



takingaim

Boo Weekley sets sights on third straight title

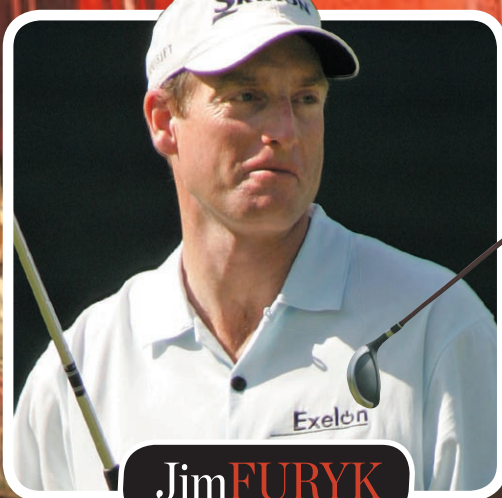
He's been to Harbour Town twice.

He has two tartan jackets.

So who can knock him off?



Davis **LOVE III**



Jim **FURYK**



Stewart **CINK**

>>THE EVENT

A spectator's guide to viewing Hilton Head Island's PGA Tour extravaganza

>>THE FIELD

Find out who's in this year's tournament along with opening-round tee times

>>THE LOCAL

Beaufort amateur Mark Anderson prepares for the biggest tournament of his life

>>THE MEMORIES

Those who cover the Heritage look back on their favorite Harbour Town moments

A SHOT AT HISTORY

Boo Weekley has his sights set on a Heritage three-peat



JONATHAN DYER • The Island Packet

Boo Weekley has been a sharpshooter at Harbour Town Golf Links, winning the PGA Tour stop here in 2007 and 2008.

The everyman champion

By JUSTIN JARRETT
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843-706-8120

Lounging comfortably in a chair in the lobby of the Inn at Harbour Town, just a choked-down pitching wedge from the first tee box of the course that made him a household name, Boo Weekley ponders a question.

What is it about this place ... ?

The answer is obvious — Harbour Town Golf Links requires accuracy and ingenuity, and Weekley is widely considered one of the best ball-strikers on the PGA Tour — and yet Weekley never settles for the obvious answer.

"I just like being here," Weekley says, a smile spreading across his face. "If I pass away, I'll probably be walking up and down this golf course. It'll be like the ghost of St. Andrew's or something, but I'll be the ghost of Hilton Head."

"I'll have a golf club and some guy with a bagpipe playing behind me."

The last bit brings a deep chuckle that shakes his gut, but he's not kidding.

Perhaps no player other than five-time champion Davis Love III is more closely associated with Harbour Town and the Heritage than Weekley, who came to Hilton Head Island in 2007 as a little-known character from the fringes of the PGA Tour. He emerged from a wild Monday finish as

"If I pass away, I'll probably be walking up and down this golf course. It'll be like the ghost of St. Andrew's or something, but I'll be the ghost of Hilton Head."

Boo Weekley, back-to-back defending Heritage champion

something of a cult hero, an anti-stereotype whose talent on the golf course is exceeded only by his overflowing personality.

The partying throngs of Heritage fans embraced their everyman champion when he returned to defend his title last year — camouflage popped up around Harbour Town like the grass after the first soaking rain of the spring, and choruses of "Booooo" echoed down Harbour Town's tree-lined fairways as Weekley once again tamed Pete Dye's famed layout.

The consummate showman, Weekley seemed to thrive on the attention. Like a basketball team gaining momentum from a raucous home crowd, Weekley's game elevated as the crowds following him increased in size and zeal, and he held off a charge from young gun Anthony Kim and past champion Aaron Baddeley.

As hard as it is to imagine, Weekley's following probably will be even larger and more zealous this year. His star has risen dramatically since he last teed it up at the Heritage, propelled into a new stratosphere

by his performance at the Ryder Cup, where he mounted his driver like a stick horse and galloped down the first fairway — then proceeded to help the U.S. team recapture the Cup by earning 2½ points in his three matches, including a 4-and-2 victory over Oliver Wilson in the Sunday singles matches. Much like he has at Harbour Town, where Weekley says he feels like he's at home because of his bond with the laid-back crowd, he flourished at Valhalla, where he felt free to let down his guard.

"It was kind of like you can go out there and be who you really are as a person and kind of let your emotions blow and show a little more than normal," Weekley says, "and that kind of suited me pretty well."

What ensued was a whirlwind the likes of which Weekley usually associates with the storms that blow up off the Gulf of Mexico. Before he knew it, he was sitting in a chair beside Jay Leno, signing a book deal and launching a clothing line.

Please see WEEKLEY on 5D

Putting up numbers

2 By earning his first two PGA Tour victories at the Verizon Heritage, Boo Weekley joined a group of only eight players since 1960 to pick up their first two wins in the same event. Oddly enough, the first to do it also came at Harbour Town Golf Links. Here's the list:

- Hale Irwin (Sea Pines Heritage 1971, 1973)
- Dave Eichelberger (Greater Milwaukee Open 1971, 1977)
- Calvin Peete (Greater Milwaukee Open 1979, 1982)
- Loren Roberts (Bay Hill Invitational 1994, 1995)
- Brian Henninger (Southern Farm Bureau Classic 1994, 1999)
- Vaughn Taylor (Reno-Tahoe Open 2004, 2005)
- J.B. Holmes (FBR Open 2006, 2008)
- Boo Weekley (Verizon Heritage 2007, 2008)

3 With another victory at Harbour Town Golf Links this week, Weekley would join a select group of players who have won the same event in three consecutive starts. Here's the list:

- Jamie Anderson (British Open, 1877-79)
- Robert Ferguson (British Open, 1880-82)
- Willie Anderson (U.S. Open, 1903-05)
- Walter Hagen (Metropolitan Open, 1916, 1919-20)
- Gene Sarazen (Miami Beach Open, 1927-29)
- Henry Picard (Tournament of the Gardens, 1935-37)
- Ralph Guldahl (Western Open, 1936-38)
- Ben Hogan (Asheville Land of the Sky Open, 1940-42)
- Gene Littler (Tournament of Champions, 1955-57)
- Billy Casper (Portland Open, 1959-61)
- Arnold Palmer (Texas Open, 1960-62)
- Jack Nicklaus (Disney World of Golf Classic, 1971-73)
- Johnny Miller (Tucson Open, 1974-76)
- Tom Watson (Byron Nelson Classic, 1978-80)
- Tiger Woods (Memorial Tournament, 1999-2001)
- Tiger Woods (WGC-NEC Invitational, 1999-2001)
- Tiger Woods (WGC-Bridgestone Invitational, 2005-2007)
- Tiger Woods (WGC-CA Championship, 2005-07)

4 Weekley still has some work to do to match the record for consecutive victories in the same event, though. Four players have won the same tournament four times in a row, and only Tiger Woods has achieved that feat since 1930. Here they are:

- Tom Morris Jr. (British Open: 1868-70, 1872)
- Walter Hagen (PGA Championship 1924-27)
- Gene Sarazen (Miami Open 1926, 1928-30)
- Tiger Woods (Bay Hill Invitational 2000-03)
- Tiger Woods (Buick Invitational 2005-08)

Boo's career timeline

Fall 2001: Finished tied for 23rd at the PGA Tour Qualifying Tournament, earning his tour card.

2002: Made PGA tour debut. Missed the cut in 19 of 24 starts and lost his tour card after earning only \$95,206.

2006: After four years on the Nationwide Tour, finished seventh on the money list to graduate and earn his second shot at the PGA Tour. In 24 events, claimed nine top-10 finishes and 14 top-25 showings.

April 2007: Earned first PGA Tour victory with back-to-back chip-ins on the final two holes of the Verizon Heritage, edging Ernie Els for a \$972,000 payday.

2007: Powered by Heritage victory, earned more than \$2.6 million and finished 25th in the FedExCup standings.

November 2007: Teaming with former high school teammate Heath Slocum, finished second in the Omega Mission Hills World Cup in China.

April 2008: Played in first Masters Tournament, tying for 20th.

Anthony Kim and Aaron Baddeley by three shots to become the first back-to-back winner at Harbour Town Golf Links since Davis Love III in 1991 and 1992.

Sept. 2008: Helped U.S. team recapture the Ryder Cup, earning 2 1/2 points in three matches, including a 4-and-2 win over Oliver Wilson in the Sunday singles matches. Became a crowd favorite when he rode his driver down the first fairway "cowboy horse" style.

2008: Won nearly \$2.4 million with five top-10s and 11 top-25s, and finished 33rd in the FedExCup standings.

Inside this section

COURSE INFO

Stats and playing tips for one of the PGA Tour's most unusual venues, Harbour Town Golf Links **8D, 9D**



TRAHAN'S TIME?

Former Hilton Head High student D.J. Trahan has proven he's good enough to win a PGA Tour event. Can he do it here? **6D**



MORE MONEY

For the 17th straight year, the purse for the Heritage has been increased. Not bad, considering the economic climate. **15D**



ALSO

Boo's swing breakdown **4D**
Local gets his big chance **7D**
Evolution of Matt Kuchar **10D**
2008 Heritage recap **12D**
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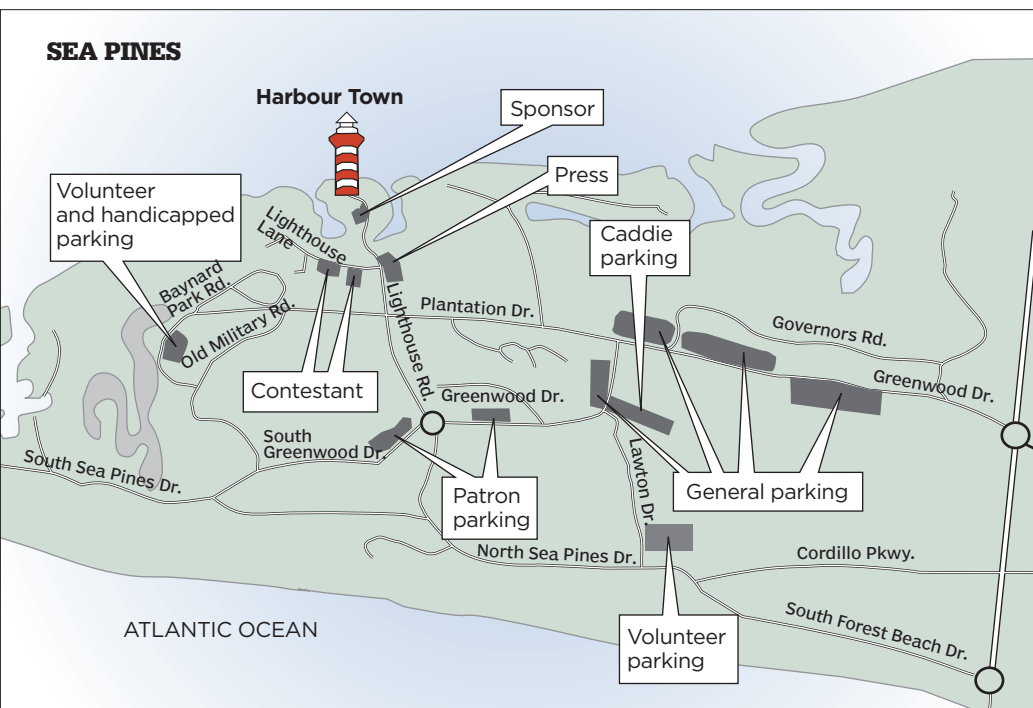
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PARKING

As you reach Hilton Head Island on U.S. 278, take the Cross Island Parkway to Sea Pines Resort (a \$1.25 toll is required), or continue down William Hilton Parkway. Traffic will flow through the main gate of Sea Pines Resort on the south end of the island. Once inside the main gate, security personnel will direct you to the first available parking lot. Those with color-coded and numbered parking passes should follow the directional signs to their lot. Please note the lot number so you can take the appropriate shuttle back at the conclusion of play. Buses taking spectators back from the tournament site to the parking lots will stop running one hour after play.

HANDICAP PARKING

Handicap parking passes will be issued by Sea Pines Security, located on Greenwood Drive in the Community Services Associates building, one mile inside the main gate. To reach the security office, call 671-7170.

WILL CALL

Will call is designed for last-minute sales, pick-up and redistribution of tournament badges, which can be dropped off at the ticket office adjacent to the clubhouse or at will call in the Sea Pines Welcome Center parking lot on Greenwood Drive. A photo ID will be required to receive tickets. Will call will be open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursday through Saturday and 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday.

GATE HOURS

The ticket office next to the clubhouse at Harbour Town Golf Links will be open from 7 a.m. through the end of play each day.

SCHEDULE

TODAY
All day: First round, Harbour Town Golf Links.
FRIDAY
All day: Second round, Harbour Town Golf Links.
SATURDAY
All day: Third round, Harbour Town Golf Links.
Noon-2 p.m.: Tartan Day judging in the tent by the clubhouse. Fans are encouraged to wear their best Heritage garb.
SUNDAY
7:30 a.m.: Church service, 18th green.
8:30 a.m.: Start of final round, Harbour Town Golf Links.
After play: Closing ceremonies, 18th green.

AUTOGRAPHS

A player may not sign autographs after the start of his round and until the round has been completed. Designated autograph areas are located behind the 9th and 18th holes. Their use is optional to players. Objects larger than 8 1/2 inches by 11 inches will not be signed.



PROHIBITED ITEMS

Include but are not limited to cell phones, beepers, radios, signs or banners, coolers.

FOR YOUR PROTECTION

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Wear sunscreen.
- Wear soft-soled shoes but no spiked golf shoes.
- Remain behind gallery ropes.
- Follow marshals' directions.
- If a siren sounds indicating bad weather approaching, seek shelter immediately.

CONCESSION STANDS

Are located near the second green, the eighth green, the 10th fairway, the 13th green, the 15th green, the 17th green and the 18th green. Concessions also are available at the Heritage Pavilion near the clubhouse, and the 19th hole is located behind the 18th hole, near the Harbour Town Yacht Basin.

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Tournament at a glance

What: 41st Annual Verizon Heritage
When: April 16-19, 2009
Where: Harbour Town Golf Links, The Sea Pines Resort, Hilton Head Island
Par: 36-35-71
Yardage: 3,495-3,478-6,973
Format: 72 holes of stroke play
Course designer: Pete Dye with Jack Nicklaus
Course features: Narrow, tight fairways; abundant water and sand hazards; small greens; winds through pines, palms and oak forests; fronts on Calibouge South with view of the marsh and Harbour Town Yacht Basin.
Defending champion: Boo Weekley
Past champions: Arnold Palmer, Bob Goalby, Hale Irwin, Johnny Miller, Jack Nicklaus, Hubert Green, Graham Marsh, Tom Watson, Doug Tewell, Bill Rogers, Fuzzy Zoeller, Nick Faldo, Bernhard Langer,

Davis Love III, Greg Norman, Payne Stewart, David Edwards, Bob Tway, Loren Roberts, Nick Price, Glen Day, Stewart Cink, Jose Coceres, Justin Leonard, Peter Lonard, Aaron Baddeley.
Total prize money: \$5,700,000.
Winner's share: \$1,026,000.
Playoff: If necessary, a sudden-death playoff will be conducted, starting at the 18th hole.
Field: 132 invited players who qualify in at least one of the 22 categories of eligibility.
Title Sponsor: Verizon
Tournament Director: Steve Wilmot
Director of Golf: Jonathan Farrell
Course Superintendent: John Wright
Consultant: Gary Snyder
TV: THE GOLF CHANNEL — Thursday: 3-6 p.m.; Friday: 3-6 p.m.; Saturday: 1-3 p.m.; Sunday: 1-3 p.m.; CBS — Saturday: 3-6 p.m.; Sunday: 3-6 p.m.

Today's tee times

Tee times for the first round of the 2009 Verizon Heritage PGA Tour tournament today at Harbour Town Golf Links on Hilton Head Island.

No. 1 tee

- 7:20 a.m.:** Rod Pampling, Fredrik Jacobson, Nicholas Thompson
- 7:30 a.m.:** Bart Bryant, Bo Van Pelt, Alex Cejka
- 7:40 a.m.:** Corey Pavin, Luke Donald, Steve Elkington
- 7:50 a.m.:** Eric Axley, Billy Andrade, Bill Haas
- 8 a.m.:** Marc Turnesa, Brad Faxon, Chris DiMarco
- 8:10 a.m.:** Ryan Palmer, Chez Reavie, Shaun Micheal
- 8:20 a.m.:** Mark Wilson, Carl Pettersson, D.J. Trahan
- 8:30 a.m.:** Cameron Beckman, Scott Verplank, Robert Allenby
- 8:40 a.m.:** Joe Durant, Kevin Streelman, Jeev M. Singh
- 8:50 a.m.:** Lucas Glover, Ted Purdy, Tim Wilkinson
- 9 a.m.:** Jason Dufner, Aron Price, Colt Knost
- Noon:** Jason Bohn, Stephen Leaney, Charlie Wi
- 12:10 p.m.:** Jeff Klauk, John Mallinger, Scott Piercy
- 12:20 p.m.:** Tim Clark, Greg Owen, Robert Garrigus
- 12:30 p.m.:** Tim Herron, Jose Maria Olazabal, Webb Simpson
- 12:40 p.m.:** George McNeill, Chris Couch, Tom Lehman

- 12:50 p.m.:** Will MacKenzie, Johnson Wagner, Todd Hamilton
- 1 p.m.:** Jim Furyk, Charles Howell III, Aaron Baddeley
- 1:10 p.m.:** Justin Leonard, Ernie Els, Rory Sabbatini
- 1:20 p.m.:** Jeff Maggert, Brian Davis, Nathan Green
- 1:30 p.m.:** Troy Matteson, Jerry Kelly, Jeff Quinney
- 1:40 p.m.:** Chris Stroud, Jarrod Lyle, Marc Leishman

No. 10 tee

- 7:20 a.m.:** Heath Slocum, Vaughn Taylor, Mathew Goggin
- 7:30 a.m.:** Tom Pernice Jr., Steve Marino, Michael Letzig
- 7:40 a.m.:** John Rollins, Kevin Na, Martin Laird
- 7:50 a.m.:** Lee Janzen, Ken Duke, Greg Chalmers
- 8 a.m.:** Greg Kraft, Brian Bateman, Dudley Hart
- 8:10 a.m.:** Parker McLachlin, Brandt Snedeker, Joe Ogilvie
- 8:20 a.m.:** Zach Johnson, Camilo Villegas, Trevor Immelman
- 8:30 a.m.:** Paul Casey, Dustin John-

- son, Brian Gay
- 8:40 a.m.:** Peter Lonard, Briny Baird, Charles Warren
- 8:50 a.m.:** Tommy Armour III, James Nitties, Rory McIlroy
- 9 a.m.:** Brendon de Jonge, Matt Weibring, Cory Schneider
- Noon:** Jose Coceres, Brett Quigley, Bill Lunde
- 12:10 p.m.:** Dean Wilson, Bob Tway, Billy Mayfair
- 12:20 p.m.:** John Senden, Tim Petrovic, Matt Kuchar
- 12:30 p.m.:** Ben Crane, Nick O'Hern, Cliff Kresge
- 12:40 p.m.:** Steve Lowery, Woody Austin, Kirk Triplett
- 12:50 p.m.:** Daniel Chopra, Jonathan Byrd, Fred Funk
- 1 p.m.:** Davis Love III, Boo Weekley, Steve Flesch
- 1:10 p.m.:** Michael Bradley, Stewart Cink, Charley Hoffman
- 1:20 p.m.:** Glen Day, Mark Brooks, Brad Adamonis
- 1:30 p.m.:** Bob Estes, Michael Allen, Matt Bettencourt
- 1:40 p.m.:** James Driscoll, Tommy Gainey, Mark Anderson

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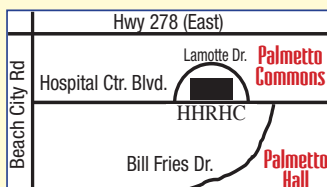
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BOO-TRUVIANMAN

Finding the secret to a championship swing

By **LANCE HANLIN**
lhanlin@beaufortgazette.com
843-986-5540

Two-time defending champion Boo Weekley may be a funny guy, but his golf game is no joke, especially at Harbour Town Golf Links.

His swing has changed some over the years, but two basics remain. One is to keep his head steady. The other is to make a controlled hip turn. To unlock the other secrets of his championship swing, we first looked to the best in the business — Tiger Woods swing coach Hank Haney.

"First off, he's a great player," said Haney, who runs the Hank Haney International Junior Golf Academy here in Beaufort County. "He has

shown that at a lot of different places. ... Also, some courses just fit your eye and you feel comfortable there. He's always played good here and I'm sure he will play well here again this year."

Haney was unable to break down the finer points of Weekley's swing due to his contract with Golf Digest, but he did introduce us to his right-hand man, veteran instructor and fellow swing guru Peter Krause.

Golf Magazine labeled Krause one of the Top 100 Teachers in America. He was also PGA National Teacher of the Year in 2005. Krause spent a few days studying photos and video of Weekley's swing for The Beaufort Gazette/Island Packet. Here are his findings:

Boo Breakdown By Peter Krause



ADDRESS

His posture is good. His head is in line with his back before he begins his swing.

and wrist line up right on the plane, but with his strong grip, the clubface is closed.

GRIP

His left arm is a little above his right and his right hand is a little underneath the club. This grip is a little on the strong side.

DOWNSWING

He keeps the right shoulder back behind the left shoulder on the downswing. This is good for the average guy to keep in mind.

FINISH

He's got nice balance. His hips and shoulders are facing the target and the club head is released through his ears.

TAKAWAY

He has a really good take-away. The club goes up on the shaft and the clubhead is directly in front of his turn, between his arms and opposite his hands.

IMPACT

At impact, I can kind of see his eyes starting to turn and rotate toward the target. That's going to keep him from flipping his hands over so he doesn't hit too big of a hook.

REVIEW

The clubface says he should be hitting big hooks, but this guy is incredibly strong. When you see him at impact, notice how turned out his left hip is. If he didn't do that, his hands would flip over and he would hit a big hook. He does have a strong grip, but he compensates for it.

PLANE

His club is above and parallel to the original shaft plane, which is good. At the top of his swing, his left forearm

FOLLOW

His eyes are out in front of him and the toe of the club is pointing at the target. The club is directly in front of his turn again.



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WEEKLEY

Continued from 2D

"There's so much that has happened since my second win here," Weekley says. "My life, it's just been turned upside-down."

All that attention seems to go against Weekley's everyman persona, but he has taken it in stride, realizing his time in the spotlight won't last forever. He reportedly earns more than \$2 million per year in endorsements, which will help him toward his goal of trading his golf clubs for rifles and fishing rods.

"It's never a bad thing when somebody's calling wanting something," Weekley says, "because there's going to come a time when there ain't nobody going to call you."

'I'M HERE'

The calls weren't coming too often two years ago, when Weekley's closest brush with victory on the PGA Tour was at the Honda Classic, where he three-putted on the 72nd hole and wound up tied for second after a four-man playoff on Monday.


That all changed after another Monday finish, when Weekley tamed the heavy wind coming off the Calibogue Sound by chipping in on the final two holes and donning his first tartan jacket. Suddenly, the PGA Tour had a new average joe hero — a John Daly without the off-course issues — and Weekley had a newfound confidence that he could make it on the PGA Tour, where he foundered as a rookie in 2002.

Weekley has said he never felt comfortable during his first stint on the tour, when he made only five cuts in 24 starts and faded back into the morass of the Nationwide Tour. He found that elusive comfort zone at Harbour Town.

"I'm here," Weekley says of the feeling he gets when returning to Harbour Town. "Seriously, when I walk out there, I feel like I grew up here. The way the people have treated me ... they don't say, 'How you playing?,' they say 'How you doing?' You know what I mean?"

Weekley is hesitant to say Harbour Town is the place that made him — he has proved himself elsewhere, after all, claiming 11 top-10 finishes and 25 top-25s in less than three years on tour — but he

Boo Weekley



Height, Weight: 6-0, 210
Turned pro: 1997
Birthplace: Milton, Fla.
Birthdate: July 23, 1973
Notes: Played high school golf with PGA Tour member Heath Slocum. Tour member Bubba Watson also attended and played golf at their high school, Milton (Fla.) High School, and nearby resident Joe Durant is a close friend. Slocum's dad, Jack, served as his caddie during finals of the PGA Qualifying Tournament ... Nicknamed after cartoon hero Yogi Bear's sidekick, "Boo Boo" Bear ... Studied turfgrass science in college and later worked as a laborer at the Monsanto chemical plant in Pensacola, Fla. ... Used to wear rain pants because cotton pants caused him to break out in a rash.

recognizes the role his Heritage success has played in helping him get where he is.

"It helped me get over the hump," Weekley says. "It's got me to where I believe more in myself."

He should be swelling with confidence this week.

In only two starts at Harbour Town Golf Links, Weekley has proven he knows every nook and cranny of Pete Dye's tree-lined track, and his success here has made him the new face of a tournament whose roll of champions is a veritable who's who list of golf legends.

On that windy Monday two years ago, Heritage tournament director Steve Wilmot glanced at the leaderboard and saw a few names that would fit right in with that list of champions — Boo Weekley wasn't one of them, but he beat all of them.

"A month later, I was still kind of going, jeesh, you have Mr. Palmer and Mr. Nicklaus and Hale Irwin, Tom Watson, Nick Faldo, Greg Norman, Payne Stewart, and you go on and on and on," Wilmot says. "And then Boo Weekley? But you know what, he can play, and he's been a great champion."

SHOOTING FOR THREE

Now he sets out to do something no one on that illustrious list has achieved — to conquer this course three times in a row. The odds are not good. In the past 20 years, PGA Tour players have won the same event two years in a row on 36 occasions, but only seven times have they won three consecutive. Not surprisingly, Tiger Woods was responsible for six of those seven.

Doing so at Harbour Town might be

even more unlikely, considering the course's tight fairways and tiny greens allow little margin for error. But if anyone can do it, Weekley seems to fit the bill, because the course suits his game so perfectly.

He loves staring down Harbour Town's tree-lined fairways and zeroing in on targets, a skill fostered by growing up on the similarly designed Tanglewood Golf Club in Milton, Fla., and honed in tree stands as well as on tee boxes. And he possesses an uncanny ability to work his shots in either direction, a necessity at Harbour Town, where even a seemingly perfect drive can wind up behind a well-placed tree limb.

"It's very similar to the one I grew up on," Weekley says. "I feel comfortable here. When I look down the fairways, I've got targets. That's what I'm always thinking — I want to start it there and make it go over here. ... That's what I like about playing old, traditional golf courses."

Even with all the success he has had here — he has carded scores in the 60s in seven of his eight Heritage rounds, only failing to do so in last year's final round, when he played conservatively and shot even-par 71 en route to a three-shot victory — winning three in a row won't be easy. Payne Stewart nearly did it in 1991, tying for fourth after winning the previous two tartan jackets, but five-time champion Love missed the cut in his three-peat bid in 1993.

A strong field, including some of Weekley's best buddies, will be gunning for him.

"I love him; he's one of my closest friends out here," says Brandt Snedeker, who has made the cut in all three of his start here, including a tie for 16th in 2007. "But I told him I don't want him to win this thing three years in a row, because I want to win it this year."

"And that plaid isn't flattering on his big, old gut. I think it's time to see somebody new in it."

Weekley, of course, has other ideas. And even if he doesn't make it three in a row, he plans on adding more tartan to his closet before he puts away his clubs.

"I'm very fortunate to win this tournament two times already," Weekley says. "I can see myself, if I stay out here about another 10 years, I'll win it a couple more times, too."

Can't beat the Heritage

If one event is synonymous with Hilton Head Island, it's the Verizon Heritage, which is back for a 41st installment this week. Mention of Hilton Head evokes images such as the Harbour Town lighthouse, the boats lined up on the Calibogue Sound to watch the action on the 18th green and the annual party and fashion show that breaks out on a certain golf course on the island's south end each spring.

So determining the biggest sporting event in Beaufort County doesn't take much time or effort. But we dug around and came up with a few of the top contenders for the No. 2 spot — we'll call them the best of the rest:

- Beaufort County has played host to countless golf events, but most pale in comparison to the Heritage in terms of their impact on the area. Perhaps the lone exception was the 1989 Nabisco Championship. The equivalent of today's Tour Championship, the Nabisco brought all the top golfers to Harbour Town for a second time that year, and Tom Kite beat Payne Stewart in a playoff to earn a \$450,000 payday.

- Before moving to Charleston (and with the exception of 1975 and 1976, when it was played in Amelia Island, Fla.) the Family Circle Cup WTA event called Hilton Head Island home. Played in Sea Pines Plantation, the Family Circle Cup boasts a champions list that includes tennis legends such as Chris Evert, Tracy Austin, Martina Navratilova, Steffi Graf, Gabriela Sabatini and Martina Hingis.

- For the better part of the 1980s, the Bud Light United States Triathlon Series held its national championship on Hilton Head Island. Nearly 2,000 triathletes raced across land and sea for the annual event.

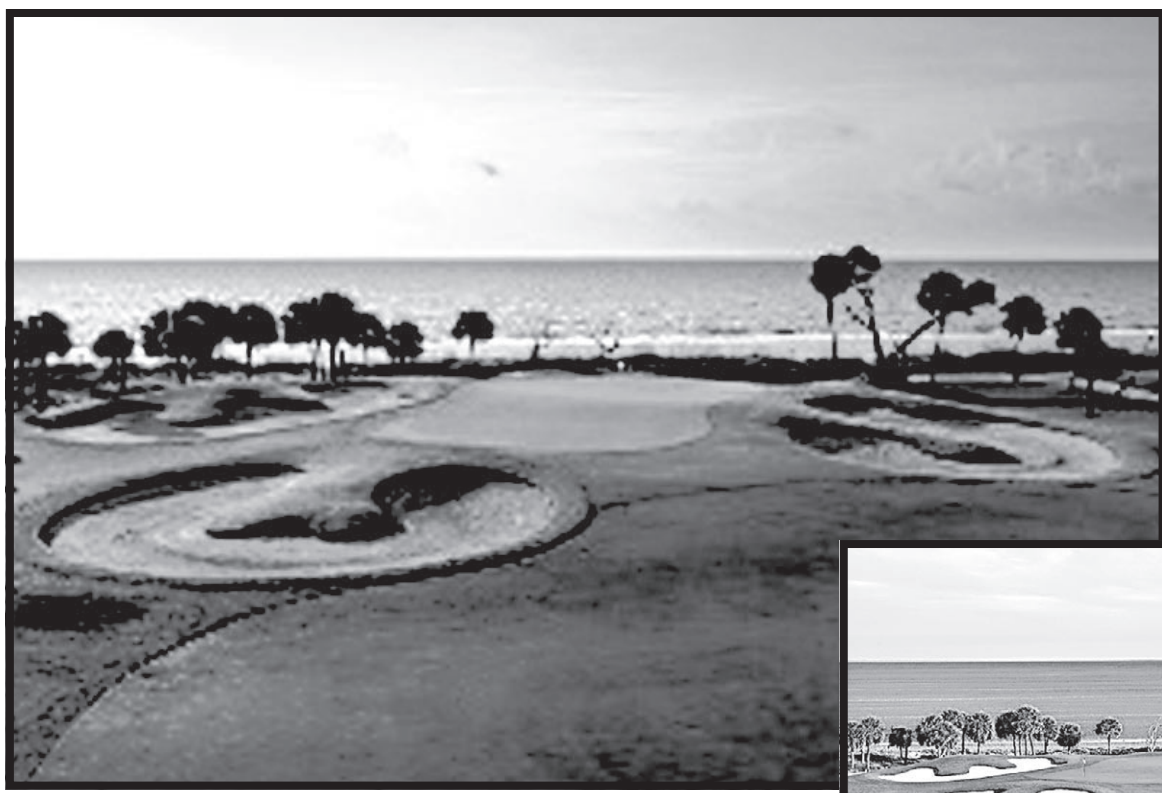
- The Gus Macker 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament brought its national championship to Hilton Head Island in 2003, attracting hundreds of participants and creating an estimated \$131,400 economic benefit for the town. Hurricane threats forced the tournament to be rescheduled in 2004, and the event did not return in 2005.

- Last summer, Bluffton's Oscar J. Frazier Park was the site of the Dixie Junior Boys World Series, where state champions from 11 states throughout the Southeast duked it out on the diamond, bringing big crowds with them.

- The National Senior Windsurfing Championships were held at Palmetto Dunes Resort for a number of years beginning in the late-1980s.

— Justin Jarrett

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- Fripp Island Resort
 - Ocean Creek Course
 - Ocean Point Course
- Golden Bear Golf Club @ Indigo Run
- Hilton Head National
- Island West Golf Club
- Old South Golf Links
- Oyster Reef Golf Club
- Palmetto Dunes Resort
 - Robert Trent Jones Course
 - George Fazio Course
 - Arthur Hills Course
- Palmetto Hall
 - Arthur Hills Course
 - Robert Cupp Course
- Port Royal Golf Club
 - Barony Course
 - Robber's Row Course
 - Planter's Row Course
- Rose Hill Golf Club
- Sea Pines Resort
 - Harbour Town Golf Links
 - Heron Point
 - Ocean Course
- Shipyard Golf Club
- Tradition National Golf Club

Boo a true ambassador

The Verizon Heritage might not hold a lofty spot on the PGA Tour hierarchy of tournaments, but its list of past champions that have slipped on a Tartan Jacket amid a serenade of boat horns along Calibogue Sound is a veritable who's who of professional golf worthy of any signature event.

The roll call of Heritage champions is one that any PGA Tour event, or major golf tournament for that matter, would be proud to call its own. Honestly, consider the list — Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson, Greg Norman, Nick Price, Davis Love III, Payne Stewart, Nick Faldo and Hale Irwin.

In 1969, the Heritage reignited the career of the legendary Palmer, who claimed the inaugural event, and in the four decades since has been blessed not only with stellar fields, but with champions that have honored the game, and more importantly, played a key role in making the tournament such a special stop on the PGA Tour.

"It's unbelievable," said tournament director Steve Wilmot. "The best players win at Harbour Town. It's a shot-makers golf course and it's not about being long but being accurate. That is a big reason why so many great players play so well here."

That same reasoning would also explain why the same great players have played so well so many times at Harbour Town.

The list of golfers with multiple Heritage victories would make some tournament directors blush, and just the mention of it is enough to make Wilmot smile.

By a mile, Love is the most accomplished on Pete Dye's Sea Pines design, having won five times in a span of 21 years, but he has some impressive company. Two-time U.S. Open champion Irwin owns three tartan jackets. Major champions Johnny Miller, Watson, Fuzzy Zoeller, Stewart and Hubert Green and Ryder Cup veteran Stewart Cink all have won two Heritage titles. Last year, Boo Weekley joined that impressive list of multiple winners, winning his second consecutive tartan jacket and joining Love and Stewart as the event's only repeat defenders.

"Some players just really feel at home here on Hilton Head," Wilmot said. "It's played at a good time of year after The Masters where players can just come here, relax and play golf."

While the galleries of Harbour Town have belonged to Love the past two decades or so, the engaging and refreshing Weekley has certainly crafted a significant following of his own. A relative unknown when he won the first of his back-to-back titles in 2007, outlasting Ernie Els in a memorable Monday finish, Weekley's connection with Hilton Head golf fans has elevated him to near folk hero status. While Boo lacks the pedigree and hardware of some of the Heritage's best known champions, no golfer this side of Love has been more cheered, or "Booed" if you will, in such a short period of time.

"Maybe it's the way I play and the way I interact with them inside and outside of the ropes, but I really feel a connection with the galleries here," Weekley said. "I don't know, I'm from the South and this is the South, maybe that's it."

More likely it's that people connect with Weekley because they believe him



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to be the genuine article — a caring family man who enjoys fishing for bass with his son as much as he does reeling in birdies with his fellow professionals.

He's as honest as the day is long, even though that sometimes gets him in trouble. And perhaps most refreshing is the fact that Weekley honestly has fun playing the game.

Judging by his Happy Gilmore impression during a singles match victory over Oliver Wilson at the Ryder Cup last year, Boo has little interest in playing the prepackaged, politically-correct role of professional golfer. Judging by his popularity, golf fans have even less interest in seeing him do it.

It's these traits and more that led Forbes.com to recently wonder aloud whether Weekley was the one professional golfer who could save the PGA Tour amid an economic firestorm that threatens its base for the first time since the onset of the Tiger Woods era in the 1990s.

With the squeeze on sponsors to find the money to support tournaments such as the Heritage and the pressure on golf fans to find the money to attend them, golfers now more than ever must connect with the folks outside the ropes as much as they entertain them inside the ropes.

"It's a blessing to be able to play this game regardless what the money is," Weekley said. "It's about playing the game and enjoying it."

Putting his time where his mouth is, Weekley has been a true ambassador for the Heritage as a two-time champion. Following his 2007 victory, the affable pro returned the following December to participate in the tournament's Sponsors Day.

This past March, Weekley attended Media Day at Harbour Town, just two days removed from competing in the World Match Play Championship across the country in Arizona.

"He really is a breath of fresh air," Wilmot said. "He's just a really down to earth guy who loves what he is doing and it shows on the golf course. Our galleries and our sponsors seem to connect with that."

No longer a Hilton Head secret after his terrific Ryder Cup performance, Weekley returns to Harbour Town this week looking to do something that no other professional golfer has done before — claim a third consecutive Heritage title.

Another stellar field stands in Weekley's history-making way, but behind him will stand an entire gallery that is simply itching to get its "Boo" on.

"It would be a real honor to win three in a row, but I know the other players aren't just going to lie down and let me do it," Weekley said. "There's no doubt I'm going to have to play well to do it."

If he does pull off the three-peat, there will be no denying Weekley's lofty status in Heritage history, and considering those that already occupy space there, that's really saying something.



C. ALUKA BERRY • The (Columbia) State

D.J. Trahan follows his shot on the 12th tee during a practice round for the 2009 Masters on April 6 at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Ga.

Quiet rise to prominence

Former Hilton Head High student a force on PGA Tour

By **BRANDON PARKER**
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Fresh off a 3½-month layoff and minutes removed from an impressive round of 7-under par 66 golf at the Mercedes-Benz Championship in January, it's more than likely that the Verizon Heritage was far from D.J. Trahan's mind.

Still, based on the 28-year-old's words during that winter day in Hawaii, one couldn't help but wonder.

"I hit the ball really solid, and it was a pleasure to play with Boo (Weekley) because he struck the ball very well," Trahan said after being paired with the two-time defending Heritage champ. "So it was kind of like he and I battled back and forth, from tee-to-green."

Then, when asked about how Trahan spent the longest vacation of his career, he responded: "I do a lot of what Boo Weekley does. I enjoy hunting a lot."

Of course, doing a lot of what Boo does has never included chewing tobacco during rounds or galloping on his golf club like Happy Gilmore at the Ryder Cup. But thanks to a breakout 2008 season and two top-10 finishes in nine tournaments this year, like Weekley, Trahan must grow used to being one of the hunted during this week's Heritage at Harbour Town Golf Links.

Granted, having a slew of eyes fixed on him is nothing new for Trahan, at least not during his five previous appearances at the Heritage. Growing up in Hilton Head and currently residing in Mount Pleasant, Trahan is plenty popular among

D.J. Trahan

Height, Weight: 6-3, 185
Turned pro: 2003
Birthplace: Atlanta
Birthdate: December 18, 1980
Notes: Trahan's father, Don, is the former director of instruction at Harbour Town Golf Links. ... Helped lead Clemson to the 2003 NCAA title, the first in school history. First-team All-American, first-team all-district and four-time All-ACC selection. Ben Hogan Award finalist. ... Winner of the 2000 United States Public Links Championship, defeating Bubba Watson in the 37-hole final and Kyle Thompson in the semifinal. ... Winner of the Southern Farm Classic in 2006 and the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic in 2008 to join Charles Howell III and J.B. Holmes as the only American golfers under the age of 30 to win multiple PGA Tour events. ... Enjoys fishing and boating.

local spectators, who flock to catch a glimpse of their hometown hero, just as Trahan once did.

"When you have that many people out watching you, you want to play well for them," the former Hilton Head Island High School student said. "Every year I watched the guys come through at the Heritage and what can you say?"

"You watch the best players in the game every year come through your hometown and play in your home course, and you love the game already. And then you see what they're doing and it's just kind of a domino effect."

Last year saw things fall into place for Trahan. Not only did Trahan have his best showing at Harbour Town Golf Links, tying for 17th at 5-under, he also recorded four top-10 finishes, including a victory at the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic and a fourth-place finish at the U.S. Open.

"When you contend in a major you

kind of prove to yourself that you've got the ability to win one," Trahan said after jockeying for the lead with eventual champ Tiger Woods at last June's Open Championship. "Now, each and every major that I play in I'll tee it up knowing I've been in the hunt and that I'm good enough to win that tournament."

Along with this newfound confidence has come an improved putting game, which often handicapped Trahan's strong tee-shot ability in the past.

Just two years ago, Trahan ranked 183rd in putting average, but through nine events this season, the six-year Tour member sits at 82nd with a 1.788 mark.

Such numbers bode well for Trahan entering the Heritage, which rewards efficient ball-strikers with a knack for birdies, an area that Trahan ranks eighth on the tour this year with more than four per round.

This rise to prominence has been a quiet one, far from the ballyhoo surrounding Weekley or fellow up-and-comers Anthony Kim and Camilo Villegas. But the way Trahan sees it, as long as he keeps improving, it's only a matter of time before the whispers about his game evolve into, perhaps, a Tiger-like roar.

"My game, I feel like, has been going in the correct direction, and if it'll keep going that way, I feel like, yeah, I'll be in that little group that they've got going with these young guns," Trahan said. "If you're mentioned with the guys that are highly ranked in the world, the best players in the game, you're certainly doing something right."

Trahan by the numbers

17 Trahan's finish at 2008 Heritage, his best showing in five appearances

5 Number of top-10 finishes on PGA Tour in last nine months

2 Number of wins since joining PGA Tour in 2005



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GRADES JK - 12th



No Tiger? No problem: Still plenty of great stories at Verizon Heritage

By now you've probably noticed Tiger Woods did not make the trip down from Augusta.

And you know what? That's OK. From a purely selfish standpoint, it means we sports writers don't have to devote half our manpower this week to the Tiger beat — no Twitter updates for the World's Greatest Golfer's every move ("OMG, Tiger just made 6-footer for birdie. Fist pump!") — meaning we can seek out other stories to tell, stories that haven't already been repeated time and again during last week's wall-to-wall Tiger coverage at the Masters.

Don't get me wrong, Tiger is the best in the world — perhaps even the best ever — and there is no such thing as too much Tiger, as far as the PGA Tour or its fans are concerned. Even my grandmother, who probably couldn't tell you whether a pitching wedge is used to throw a baseball or hold a door open (but those would probably be her first two guesses), can't get enough Tiger, though she marvels more at the way he fills out his shirt than the way he stares down a birdie putt.

But as much as the golf world needs Tiger, it also needs an occasional break from him. This week, on the heels of the Masters, seems as good a week as any to step back, take a deep breath and remember there are dozens of other great golfers with compelling stories, and a good number of them are here at Harbour Town Golf Links this week.

Tiger wasn't here when Davis Love III ran in a 66-foot chip on No. 18 to claim his fifth Heritage title in 2003; he wasn't around when Stewart Cink made a rather Tiger-like comeback from nine shots back in the final round to win in 2004; and he wasn't lurking when a fellow named Boo Weekley became a household name with a couple of crazy chip-ins on a wild and windy Monday at Harbour Town.



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He was, on the other hand, hanging around Harbour Town for some serious drama in 1999, but he didn't have anything to do with it. Glen Day took down Jeff Sluman and Payne Stewart in a playoff that year; Tiger tied for 18th, and he hasn't been back since.

So, yeah, the Heritage will get by without golf's biggest star. Heck, we might even be introduced to golf's next big thing this week.

It simply doesn't make sense for Tiger to come here. For starters, his schedule is designed to point toward the majors, and as long as the Heritage falls a week after the Masters, it will remain an afterthought on his priority list. And it doesn't help that bombing it long is not the name of the game at Harbour Town, where accuracy and ingenuity are rewarded more than raw power.

With that said, don't rule out the notion of Tiger returning here one day. Maybe he'll decide green isn't really his color and stop gearing his entire spring toward the Masters. Or maybe he'll catch wind of the little running joke that started up a couple weeks ago among friends, who playfully suggested we'll look back on Tiger's unbelievable career and comment that the only thing missing was a tartan jacket. Hey, many of the greats of the last 40 years — Arnold Palmer, Hale Irwin, Tom Watson, Jack Nicklaus, Nick Faldo, Greg Norman, Love, Stewart — have donned tartan.

Maybe Tiger will decide one day he wants to try to add his name to that list, or maybe he won't. Either way, the Heritage will be OK.

Anderson stepping inside the ropes

By **SAM McDOWELL**
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Matt Jager referred to himself as an intense competitor during last summer's Players Amateur at Belfair Golf Club's East Course. But in one of the most significant tournaments of his life, he couldn't help but laugh and enjoy an opponent's remarkable performance.

Mark Anderson's day simply warranted his attention.

Sure, when Jager scored an eagle on the 13th hole, he was able to garner the attention for a handful of seconds. But Anderson quickly responded with a 30-foot birdie putt to make his seventh birdie of the day. This was his day.

Anderson often thinks back to that round of golf. He remembers the putt as if it happened a few hours ago, along with other shots that followed throughout his course record-breaking round of 60.

"Best round of my life," recalls the Beaufort resident. "No question about it."

He uses it as a tool for motivation while he's on the practice green or at the driving range. During a pressure-filled spot in a golf tournament, Anderson said his thoughts about that day can help put him at ease and clear his mind.

"I felt very calm and very patient all day long," Anderson said. "My mindset was the difference. I felt confident all over the ball, no matter where I was on the course. And I put everything together and produced something really special."

What he produced, thanks to a four-day total of 22-under par, was an entry

Mark Anderson

Height: 5-11
Playing status: Amateur
Hometown: Beaufort

Notes: Players Amateur champion last July. Followed that with a win at the Ogeethorpe Invitational in Savannah later that month. ... Won the NEC Master of the Amateurs in January. ... Qualified for the USGA-U.S. Amateur Championship. Made All-SEC First Team in 2008 as a senior at South Carolina. Also named a GCAA PING honorable mention All-America selection that year after compiling nine top-25 finishes and ranking sixth in the conference with a 72.00 stroke average.



PAST PLAYERS AM CHAMPS

- 2008:** Mark Anderson
- 2007:** Rickie Fowler
- 2006:** Jonathan Moore
- 2005:** Brian Harman
- 2004:** Aron Price
- 2003:** Camilo Villegas
- 2002:** Bill Haas
- 2001:** Michael Sims
- 2000:** Ben Curtis

into the Verizon Heritage at Harbour Town Golf Links, a tournament that was always just a short drive away from his home as a kid in Beaufort.

Anderson's stories about Harbour Town are a bit more in depth than the normal spectator. He's competed — and won twice — in junior events at the course. In back-to-back years, he came away with victories in tournaments that were part of the Plantations Junior Golf Tour.

Though he won't be able to use any pointers he learned about the course over those years, Anderson does plan to draw back on that experience.

"I keep reminding myself to play like I was a little kid," Anderson said. "That's when I play my best, when I clear my mind and play for the fun of it."

That strategy worked out well for him over the four days last July, especially on the greens. Anderson made numerous long-distance putts throughout the Players Amateur and said after the final round he'd just completed the best putting performance of his career.

"The key to me is if I can get hot with

the putter, I can make a lot of birdies and a lot of pars," Anderson said. "Having my short game in good shape will give me a chance."

If he does have a chance to make the cut and continue playing over the weekend, he'd make history in the process. No Players Amateur winner has ever made the cut at the Heritage.

"I never thought I'd ever even play there in a PGA event," Anderson said. "At that time, I went out there to have fun and meet some friends. It wasn't anything like it is now. So I'm just going to have fun with it."

The friends will still be there — in record numbers. Anderson expects more than 100 friends and family members to back him at the Heritage.

And it certainly would be no surprise if even those who don't know him personally are supporting the former Beaufort Academy golfer today.

"That might be the most exciting thing out of all of this," Anderson said. "I'm going to be the small town local guy. Everyone will know I am. I'll probably have the biggest crowd of just about everyone."

"I just need to give them a reason to make noise."

Anderson by the numbers

60 Anderson's final round at the Players Amateur last July, breaking the Belfair Golf Club's East Course record

2 Number of wins for Anderson at Harbour Town Golf Links

0 Number of Players Amateur champions to make the cut at the Heritage



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HARBOUR TOWN GOLF LINKS

FRONT NINE


Hole No. 1
Yardage: 410
Par: 4
Handicap: 13
Diff.: .005
Key: Drive it straight. Easy starting hole can be made difficult by clipping a branch along the narrow chute from the tee box.



Hole No. 2
Yardage: 502
Par: 5
Handicap: 9
Diff.: -.472
Key: Stay left off the tee box. There's no hope of reaching an otherwise accessible green in two shots from the right side of the fairway because a tree hidden from view from the tee box can come into play.




Hole No. 3
Yardage: 437
Par: 4
Handicap: 15
Diff.: .157
Key: Drive to the middle of the fairway makes for a straight-forward approach to a green guarded on the left by a bunker and on the right by a large tree.



Hole No. 4
Yardage: 200
Par: 3
Handicap: 11
Diff.: .161
Key: Classic risk-reward hole, particularly when the pin is cut on the front left of the green. Go for that pin only at your own peril. There's plenty of bail out available to the right.



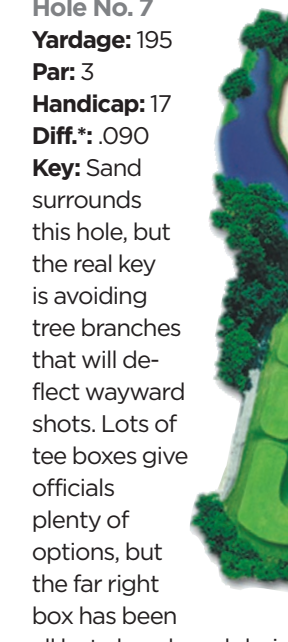
Hole No. 5
Yardage: 530
Par: 5
Handicap: 3
Diff.: -.491
Key: If you want to hit the green in two, you've got to keep it left but avoid a fairway bunker that swallows wayward drives. The green is well-guarded and cants left to right.



Hole No. 6
Yardage: 419
Par: 4
Handicap: 5
Diff.: .078
Key: Carry the fairway bunker to the right for the best angle to an open green. Big hitters can play more safely to the left. The green tilts heavily from back to front.




Hole No. 7
Yardage: 195
Par: 3
Handicap: 17
Diff.: .090
Key: Sand surrounds this hole, but the real key is avoiding tree branches that will deflect wayward shots. Lots of tee boxes give officials plenty of options, but the far right box has been all but abandoned during recent Heritage play.



Hole No. 8
Yardage: 470
Par: 4
Handicap: 1
Diff.: .178
Key: The most difficult hole on the course also usually ranks as one of the most difficult on the PGA Tour. You must hit it long and right off the tee to have an approach unmolested by trees, bunkers and lagoons on the approach shot.



Hole No. 9
Yardage: 322
Par: 4
Handicap: 7
Diff.: -.076
Key: Position your drive on this short hole to the side of the fairway opposite the side of the green to which the pin is cut. The approach requires precision to avoid a bunker in front and a pot bunker in the rear.



* Diff. indicates the differential between par and the tournament scoring average during the 2008 Heritage.

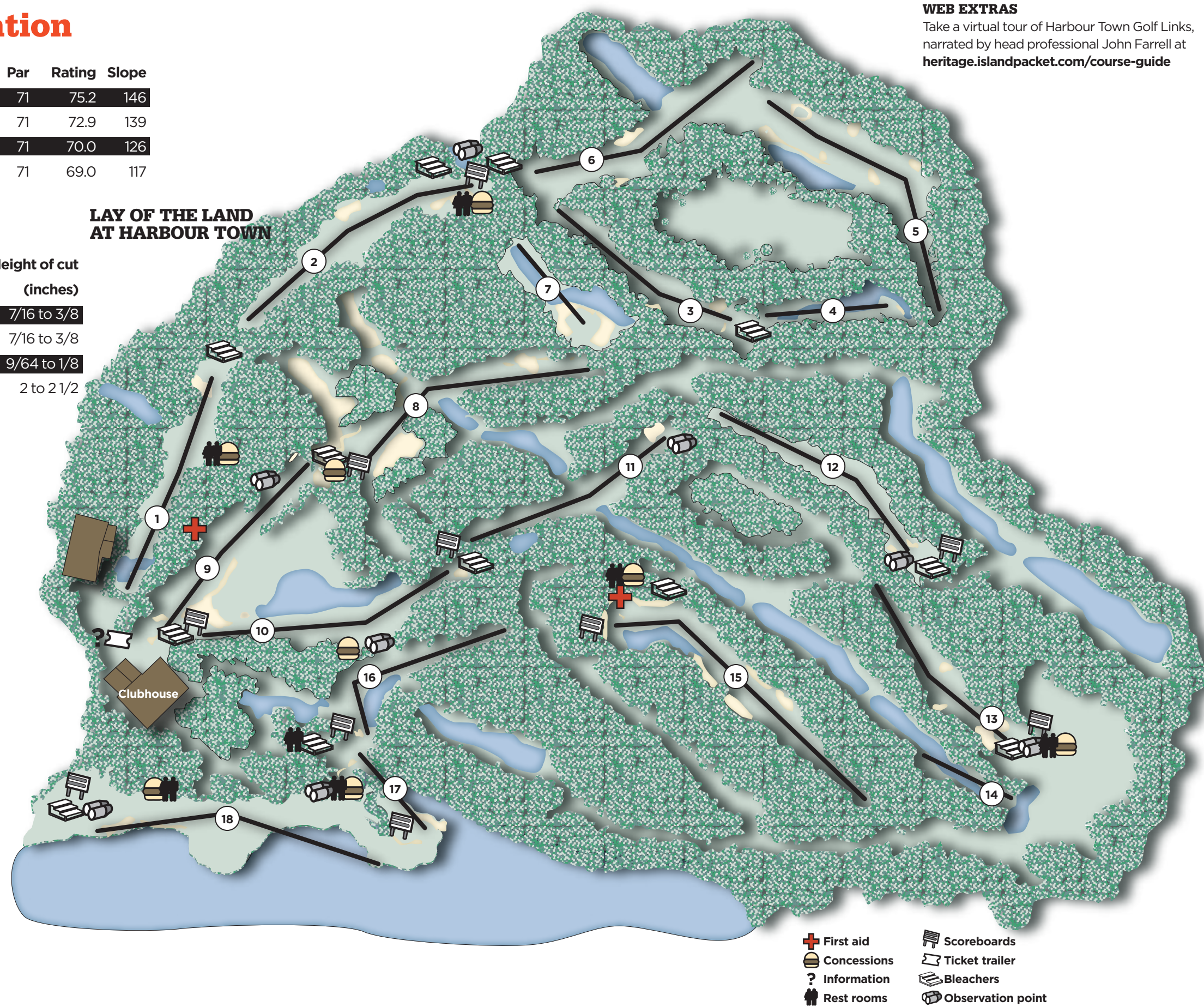
Tee information

Tee	Yardage	Par	Rating	Slope
Heritage	6,973	71	75.2	146
Championship	6,603	71	72.9	139
White	6,116	71	70.0	126
Green	5,019	71	69.0	117

Grassing

Area	Grass	Height of cut (inches)
Tees	TifSport	7/16 to 3/8
Fairways	419 Bermuda	7/16 to 3/8
Greens	Tifeagle	9/64 to 1/8
Rough	419 Bermuda	2 to 2 1/2

LAY OF THE LAND AT HARBOUR TOWN



WEB EXTRAS
Take a virtual tour of Harbour Town Golf Links, narrated by head professional John Farrell at heritage.islandpacket.com/course-guide

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A spectator's guide to viewing Hilton Head's PGA Tour extravaganza

From staff reports

The annual Verizon Heritage provides a unique opportunity to see first-hand the personalities, excitement and drama of the PGA Tour.

Admittedly, there are those who claim the best way to watch the event is at home in front of a television set. At times, that method does have its advantages. With a little advance planning, however, the on-site spectator can get as close to the action as the television cameras and see a whole lot more.

After fans are inside Sea Pines Resort, they'll be able to park in one of several general parking lots off Greenwood Drive, Plantation Drive and near Lawton Stables. Shuttles will serve each parking lot to take fans to Harbour Town Golf Links. All parking and shuttle-busing is free.

Once they reach the course, fans will find spectator bleachers set up around holes 13, 15, 16 and 18 (see course map at left.) The bleachers are also close to concession stands so spectators can stay in one spot for a long time and not worry about starving.

Another method of watching play is to sit by any other hole on the course and watch the field pass through. In this case, it is advisable to take along something to sit on, such as a folded blanket or a collapsible chair.

Yet another popular method is to follow a specific golfer around at least part of the course. Daily pairings sheets, which include starting times, are available to the public and also are published in our newspaper each day, so it is easy to find out when a favorite golfer will begin his round

each day of the tournament. Large maps and scoreboards around the golf course indicate where individual golfers are playing, so if you miss someone's tee time on the first hole, it is relatively easy to catch up with him as he plays the course.

One of the most popular viewing spots at Harbour Town is the spectator mounds surrounding the ninth green, located directly in front of the clubhouse. If you plan to sit there, arrive early, no matter which day you attend the tournament — the area fills up quickly.

Two holes at Harbour Town, Nos. 8 and 11, are routinely listed among the most difficult on the PGA Tour. These are both good spots for watching the Heritage field. Spectators can witness some great moments at either one, on any day of the tournament.

If you prefer not to walk or sit all day, a good way to watch the proceedings at the Heritage is to follow a golfer with an early tee time part of the way around the course, then stay at one particular hole and watch the remainder of the field play through. You also can use the opposite approach — stay by one hole for a period of time until a favorite player comes through and then follow that player around the rest of the course.

On Saturday and Sunday, unless you arrive very early, don't plan to sit in the bleachers on any of the final holes. They will be packed, and if you should have to leave your seat for any reason, it will probably be occupied when you return. Sit by some other hole or walk around the course during play.

Quick facts


- Architect:** Pete Dye, with Jack Nicklaus
- Course restoration:** Pete Dye, 2000
- Average tee size:** 2,400 square feet
- Average green size:** 4,000 square feet
- Rounds per year:** More than 40,000
- Acres of fairway:** 31
- Acres of rough:** 40
- Sand bunkers:** 45
- Water hazards:** 12
- Tournament Stimpmeter:** 10 to 10.5 feet
- Soil conditions:** Sandy loam and clay
- Superintendent:** Jonathan Wright
- Head PGA professional:** John Farrell

BACK NINE


Hole No. 10
Yardage: 444
Par: 4
Handicap: 10
Diff.: .169
Key: The landing area appears wide, but only a shot to the left or middle affords a straight-on approach to a well-guarded green.



Hole No. 11
Yardage: 436
Par: 4
Handicap: 8
Diff.: .139
Key: A straight drive is essential to avoid trees and water lurking on both sides of the fairway. A well-bunkered green becomes even more difficult to hit from the right side of the fairway, from which a tree near the front right of the green will have to be negotiated.



Hole No. 12
Yardage: 430
Par: 4
Handicap: 8
Diff.: .044
Key: Reaching the dogleg from the tee box is imperative to par ... but the challenge doesn't end there. Bunkers and a severe dip essentially bisect the green and make your target landing area about half the size it appears from the fairway.



Hole No. 13
Yardage: 373
Par: 4
Handicap: 12
Diff.: .103
Key: The drive must be to the right side of the fairway to avoid overhanging trees on the approach. The hole is short but demands precision.



Hole No. 14
Yardage: 192
Par: 3
Handicap: 18
Diff.: .196
Key: Aim for the middle of the green. Water in front and at right and a deep pot bunker at the rear make this the prudent choice. This hole became a lot more difficult after an additional tee box was added before the 2001 tournament.



Hole No. 15
Yardage: 571
Par: 5
Handicap: 6
Diff.: -.071
Key: Stay to the middle of the fairway. Bunkers, water and waste areas abound to swallow all but the best-placed shots. This green used to be next to impossible to hit in two, but in recent seasons, PGA Tour golfers have reached more often.



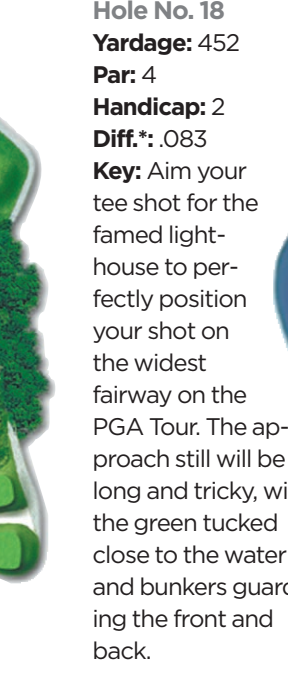
Hole No. 16
Yardage: 395
Par: 4
Handicap: 16
Diff.: .005
Key: Stay off the beach. The fairway dogleg is well-guarded, and the former waste area along the left of the fairway was converted to a conventional bunker before the 2006 Heritage, making a tee shot there more perilous.



Hole No. 17
Yardage: 185
Par: 3
Handicap: 14
Diff.: .149
Key: Gauge the wind. It can mean a three-club difference off the tee when in blows in your face or at your back and can make alignment difficult when it quarters.



Hole No. 18
Yardage: 452
Par: 4
Handicap: 2
Diff.: .083
Key: Aim your tee shot for the famed light-house to perfectly position your shot on the widest fairway on the PGA Tour. The approach still will be long and tricky, with the green tucked close to the water and bunkers guarding the front and back.



Images courtesy of HoleView

A 10-year learning curve for Kuchar

Invitational status makes Heritage a top tour stop



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It's been nearly a year since I sat in high-back leather chairs with Matt Kuchar in the recesses of the TPC-Sugarloaf clubhouse. I haven't chatted with him since. But when he tees it up at Harbour Town Golf Links today for the Verizon Heritage, there's little doubt he's changed. Kuchar is an unassuming guy on a PGA Tour that so desperately needs an injection of personality, though not at the expense of character.

For every Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson and Sergio Garcia — players who exude charisma and create a sense of drama by merely sipping water — there are a dozen other players who go about their business in a professional, low-key manner. Their galleries are thin, their sponsorship portfolios are relatively lean and they can plop down next to you at a bar and you'd be none the wiser as to what they do for a living. And their resumes, like practically every tour golfer, are littered with achievements, though they fall well short of their big-name peers'.

That's the category Kuchar falls in, though with little regret. It's reflected by the way he treats others, both his fellow pros as well as the average Joe who seeks out his autograph though he's not exactly sure who's signing his hat. Kuchar acknowledges everyone with a genuine smile.

But there is a difference between Kuchar and most of the other rank and file members of the tour. At one time Kuchar wasn't meant to be a simple soldier in the army of Tiger, Phil and Sergio. Expectations were grand and talk concerning Kuchar going into every week wasn't if he would contend or simply make the cut, but whether he would win. Greatness, or at the very least very good things, seemed a lock.

After all, how could the stars not have been aligned for Kuchar when he turned pro in 2001? He had been a two-time first-team All-America selection at collegiate golf power Georgia Tech and was an all-Atlantic Coast Conference pick each of his four years. Kuchar was ACC Player of the Year in 1998, the same year he




TOM PENNINGTON • Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Matt Kuchar is back at the Verizon Heritage after tying for seventh last year.

Matt Kuchar

Height, Weight: 6-4, 195
Turned pro: 2000
Birthplace: Winter Park, Fla.
Birthdate: June 21, 1978
Notes: Won the Honda Classic in 2002. ... Tied for sixth in this year's FBR Open. ... Won the 1997 U.S. Amateur. ... Finished 21st at Masters and 14th at U.S. Open as a sophomore at Georgia Tech in 1998. ... Awarded Fred Haskins Award in 1998 as the nation's top collegiate golfer.



won the Fred Haskins Award as the nation's top collegiate golfer. He won the 1997 U.S. Amateur and was a member of the 1999 U.S. Walker Cup team. Kuchar even finished 21st at the Masters as well as 14th at the U.S. Open in 1998, proving he could hang with the big boys under the most extreme conditions and captivate fans and the media by smiling the whole time.

He played through sponsor's exemptions during that rookie season in 2001 and earned enough to avoid PGA Tour qualifying school and earn full playing status on the tour. Kuchar parlayed that into a victory the following year at the Honda Classic.

Ah, but that's when things finally got difficult. Over the next four seasons, top-10 finishes were as rare as snow in July as he struggled to simply make cuts. He eventually had to retreat to the Nationwide Tour for 21 events in 2006, where he got reacquainted with winning and was able to get promoted back to the PGA Tour for 2007.

It would have been an insult to many with the similar success Kuchar had already experienced, especially since he says it was something he

never expected and certainly hadn't prepared himself for. But in hindsight he realizes it was a much-needed lesson about something the tour vets call a "10-year learning curve," a process that has as much to do with the lifestyle of a pro golfer as it does the game itself.

Not that Kuchar needed help making curfew — he's a fun-loving guy with a strong moral compass that points him toward the right kind of fun. Instead it was about adapting and learning the nuances of tour life that go overlooked: Where to stay, the differences about each course, when to go to the equipment trailer for a tune-up and more. It was an education you often can't circumvent through talent alone.

"When I first heard it, I didn't see a lot of validity in the 10-year learning curve," Kuchar said. "I'd seen the exceptions to it — Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, guys who've had great success quickly. But there aren't that many guys who seem to come straight out of college and have an instant impact on the tour. There is definitely a learning curve out here, though, and I don't know how to describe it to the rookies."

Kuchar may not be able to explain it, but he understands it. His results since returning to the tour are a testament to that.

He's made 16 cuts out of 26 events each year since returning to the Tour full time in 2007. He's also had seven top-10 finishes, including five last year when he finished tied for seventh at the Heritage and runner-up at the Justin Timberlake Shriners Hospitals for Children Open. Kuchar missed the cut at this year's season-opening Sony Open before making six straight, finishing the FBR Open tied for sixth.

Part of Kuchar's resurgence, of course, could be the work he's done to improve his game. He's spent the past three years adapting to a one-plane swing with a coach, something he says has given him more consistency and is just an overall good fit for his style of golf.

The rest, however, goes back to that 10-year curve. Well, that and the simple process of accepting maturity as it comes to you.

"I thought 'Wow, it's been 10 years since I won the U.S. Amateur.' But I haven't really reflected too much on the way things have gone," Kuchar said. "I'm awfully happy with the way things have gone, where I am in life at the moment. I've got a great wife and a child now, which is awesome."

"And I'm living a dream playing golf on the PGA Tour. Life is really, really good for me."

From staff reports
A number of factors make the Verizon Heritage an attractive event for PGA Tour golfers, from the laid-back atmosphere a week after the tightly-wound Masters, to the almost universally loved Harbour Town Golf Links — and don't forget the Heritage's status as an invitational event.

The vast majority of PGA Tour events are standard, or full-field, events, meaning the fields are determined by following the PGA Tour's priority ranking system, list of exemption categories ranked by the priority they are given in filling tournament fields. Full-field events feature 156 players during daylight saving time and 144 players the rest of the season, with a couple of exceptions during the month of October.

Invitational tournaments feature smaller, more select fields. For example, the Arnold Palmer Invitational, The Memorial Tournament and the AT&T National include 120 players, and the Heritage boasts a field of 132 players.

The smaller field, in theory at least, gives the Heritage a stron-

ger field and a bit more prestige, Wilmot said.

"You have the four majors, and they say the Players Championship is the fifth, and then you have the invitationals, and that's kind of how they're ranked," Wilmot said. "So we're basically in the top 10 when it comes to that."

Moreover, the other invitationals have some big names — Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Ben Hogan and Tiger Woods — attached.

"So we're in pretty good company there," Wilmot said.

Unlike standard events, which must follow the PGA Tour's priority ranking system, invitationals have some freedom to decide their own exemptions. If the Heritage wanted to add an exemption category, it would propose the change to the PGA Tour for review and discussion, and the tour's policy board would make the final decision on whether the exemption category is added. The last change was the addition of an exemption for player in the top 50 in the World Golf Rankings, at which time the field was expanded from 120 players to 132.

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Folks you need to know

Steve Wilmot
JOB TITLE: Tournament director
JOB RESPONSIBILITIES: A little bit of everything.
YEARS ON THE JOB: 23
HOMETOWN: Moorestown, N.J.
GOLF HANDICAP: 16
FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: 15. I usually play late in the day and I love how the fairway becomes half shaded due to the sunset.



IF YOU WEREN'T AT THE TOURNAMENT, WHERE WOULD YOU BE?: I honestly don't know what I would be doing, but it would definitely be on Hilton Head Island.

Charlie Brown
JOB TITLE: Community Relations, Director of Customer Experience-East Region, Marriott Vacation Club International



JOB RESPONSIBILITIES: MCVI project development, special task force assignments, community outreach and working with local, state and national governmental officials to assist the Town of Hilton Head Island and Chamber of Commerce.

YEARS ON THE JOB: 18.
HOMETOWN: Charleston.
GOLF HANDICAP: 17
FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: 14. I almost got a hole-in-one but got a gimme putt for birdie instead at our last Sponsor Day golf tournament. I won Closest to the Pin.

Morgan Hyde
JOB TITLE: Assistant tournament director
JOB RESPONSIBILITIES: Tournament operations, pro-am administration, gifts, staff and volunteer apparel
YEARS ON THE JOB: 12
HOMETOWN: St. Simons Island, Ga.
GOLF HANDICAP: Do I really need to say? 28.
FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: No. 17. The view aside, it was the hole that I had my first birdie.



LEAST FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: 18. I always play it like the pros with the ball to the left of the fairway with the second shot to the green over the marsh and always come in 2-5 yards short of the green into the marsh.

PREVIOUS JOBS: General manager of the Hilton Head Inn Hotel/First American Hilton Corporation

HOBBIES: Golf and basketball
IF YOU WEREN'T AT THE TOURNAMENT, WHERE WOULD YOU BE?: Working with my Fast Lane Track Club. We have about 50 kids on Hilton Head, preparing them for the state meet in Columbia.

Jonathan Wright
JOB TITLE: Golf course superintendent
RESPONSIBILITIES: Maintaining Harbour Town Golf Links.
YEARS ON THE JOB: This is my first year as head super but I have worked here for 11 years.
HOMETOWN: Lexington, Ky.
GOLF HANDICAP: 10
FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: 15 because it requires a great deal of strategy on every shot.



Ray Angell
JOB TITLE: General Chairman of Volunteers
JOB RESPONSIBILITIES: To coordinate with the various chairmen and vice chairmen of the approximate 20 committees. To keep Steve Wilmot and his staff apprised of all volunteer activities including promotions, reorganization, service awards and staffing.



YEARS ON THE JOB: 2009 will be my 23rd year as a volunteer. This will be my third year as general chairman.
HOMETOWN: Pittsburgh, Pa.
GOLF HANDICAP: 18
FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: No. 14 because I had my only hole-in-one after playing golf for 50 years. This happened in 2005.

LEAST FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: No. 15 because I rarely reach the green in regulation.
PREVIOUS JOBS: I retired 22 years ago after a career of 30 years in the steel business as a group vice president for a billion dollar company. With the golf tournament I started as a marshal on the 10th hole moving eventually to co-captain of that hole and then chairman of the back nine marshals. Then chairman of all marshals front and back nines. And three years ago I became general chairman of volunteers.

HOBBIES: Spending time with my wife after traveling for 25 years including international travel, the Verizon Heritage golf tournament, playing golf three or four times a week.
IF YOU WERE NOT AT THE TOURNAMENT

WHERE WOULD YOU BE? I would be at my granddaughter's 16th birthday. Her birthday falls in mid-April and because of the tournament I have never been there, including her birth. This granddaughter is one of four of our grandchildren.

Bonnie Hunt
JOB TITLE: Executive Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator
JOB RESPONSIBILITIES: Coordinating some 1,000 volunteers, various secretarial duties.



YEARS ON THE JOB: 40
HOMETOWN: Thomasville, N.C.
GOLF HANDICAP: Do not play
FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: 18 — it has the lighthouse and the view of Calibogue Sound

LEAST FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: Do not have a least favorite
PREVIOUS JOBS: Telephone operator with Southern Bell, switchboard operator at University Hospital in Augusta, Ga., title clerk with major financial company

HOBBIES: Reading, ceramics, painting
IF YOU WEREN'T AT THE TOURNAMENT, WHERE WOULD YOU BE?: On a cruise or vacationing in Hawaii.

Rebecca Carr
JOB TITLE: Vice President Global Marketing
JOB RESPONSIBILITIES: Position Verizon Business as the leading global partner to businesses and governments for communications, IT, security and networking solutions in the market. Enable our global sales organization with the intelligence, collateral and tools they need to win business and sustain loyal customers.



YEARS ON THE JOB: 6
HOMETOWN: Alpharetta, Ga.
GOLF HANDICAP: What is the highest number I can take?

FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: No. 18 at Harbour Town is the signature hole of the golf course and Hilton Head. It showcases not only the various views of the ocean but also the famous Lighthouse behind the green. The Lighthouse is not only the symbol of the golf course but the whole island. Even though the tee shot is relatively wide open the real difficult part of the hole is the second shot. The green is extremely small for the length of shot it demands and is partially surrounded by water on the left side leaving you a lot of options on how aggressive you want to be with your shot.

LEAST FAVORITE HOLE AT HARBOUR TOWN: No. 8 at Harbour Town is always one of the hardest holes in the Verizon Heritage. With water on the left and a big tree on the right bordering the fairway, the demands of a premium tee shot are required. Once that has been achieved the second shot might be the most demanding on the course. The narrow green has a deep bunker and water on the left side and a difficult pitch from the right side if you miss the green.

PREVIOUS JOBS: Sales and every marketing role imaginable.
HOBBIES: Cooking, reading, playing piano.
IF YOU WEREN'T AT THE TOURNAMENT, WHERE WOULD YOU BE?: Hanging out with my family.

Facts & figures

Heritage records
BEST 9-HOLE SCORES
Front: 28: Craig Barlow ('03).
Back: 29: Steve Flesch ('01), Chris Perry ('00); Brad Faxon ('97), Jeff Maggert ('06).

BEST 18-HOLE SCORE (ANY ROUND)
61: David Frost ('94) (second).
BEST 36-HOLE SCORES
129: Jack Nicklaus ('75); Phil Mickelson ('02)

BEST 54-HOLE SCORES
197: Justin Leonard ('02).
BEST 72-HOLE SCORES
265: Loren Roberts ('96).
266: Davis Love III ('98); Hale Irwin ('94).

HIGHEST SCORE BY A WINNER
283: Arnold Palmer ('69).
BIGGEST 36-HOLE LEAD
6: Darren Clarke ('05); Jack Nicklaus ('75); Johnny Miller ('74).

BIGGEST 54-HOLE LEAD
8: Tom Watson ('79).
BEST RECOVERY
After 18: 6 back, Davis Love III ('87).
After 36: 6 back, Bob Goalby ('70); Fuzzy Zoeller ('83); Glen Day ('99).

LOW START BY WINNER
62: Peter Lonard ('05).
HIGHEST START BY WINNER
74: Bob Goalby ('70).
LOW FINISH BY WINNER
64: Stewart Cink ('04).

HIGH FINISH BY WINNER
74: Arnold Palmer ('69).
LARGEST MARGIN OF VICTORY
7: Davis Love III ('98).
LOWEST ROUNDS
First: 62, Davis Love III ('02); Peter Lonard ('05).
Second: 61, David Frost ('94).
Third: 62, Gil Morgan ('95).
Fourth: 62, Loren Roberts ('94).

HIGHEST NUMBER MAKING CUT
84: 1998 (at 144).
MOST CUTS MADE
24: Hale Irwin.
MOST CONSECUTIVE CUTS MADE
15: Chip Beck, Peter Jacobsen.

MOST YEARS PLAYED
39: Jay Haas.
MOST CONSECUTIVE YEARS PLAYED
39: Jay Haas.
LONGEST CURRENT CONSECUTIVE APPEARANCES STREAK
23: Davis Love III

LAST MONDAY FINISH
2007
LAST BACK-TO-BACK WINNER
Boo Weekley, 2007-2008

FIRST-TRY WINNERS
Arnold Palmer ('69); Bob Goalby ('70); Stewart Cink ('00), Jose Coceres ('01), Peter Lonard ('05), Boo Weekley ('07).

MOST YEARS BETWEEN WINS
21: Hale Irwin ('73 and '94).
OLDEST WINNER
Hale Irwin, 1994, 48 years, 10 months, 14 days.

YOUNGEST WINNER
Davis Love III, 1987, 23 years, 6 days.
DEFENDING CHAMPIONS WHO MISSED CUT
Davis Love III ('88 and '93); Greg Norman ('89); Nick Faldo ('85); Tom Watson ('83).

MOST WINS
Davis Love III, 5
BEST FINISH BY AMATEUR
284: Larry Wadkins, 1970, second place.
283: Ben Crenshaw, 1972, third place.

FEWEST PUTTS, 72 HOLES
92: David Frost ('05) set PGA Tour record, breaking record of 93 putts set by Kenny Knox in 1989 Heritage Classic.

FEWEST PUTTS, 18 HOLES
18: Kenny Knox, 1989, tied PGA Tour record, in first round.
SUDDEN DEATH PLAYOFFS
2004: Stewart Cink defeated Ted Purdy.
2003: Davis Love III defeated Woody Austin.
2001: Jose Coceres defeated Billy Mayfair.
1999: Glen Day defeated Payne Stewart and Jeff Sluman.

1995: Bob Tway defeated Nolan Henke and David Frost.
1990: Payne Stewart defeated Larry Mize, Steve Jones.
1985: Bernhard Langer defeated Bobby Wadkins.
1982: Tom Watson defeated Frank Conner.
1980: Doug Tewell defeated Jerry Pate.

CAREER SCORING AVERAGE (at least two career appearances)
Player years average
Boo Weekley 67.38
Aaron Baddeley 2 69.25
Brad Erler 3 69.25
Ernie Els 10 69.53

PGA Tour statistics
SCORING AVERAGE
1. Kenny Perry, 69.39, 2. Nick Watney, 69.51, 3. Kevin Na, 69.52, 4. Sean O'Hair, 69.57, 5. David Toms, 69.65.
DRIVING DISTANCE
1. Bubba Watson, 310.4, 2. Robert Garrigus, 308.9, 3. Gary Woodland, 304.6, 4. Scott Piercy, 303.5, 5. Dustin Johnson, 303.4.
DRIVING ACCURACY PERCENTAGE
1. Mark Brooks, 79.84%, 2. Olin Browne, 76.00%, 3. David Toms, 74.79%, 4. Brian Gay, 73.16%, 5. Chris DiMarco, 73.13%.

GREENS IN REGULATION PCT.
1. Camilo Villegas, 73.15%, 2. D.J. Trahan, 71.78%, 3. Charley Hoffman, 71.53%, 4. John Senden, 70.97%, 5. Robert Allenby, 70.83%.
TOTAL DRIVING
1. Jonathan Byrd, 66, 2. Robert Allenby, 72, 3. Mathew Gogglin, 73, 4. D.J. Trahan, 79, 5. Jeff Maggert, 87.
PUTTING AVERAGE
1. Geoff Ogilvy, 1.682, 2. Kevin Na, 1.704, 3. Charlie Wi, 1.713, 4. Aaron Baddeley, 1.716, 5. Steve Stricker, 1.717.
BIRDIE AVERAGE
1. Geoff Ogilvy, 4.89, 2. Anthony Kim, 4.61, 3. Dustin Johnson, 4.59, 4. Paul Casey, 4.50, 5. Tim Clark, 4.46.
SAND SAVE PERCENTAGE
1. Olin Browne, 90.00%, 2. Webb Simpson, 70.97%, 3. Luke Donald, 67.39%, 4. David Mathis, 66.67%, 5. Kevin Na, 65.96%.
ALL-AROUND RANKING
1. Sean O'Hair, 239, 2. Tim Clark, 264, 3. Kenny Perry, 280, 4. Nick Watney, 292, 5. Steve Stricker, 315.

Field tracker

A look at the top 30 golfers on the PGA Tour FedEx Cup points race and the Official World Golf Rankings. Players in this week's Verizon Heritage listed in bold.

Table with columns: Rank Name, Points, YTD Money, and list of top 30 golfers including 1. Geoff Ogilvy, 2. Phil Mickelson, 3. Kenny Perry, etc.

Table with columns: World ranking, Name, Country, Rating, and list of top 30 golfers including 1. Tiger Woods, 2. Phil Mickelson, 3. Sergio Garcia, etc.

Table with columns: Name, Country, Rating, and list of top 30 golfers including 15. Lee Westwood, 16. Ernie Els, 17. Rory McIlroy, etc.

2008 Verizon Heritage recap

ROUND 1

Leaders: Davis Love III, Justin Leonard, Lucas Glover (-5)

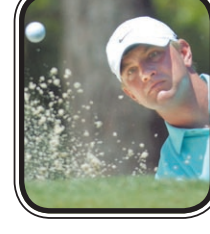


Followers: Anthony Kim, John Rollins, Stewart Cink, Tim Herron, Camilo Villegas, Jay Williamson, Brian Davis, Mathias Gronberg, Nick Dougherty, Charles Howell III (-4)

What happened: The usual suspects show their skill as former Heritage champions Justin Leonard and Davis Love III jump out to an early lead along with Clemson star Lucas Glover. In all, 58 players broke par, taking advantage of an atypical day at Harbour Town Golf Links, in which the wind remained relatively calm.

ROUND 2

Leader: Lucas Glover (-10)
Followers: Boo Weekley (-9), Anthony Kim (-8), Cliff Kresge (-7), Stephen Ames (-7), Stewart Cink (-7)



What happened: Clemson star Lucas Glover continues his strong play from the first round with another 5-under-par 66 to take control of the tournament. The biggest news of the round however is the play of defending champion Boo Weekley, who sits just one stroke off the lead after scoring a 64. Former champions Davis Love III and Justin Leonard fall five strokes behind. Anthony Kim moves up to third, two strokes off the lead.

ROUND 3

Leader: Boo Weekley (-15)
Followers: Anthony Kim (-12), Aaron Baddeley (-10), Jason Bohn (-10), Cliff Kresge (-10)



What happened: Defending champion Boo Weekley follows up his stellar second round with a 65 to take a 3-shot lead heading into the final round. Anthony Kim fires his third straight 67 and sits alone in second place, three strokes off the lead. The 22-year-old golf prodigy born to Korean immigrants hopes to become the youngest champion in Heritage history. Weekley has his sights set on becoming the tournament's first back-to-back champion since Davis Love III did it in 1992.

ROUND 4

Leader: Boo Weekley (-15)
Followers: Aaron Baddeley (-12), Anthony Kim (-12), Jim Furyk (-11), Cliff Kresge (-10)



What happened: Boo Weekley successfully defends his Verizon Heritage title, shooting an even-par 71 at Harbour Town Golf Links for a 15-under-par total 269. It is his worst round on the course, following seven straight rounds in the 60s. Weekley is the first player to win the tournament in his first two starts and just the third to win it back-to-back, joining Davis Love III (1992) and Payne Stewart (1990). The unassuming country boy from the Florida Panhandle collects \$990,000 for his effort, the largest paycheck of his career, and earns another ticket to The Masters. The victory moves Weekley into second place in career money earned at the Heritage, with \$1,962,000, behind Love (\$2,567,786).



SCORING SUMMARY table with columns: Player, Score, and list of all 100+ players including Boo Weekley, Aaron Baddeley, Anthony Kim, etc.

Hanlin's 10 who have a shot

BOO WEEKLEY

Best Heritage finish: Won it in 2007 and 2008.
Pertinent stat: Seven of his eight rounds here have been in the 60s. The other was a 71.
On target: He's never lost at Harbour Town. The course layout suits his game.
Off target: He has struggled in 2009. His all-around ranking is 135th and he's frustrated with his game at the moment.
His shot: Great. The crowd will be behind him from his first hole to his last. He won't disappoint.



ERNIE ELS

Best Heritage finish: Second in 2007.
Pertinent stat: More than 50 worldwide career victories along with three major championships.
On target: He's ranked No. 7 in greens in regulation with an average of 70.51.
Off target: After a career of strong play at Harbour Town, Els missed the cut last year.
His shot: Very good. Big Ern's Heritage history is punctuated by close calls and narrow defeats. He's itching for a win here.



AARON BADDELEY

Best Heritage finish: Won it in 2006.
Pertinent stat: He's ranked No. 3 on tour in putts per round with an average of 27.65.
On target: After missing the cut in his first Heritage, Baddeley has been a Harbour Town stud, recording three straight top-10 finishes.
Off target: He has no top-10 finishes this year and has an all-around ranking of 114.
His shot: Great. Expect him to be in the hunt this Sunday.



CAMILO VILLEGAS

Best Heritage finish: Seventh in 2008.
Pertinent stat: Leads the tour in greens in regulation at 73.15 percent.
On target: With three top-10 finishes this year, he's primed to win soon.
Off target: He's best known for his distance off the tee, something that won't help him much this week.
His shot: Good. "Hombre Arana" may have figured out this course last year.



STEWART CINK

Best Heritage finish: Won it in 2000 and 2004.
Pertinent stat: Cink is ranked No. 3 among career Heritage money leaders with \$1,808,618.
On target: After nine years at Harbour Town, his average round score is 69.79.
Off target: Outside of Match Play, his best finish this year is 24th at the Mercedes-Benz Championship.
His shot: Good. He should never be counted out at Harbour Town. Just ask Els.



JUSTIN LEONARD

Best Heritage finish: Won it in 2004.
Pertinent stat: With a scoring average of 70.01, Leonard is playing his best golf since 2004.
On target: His all-around ranking is No. 25. He has three top-10 finishes this year.
Off target: He has been inconsistent at Harbour Town. He missed the cut two years before he won the tournament, then finished 47th the year after.
His shot: OK. His accuracy could make him a factor here once again.



D.J. TRAHAN

Best Heritage finish: 17th in 2008.
Pertinent stat: Ranks No. 2 on tour in greens in regulation at 71.78 percent and is No. 4 in total driving.
On target: Trahan has four top-20 finishes this year and won PGA Tour events in 2006 and 2008.
Off target: Despite his local ties, Trahan has not played well in this tournament.
His shot: OK. He is improving each year. His last round at Harbour Town was a 66.
Just off the mark: Tim Clark, Todd Hamilton, Paul Casey, Trevor Immelman, Rory Sabbatini, Dustin Johnson, Woody Austin, Tommy Gainey, Matt Kuchar.



JIM FURYK

Best Heritage finish: Second in 2006.
Pertinent stat: He's ranked No. 7 on tour in sand save percentage at 65.38 and is No. 6 in putts per round at 27.95.
On target: In the past four tournaments at Harbour Town, "The Grinder" has two second-place finishes and one fourth-placer.
Off target: He's the Susan Lucci of the Heritage. Of course, Lucci did eventually win that Emmy.
His shot: Great. The guy is as steady as they come and is always a threat to win here.



RORY McILROY

Best Heritage finish: This is his first trip to Harbour Town.
Pertinent stat: At 19, McIlroy is the youngest player to crack the top 50 of the world rankings.
On target: Tiger Woods says McIlroy has all the components to be the best player in the world. Nice endorsement.
Off target: His aggressive play could get him in trouble on Harbour Town's narrow layout.
His shot: Very good. If he plays up to his potential, "Boy Wonder" can win this thing.



DAVIS LOVE III

Best Heritage finish: Won it in 1987, 1991, 1992, 1998 and 2003.
Pertinent stat: In 24 starts at Harbour Town, he has 11 top-10 finishes, 12 top-25s and has missed just four cuts.
On target: Nobody knows the ins and outs of this golf course better than Love does.
Off target: The tournament has been won by a player 40 or older just five times. Love turned 45 on Monday.
His shot: Very good. After his last three disappointing finishes, Love is due for another title.



This is Boo's tournament to lose



LANCE HANLIN
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How does one pick the winner of this year's Verizon Heritage? Easy. Take the guy who never loses here. Boo Weekley has played Harbour Town Golf Links twice and has two tartan jackets to show for it. His quest to make it three in a row starts today.

Obviously, it won't be easy. There's a load of talent in this field, and Weekley has been off his game in 2009, recording just one top-10 finish. None of that matters though. This is Hilton Head Island, the place where Weekley shines the brightest. The crowds following him get larger with every round, and he seems to feed off their energy. He's proud to be our champion, and people here are proud that he is. He keeps saying Harbour Town reminds him of the place he grew up playing. I guess that gives him a home-course advantage. He's the safest pick.

Snedeker a fan favorite at Heritage

By JUSTIN JARRETT
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Brandt Snedeker

Height, Weight: 6-1, 185
Turned pro: 2004
Birthplace: Nashville
Birthdate: Dec. 8, 1980
Notes: Won the U.S. Amateur Public Links in 2003... PGA Tour Rookie of the Year in 2007... Older brother Haymes caddied for him in the 2004 Masters and participated in "Big Break X" on Golf Channel in 2008... Won the 2007 Wyndham Championship.



When Brandt Snedeker came to Harbour Town Golf Links last spring, his third-place showing and tearful outpouring on Sunday at the Masters Tournament fresh in golf fans' minds, it seemed a star had been born.

His charge to the top of the leaderboard at Augusta National Golf Club last April — and his subsequent fall from that perch, as well as the emotional press conference that followed — made him one of the sport's most recognizable young players.

Snedeker hasn't been able to recapture that magic so far this season, missing the cut in six of his first nine events, including last week's Masters. His struggles began last fall, when he didn't post a top-10 finish in his last nine PGA Tour events after posting five top-10s earlier in the season, including a tie for third at the Masters and a tie for eighth at the U.S. Open.

"I think the biggest thing is

probably consistency," Snedeker said at the Omega Mission Hills World Cup in November. "I had days and weeks where I feel like I can be a top-25 player in the world, top-30 player where I feel like I need a new job. So I need to find a little bit in between."

Perhaps he can find that happy place at Harbour Town, a place with which he has felt a special bond since first playing at the Heritage on a sponsor's exemption in 2005. He has made the cut in all three starts here, including a tie for 16th in 2007.

An affable Southerner — he

was born in Nashville and was an all-American at Vanderbilt — Snedeker is a crowd favorite here, on and off the course. In the days leading up to last year's Heritage, he was approached by several diners at Red Fish restaurant on Hilton Head Island, each of them offering kind words in the wake of his Masters meltdown.

"I just feel so relaxed being here," Snedeker said at last year's Heritage. "The people here are great."

After enjoying tremendous success in the amateur and college ranks, Snedeker was the PGA Tour's Rookie of the Year in 2007 and he got off to a fast start in 2008. So his recent struggles are a new challenge he's still learning to handle.

"I've kind of got to realize that once I leave the golf course, there's nothing else I can do about it that day," Snedeker said at Verizon Heritage Sponsor Day in December. "I have to realize I'm working as hard as I can, and if it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen, but eventually it will."

Propicks

Area golf professionals tell The Beaufort Gazette/Island Packet who will win the Verizon Heritage this year:

Pro	Club	Pick	Pro	Club	Pick
Rob Anderson	Belfair Golf Club	Stewart Cink	Scott Schoiack	Moss Creek	Jim Furyk
Matt Presnell	Berkeley Hall	Ernie Els	Paul Schell	Old Carolina	Jim Furyk
Bill Layman	Crescent Point	Davis Love III	Nathan Broyles	Old Tabby Links	Boo Weekley
Burrell Williams	Dolphin Head	Boo Weekley	Derek E. Gall	Old South	Rory McIlroy
Brent Carlson	Eagle's Pointe	Davis Love III	David Crosby	Pinecrest	Boo Weekley
Char Cormier	Fripp Island	Boo Weekley	Richard Wagner	Port Royal	Davis Love III
Jason Cherry	Haig Point	Jim Furyk	Derek Lafferty	Sanctuary	Jim Furyk
John Farrell	Harbour Town	Boo Weekley	Bobby Downs	Sea Pines	Justin Leonard
Ben Cheval	Long Cove Club	Rory McIlroy	Matt Edlin	Hidden Cypress	Jim Furyk
Greg Wrobel	May River Club	Boo Weekley	David Wilding	Tradition National	Billy Mayfair

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MEDIA MOMENTS

Stories from those who cover the Heritage

Tournament gets four more hours of live TV coverage

This year's Heritage will be shown in 221 countries and broadcast in 35 different languages.

From staff reports

Hilton Head Island and the Verizon Heritage will be given prime television exposure throughout the United States and around the world when this year's PGA Tour event is broadcast live for 16 hours over four days.

Four additional hours of live coverage will air on The Golf Channel.

"Our overall exposure is going to be up," Heritage tournament information director Arnie Burdick said. "This tournament is going to be seen all over the globe. Hilton Head and the state of South Carolina couldn't ask for more publicity or exposure. You couldn't pay for this."

Rounds today and Friday will appear on The Golf Channel from 3-6 p.m., with replays of the rounds appearing from 8:30-11:30 p.m. and 12:30-3:30 a.m. each day.

Frank Navalo will be the analyst and Jerry Foltz will serve as on-course reporter.

On Saturday and Sunday, The Golf Channel will broadcast live from 1-3 p.m. CBS will pick up the coverage both days and broadcast from 3-6 p.m.

The CBS broadcast team for this year's event will include host Jim Nantz and former Heritage champion Nick Faldo. The Englishman won on Hilton Head Island in 1984 with four rounds in the 60s for his first PGA Tour victory.

Peter Oosterhuis, Gary McCord and Ian

Day	Golf Channel	CBS
Today	3-6 p.m.	---
Friday	3-6 p.m.	---
Saturday	1-3 p.m.	3-6 p.m.
Sunday	1-3 p.m.	3-6 p.m.

Baker-Finch will be the tower announcers. David Feherty and Peter Kostis will be out walking the course.

The tournament will also be broadcast in 220 other countries and in 35 different languages.

Live scoring updates will be available at www.pgatour.com.

While overall exposure of the tournament may be up, the number of media outlets covering this year's tournament is a little down.

Burdick estimates more than 400 credentials were approved but said request fell about 15 short of last year. One notable loss is the Post and Courier newspaper out of Charleston, which is struggling along with the rest of the print industry.

"I've been at this paper since 1982 and we have never missed it in that time," Post and Courier sports editor Malcolm DeWitt said. "I can't recall us missing it before then either. Just like every other newspaper in the country, we're being forced to make some hard choices, and that was a hard one. I'm really holding out hope that this is a temporary thing and we'll be back at Hilton Head next year."

NAME: Ken Griner

MEDIA OUTLET: WSPA-TV

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: 22

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: My favorite Heritage moment came in 1991, far away from the usual crowd of the tournament. Payne Stewart was on the course trying to get his game in shape for a third straight win at Harbour Town. It was my first year at WTOG, and Mitch Glick and I ventured out to find Payne. We caught up to him coming off the No. 7 green. As he approached the No. 8 tee box, he looks our way and says, "Hey, you're Mitch Glick right?" Mitch was very surprised, and said, "Well yes I am." Payne tells him he has something for him, and pulls out a can of Nutra-Slim. Mitch broke out in that huge laugh of his, knowing what had happened. A mutual friend in Orlando had set Payne up to pull off the practical joke. Payne got a chuckle out of it, but wanted to do something for Mitch, so he invited us over to St. Joseph's Hospital in Savannah to do a story on Payne getting his back worked on. Mitch got a great story out of it, formed a new friendship and Payne got a chance to play the practical joker like he always enjoyed doing. It's truly a shame that we lost both of these men so young.



NAME: Kevin Adams

MEDIA OUTLET: Golfweek

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: 14 (eight as Island Packet sports editor from 1993-2000)

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: Well, it was my first Heritage moment — in 1992. As Beaufort Gazette sports editor, I went on a Friday afternoon to write a column from Round 2 of the Heritage, the first time I'd ever covered the tournament. My dad, in town for the weekend, tagged along and we decided to watch Ray Floyd for a bit, because he had always been one of my dad's favorites. Floyd was 49 years old, had opened with a first-round 74 and was all ready to hit the Champions Tour in September. I assumed we'd follow old Ray for a couple of holes, then I'd go in search of a subject for my article. Instead, Floyd threw dart after dart at the Harbour Town flags, rolled in a bunch of putts and we never left as he put up an 8-under 63. I had my column, and I still say it's the best complete round of golf I've ever seen in person. Not bad for a guy five months shy of 50.



NAME: Al Muskewitz

MEDIA OUTLET: Anniston (Ala.) Star, then of the Anderson Independent-Mail

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: 7 (between 1985-1997)

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: It was the Saturday of the week after Greg Norman had the big collapse at Augusta. Tim Guidera, then of the Savannah Morning News, and I are walking up to the tee box on 18 just as Greg Norman and Charlie Rymer are getting there. This guy, apparently well into the cold beer, walks right up to the ropes after they hit their tee shots and yells, "Hey, Norman, you chokin' dog. You cost me money last week." Well, Norman's caddy drops the bag and bolts after the guy, who has already taken off, Norman goes too. Rymer's caddy drops his bag and joins the chase. Rymer doesn't miss a beat. He picks up both bags, slings the straps over his shoulders, and starts heading up the 18th fairway.



NAME: Ron Green Jr.

MEDIA OUTLET: The Charlotte Observer

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: 20

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: Having seen Greg Norman, Davis Love III, Payne Stewart, Nick Faldo and others win at Harbour Town, my favorite memory is of a man who didn't win. In 2005, Darren Clarke seemed destined to win but on Sunday afternoon, it all came unraveled for him. Clarke made a mess of the final round and eventually finished second to Peter Lonard, who hadn't played much better during the final round. Obviously disappointed after a final-round 76, Clarke was gracious enough to come to the media room and go through the details. Upon arriving at the interview room, Clarke slumped into a chair, grabbed a microphone and said, "Can I get a beer?" He deserved one.



NAME: Bob Gillespie

MEDIA OUTLET: The (Columbia) State

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: 32 (every one since 1977.

Yeah, I'm old)
FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: 1988. The year Greg Norman came from behind to win while being followed by cancer patient Jamie Hutton. Norman birdied the par-4 eighth hole to get in contention and shot a closing 66 to overtake leader David Frost, beating Frost and Gil Morgan by a shot. Then at the awards ceremony, Heritage officials had arranged to have a miniature plaid Heritage blazer for Jamie. Feel-good win for a lot of reasons.



NAME: Alan Blondin

MEDIA OUTLET: The (Myrtle Beach) Sun News

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: Nine through 2008

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: The 2003 Heritage when Davis Love III won his fifth title in dramatic fashion. Love forced a playoff with a bump-and-run birdie chip from 66 feet on the 18th hole then emphatically pointed at and high-fived his brother and caddie, Mark, whom he told he would chip in. He went on to hit a 6-iron off the flagstick from 170 yards on the fourth extra hole to defeat Woody Austin and conjure up perhaps his most magic at Harbour Town.



NAME: Joel Zuckerman

MEDIA OUTLET: Bluffton Today, formerly Carolina Morning News

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: Over 10

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: Several years ago when Aaron Baddeley, who went on to win the event, hit the par-5 15th green in two shots with an incredible 6-iron approach over the trees. An amazing shot, and Baddeley isn't even considered a "bomber" on the tour. It just goes to show how incredibly skilled these players are.



NAME: Phil Kornblut

MEDIA OUTLET: South Carolina Radio Network

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: 15

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: 2004. Stewart Cink's controversial shot from the fairway bunker on 16 in sudden death.



NAME: Jeff Kidd

MEDIA OUTLET: The Island Packet/The Beaufort Gazette

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: 15

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: Darren Clarke's final-round implosion in 2005 was probably my most memorable moment, but it's not my favorite because it was painful to watch, particularly knowing what Clarke was going through in his personal life at that time. So I'd have to say my favorite memory is Jose Coceres' victory in 2001. That was special to me because, although it wasn't my first year covering the tournament, it was my first tournament as the Packet's sports editor. It was just so surreal. This unknown from Argentina, who spoke, at best, broken English. You had this five-hole, two-day playoff because of rain, darkness and the inability of Coceres and Billy Mayfair to make a putt on Sunday.



NAME: Terry Chick

MEDIA OUTLET: KEPR-TV

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: 12

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: Of all the Heritages I covered, nothing can beat 2007. Boo Weekley chips in on 17 and 18 and a legend is born. After his tee shot on 17 goes off the back side of the green, there seems no way he'll make par. He's probably staring at bogey at best, but with a flick of his wedge ... bottom of the cup and the crowd goes crazy. And then on 18, with Calibogue Sound to his back, it's lightning striking twice. The self-proclaimed "good ole boy" joins the ranks of Palmer, Nicklaus, Watson and Norman as Heritage champ.



NAME: Pete Iacobelli

MEDIA OUTLET: The Associated Press

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: 16 in a row, and counting.

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENTS: Too many to list. Perhaps what stands out the most was Greg Norman's calmness and good attitude in 1996 when he largely endured probing questions and gallery comments at Harbour Town Golf Links a week after his collapse at The Masters. On the course, it has to be in 2007 when Boo Weekley's two chip-ins did in perennial Harbour Town also-ran Ernie Els.



NAME: Ken Burger

MEDIA OUTLET: The (Charleston) Post and Courier

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: More than 20.

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: I think it would have to be when Greg Norman befriended cancer patient Jamie Hutton. It was a great story that surpassed the local coverage and spread around the world. Feel-good stories are hard to come by in the real world. That's why we love sports so much.



NAME: Rick Snow

MEDIA OUTLET: WTOG-TV

NUMBER OF HERITAGE TOURNAMENTS COVERED: 21

FAVORITE HERITAGE MOMENT: Davis Love III's chip in at 18 that propelled him to another Heritage title.





GERRY MELENDEZ • The (Columbia) State
Jim Furyk blasts from the greenside bunker on the second hole during the third round of The Masters on Saturday in Augusta, Ga.

Furyk takes pride in consistent play

By SCOTT HAMILTON

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After spending the past 15 years as a regular on the PGA Tour, Jim Furyk says his unusual golf swing is old news. Now he simply wants to be known being a consistent golfer.

"I think if you look at my record over the years that I've been on tour, the consistency is something I'm definitely proud of," Furyk said. "I've had a lot of good years, and it's lasted for a good stretch, but I'm hoping to make that last a lot longer. Still got a few good ones out here I think."

Still that swing — a motion that's tough to describe even by those with a mastery of the movement's technical terms — is there every time he tees it up. It's a novelty for those seeing it for the first time, especially golf fans abroad. However, it's the results, the 38-year-old Furyk says, people should instead notice.

During his time on tour, Furyk has indeed been a steady force on weekends. He's accumulated 13 wins, including the 2003 U.S. Open, and has earned his way onto the U.S. Ryder Cup team six times while also making five Presidents Cup appearances.

But things have otherwise slowed down away from Hilton Head Island. He hasn't won a tournament since the 2007 Canadian Open. His best finish through six events this season was third in last month's WGC-CA Championship. Part of that could be lingering rust resulting from a longer layoff than normal, as Furyk opted to begin his season a bit slower than in the past due to an extended schedule last year.

He could get back on track this week at Harbour Town

Jim Furyk

Height, Weight: 6-2, 185
Turned pro: 1992
Birthplace: West Chester, Pa.
Birthdate: May 12, 1970
Notes: His father, Mike, has been his only swing instructor. ... Has 13 career PGA Tour victories. ... Twice named All-Pac 10 Conference and All-America at University of Arizona.

Golf Links, a short course that might play to Furyk's strengths.

The course's tight fairways and tiny greens have been friendly to a steady ballstriker such as Furyk, a self-professed shorter hitter on a tour of bombers. Though he has yet to claim a tartan jacket at the Verizon Heritage, Furyk has still been strong at Harbour Town. In his past six appearances in the Heritage since 2002, he has five top-15 finishes, including three top-fours. Furyk finished fourth to repeat winner Boo Weekley last year, two years after coming in second in 2006 and tying for second in 2005.

"I wish I hit it farther, I'll promise you that," Furyk said. "But it's not going to happen. I'm only going to get shorter probably from here on out. I think the glaring weakness for me is that I'm very average length. I don't hit the ball that far. Most of the guys I play with hit it past me. My strengths have to be in other things, and I have to beat those guys in other areas, if that makes sense."

"I don't go to a lot of golf courses where I feel it's just a bomber's paradise and I'm at a severe disadvantage," he added. "I try to put myself in positions where I feel like I have the best opportunities to win. But you know, any player that has a good record has confidence that he can win on any golf course."

Win now worth a million bucks

Verizon Heritage purse continues 17-year record of growth

By BRANDON PARKER
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For the first time in the Verizon Heritage's already-rich history, a victory at Harbour Town Golf Links will make one fortunate golfer into a millionaire.

The \$1.02 million prize awaiting this year's winner is a far cry from the \$20,000 awarded to Arnold Palmer when he won the inaugural Heritage in 1969, but of course, much has changed since then.

Contractual obligations with the PGA Tour require the Heritage to increase its purse each year, which the event accomplished for the 17th straight campaign, this time upping the total prize money from last year's \$5.5 million to \$5.7 million.

Yet with countless economic woes tearing through America, one can't help but wonder how golf tournaments like the Heritage can support this windfall of cash.

And at several points leading up to this year's event, tournament director Steve Wilmot found himself asking the same question.

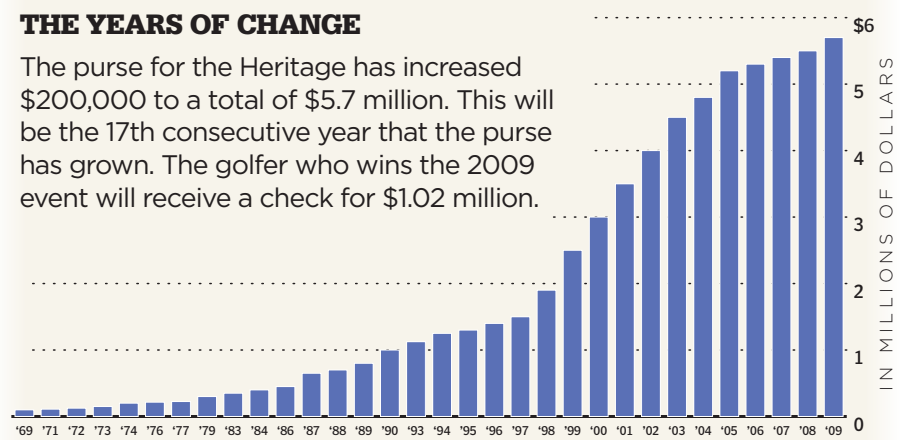
"For me to say there was never a concern of us meeting our obligation of upping the purse would be a lie, because that definitely wasn't the case," Wilmot admits. "We had a lot of discussion about a lot of things with sponsors and the tour because we're behind in ticket sales, sponsor sales, pro-am numbers and other areas. But we've still been fortunate to find enough continued support."

According to Wilmot, about 64 percent of the Heritage's purse is drawn from television contracts, which got a slight bump this year thanks to the event garnering four more hours of coverage for a total of 16 hours. That percentage leaves the tournament on the hook for approximately \$2.05 million.

In this remaining pool, the greatest monies are drawn from Verizon, its title sponsor which is entering the third year of a five-year contract with the Heritage. Also key

THE YEARS OF CHANGE

The purse for the Heritage has increased \$200,000 to a total of \$5.7 million. This will be the 17th consecutive year that the purse has grown. The golfer who wins the 2009 event will receive a check for \$1.02 million.



Source: The Heritage Classic Foundation

The Island Packet

is the Heritage Classic Foundation, which Wilmot said has taken quite a few risks to provide financial stability and direction for the tournament.

At the close of each event, the Foundation distributes revenues to various charities, universities and medical organizations, with more than \$15 million having been donated since it was organized and a record \$1.8 million doled out last year.

Additionally, with this tour event being the only in South Carolina, typically infusing \$84 million into the state and drawing around 135,000 fans each year, local business and charities certainly find themselves salivating for this one week.

And by Wilmot's estimation, the potential for a spike in sales lies greatest with the concession booths, which likely will reap monies from the decline in skybox, free tickets and hospitality areas provided by sponsors.

But not even these encouraging signs can fully solve issues like a substandard sponsorship return rate that, just last month, was nearly \$100,000 behind last year's pace.

"I've had some of the sponsors that left

us tell me, 'Hey Steve, the return on golf is incredible as is the investment and charity component, but we just can't be here this year,'" said Wilmot, who is also executive director of Heritage Classic Foundation. "The value of golf is something that people still see, but we're also sensitive to those who do support us in such tough times."

It's safe to say planning this year's event has been a bit more stressful for Wilmot and his staff, but all things considered, you won't hear Wilmot complaining.

As a member of the staff for the past 23 years, Wilmot considers it a privilege to be part of an event that donates a million-plus dollars to a good cause as well as one that simply offers thousands of fans a unique blend of camaraderie and fun.

"It's kind of like all the people who get together for the Super Bowl," Wilmot said. "Half of the people don't know who's playing or even watch football, but ultimately, the event and the gathering it brings is good for morale and team spirit."

"So we're just fortunate to be a part of something like that and to continue holding this weeklong activity, when, for those moments, the eyes of the world are on us."

McIlroy continues fast rise to the top

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If you ignored the curly, brown mop of hair on top of his head and his boyish looks, you'd guess Rory McIlroy has been at this awhile.

If you observed his demeanor and read his thoughts on being a teenage golf sensation, your opinion likely wouldn't change.

But believe it or not, the Northern Ireland golfer is just 19 years old. And he's enjoying every second of being in the limelight at this stage in his young career.

"I sort of like being the center of attention. It's nice," he said after the WGA-CA Championship last month. "I feel very comfortable in it."

At the rate he's moving, he had better be prepared to be in for long haul.

At 16, McIlroy had already

played in his first European Tour event. A year later in 2007, he competed in the Open Championship and finished 42nd after easily making the cut, thanks to an opening round that had him in a third-place tie heading into the second day.

He turned professional shortly thereafter, and it didn't take him long to make an impact. He claimed his first professional tournament title in February of this year in the Dubai Desert Classic — still three months shy of his 20th birthday.

"(That) was very good for my confidence, especially so early in the year," he said.

His race up the world rankings charts has helped earn him the attention of several tour players as well.

"Certainly he has the talent. We can all see it — the way he hits the golf ball, the way he putts, the way he can chip, get up-and-down," Tiger Woods

Rory McIlroy

Height, Weight: 5-7, 160
Turned pro: 2007
Birthplace: Hollywood, Northern Ireland
Birthdate: May 4, 1989
Notes: Youngest Affiliate Member in the history of the European Tour to earn a tour card. ... Won Dubai Desert Classic on Feb. 1. ... In 2007 became the youngest winner of both the West of Ireland Championship and the Irish Close Championship. ... Part of the Great Britain & Ireland team at the 2007 Walker Cup.

said last month. "He has all of the components to be the best player in the world. There's no doubt."

Though he's admitted he's been somewhat in awe of competing against guys like Tiger and Phil Mickelson, McIlroy isn't concerned with catching up to the world's best quite yet.

"I've started to concentrate on what I need to do to become a better player," he said. "I'm not looking around me as much. I'm

not looking at other players. ... And I think that's been a big part of why I've done so well, because I know if I do the right thing, I'll play well. If I play well, I'm capable of beating most of the guys out here."

McIlroy, who is known for his aggressive style on the golf course, comes to the Verizon Heritage after playing in his first Masters just last week. He finished in a tie for 20th place at 2 under par for the tournament, certainly a strong showing for Augusta.

Though he said he's enjoyed his time in the US, he doesn't intend to play here full-time at any point in his career. He also said he hasn't made any plans to join the PGA Tour any time soon.

But when it comes to making an impact on its events, expect something sooner rather than later.

"It's been a fast rise," he said.

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