

Wednesday, April 3, 2002

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■ Courses

Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn., has been selected as the site of the 41st Ryder Cup Matches, PGA of America officials announce. That event is scheduled for September 2016.

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■ Equipment

CHAMP began shipping its new CHAMP TRAC soft golf spike this week to distributors and retailers. The CHAMP TRAC features the an anti-clogging bar to eliminate the clogging of materials in the cleat.

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On Saturday, April 20, **Spalding** will help kick off a new golf season by continuing to distribute more than 2.5 million free TOP-FLITE XL 3000 golf balls through a nationwide sampling program at more than 5,000 courses.

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Pixl Golf announces that the Pixl S 1.8 Milled putter has been named 2001 Putter of the Year by eGolfWeekly.

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■ Apparel

Ashworth, Inc., announces the start of initial shipments of its Callaway Golf apparel to approximately 1,000 distributors. The official launch of the new line is scheduled for fall 2002, but Ashworth developed a limited pre-launch offering, which is scheduled for mid-spring deliveries.

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■ Associations

The **PGA of America** creates the Paul Runyan Collegiate Golf Management Scholarship. This annual award of \$5,000 will go to a junior in The PGA's Professional Golf Management program, which is offered at 13 universities or colleges nationwide.

Commentary

Times, they are a changin'

***Editor's note:** Last summer Augusta National was revamped, stretched in length around the course to help offset many of golf's long drivers off the tee. Some observers view the changes as insignificant, while others view them as a necessary evil to keep up with the continuing technological advances. Paul Albanese is a Michigan-based golf course architect and member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Albanese writes in this week's guest Commentary that a change at Augusta National is needed, but not in the course's length.*

Peter Sampras will bring his own tennis balls, the ProV2, to Wimbledon this year. Sampras said he liked the way he could spin the new ball, which perform better than the standard balls Wimbledon has provided in the past.

Rumor has it that the Atlanta Braves' John Smoltz will pitch a specially designed baseball that allows his slider to break an extra six inches. Standard Major League baseballs just do not allow him to strike out enough batters. And a company is developing a uniquely laced football to be used by New England quarterback Drew Bledsoe, which should make his passes spiral more tightly.

Obviously, these examples are fictitious. But, as any good scientist knows, the best way to test one variable is to keep the other variables constant. In modern golf, the equipment variable is beginning to dominate the equation. Golf, unlike most other sports, is continually being made less a game of skill and more a game of technology and brute force.

Look at tennis, where the equipment variable has almost completely degraded the game. At one point, tennis

A Look Back: Apr. 3

1960: Tom Nieporte wins the Azalea Open.

1966: Doug Sanders birdies the second extra hole to defeat Tom Weiskopf in a playoff in the Greater Greensboro Open.

1977: Danny Edwards wins the Greater Greensboro Open by four strokes over George Burns and Larry Nelson.

1978: Gary Player shoots a final-round 69 for a one-stroke victory over Andy Bean in the Shell Houston Open.

1994: Ben Crenshaw wins the Compaq Classic of New Orleans by three strokes over Jose Maria Olazabal.

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■ People

Sun Mountain announces the hiring of **Bill Meyers** as a new sales representative in Arizona.

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Heritage Golf Group, a San Diego-based owner and operator of premier private and daily fee golf facilities, announces the appointment of **David Karch** as Director of Sales & Marketing at Valencia Country Club in Valencia, Calif.

[For more...](#)

Jeffersonville Golf Club, the recently reconstructed Donald Ross-designed golf course in Jeffersonville, Pa., announces **Steve Spross** will serve as its head golf professional.

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■ Tournaments

Annika Sorenstam, the LPGA's 2001 Player of the Year and winner of this season's first major women's championship, commits to play in the inaugural **Kellogg-Keebler Classic**, May 31-June 2, at Stonebridge Country Club in Aurora.

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■ Players

Rachel Teske, who defeated Lorie Kane in a playoff to win the 1999 Chick-fil-A Charity Championship hosted by Nancy Lopez, will return to play in the 11th annual event, scheduled for April 29-May 5 at Eagle's Landing Country Club in Stockbridge, Ga.

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■ Media

The **Inside Golf** television show and the Philadelphia Section PGA agree to a two-year marketing agreement in which both parties agree to help each other in the economic and competitive marketplace.

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■ Events

The United Negro College Fund will host its 31st **UNCF Golf Classic** to Monday, May 20 at the Sweetwater Country Club in

was a sport of finesse, touch and skill. Great volleys, such as those between John McEnroe and Bjorn Borg, are a spectacle not seen in today's era of tennis. The new high-powered racquets make returning a serve more an act of God than an act of sport.

Golf is heading down this same road. Soon 7,200-yard golf courses will be considered pitch and putt. Young Tiger Woods wannabes will all be attempting to hit a 700-yard par-5 in two.

Sound far fetched? If you analyze the history of golf and the trend in ball flight distance, it is clear that these scenarios are not too unbelievable or far off.

Augusta National has undergone significant design alterations, in response to the modern equipment, which in recent years, has embarrassed the hallowed ground. As a golf course architect myself, it rips at my soul to watch such an architectural icon be remodeled simply because equipment has made parts of the golf course indefensible.

It is time for the crew at the Masters to lay down the law -- by making new law. The Masters needs to introduce the "Tournament Ball," a uniform golf ball to be played by all competitors. At a minimum, the Tournament Ball would make one important variable constant -- human skill, thereby testing the true essence of sport. The Tournament Ball is a needed first step toward the preservation of the game's integrity.

Continuing to allow equipment to destroy the sanctity of classic venues, such as Augusta National, will cause golf to lose the appeal it has enjoyed for so long. If nothing is done, golf will head down the same road as tennis, which has suffered greatly due to its own technological guffaws. Someone needs to step up to the proverbial plate, and the members of Augusta are primed for the job -- I hope.

■ Reader's Forum

Considerable alterations have been made at Augusta National, especially in terms of length. Will these changes

Sugar Land, Texas. A dinner and awards presentation will close out the event.

[For more...](#)

positively or negatively affect the Masters, and how so? Also, were these changes necessary to keep up with the technological advances in equipment and today's better-conditioned players?

Let us know your opinions by sending your responses to stuart@gpagolf.com with the subject line RE: Masters alterations. Also include your first name and last initial.