

ILLINOIS GOLFER

THE OPENING 9

Thursday,
August 18, 2022

Of golf and jurisprudence



Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer

CLIMACTIC HOLE Wilmington Country Club has all the modern big-time golf trimmings this week. This is the 18th green.

REPORTING FROM WILMINGTON, DELAWARE
1 Once upon a time, professional golf was a simple sport. Arrive at the tee, count all your strokes, sign your scorecard. Rinse and repeat the next day, and for two more if you made the cut. On Sunday night, if you were the low scorer, someone would hand you a shiny trophy and an oversize check. If not, there was still money in the purse to be had. Plus, someone would pay you to wear their shirts, and perhaps to endorse a product or three.

Questions from eager reporters ranged from wondering about the brand of your 3-iron to whether or not you drank a martini with an overlapping grip. For thorny issues, the Decisions on the Rules of Golf, that perennial best-seller, would be consulted.

Not today. Players who used to have only a caddie at their beck and call have in recent years added a swing coach, a mental coach, a therapist, and sometimes a cook. **Louis Oosthuizen** travels with his own mattress. Well, with someone who lugs it about for him.

All of that, however, seems like ancient history. This is 2022, and the modern major golfer needs not only all of the above in his posse, but a lawyer as well. You never know when someone you used to play with might serve you with papers. The Rules of Golf have been replaced by Black's Law Dictionary.

Think not? **Patrick Reed**, late of the PGA Tour and currently of LIV Golf, slapped a defamation of character lawsuit on **Brandel Chamblee** and Golf Channel on Tuesday. Reed, who famously had his parents thrown out of a U.S. Open at Pinehurst and banned them from the Masters he won – even though they live blocks from Augusta National – says he's been wronged and lied about by Chamblee in particular and Golf Channel generally.

At first blush, Reed appears to have shanked this legal wedge. The network did, after all, replay his building of a sand castle in a bunker during a PGA Tour stop in the Bahamas. And Chamblee has, after all, questioned Reed's judgment about that and other situations over the years.

All those comments were based on facts, and, as the saying goes, the truth is an excellent defense.

Reed's suit comes out of nowhere, which is, aside from wondering who'll jump to the nascent operation next, approximately what LIV's visibility is in the United States. His picture on a milk carton would get more views than the television broadcasts, which in the 50 states have been limited to YouTube and the LIV website and Facebook pages. Not exactly Nielsen's playground. (In Canada, the final rounds are carried on CHCH, a superstation in Hamilton, Ont., and on TVA Sports, the latter a French-language outlet.)

Last week's foofaraw over whether or not LIV golfers suspended by the PGA Tour but otherwise qualified for the playoffs could play in said playoffs – a Federal court judge said no – seems like Brown

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vs. the Board of Education compared to the suit crafted by legal beagle **Larry Klayman** on Reed's behalf.

Aside from Reed being a public figure and thus harder to prove malice to win the case – see *New York Times Co. vs. Sullivan* from 1964 – Klayman throws a laundry list of Chamblee quotes back at him, forgetting Chamblee's opinion is based on fact. This is like blaming the crash of the Hindenburg on the photographers who took pictures of it blowing up.

Klayman's record in court isn't great. The Washington Generals beat the Harlem Globetrotters more often. Klayman once sued his mother.

The judge who gets stuck with this time-waster will likely throw it out, but if not, we look forward to the trial, when Chamblee's lawyers would be advised to call Reed's parents to the stand as character witnesses.

2 Reed, as he is now ensconced with LIV Golf, will presumably grace Rich Harvest Farms with his presence next month, when the Livvers play through Sugar Grove on Sept. 16-18. That means he is not here in Wilmington this week, on the South Course of posh Wilmington Country Club, where the BMW Championship – a.k.a. the Western Open – has decamped through Sunday.

What Reed and his fellow former PGA Tourists will miss, to use erstwhile *Chicago Tribune* golf writer **Charles Bartlett's** perfect phrase, is the tournament for a cause.

While the BMW will lavish \$15 million on its 68 participants, with \$2.7 million going to the winner, but millions will also flow into the coffers of the Evans Scholars Foundation, the WGA's caddies-to-college charity wing.

There are 1,070 caddies going to college this academic year, including at Penn State, thanks to the idea of Chick Evans and those who took it up.

Given the scope of the alumni, one would be hard-pressed to find a golf charity more far-reaching than the Evans program.

LIV, at least at Rich Harvest, is expected to donate to owner **Jerry Rich's** Kids Golf Foundation, and he may commence a caddie-scholarship program as well. We'll see.

Thursday Pairings

No. 1 Tee (Eastern Time)

9:10	Harold Varner III	Alex Noren
9:20	Chris Kirk	Taylor Moore
9:30	Troy Merritt	Chez Reavie
9:40	Mackenzie Hughes	Si Woo Kim
9:50	Kurt Kitayama	Sebastian Munoz
10:00	Keegan Bradley	Adam Scott
10:10	Trey Mullinax	Mito Pereira
10:25	Seamus Power	Shane Lowry
10:35	Maverick McNealy	K.H. Lee
10:45	Kevin Kisner	Corey Connors
10:55	J.T. Poston	Joohyung Kim
11:05	Collin Morikawa	Tom Hoge
11:15	Max Homa	Jordan Spieth
11:25	Xander Schauffele	Patrick Cantlay
11:40	Sam Burns	Tony Finau
11:50	Justin Thomas	Sungjae Im
Noon	Taylor Pendrith	Marc Leishman
12:10	Matt Kuchar	Brendan Steele
12:20	Adam Hadwin	Christiaan Bezuidenhout
12:30	Lucas Herbert	Emiliano Grillo
12:40	Tyrrell Hatton	Cam Davis
12:55	Scott Stallings	Andrew Putnam
1:05	Luke List	Russell Henley
1:15	Keith Mitchell	Cameron Tringale
1:25	Lucas Glover	Denny McCarthy
1:35	J.J. Spaun	Aaron Wise
1:45	David Riley	Sahith Theegala
1:55	Billy Horschel	Brian Harman
2:10	Viktor Hovland	Joaquin Niemann
2:20	Jon Rahm	Hideki Matsuyama
2:30	Sepp Straka	Rory McIlroy
2:40	Will Zalatoris	Scottie Scheffler
2:50	Matt Fitzpatrick	Cameron Young
3:00	Alex Smalley	Wyndham Clark

3 Wilmington South is a brawny **Robert Trent Jones** layout from the late 1950s, with some trademark runway tees, but also rough thick enough to hide a small child, bunkers you could camp out in, and greens the size of ballroom dance floors. There are seven doglegs – that makes it a bit like Jones' original plan for Hazeltine National – making it a bit of a beast, but so was Medinah No. 3 in 2019, and all **Justin Thomas** did there was shoot 25-under 263 and prompt a \$23.5 million renovation. That's \$940,000 for every stroke under par, if you're scoring at home. Thomas will not get the bill.

"I'm atrocious at guessing the winning score," Thomas said Wednesday, then hazarded, "I would say like most tournaments it'll be in the 12- to-15-

(under) range, but I also thought Medinah was going to be like 5-under."

Wilmington was called "like a harder Caves Valley," last year's BMW site, by **Xander Schauffele**. All **Patrick Cantlay** and **Bryson DeChambeau** did there is twirl around in 27-under 261 before Cantlay birdied the sixth playoff hole to win.

4 Usually, how the course will play and who's favored are the standard topics before any tournament. Not this week, with Reed's shot across Chamblee's bow and a series of meetings among PGA Tour players discussing how to keep stars from bolting for the new circuit and how to make the Tour better.

Tuesday, there was a Players Advisory Council meeting, plus a more

highly-publicized meeting of top players that included **Tiger Woods**, who jetted up from Florida to speak his mind (and brought along **Rickie Fowler** as well), and Wednesday, commissioner **Jay Monahan** hung out to answer questions from any player who had them, as he did last week in Memphis.

What came out of the chats? Nobody was saying.

"I just hope for a better product," Thomas said. "We all want what's best for the players, and we're working to do that."

"Some sort of unity," Schauffele said he wanted. "It's definitely fractured currently. In a nice peaceful way would be a nice outcome."

Even though he's effectively retired from regular play, Woods' presence meant a great deal to his peers.

"He's the hero we've all looked up to," McIlroy said. "His voice carries further than anyone else. His role is navigating us to a place where we all think we should be. ... I think it's pretty apparent that whenever we all get in the room, there's an alpha in there, and it's not me."

For a long time, many considered Woods interested only in himself. Now, as his star dims, we find he's interested in assuring the place he built his golf reputation is not tarnished by a rival league.

5 Time was when the Western / BMW was in Chicagoland every year. That is now a long time ago. And the concept of playing their premier championship in their home market every other year is out the window as well.

The 2020 BMW at Olympia Fields was played without fans because of COVID-19. Last year meant Caves Valley, near Baltimore. This year, we're in the shadow of Philadelphia. Next year, Olympia Fields will welcome fans, but the following three years are away from home: 2024 at Castle Pines above Denver, 2025 back at Caves Valley, and 2026 at Bellerive in the posh suburbs west of St. Louis.

As **Vin Scully** said one spring when the Dodgers were booting grounders with monotonous regularity, "Folks, get used to it."

Will Jerry Rich and LIV take advan-



Charles Cherney / Western Golf Association

PHAN PHAVORITE The Phillie Phanatic mugs for the camera Thursday.

tage of this and make their shotgun start shootout an annual thing? One would think that's crossed their minds.

6 You never know whom you'll find playing in a pro-am. Such was the case on Wednesday, when the Gardner Hedrick Pro-Am – Hedrick being a donor who some years ago wrote a check to the Evans Scholars to stick his name on the Wednesday carnival, bumping Evans – was punctuated by the presence of **John Carney**, who happens to be the governor of Delaware.

Carney, a former freshman football coach at the University of Delaware who is in his second term, even attended media day for the tournament several weeks ago. That's something unthinkable in Illinois, where **Jay Pritzker's** office wasn't a great fan of golf being played in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, never mind that the game is played in the great outdoors.

Another area notable who dropped in was a popular guest. The **Phillie Phanatic** did his thing during a clinic for First Tee kids in the afternoon. Alas, there was no sign of **Gritty**, the Philadelphia Flyers' mascot.

7 **Cameron Smith** withdrew, citing a bad hip, but chatter about the day-after two-stroke penalty for not taking complete relief from a hazard at St. Jude

continues to reverberate on the circuit.

"He seemed like a good sport about it, but the fact that he just sort of teed off at 9-under at the 11-under time, he should have been going earlier, maybe with less wind to get it back -- it was a little sloppy in my opinion from a handling standpoint," Schauffele said. "I really have no answer there on sort of the whole instant replay thing or the replay overnight deal.

"I'm not calling that one a terrible ruling, but an unfortunate ruling, I should say."

8 President **Joe Biden** is a Wilmington member. He's busy and not expected this week, but if he drops in, it will be a surprise visit, unannounced, which would make it easier for security. With 36 holes, there's plenty of room to land Marine One on the property.

9 Finally, there are 14 BMW / Western first-timers in the tournament: **Christian Bezuidenhout, Lucas Herbert, Joohyung Kim, Denny McCarthy, Taylor Moore, Trey Mullinax, Taylor Pendrith, Mito Pereira, Seamus Power, Davis Riley, Alex Smalley, Sepp Straka, Cameron Young** and **Will Zalatoris**. Of those, the last may come in first. If you can win in Memphis with a bogey, you can go back-to-back.

– **Tim Cronin**