



GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER

THE INSIDE REPORT ON WORLD GOLF

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OUR 31ST YEAR

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Dear Subscriber:

The virus' impact on the 2020 professional golf tours resulted in fewer incidents of professional golfer public nudity—for the first time in three years—and only a couple obvious occurrences of skirting the Rules. Equipment sales and recreational rounds sharply increased. Golf flotsam was generally improved by the pandemic.

The lead-in to the year was a rum thing as Matt Kuchar slinked back to Mexico to demonstrate his contrition about stiffing his caddie the year before; Nancy Pelosi's nephew and California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the FAIR PAY TO PLAY ACT allowing college athletes to accept money for the commercial use of their identities while maintaining their amateur status; Phil Mickelson declared himself to be a genius; Patrick Reed was penalized for improving his line of play (twice moving sand behind his ball in a bunker) at a Bahamian tournament; and the U.S. won the Presidents Cup for the eighth consecutive time. Things were calm in the New Year—even boring—until the virus arrived to impact all corners.

JANUARY

• 9th - Pete Dye, 94, dies from Alzheimer's disease. Sometimes referred to as the Jackson Pollock of golf course architects, he was respected as an innovator and showman who constantly re-thought his approach. He referred to himself as a golf course *builder*. When railroad ties became one of his early trademarks, it was surmised that he would be the first architect to have one of his courses burn down. Casa de Campo, Harbour Town, P.G.A. West, T.P.C. Sawgrass, and the Ocean Course are his most notable.

• 15th - Se-ri Pak, 42, wins Bob Jones Award, the U.S.G.A.'s highest award that centers on sportsmanship.

Ms. Pak won the U.S. Women's Open at age 20. She is credited with motivating a generation of Korean golfers who dominate the L.P.G.A.

• 18th - Kevin Na yells, "Hit my ball," as Russell Knox's bunker shot (from Pete Dye's San Andreas Fault bunker at P.G.A. West) barely misses hitting Mr. Na's unmarked ball inside tap-in range during the second round of The American Express tournament. The incident raises questions of backstopping—the practice of not marking a ball in order to help a fellow competitor who is playing further from the hole. Rule 15.3a provides for marking another ball if it may help anyone else's play, and prohibits leaving a ball in place if it will aid another's play.

FEBRUARY

• 4th - The R&A and the U.S.G.A. issue their 56-document distance report: Pre-1900, the best players' tee shots traveled 200-220 yards; by the end of 2019, that number was 310 yards. Player improvements and course conditions are cited as contributing to the gain. "Continuing increase in overall hitting distances will not make golf a better game as a whole," the report states.

• Reactions and comments on the report: "The P.G.A. Tour is committed to ensuring any future solutions identified benefit the game as a whole without negatively impacting the tour, its players, or our fans' enjoyment of our sport." Translation: Bomb it, and listen to them ooh and awe.

Dustin Johnson - "... it's not like the scores are lower than they used to be or they're any different. I don't think [the ball] goes too far, and I don't think we make this game too easy, or it sure is not easy for me."

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2020 IN REVIEW

Robert Garrigus - "Whatever they do, we're going to find a way around it. You can't take speed away from a player who has it and has an advantage. ... You want to see us dial it back a little more, start putting stuff in our way. Don't make the golf course easier at 320 than it is at 280."

Rory McIlroy - Recognizes that the report only addresses problems created "by .1 per cent of the golfers out there. So look, if they want to try to contain what we do as touring professionals, I'm all for that." His concern is environmental sustainability.

Phil Mickelson - "... we are the only professional sport in the world that is governed by a group of amateurs, and that leads to some questionable directions that we go down. I wish that we had people that are involved in the sport professionally to be in charge a little bit more. ... I've played, what, 29 U.S. Opens. [Winning none.] One-hundred percent of the time they have messed it up if it doesn't rain. ... If they don't have a governor they don't know how to control themselves."



• 4th - A Premier Golf League (P.G.L.) is proposed: 18 tournaments, 54 holes, 10 played in the U.S., 1 in the Middle East, 7 elsewhere in the world, shotgun starts the first two rounds, teams of four competing individually and for the team. They are looking for players.

• 17th - Mickey Wright, 85, dies of a heart attack. Her 82 wins (44 in 4 years) included 13 majors. She was the only L.P.G.A. player to hold all major titles at the same time. "At my best I would go into what I called a 'fog'."

• 18th - Martin Ebert begins changes to Royal Liverpool to make it "an even more attractive test of golf, and a future-friendly Open Championship venue".

• 19th - "The more I've thought about [the P.G.L.], the more I don't like it," says Mr. McIlroy. He does not want to be told where/when he must play. ... "I'm out."

• 25th - Greg Norman accuses Mr. McIlroy of financial duplicity with regard his PGL stand, which is fiercely denied by Mr. McIlroy.

• 24th - Brooks Koepka, "The more I've thought about [the P.G.L.], the more I don't like it."

• 2nd - As Tommy Fleetwood takes the lead into the final round of the Honda Classic, Paul Azinger chatters, "... you're trying to prove to everybody that you've got what it takes. These guys know, you can win all you want on that European Tour or in the international game and all that, but you have to win on the P.G.A. Tour."

• 4th - With the regular Masters date five weeks away, Augusta National Chairman Fred Ridley says that all will proceed as scheduled. The same day, the Club pays \$3.4 million for the Wendy's on Washington Road.

• 10th - Mr. McIlroy slams Saudi funding of the P.G.L. Brandel Chamblee praises Mr. McIlroy saying P.G.L. funding "comes from sewers".

• 12th - As the virus spreads, The Players Championship conducts Round 1 play—Hank Haney calls it the "stupidest move ever"—then bans spectators for the final three rounds. Hours later, the tournament is cancelled. Each player is awarded \$52,000, half the purse. The tour ban will continue for the next three events.

• 12th - Augusta considers banning patrons. The following day the Masters is postponed.

• 13th - The U.S.G.A. is monitoring but has yet to make any decisions on its 2020 season schedule.

• 15th - Mr. Koepka and Jon Rahm state they will not participate in the P.G.L.

• 16th - Augusta National course closes to members.

• 16th - The European Tour suspends ticket and hospitality sales "until further notice". P.G.A. Tour begins cancelling and postponing future tournaments.

• 17th - U.S. Open local qualifying for Winged Foot is cancelled.

• 19th - O.J. Simpson is criticized for suggesting how recreational golf can continue despite the pandemic. What he suggests is eventually adopted country-wide.

• 24th - Having pondered for a month, The International Olympic Committee postpones the games scheduled for Tokyo in July/August. They will be played about the same time next summer.

A P R I L

- 1st - Wimbledon is cancelled.
- 6th - The 149th Open Championship, to have been played at Royal St. George's, is cancelled, and re-scheduled to be played (also at George's) July 15-18, 2021.
- Golf clubs scramble to find ways to make golf safe and attractive. Tee times, separate carts, fixed flagsticks, etc. all adopted at most public and private courses.
- 12th - Doug Sanders, 86, dies on Easter Sunday of natural causes. Mr. Sanders won 20 times and finished second 20 times on tour. In 1970, he missed a three-foot putt to win the Open Championship at St. Andrews. "I won 20 times on the P.G.A. Tour," he said, "and if you gave me one birdie, four pars, and a bogey wherever I could put them, I'd have five majors. But it's that putt [at St. Andrews] everyone remembers. What can I say? It's what I remember most, too."



M A Y

- 17th - The P.G.A. Championship (Harding Park), originally scheduled for May, is moved to Aug. 6-9, and will be held without spectators.
- 18th - U.S. Open sectional qualifying is cancelled; local qualifying was cancelled in March. Exemptions are expanded to fill the field with 13 amateurs, the top 70 point leaders from the world ranking, top performers from various international circuits, as well as the customary U.S. Open exemptions. A new date is still un-fixed.

J U N E

- 18th - Mr. McIlroy criticizes European players who are unwilling to come and quarantine in order to play in America. "If I were in their shoes and I was asked to come over to the states and shelter in place or quarantine for two weeks before these tournaments, I would have done that," Mr. McIlroy said.
- 29th - Fox Sports opts out of the remaining seven years of their 12-year contract to carry U.S.G.A. championships; sells the remainder of the contract to NBC.

J U L Y

- 8th - The Ryder Cup (Whistling Straits) is cancelled. Will be played Sept. 21-26, 2021, at Whistling Straits.

• 28th - C. Grant Spaeth, 88, past president of the United States Golf Association (1990-91)—the most beloved by that organization's staff, volunteers, and competitors of anyone to hold that position, and the most articulate and entertaining extemporaneous speaker of anyone to hold that position—dies at home from complications of Parkinson's disease.

- 29th - U.S. Open to be played at Winged Foot, Sept. 17-20, without spectators.

• Golf equipment sales reach \$388.6 million in July - an all-time record *for any month, ever*. Golf rounds are also much increased due to the game's safe access during the pandemic.

A U G U S T

• 6th - With temperatures 30 degrees lower than tournaments played the previous three weeks, the P.G.A. Championship begins at Harding Park in San Francisco.

• 7th - Rickie Fowler whiffs a 6 inch putt at the 15th, which results in his not making the cut.

• 7th - Mr. McIlroy is complimented for correcting an over-generous relief ruling, re-replaces his ball in worse lie and makes bogey.

• 7th - Haotong Li (8 under) is the first Chinese player to lead a men's major championship after 36 holes.

• 8th - Mr. Koepka after 54 holes: "I like my chances. When I've been in this position before, I've capitalized. I don't know, (Johnson)'s only won one. I'm playing good. I don't know, we'll see."

• 9th - Collin Morikawa wins the P.G.A. Championship by two shots (-13). During the final three hours, the lead changes nearly 20 times. Mr. Morikawa's decisive win is emphasized by his leading three notable statistical categories: Proximity to the Hole, Strokes Gained Putting, and Driving Accuracy.

S E P T E M B E R

• 7th - Dustin Johnson, after holding the 36- and 54-hole leads, wins the Tour Championship by three strokes (-21) over Justin Thomas.

• 8th - Mr. Thomas edges Jon Rahm to capture his second P.G.A. of America Player of the Year Award. Because the tour finishes their season in September, the

postponements of the U.S. Open and Masters to the last quarter, and the cancellation of the Open, Mr. Thomas' award includes his competing in just one major championship. Next year's "season" may include six majors.

- 20th - Bryson DeChambeau wins the U.S. Open as the only player under par (-6), and the only player under par in the final round (-3). As an indication of the absence of penalty for playing from the rough, Mr. DeChambeau finished 5th in greens in regulation (46), despite tying for 26th in fairways hit (23). His performance at Winged Foot, as well as Mr. Wolfe's second place finish, demonstrated that distance, fairway width, and rough are no longer obstacles for the best players in the world.

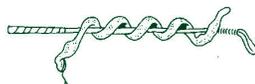
- 22nd - U.S.G.A. CEO and Executive Director Mike Davis announces he will be leaving the golf association by the end of 2021 to pursue a course design career.

O C T O B E R

- A National Golf Association survey concludes "20 per cent of core golfers will be over-spenders this year". Within this group of 2.5 to 3 million players, 44 per cent are likely to buy a driver and/or set of irons, and estimate they will increase their rounds played by 37 per cent. Two-thirds are under the age of 50, half are in households making \$150,000 or more, and 23 per cent most likely live in the Northeast or Midwest.

N O V E M B E R

- 15th - Dustin Johnson wins the 84th Masters Tournament by five strokes, equals the 54-hole record, and lowers the 72-hole record by two strokes, finishing at 268. Windless days and rain-softened greens present more favorable scoring conditions than the accustomed



For P.A.:

*And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his captain's hand on his shoulder smote—
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"*

Sir Henry John Newbolt
VITAI LAMPADA

April weather. Cameron Smith and Sung-jae Im give Mr. Johnson a run for his money until he closes the door with a spectacular birdie at the 14th.

D E C E M B E R

- Dustin Johnson wins \$8.95 million of a total \$25.86 million in calendar year 2020 prize money—34.63 per cent! Only five players have ever bettered Mr. Johnson's performance.

- 5th - Peter Alliss, 89, dies unexpectedly but peacefully, according to his family. He earned the sobriquet the "Voice of Golf" because of his erudition and accomplishment playing the game; and his measured, candid and humorous commentary for half a century with the BBC.

Mr. Alliss weighed 14lbs. 11oz.—thought to be a world record—when born in 1931 in Berlin, where his English father was a golf professional. During the 1950s and 60s, Mr. Alliss won 20 times including three British P.G.A. Championships. He finished in the top-10 five times in the Open; played on eight Ryder Cup teams; and his father, Percy, and he were the first father and son to compete in and win the Ryder Cup.

About this publication he wrote, "It's a few years now since I first had the pleasure of reading THE GOLF LETTER. It came unannounced through the post, and I was immediately taken by its layout and also some of its quirky contents. I wondered who is this man who is so interested in the game of golf that he should produce this newsletter, covering not only events in the United States but, through a network of 'golfing disciplines', spreading the golfing word from the four corners of the globe?"

"Long may you continue your independent voice, bringing golfing points of view to our notice, praising many but also, on occasion, 'slapping a wrist' that needs to be slapped."

Yours vy truly,

Gary A. Galyean
Editor & Publisher

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