



# GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER

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Dear Subscriber:

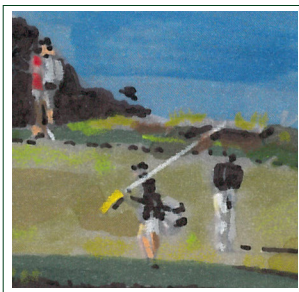
FOR THE SECOND TIME in as many U.S. Open meetings at Torrey Pines [South] the course produced competition of the highest order without presumption, unfairness, or ostentation as to its character, legacy, or architectural superiority. The south course exacted a powerful contest intolerant of timidity, demanding of self discipline, and calling for shots not so recently required in the national championship.

Torrey Pines—we will dispense with the *south* moniker for the remainder of our report—reinstated the U.S. Open as the world's premier competitive test by providing the magnitude and precision of elements necessary to play golf with implements and balls that have steadily encroached upon the courses we have revered because of their history and beauty. Shinnecock, Merion, Brookline, Pebble Beach et al. have our hearts but must be rigged for the U.S. Open test with exaggerated rough, never before shaved greenside slopes, or odd teeing angles to constrict the distance and control advantages of the modern professional's big-boy game.

Torrey Pines is longer (7,700 yards) than any course played on the regular P.G.A. Tour; as well as being the annual venue for a P.G.A. Tour event. These two facts give us the statistical advantage of judging the added difficulty and difference annually presented by Torrey Pines and what distinguished its two U.S. Opens.

Traditionally, a U.S. Open course places a premium on finding the fairway off the tee in order to ease the approach to the green. However, at Torrey Pines in 2008, of the 78 players who made the cut, Tiger Woods, on his way to victory, ranked 56<sup>th</sup> in his percentage of fairways hit.

During the past 15 years at the Farmers Insurance Open, played each winter at Torrey Pines, the U.S.G.A. reports that winners at Torrey Pines gained only 11 percent of their strokes for the week off the tee. The P.G.A. average for tournament winners during that same span of time was 17.8 percent. Torrey Pines demonstrated—especially during the final U.S. Open round—the precision with which the fairway bunkers were placed e.g. at the 17th when Jon Rahm chose to gamble with the bunker rather than risk a penalty in the left side canyon.



Torrey Pines' extraordinary length, combined with the deficiency of that driving statistic, makes strokes gained from approach shots to the green more substantial. For that same 15 years, winners gained more than 46 percent of their shots over the rest of the field from approach shots. The tour average for the same period was 35.5 percent. The course's length naturally demands longer approaches. Since 2004, according to the U.S.G.A. report, 31 percent of winners' approach shots have been from outside 200 yards. The tour average was 23.4 percent.

This also means that we saw shots not normally seen i.e. fewer wedge approaches and artless flop shots; more long and low pitches to open-throated putting greens like Messrs. Hogan and Snead used to play. During the past 17 years at Torrey Pines only 15.5 percent of approaches were played from the 50 to 125 yard range—20 percent was the tour average for the same period from the same distance.

Lastly, Torrey Pines' putting greens are not as smooth as most tour venues. This is due to the *Poa annua* grass that has statistically shown to require more putts from the 4-8 foot range. Over the past decade, players who finished in the top ten at the Farmers holed 68 per cent

of their putts from this distance—tournament winners holed 72 percent—and those outside the top ten only 62 percent of the time.

Rees Jones produced the 2001 renovation of Torrey Pines that led to its hosting of the 2008 U.S. Open. For this year's national championship he updated the bunkers and added length. His prediction for this year's U.S. Open was that the title would be decided on the back nine—like any great championship. As we now know, Mr. Jones was exactly right. However, he focused his prediction on holes 11,12,13 and 18. We have produced the four-day performance statistics (below) for these holes by the top three players. When the winner is determined by only one stroke out of 278 strokes, pinpointing where that advantage arose can be simultaneously obvious and impossible, as we are about to show you.

121ST  
U.S.



OPEN  
TORREY PINES

### Rees Jones Pivotal Hole Picks

#### ALL ROUNDS

	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	TOTAL
Rahm	+1	+1	E	-4	-2
Oosthuizen	+3	-1	-1	-5	-4
English	-1	+1	E	-3	-3

### Par 5s

#### ALL ROUNDS

	9 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	TOTAL
Rahm	-1	E	-4	-5
Oosthuizen	-1	-1	-5	-7
English	-3	E	-3	-6

Who played the par 5s best, the par 3s, drove best, approached best, converted from around the green, and putted best? The *strokes gained* stat box (page 4) discloses those bits of information but does not identify what we believe it all boiled down to—we will do that last.

As we saw on Sunday, Jon Rahm won when Louis Oosthuizen failed to make eagle at the last to force a

### Par 3s

#### ALL ROUNDS

	3 <sup>rd</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	TOTAL
Rahm	E	+1	+1	E	+2
Oosthuizen	E	E	+3	-2	+1
English	+1	-1	-1	E	-1

playoff. No U.S. Open champion has ever eagled the last to win, so clearly Mr. Rahm's advantage came before the 72<sup>nd</sup> hole.

Mr. Oosthuizen and Harris English both outplayed Mr. Rahm the 12 times par 5s were played, as well as the 16 times par 3s were played, so there was no advantage for the Spaniard within those performances.

With 28-yard wide fairways, perfectly positioned fairway bunkers, and open-throated greens with less-than-obvious diabolical contours, the winner and the contenders were determined by superior—and nearly equal—execution of a variety of extremely difficult adrenaline-filled shots over four hours.

### Green Light Sunday

At 12:22 (Pacific Time), Mr. Rahm came to the 1st tee trailing Mr. Oosthuizen, who started in the last group at 12:55, by three strokes. Bookmakers in London favored the South African 7/2; the Spaniard 10/1. Neither player betrayed any sign of intimidation.

Mr. Rahm's birdies at the 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> quickly reduced the lead to one stroke before Mr. Oosthuizen struck his first drive. Both men bogeyed at the 4<sup>th</sup>.

By 1:15, 13 players were within 13 shots of the lead. Five minutes later, Justin Thomas drove his ball out of bounds at the 10<sup>th</sup>, made double bogey, dropped to even par, and disappeared from contention. Simultaneously, Rory McIlroy birdied from 35 feet at the 4<sup>th</sup> rising to 4-under. Moments later, Bryson DeChambeau birdied the 5<sup>th</sup> to join Mr. McIlroy and Mr. Oosthuizen at 4-under, after the South African's bogey at 4<sup>th</sup>.

By 1:45, ten players were within three of the lead. Fifteen minutes later, Mr. DeChambeau nearly holed his drive at the par 3 8<sup>th</sup> and took the lead for the first time at 5-under. An hour later, Mr. Oosthuizen birdied the 9<sup>th</sup> to co-lead with Mr. DeChambeau. Mr. Rahm also birdied the 9<sup>th</sup> moving him to 4-under.

The leaders turned to the final nine with that same single stroke of separation. At the par 3 11<sup>th</sup>, Mr. DeChambeau pushed his drive right and recorded his first bogey in 31 holes. He also drove right at the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, scored bogey then double bogey, fell to 1-under and out of contention.

At the 10th, Mr. Oosthuizen birdied to go two ahead of Mr. Rahm, but bogeyed the 11<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Rahm parred both. Mr. Oosthuizen again lead Mr. Rahm by one.

The 12th through 16<sup>th</sup> holes exacted excruciating pars for the leaders, as the contenders faltered and failed. While Mr. Rahm played ahead without delay, Mr. McIl-

roy, in the 13<sup>th</sup> fairway, and Mr. Oosthuizen, on the 13<sup>th</sup> tee, waited five minutes while Mr. DeChambeau hopscotched his way to double bogey on the same hole.

Mr. Rahm just missed birdie at the par-3 16<sup>th</sup> and moved to the 17<sup>th</sup> tee still trailing Mr. Oosthuizen by one. Deciding to take the canyon on the left of the 17<sup>th</sup> fairway out of play, Mr. Rahm drove 316 yards into the fairway bunker on the right. His second was a 130-yard gap wedge that finished 24 ft beyond the hole. Perfectly judged, his left-to-right putt broke 18 inches and fell into the hole. Messrs. Oosthuizen and Rahm were now tied at 5-under. Pars for Mr. Oosthuizen became more important and were accomplished through the 16th.

Playing the last, Mr. Rahm made birdie from the front right greenside bunker and took the outright lead to 6-under.

At the 17<sup>th</sup> tee, Mr. Oosthuizen made the mistake that cost him the

championship. Knowing he was one stroke back, he choose to play left with a target near the crest of the canyon. Pressing with his driver, he over swung and pulled the ball five yards left. It bounded into the canyon - a red-lined penalty area. He took his drop (penalty stroke), then played his third from 131 yards to 12 feet from the hole, but missed the putt and recorded a bogey.

He now trailed Mr. Rahm, who has finished, by two shots. Mr. Oosthuizen had to make eagle at the last to force a playoff. The odds of that went higher when his drive finished in the rough forcing a lay up with his second shot rather than an attempt at reaching the green.

Birdie was attained, but eagle was not. Mr. Rahm won by one.

“I was glad that the redesign of the 17<sup>th</sup> hole was really the determining factor of the championship,” Rees Jones said later. When the rare Torrey Pine trees to the left died, Mr. Jones was able



THE 3RD AT TORREY PINES [SOUTH] BY TAG GALYEAN

### What It Boiled Down to ...

begins	Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out
-2	Rahm	-3	-4	-4	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-4	33
-5	Oosthuizen	-5	-5	-5	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-5	35
	Hole	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In
	Rahm	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-5	-6	34 67
	Oosthuizen	-6	-5	-5	-5	-5	-5	-5	-4	-5	36 71

### Strokes Gained by Top Three Players

	Rank	Total	Off the Tee	Approach the Green	Around the Green	Putting	
<b>ALL ROUNDS</b>							
Rahm	-6	1	3.78	1.06	1.25	0.57	0.91
Oosthuizen	-5	2	3.53	0.33	0.72	0.61	1.86
English	-3	3	3.03	0.07	0.99	0.96	1.01
<b>ROUND FOUR</b>							
Rahm	67		6.17	1.35	2.61	-0.27	2.48
Oosthuizen	71		2.17	-0.51	1.35	0.33	1.00
English	68		5.17	0.99	0.42	0.06	3.70

to move the fairway left toward the rim of the canyon. There is little rough or undergrowth there to stop a ball from rolling into the barranca, as Mr. Oosthuizen discovered. Mr. Jones also reconfigured the fairway bunkers on the right, where Mr. Rahm drove and from where he made birdie. The 17<sup>th</sup> allowed the most birdies of any pars on the back, but also the most penalty strokes.

•••

It was a championship noteworthy for the play it produced rather than the photographs of stunning holes. The Pacific cliff side setting is beautiful, but the buildings that rise on the east side are not. There is little elevation change; nearly no weather to consider, other than fog, and yet it was a stunning and dramatic examination. The demanding tee shot targets, the precisely-placed fairway bunkers, the uneven rough that could be played from, the longer approaches, the mysterious green contours, poa, and the overall length all came together producing play more memorable than pretty landscapes.

While we were delighted by the contest Torrey Pines' competitive elements produced, readers of this letter through the years know that it gives us no pleasure to move the respected favorite courses from America's golf history into second position when it comes to our national championship. This is, however, the price that must be paid for the metal bats, polybutadiene balls, air conditioned putting grass roots, precision mowing and irrigation, and the big, corporate money that makes it all possible.

For the past two decades, golf's great dilemma between old and new has searched for a peaceful solution. Like it or not, what happened at Torrey Pines is that solution. The most painful resolution of this same dilemma will come at the 150<sup>th</sup> Open Championship next summer at St. Andrews.



For L.T.O.:

*"Experience is what you get when you don't get what you want."*

Randy Pausch (1960-2008)  
Professor, Human-Computer Interaction  
CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

## Men's Final Olympic Golf Rankings

LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND (June 22) — With his U.S. Open victory, Jon Rahm of Spain jumped ahead of Justin Thomas into first position of the Olympic rankings. Americans finished 2 through 5 with Mr. Thomas, Colin Morikawa, Xander Schauffele, and Bryson DeChambeau, respectively. The United States is the only country with more than two qualifiers for the 60-player field, which will compete at Kasumigaseki from July 29-August 1.



The top 15 world-ranked players are eligible with a limit of four players from a given country. Beyond the top 15, players are eligible based on the world rankings, with a maximum of two eligible players from each country that does not already have two or more players among the top 15. The host country is guaranteed a spot, as is each of the competing five continents.

By our calculation, the following will lead the men's competition (Olympic ranking in parenthesis):

### U.S.A.

Justin Thomas (2), Colin Morikawa (3), Xander Schauffele (4), & Bryson DeChambeau (5)

### SPAIN

Jon Rahm (1) & Rafa Cabrera Bello (40)

### IRELAND

Rory McIlroy (6) & Shane Lowry (18)

### GREAT BRITAIN

Tyrrell Hatton (7) & Paul Casey (10)

### JAPAN

Hideki Matsuyama (9) & Rikuya Hoshino (27)

Yours vy truly,

Gary A. Galyean  
Editor & Publisher

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