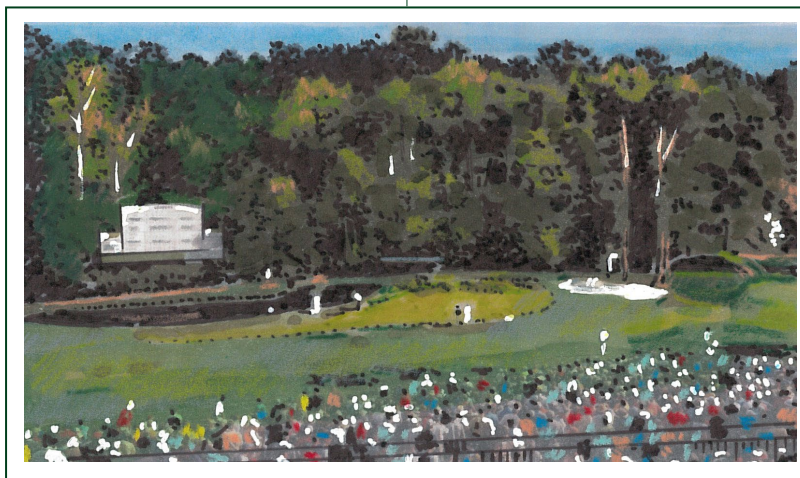
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OUR 34th YEAR

APRIL 2023

Dear Subscriber:

ONCE THE MASTERS BEGINS it is a microcosm unto itself—as are most important gatherings—with its own heroes, failures, pressures, and proclivities for irrecapiturable drama and historic pretense. It never disappoints, always entertains, and revives respect for golf excellence played and watched with good sportsmanship and proper manners. Jon Rahm's extraordinary *sitzfleisch*—his staying power and ability to endure and persevere—was this year's hallmark.



TAG GALYEAN, WHITE DOGWOOD

87th Masters

• Augusta National's most significant and obvious course change this year was the moving back—35 yards—of the Masters tee at the 13th. Data accumulated since 1942 ranks the 13th as the easiest hole, with an average of 4.775 strokes (through 2022). While the second shot was made more *momentous* this year—as it was originally designed—the added length did not appear to have altered the 13th's standing as the easiest.

An Elite Ball?

On March 14, The R&A and USGA announced a proposal to introduce a model Local Rule option for golf balls used in elite competitions. The modified ball is expected to reduce hitting distance by 14-15 yards. If adopted, the local rule would be available in 2026. The Open will presumably return that year to St. Andrews.

Who will manufacture the elite ball for players who never pay for golf balls? Tiger Woods, at his April 4 pre-Masters press conference supported the idea. "... It's very much like baseball with aluminum bats [for amateurs] and wooden bats [for professionals]. You can have a difference in the golf ball. Tennis has the same thing. You go to different events and you have different balls. The public doesn't know that, but the players do."

• One-hundred four players were invited to compete.

Eighty-eight accepted, and 84 finished. Four withdrew due to injuries [Messrs. Na, Zalatoris, Woods, and Oosthuizen]. There were 16 first time players (7 amateurs, 9 professionals). During the first two days, each amateur was in a group with a Masters champion.

• Pre-tournament: Tiger Woods on his chances, "You know I don't sleep very well, so going through it and rummaging through the data bank and how to hit shots from each and every place and rehearsing it; that's the only way that I can compete here. I don't have the physical tournaments under my belt. I haven't played that much, no. But if there's any one golf course that I can come back, like I did last year, it's here, just because I know the golf course."

• Fred Ridley, Augusta National chairman, reiterated in his pre-tournament press conference that LIV Golf

players, falling under the Masters exemption criteria, were invited to compete. Eighteen are in the field of whom six are past Masters champions.

- Mr. Ridley also commented on Greg Norman not being invited although such an invitation is often the custom for those who oversee the world's various men's professional golf tours. "We did not extend an invitation to Mr. Norman. The primary issue ... I want the focus this week to be on the Masters competition, on the great players [who] are participating, the greatest players in the world, which, by our decision in December, we ensured that we were going to honor and be consistent with our invitation criteria.

"I would add that, in the last ten years, Greg Norman has only been here twice. I believe one of those was as a commentator for Sirius Radio."

Mr. Norman responded, "I'm disappointed because it's so petty, but of course I'll still be watching." Earlier he stated that should a LIV player win, the other 17 LIV players would demonstrate their support at the 18th green.

- The Champion's menu on Tuesday evening included cheeseburger sliders, firecracker shrimp, tortilla soup, Texas ribeye steak, blackened redfish, and warm chocolate chip skillet cookies with milk & cookies ice cream.

- Gary Player appeared as an honorary Masters starter at 7:45 on Thursday morning in his traditional black costume but without the white *Golf Saudi* logo that adorned the neck of his black turtleneck the previous two years.

During the week before the Masters, Mr. Player commented to the *TIMES OF LONDON*, "After all I've contributed to the tournament and been an ambassador for them, I can't go and have a practice round there with my three grandchildren without having to beg a member to play with us, and there's always some excuse. It's terribly, terribly sad. I've played my role: I've won it three times, I was in the top-10 15 times, I made the most number of cuts in a row ever. Yet here we are struggling to get a round. If it wasn't for the players, [Augusta] would just be another golf course in Georgia.

In the *DAILY MAIL*, Mr. Player was quoted, "Never mind the Masters, the Open is by far the greatest tournament on the planet. I rate the Open at one, the U.S. Open two, PGA three, and Augusta four."

Jack Nicklaus has also ranked the Masters fourth because it is a tournament — not a championship.

WHEN ALL WAS said and done, Jon Rahm's perseverance through bad weather, awkward starting times, suspended and resumed play, slow play, and a double bogey at the first hole resulted in his becoming the first European player to ever win the Masters and the U.S. Open.

The statistics [following page] paint a clear picture, and eliminate any confusion about Brooks Koepka's level of play as compared with Mr. Rahm's.

**Thursday Morning
LADBROKE Odds**

1:18	McIlroy	11/2
1:06	Scheffler	11/2
8:18	Rahm	8/1
2:00	Spieth	14/1
10:12	Cantlay	14/1
2:00	Finau	14/1

8 a.m. Weather

67° Cloudy
S 3 mph
Humidity: 93%
Thunderstorms likely

The par-3s were not where either Messrs. Rahm or Koepka excelled. Indeed they played them +1 and +2 respectively. It was Russell Henley who led at the par-3s with a total of -3.

At the par-5s Mr. Koepka led the field at -11. Mr. Rahm was at second at -10 having scored best overall (-5) at the 8th hole.

Mr. Rahm simply outscored Mr. Koepka elsewhere and overall. Mr. Rahm posted 19 birdies for the week, as compared to Mr. Koepka's 16; and Mr. Rahm made just 7 bogeys for the week, as compared to Mr. Koepka's 10 ... altogether a six stroke difference.

**Friday Morning
LADBROKE Odds**

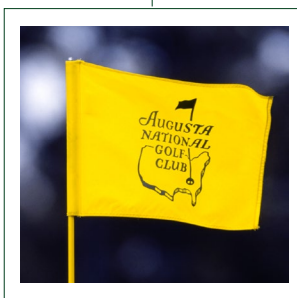
1:18	-7	Rahm	11/8
1:06	-4	Scheffler	5/1
8:18	-7	Koepka	7/1
12:54	-7	Hovland	10/1
10:12	E	McIlroy	20/1

7:30 a.m. Weather

66° Wind: SE 4 mph
Humidity: 91%
Thunderstorms likely

Mr. Koepka did not make a double bogey, but Mr. Rahm four-putted for a six at his first hole in round one! Only Sam Snead (1952) and Mr. Rahm double bogeyed at the 1st and went on to win.

Thursday into early Friday weather conditions were benign. However, starting times on Friday morning



were moved earlier to 7:30 in anticipation of rain and thunderstorms in the afternoon. Mr. Koepka's 8:18 starting on Friday proved to be of great advantage [two strokes statistically] because he was able to finish before the disruptive weather arrived. Mr. Rahm was not so fortunate when he started five hours later at 1:18.

Play was suspended at 3:07 for 21 minutes. A second suspension was called at 4:22 after heavy rain and wind felled three large pine trees just left of the 17th tee. Second round play did not resume until Saturday morning.

The second round concluded on Saturday about 11 o'clock. The cut came at three-over par with 54 players making it through.

The third round began Saturday with an 11:30 start — the low 27 players playing from the 1st tee; and other 27 players from the 10th tee. All in groups of three; rain forecasted.

Mr. Koepka (-12), as the leader, and Mr. Rahm (-10) began their third round from the 1st at 1:06. Sam Bennett, the amateur from Texas who was in third place (-8), was the third competitor in their group. The temperature was 48 degrees and a northeast wind created unusual difficulties particularly at the 17th and 18th holes.

SUNDAY BROUGHT the two leading contenders together for their first full round under normal weather conditions. Mr. Koepka (-11) and Mr. Rahm (-9) started from the 1st tee at 2:33. The temperature was in the mid 60s, the sky mostly clear, the wind from the northeast at 13 mph, and no rain in the forecast. Two inches of rain had fallen on the course during the previous 24 hours.

At the 2021 U.S. Open [Torrey Pines], Mr. Rahm came from three strokes back to win. His face had a similar countenance this Sunday afternoon as it did that Sunday in San Diego.

Jordan Spieth was already demonstrating what Augusta National was available for with the proper execution. He carded six birdies and two bogeys through the first 10 holes.

Both Mr. Koepka and Mr. Rahm began with pars at the first two holes. Of nagging concern was that it took 40 minutes for them to get through those two holes.

Indeed, the slow play they were forced to endure for their fourth round—five hours plus for two fast playing competitors—was as excruciating as it was inexcusable. Ahead of the leaders, Patrick Cantlay, and ahead of him, Sam Bennett appeared to be the molasses-slow culprits who went either without a slow-play warning or without

Par 3s					
ALL ROUNDS					
	4 th	6 th	12 th	16 th	TOTAL
Rahm	+1	E	-1	+1	+1
Koepka	+1	+1	+1	-1	+2
Mickelson	E	E	-3	+1	-2
Spieth	+1	+1	-1	-1	E
Reed	+1	E	+1	E	+2
Henley	E	E	-1	-2	-3

Par 5s					
ALL ROUNDS					
	2 nd	8 th	13 th	15 th	TOTAL
Rahm	-2	-5	-1	-2	-10
Koepka	-3	-4	-1	-3	-11
Mickelson	-2	-1	-3	-2	-8
Spieth	-3	-3	+2	-3	-7
Reed	-1	-2	-2	-2	-7
Henley	-2	-3	E	-1	-6

2023 Masters Top Finishers' Statistics								
72 HOLES								
	EAGLES	BIRDIES	BOGEYS	DOUBLE BOGEYS+	FAIRWAYS HIT	GREENS IN REG.	SAND SAVES	PUTTS PER HOLE
Rahm	1(8)	19	7	1(1)	86%	72%	60%	1.6
Koepka	1(8)	16	10	0	77%	67%	57%	1.61
Mickelson	0	21	9	2	82%	65%	62%	1.57
Spieth	0	21	10	2	73%	61%	67%	1.54
Reed	0	19	10	1	80%	62%	40%	1.51
Henley	0	14	5	1	89%	67%	100%(2)	1.54

regard for the warning they were given. For a tournament that prides itself in anticipating every detail and nuance needed to produce an outstanding competition, August National allowed the patience of their patrons and their worldwide audience to be tried. It seems likely this will not be repeated next year.

**Saturday 11:30 am
LADBROKE Odds
3rd Round Start**

1:06 -10 Rahm 11/8
1:06 -12 Koepka 6/4
12:54 -6 Morikawa 16/1
12:42 -5 Spieth 22/1
12:54 -3 Hovland 25/1
1:06 -8 Bennett(a) 40/1

11:30 am Weather

48° Cloudy
Wind: NE 11 mph
Rain expected
3:15 Play suspended for
the day

At 3:42, the leaders waited for the green to clear at the 4th. Mr. Rahm's birdie at the previous hole and par here, as compared to Mr. Koepka's par and bogey, meant the leaders were joined at 10-under.

At the 6th, Mr. Koepka's bogey gave Mr. Rahm the solo lead for the first time in the past four days.

Losing another stroke to Mr. Rahm's birdie at the 8th, and with both players making bogey at the 9th, the front nine was finished

in 2 hours 32 minutes. Mr. Rahm turned in 35 strokes (-10); and Mr. Koepka in 39 strokes (-8). Mr. Rahm would keep the lead to the end.

At about this same moment, seven players, within minutes of one another, reached 6-under par, and Mr. Spieth 7-under. Minutes later, Phil Mickelson birdied the 18th [the day's most difficult hole] to post 8-under and become the leader in the clubhouse. His 65 was Mr. Mickelson's lowest ever Masters score. Anything can and has happened on the back nine of the Masters, and so everyone was focused on Mr. Rahm.



For J.R.R.:

*We cannot choose our external circumstances,
but we can always choose how to respond to them.*

Epictetus

After another wait at the 12th tee, it was Mr. Rahm's par there and Mr. Koepka's bogey that signaled the end of the latter's threat. Just to be certain, Mr. Rahm's birdies at the 13th and 14th gave him a five stroke lead over Mr. Koepka—who went birdie, bogey (3 putt)—and a four stroke lead over Mr. Mickelson.

Mr. Koepka did not resign himself to his defeat. He birdied the next two to draw back within four, but there was too much to win back with Mr. Rahm fully committed to the steady emotions needed to finish the job.

At the 17th, Mr. Rahm drove perfectly into the fairway, played to the front of the green, and two-putted. Mr. Koepka pulled his drive left, played a low, running hook from the trees to left side of the green, chipped to about 12 feet, and two-putted for bogey.

With a four-shot lead and just one last hole to play, Mr. Rahm drove his ball left into the trees. Unclear as to the location of his ball, he played a provisional ball that finished perfectly in the fairway. Fortunately, however, his first ball had ricocheted out stopping just short of the fairway. He laid up with this second stroke just short of the front left greenside bunker, played a beautiful pitch to three feet or less, and made the putt to win by four.

José María Olazábal was greenside for the celebration. Mr. Olazábal was also 28 years old when he won his first of two Masters. That was in 1994 - the year Mr. Rahm was born. April 9th was also the late Seve Ballesteros' 66th birthday.

**Sunday 2:30
LADBROKE Odds**

4th Round

2:33 -11 Koepka 11/8
2:33 -9 Rahm 6/4
2:24 -8 Hovland 16/1

2:30 Weather

64° Clear
Wind: NE 13 mph
Humidity: 47%

Yours very truly,

Gary A. Galyean
Editor & Publisher

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