

SLICE OF LIFE



By Terry Moore

Much as the diehard golfers may wish to deny it, the golf season is slipping away. But September and early October possessed just terrific weather and helped to make up for the horrible wet spring. In fact, West Michigan had the best September weather on record, with over 81% sunshine and more than 14 days hitting 80 degrees. Anyway, I usually devote this column to a recap of the past season, listing some of the highlights and lowlights of the year. So here we go:

The Ryder Cup at Oakland Hills

Sure the U.S. got clobbered and nearly every gambit that Captain Hal Sutton tried seemed to back-fire, but the 35th Ryder Cup Matches was a most memorable and successful event. Very little if anything went wrong in terms of organization, logistics, gallery demeanor and safety, and economic impact. Things that go well hardly ever get the deserved acclaimed they should. In all, it was a tremendous boost for Detroit and the state of

Michigan. And Oakland Hills stood tall and proud throughout, proving that it is indeed a great (and I don't use this word casually) golf course. My only complaints are relatively minor like the PGA of America's cave-in to the honchos at NBC for having someone like Donald Trump (of NBC's highly rated "The Apprentice" series) providing a "welcome" at the Opening Ceremonies. Show business politics shouldn't trump golf tradition at the Ryder Cup. And it was too bad fans arriving in the afternoon for Tuesday and Wednesday practice rounds saw so little if any of the U.S. team on the South Course. Thank goodness, the Europeans were winning the gallery over with both their presence and charm.

The Buick Open at Warwick Hills

This is really where winner Vijay Singh began his outstanding play that culminated in his no. 1 World Ranking. Vijay switched back to not only a new standard length putter but he also went back to a conventional putting grip. And when Vijay's putter gets hot, everyone else seems to be playing for second place. This year's Buick also was exciting for not only Tiger being in the hunt but also for crowd favorite John Daly. He may never make it as a Captain's Pick in the Ryder Cup, but Daly still remains one of golf's most popular players.

Farmers Charity Classic at

Egypt Valley: In a few weeks, we'll all know if Jim Thorpe was indeed the last winner of this Champions Tour event held in Grand Rapids for the past 18 years. In this tough economy, it'll be a major challenge for event organizers and the GR Jaycees to sign a title sponsor. Although it struggled at times fielding some of the biggest names on the Senior and Champions Tour, the event delivered some exciting golf for West Michigan. I'm one still hoping to hear the fast-talking and jovial Thorpe at next year's Media Day.

Michigan Amateur at Grosse Ile G & CC

I relished watching the state's best amateurs contend at match play at such a fine old and smartly renovated course as Grosse Ile. With its confounding and authentic Donald Ross-designed greens, it proved a tough nut for players to crack throughout the week. The green speed may have been a tad excessive at times, given the slopes of the green, but still the venue was excellent. I especially enjoyed watching such up and coming Big Ten players such as Ryan Brehm and Matt Harmon, both at Michigan State.

Pete Dye and Whistling Straits:

The best boat ride I took all summer was the new high speed ferry from Muskegon to Milwaukee to attend the PGA Championship at Whistling Straits. Without the ease and convenience of the new

ferry I may not have witnessed Dye's stunning creation for Herb Kohler. While it is really a links-like or links-inspired layout, I would argue that Whistling Straits is the result of most imaginative and daunting construction project ever successfully executed in golf. Pete Dye is golf's boldest visionary in terms of design. As Michelangelo needed the ample coffers of the Papacy to fund his masterpieces, Dye was fortunate to have Herb Kohler's deep checkbook to build

Whistling Straits. Kudos too for the PGA of America for how it "set up" the course for the championship. Unlike the USGA at Shinnecock, the PGA ably managed length, pin location and green speed as course conditions dictated.

Best stretch of amateur golf after a bad start: I was in the threesome in August when two-time Egypt Valley club champion Jim Hegarty began his defense of his title with a double bogey and

then carded this string of holes—birdie, par, eagle, birdie and ACE! Six under par in five holes over some of the toughest holes around. Hegarty finished the nine at 32 and fired a 68. Incidentally, it was Hegarty's first ace after more than 30 years of competitive golf.

It's that type of golf memory that's needed to ward off the numbing effects of the coming Michigan winter. May it pass quickly. *MG*

