



GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER®

THE INSIDE REPORT ON WORLD GOLF

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Dear Subscriber:

THE SELECTION OF THOSE who comprised the various countries' Olympic Golf teams resulted in a welcome change—and result—from the normally recurring P.G.A. Tour events played week-in and week-out.

The selection criteria admitted all of the top 15 world-ranked players, regardless of nationality, with a limit of four players from any given country. The United States was the only country with four players in the top 15 and, therefore, was allowed four places in the competition at Kasumigaseki Country Club. No other country had more than two players in the world top 15 and, therefore, were allowed only two players in the medal competition.

Beyond the top 15, other players were eligible based on the remaining world rankings, with a maximum of two eligible players from each country that did not already have two or more players among the top 15. Japan, as the host nation, was guaranteed a place, as were each of the five competing continents.

The pandemic played its part when the Spaniard, Jon Rahm, the number one ranked player in the world, and American Bryson DeChambeau both failed the Covid testing required for playing in the Olympiad.

Those qualified and healthy but choosing not to play included Spain's Sergio Garcia—replaced by no one; Germany's Martin Kaymer—replaced by Hurly Long; South Africa's Louis Oosthuizen—replaced by Christian Bezuidenhout; U.S.'s Dustin Johnson—first replaced by Mr. DeChambeau; and England's Tyrrell Hatton, Matthew Fitzpatrick, and Lee Westwood—the one empty British spot filled by Tommy Fleetwood.

With Messrs. Rahm and Garcia out, the Spanish Olympic Committee said there was not enough “time to find a replacement [for their second spot] and comply with the necessary health protocols required”. Adri Arnaus, who replaced Mr. Rahm earlier, became the only golfer representing Spain.

Mr. Johnson's decision not to compete originally allowed Mr. DeChambeau his place, which was dashed by the plague five days before the competition was to begin. The choice for Mr. DeChambeau's replacement worked its way through Patrick Cantlay and Brooks Koepka until finding Patrick Reed.

The shuffling required to field 60 players from around the world—a field that did not include at least four of the very best—ensured that there could be some unexpected results, which was the case.

Kasumigaseki's club members suspended their use of the East Course—they have two courses—in May, which resulted in the presentation of superb playing surfaces. The

putting greens were particularly smooth, which led to remarkable putting performances by several players.

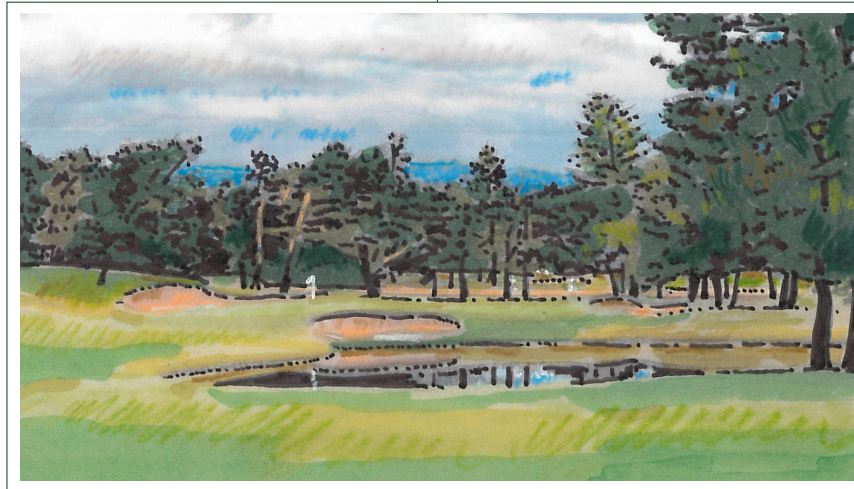
The point has been made that Tom Fazio's renovation of Kasumigaseki in 2015, combined with the use of several forward tees, did not provide as great a strategic test as hoped. Four holes have greens that slope from left-front to right-back and are guarded by a bunker at the front-middle. Conversely, three others were built as opposite reflections. Only two holes offer a hole location deep and at the center of the green. Some short tees were used for the final round, which helps to explain why all of the nine serious medal contenders returned scores between 61 and 69 on the final day.



Hideki Matsuyama was a favored contender because of his previous experience playing Kasumigaseki, his Masters victory last April, and his support from the host nation. After three rounds, he was just one stroke off the lead, but disappointing 69s on the first and final days put him into the seven-man bronze medal playoff. He was eliminated after a bogey at the first playoff hole. Hence, he finished with six others tied for fourth. He did not putt well from short distances, especially in round four, despite his familiarity with the course.

The 60-man field produced a dozen serious contenders over the 72 holes of stroke play. The top 12 players represented 11 different countries from Austria to the Philippines, and all the competing continents.

Round 2 showed promise for Xander Schauffele with an 8-under round that put him one shot ahead. Sepp Straka stumbled eight shots from his brilliant first round 63 but retained third position.



KASUMIGASEKI [EAST] BY TAG GALYEAN

Round 3 offered Mr. Matsuyama hope as his 67 pulled him to within one of Mr. Schauffele. Rory Sabbatini, born in South Africa but rep-

resenting Slovakia, finished the third round tied for 17th. The next day he set an Olympic record by posting a phenomenal 61 and giving chase to Mr. Schauffele's steady play which proved one stroke better at the end. The idiosyncrasy of the competition was exceptional due to the players' desire to win one of three medals rather than one green jacket, one Claret Jug, one U.S. Open Trophy, or one Wanamaker Trophy. When Mr. Schauffele won the gold medal on the 72nd green, the competition did not end. Indeed, many felt the playoff for the bronze medal was more compelling than the regular competition.

In sudden death, seven played for the third place on the Olympic podium. Messrs. Casey and Matsuyama were eliminated with bogeys at the first playoff hole (18th). The remaining five all parred the next (10th), Messrs. Pan and Morikawa birdied the 11th, which eliminated Messrs. McIlroy, Muñoz, and Pereira. Mr. Pan parred the 18th, to eliminate Mr.

Morikawa and win the bronze. Mr. McIlroy commented later, "I never tried so hard in my life to finish third." 🍀

MEDALISTS & LEADING CONTENDERS

ROUND 1	ROUND 2	ROUND 3	ROUND 4
Straka 63 -8	Schauffele 63 -11	Schauffele 68 -14	Schauffele 67 -18
Janewattananond 64 -7	Ortiz 67 -10	Matsuyama 67 -13	Sabbatini 61 -17
Pieters 65 -6	Straka 71 -8	Casey 66 -12	* Pan 63 -15
Ortiz 65 -6	Pereira 65 -8	Ortiz 69 -12	<small>*wins 4th hole of sudden death</small>
-----	Noren 67 -8	-----	-----
Casey 67 -4	-----	Muñoz 66 -11	Morikawa 63 -15
Muñoz 67 -4	Matsuyama 64 -9	McIlroy 67 -11	Muñoz 67 -15
Schauffele 68 -3	McIlroy 66 -7	Pereira 68 -11	McIlroy 67 -15
Matsuyama 69 -2	Casey 68 -7	Straka 68 -11	Pereira 67 -15
Sabbatini 69 -2	Sabbatini 67 -6	Morikawa 67 -7	Casey 68 -15
Morikawa 69 -2	Muñoz 69 -6	Pan 66 -7	Matsuyama 69 -15
Pereira 69 -2	Morikawa 70 -3	Sabbatini 70 -7	Straka 68 -14
McIlroy 69 -2	Niemann 69 -3	Noren 72 -7	C. Smith 66 -14
Pan 74 +3	Pan 66 -2	Vegas 70 -7	

The Tour Championship East Lake, Atlanta

ENGLISHMEN WHO ENJOY assessing social behavior can be heard to comment, calmly and without prejudice, that in America it is always about the money. This does not mean that Americans only talk about money, but it does mean that social standing is often determined by financial success rather than character.

Patrick Cantlay's performance at the Tour Championship demonstrated both. He maintained an unflappable focus leading wire-to-wire, albeit with the help of *starting strokes*, a P.G.A. Tour affectation meant to introduce drama by rewarding the season-long top players with stepped advantage to the \$60 million final purse.

The FedExCup Playoffs, a series of three events that determine the Tour's season champion, are played to reduce the 125 top players in the point standings first to 70 players, and then to 30 players for the final 72 holes at East Lake. The leading players at the end of the second playoff are awarded staggered, starting strokes before the beginning of the Tour Championship.

Mr. Cantlay, by virtue of his regular season performance and particularly his win at the second playoff [the BMW Championship], began

the Tour Championship with 10 starting strokes—that is 10-under par. Mr. Rahm began four back of Mr. Cantlay because he was awarded just six starting strokes.

Reporting the results of each day's play can be confusing in the sense of "if a frog had wings". Mr. Rahm outplayed Mr. Cantlay by three strokes during the four days at East Lake. Indeed, Mr. Cantlay actually finished tied with Justin Thomas for fourth place with his gross score of 269. However, 10 starting strokes gave him a net score of 259 that was one better than Mr. Rahm's net score of 260. If a frog had starting strokes he might win \$15 million and then go home and watch college football.

During the first round, Mr. Cantlay's starting strokes and his 67 were good enough to keep him two strokes ahead of Mr. Rahm's 65 less his starting strokes. "I was



TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP

just trying to post a score," Mr. Rahm commented following play. "My job is to hit the best shot I can each time, and that's all I can control."

After round two, Mr. Cantlay's net score was only one better than Mr. Rahm's, who birdied the last three holes while Mr. Cantlay birdied only the last two.

On day three, Mr. Cantlay took back one of the strokes he previously lost to Mr. Rahm, and these two extraordinary players went to the final round separated by two strokes

On day four, Mr. Cantlay's two birdies on the front nine were reversed by two bogeys and he turned in even par for the day. Mr. Rahm's eight pars and one birdie at the 5th put him out in 34 strokes. The separation was only one stroke going to the last nine holes.

Mr. Rahm gave chase with eight consecutive pars to Mr. Cantlay's 6 pars, 1 birdie, and 1 bogey. Both men birdied the 18th: Mr. Cantlay outdrove Mr. Rahm by nine yards. Mr. Rahm approached first with a 5-iron that he nearly holed, but his ball ran just off the putting surface into some longer grass. Mr. Cantlay's 6-iron finished 12 feet from the hole. Mr. Rahm failed to hole his chip.

Mr. Cantlay had two for it, used them both, and won the net competition by one stroke.

It can be argued that Mr. Cantlay actually

won the Tour Championship with his final two rounds at the BMW Championship the week before. He posted two 66s to Mr. Rahm's two 70s, which gave Mr. Cantlay the four-starting-stroke advantage he needed to win by one. This time, the frog had wings.

Jon Rahm Wins 2021 PGA of America Player of the Year & Vardon Trophy

The P.G.A. OF AMERICA Player of the Year calendar mirrors the P.G.A. TOUR Player of the Year competitive calendar stipulating a beginning and end to their season three months before the end of the calendar year. This is to meant to attract a Tour Championship television audience before it is reduced by those who prefer watching college football.

In non-Wuhan years, this means the four major championships have been played by the time both organizations'

	RD 1	RD 2	RD 3	RD 4	GROSS TOTAL	STARTING STROKES	NET FINAL
RAHM	65	65	68	68	266	-6	-20
NA	66	67	66	67	266	-2	-16
SCHAUFFELE	68	69	67	64	268	-2	-14
CANTLAY	67	66	67	69	269	-10	-21
J. THOMAS	67	67	65	70	269	-4	-14

Player of the Year Awards are determined following the Tour Championship.

Last year, however, the P.G.A. TOUR 2020 calendar included only one major championship—the P.G.A. Championship played in August in San Francisco. The Open Championship was not played in 2020; the 2020 U.S. Open was played in September, after the Tour’s year ended; and the 2020 Masters Tournament was played last November. Therefore, the tour’s 2021 competitive calendar included six majors (2 in 2020 / 4 in 2021), as did, therefore, the voting for 2021 Player of the Year.

The P.G.A. OF AMERICA [the club professionals] determines their Player of the Year using performance points. For 2021, Mr. Rahm won with 75 points, 5 more than Mr. DeChambeau, 15 more than Mr. Cantlay, and 21 more than Mr. Morikawa. *The Vardon Trophy*, awarded to the touring professional with the lowest adjusted scoring average, went to Mr. Rahm with his 69.3 average based upon 86 complete rounds. Dustin Johnson was second with 69.619; Louis Oosthuizen third at 69.714, and Mr. Cantlay fourth at 69.736.

However, the P.G.A. TOUR Player of the Year is determined by member voting. If money is the members’ decid-

ing factor, Mr. Cantlay will be the clear winner with \$22.6 million — Mr. Rahm finished second with \$12.7 million — due to the heavy weighting of the Tour Championship prior to which Mr. Rahm led Mr. Cantlay by \$67,128.

If the six majors played during the Tour’s 2021 Sept-to-Sept competitive year are considered as a body of work, Mr. Rahm would be the winner with five top-10 finishes including his 2021 U.S. Open win. Mr. Morikawa would come second with three top-10s and his Open Championship victory. Mr. Cantlay did not finish in a major top-10 even once and missed the cut twice in six attempts.

Mr. Cantlay did, however, win four regular season events: the ZOZO Championship, the Memorial Tournament (when Mr. Rahm, leading by six, had to withdraw after testing positive for Covid), the BMW Championship, and the Tour Championship.

In addition to the most top 10 finishes in major championships, Mr. Rahm finished 15 times in the top ten of all the Tour events in which he played—no one else reached even 10 in this category. Based on all of this, it would seem that Mr. Rahm will also win the P.G.A. TOUR Player of the Year Award. The voting for that award will be announced later in September.

Major Finishes by Leading Players — Sept. 2020 through Sept 2021

[The PGA Tour 2020/21 Competitive Calendar]

	2020		2021					TOUR CHAMPSHP
	U.S. OPEN	MASTERS	MASTERS	PGA	U.S. OPEN	THE OPEN	OLYMPICS	
Cantlay	T43	T17	MC	T23	T15	MC	DNP	1
Rahm	T23	T7	T5	T8	1	T3	DNP	2
Na	MC	T13	T12	MC	MC	DNP	DNP	3
J. Thomas	T8	4	T21	MC	T19	T40	T22	4
DeCbambeau	1	T34	T46	T38	T26	T33	DNP	7
Morikawa	MC	T44	T18	T8	T4	1	T4	T26



For F.C.F.:

Jeff: *“Do you know what time it is in Tokyo right now?”*

Nick: *“No.”*

Jeff: *“Four PM ... tomorrow. It’s the future, Nick.”*

Christopher Buckley
THANK YOU FOR SMOKING

Yours vry truly,

Gary A. Galyean
Editor & Publisher

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