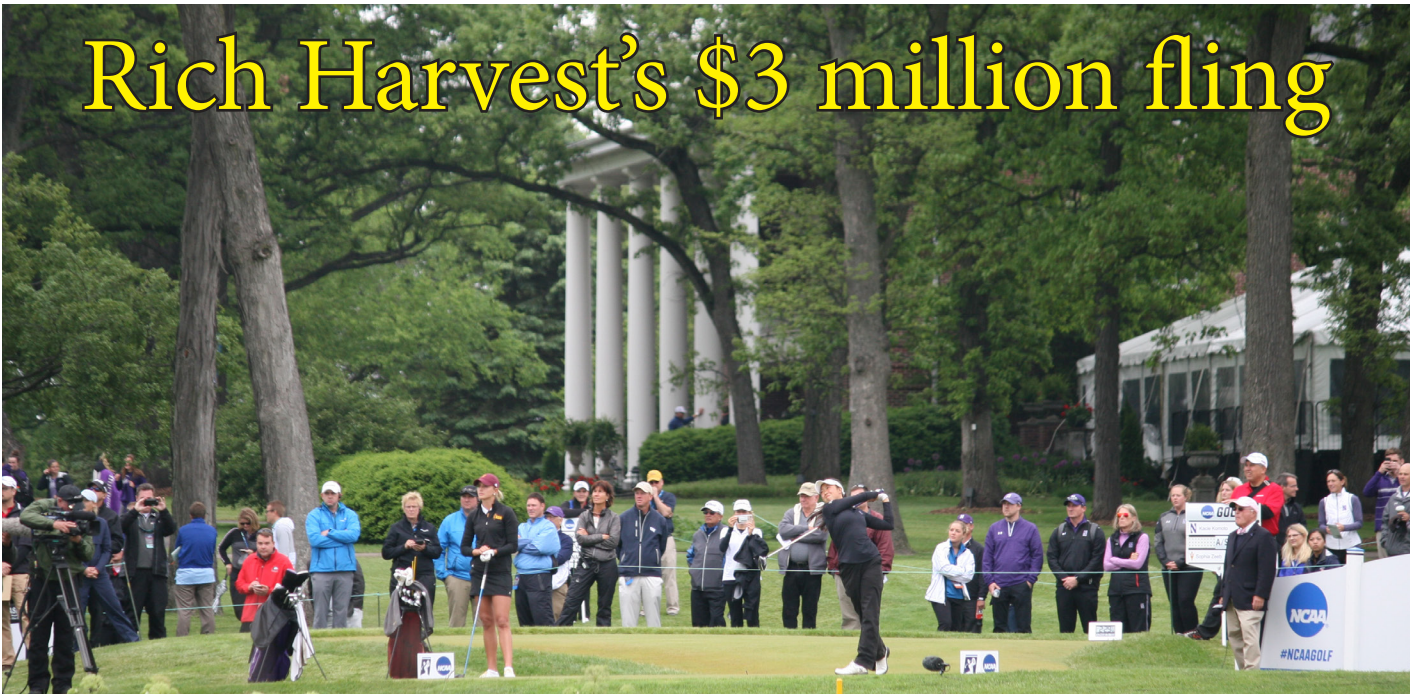


ILLINOIS GOLFER

THE OPENING 9

Friday,
September 16, 2022

Rich Harvest's \$3 million fling



Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer

CLASSIC BACKGROUND Called the Plantation House when the NCAA played through in 2017, what is now the Golden Vane building is one of the intriguing places on the golf course at Rich Harvest Farms, and makes for a dramatic background.

Reporting from Sugar Grove, Illinois

The LIV Golf Invitational Chicago starts today in this exurb of Chicago. It's 46 miles from the Loop to the center of Sugar Grove, and a couple more hybrids out to Rich Harvest Farms. Here are nine things to know about it:

1 It is a curiosity of a tournament, the fifth conducted by LIV Golf, a largely closed-loop system that eschews the traditional pro golf model in almost every way. A quick recap for those new to LIV: 54 holes instead of 72; a shotgun start instead of starting on the first and 10th tees; 48 players rather than the usual 144 to 156; no cut; four-man teams with a separate purse; and prize money well above the generous purses available on the PGA Tour.

Some of those differences – there is hesitation to call them innovations, as each has been used somewhere along the way – have caused conniptions among the golf establishment. Start with the money.

This isn't the first time outrageous money has been available compared to the rest of golf. Through most of the 1940s and 1950s, **George S. May**, impresario at Tam O'Shanter Country Club in Niles, offered the biggest purses in pro golf. He had a \$50,000 first prize when most tournaments had a \$20,000 total purse. Pros loved it and with the eventual exception of **Ben Hogan**, flocked to play at Tam for a shot at the loot that would sometimes make the winner the season's leading money winner.

History is repeating itself in that regard, except that the multi-tournament LIV is outside the PGA Tour universe, which means pros going to LIVland might play for \$25 million purses, but have been barred from playing on the traditional tour. With each new signing, that seems a rash move by the Tour, cutting down on the number of potential notables playing in any particular tournament.

The court case brought by a handful of LIV players to try to regain access to PGA Tour starts has revealed the

LIV contract allows its players to play anywhere else on non-LIV weeks, while the Tour's theoretically-looser independent contractor agreements are more like that of a trade union, barring work outside the union hall unless specifically authorized. Maybe that isn't a surprise, as the Tour, led by **Arnold Palmer** and **Jack Nicklaus**, broke off from the PGA of America in 1968 to gain the freedom to set its own rules. That was among the founding principles, and while much else has changed, that control of players hasn't changed.

2 For Rich Harvest owner **Jerry Rich**, this is a crowning moment. After hosting the 2009 Solheim Cup, Rich came up with the format for the International Crown, but after an epic shouting match with then-LPGA commissioner **Mike Whan**, the Crown was moved

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away. Rich rebounded with an NCAA Championship, the Western Amateur and a pair of Palmer Cups, among other competitions.

Until now, Rich hasn't had a men's pro tournament on his backyard playground. Then talks began, and LIV and Rich Harvest made a deal. According to a source with ties to the ultra-private club, Rich Harvest is getting \$3 million from LIV this year, and the deal is expected to run several years. That gives Chicago an annual stop by a pro tour for the first time since the BMW Championship began to alternate in and out of the area beginning in 2008.

In one respect, LIV's \$3 million check is a bargain. That's what Medinah Country Club received to host the 1999 PGA Championship. Taking into account inflation, and the size of the Saudi Arabia-backed budget LIV seems to have, the deal's a steal.

For Rich, who had a relatively close association with the WGA – hosting a pair of Western Juniors along with the 2015 Western Amateur – working with the LIV group, partly because of the breakaway nature of the operation and partly because of the Saudi funding, likely costs him a chance to host anything WGA-related or from any other tour. It is an expensive \$3 million fling.

3 **Bryson DeChambeau** doesn't look like the Michelin Man any longer. He's dropped weight since coming up with his goal of hitting the ball to moon or thereabouts, though still interested in extreme clubbed speed. Injuries, including one to his left hand that took longer than he expected to heal, brought him new inside into his body.

"I was pretty big," DeChambeau said Thursday. "It's been a journey for me to understand my body and what's going on. My hands have always been kind of a weak point in my body. I had back problems when I was younger, at 24. I had to pull out of the Valspar a long time ago because of back issues, and just excessive use on my body."

There was also his withdrawal from the John Deere Classic in the middle of the first round as defending champion.

Curiously, he hasn't won anywhere since trying his hand at long drive com-

petitions. He thinks that's coincidence.

"I think that over the course of time, I'm going to get back to that winning form," DeChambeau said. "It's taken a little bit longer than I thought. I never thought it would take this long to get back. Look, it's only four and a half months (since the hand injury), but no, I don't think it'll hurt me. If anything, it's allowed me to, as bad as I've played, still play decently well. I have a top 10 and finished 18th the other week.

"I think I'll be fine. I'll win here soon."

4 The pairings change every day. Thursday, **Dustin Johnson, Anirban Lahiri** and **Joaquin Niemann**, players in the Boston playoff Johnson won with a 30-foot eagle putt, go off the first tee together.

5 Johnson leads the LIV money list with \$7,712,500 on the individual side and overall with \$9,962,500. Newcomer **David Puig** collected a \$1,000 honorarium, the maximum allowed under USGA rules, for each of his two starts as an amateur. He's turned pro this week so can reach for the \$4 million winner's purse.

6 Speaking of crazy money, LIV will shower the field in the season-ending team championship at Doral with \$75 million.

7 Puig is with his third different team in three starts, this time with Torque. Next year, teams will be permanent for the 14-tournament season.

8 Johnson leads the season standings with 94 points, with **Branden Grace** (77) second and **Carlos Ortiz** and **Talor Gooch** (48) tied for third. The leader at the end of the season gets an \$18 million bonus, not coincidentally what **Rory McIlroy** earned in winning the Tour Championship.

9 Most tournaments start with "Play away, please." LIV tournaments start with an opening ceremony. At Rich Harvest, that means former Navy Seal paratroopers landing on the 18th fairway at noon each day.

– **Tim Cronin**

Pairings and Hole Starts

12:15 p.m. shotgun
TV: LIVGolf.com, YouTube

- 1 Dustin Johnson
Anirban Lahiri
Joaquin Niemann
- 2 Henrik Stenson
Abraham Ancer
Matthew Wolff
- 3 Bryson DeChambeau
Lee Westwood
Cameron Smith
- 4 Patrick Reed
Cameron Tringale
Ian Poulter
- 5 Jason Kokrak
Charles Howell III
Branden Grace
- 6 Pat Perez
Kevin Na
Martin Kaymer
- 8 Laurie Canter
Shaun Norris
Peter Uihlein
- 9 Hudson Swafford
Eugenio Lopez-Chacarra
David Puig
- 10 Wade Ormsby
Scott Vincent
Sihwan Kim
- 11 Richard Bland
Sam Horsfield
Turk Pettit
- 12 Chase Koepka
Jediah Morgan
James Piot
- 13 Sodom Kaewkanjana
Bernd Wiesberger
Charl Schwartzel
- 14 Graeme McDowell
Matt Jones
Phachara Khongwatmai
- 16 Louis Oosthuizen
Carlos Ortiz
Marc Leishman
- 17 Harold Varner III
Sergio Garcia
Brooks Koepka
- 18 Phil Mickelson
Talor Gooch
Paul Casey