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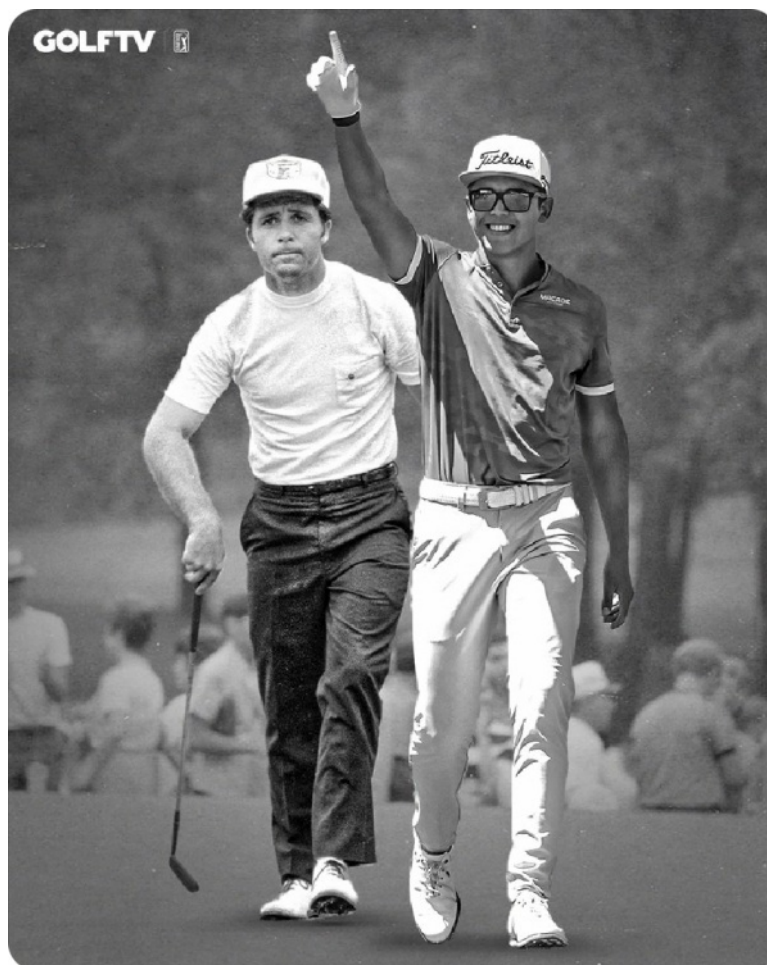
Sunday, April 28, 2024

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Hough's It

Garrick Higgo and Wilco Nienaber



22yo Garrick Higgo is the 1st SA winner on the PGA Tour of that age or younger since Gary Player in 1958!

**His last six events worldwide have seen him finish
T4th, 1st, T8th, 1st, T64th & 1st.**

[Image source](#)

It was always going to be a matter of time until the golf world stood up and took notice of these two rising South African golfing stars, but oh my, they both took centre stage at last week's hastily arranged and once-off Palmetto Championship.

At first, it was all about Wilco and his prodigious distance off the tee.

[Click here](#) to view.

But then he slipped back a little after a really hot start in Sunday's final round, and attention turned towards Higgo as he patiently made his way up the leaderboard, also assisted by some backtracking by the other contenders. (My attention turned towards my bed latish on Sunday evening, and I was both very surprised and excited upon waking up to the result, but also highly disappointed that I didn't stay up to watch it). Higgo is not short of length himself - not in Wilco's territory though - but he's well-known for his short game abilities too, and is a fierce competitor, and that proved his best asset in somewhat tough breezy conditions on Sunday.

He's now the owner of a PGA Tour title in only his 2nd event on the world's toughest golfing stage, but it's what comes with it that will really make his next few years a lot easier. He's now fully exempt for the rest of this season, plus for the whole of 2022 and 2023.

Then he's into The Masters for next April, plus the annual tournament-winners-only season opener in January in Hawaii. He's also now at #39 on the World Rankings, which pretty much means he's in all the Majors and WGC's that he can get his hands on.

From relying on getting sponsors invitations to being able to pick and choose events and being able to plan a schedule well in advance will make life completely different for Higgo in the next few years at least.

There is no doubt that South African golf is riding a wave at the moment. Whilst Louis has always been up there for over 10 years now, the new breed of Higgo and Nienaber, Christiaan Bezuidenhout, Erik van Rooyen, Dean Burmester and Dyllan Frittelli – amongst others - are certainly starting to contend and win on a more regular basis, something us armchair SA viewers have been starved of for some time.

And now with some of the 'ou toppies' like Charl Schwartzel and Branden Grace both starting to come good again, it's definitely exciting times for us. More on Branden below.

And then about Wilco, and what he does to the poor golf ball.

According to Ping Golf on Twitter, after studying over 75k swings in their motion capture lab, they found he had the fastest hand speed ever recorded of 28.5mph. And that is more than likely a result of him rotating and clearing his hips through impact as aggressively as shown in the pic below. They're almost 90° open at impact, and that rotational speed is what's pulling his hands through the hitting zone so fast, thereby creating club speeds of about 130mph with ball speeds of around 200mph with the driver, and so drives averaging 350yards are commonplace.

What's even more amazing is that compared to BDC, Wilco is tall and thin, a typical ectomorph with long levers like matchsticks, and all-natural to boot. Imagine if he bulked up like Bryson and really started some specialised speed training? I hope he doesn't!

We've seen of late how golf fans around the world are totally enthralled by the bombers on the PGA Tour, and this guy is going to show them even more than Bryson has shown them in the last year or so, and with seemingly a lot less effort.



Wilco at impact

[Sourced from Twitter](#)

The US Open



The 121st version of America's National Open Golf Championships gets underway this Thursday at the well-known Torrey Pines (South) course, a public course in the La Jolla community of San Diego and designed by William F. Bell in 1957, and which hosted its only previous US Open in 2008, where Tiger beat Rocco Mediate in an 18 hole playoff, plus 1 extra hole. It was the last 18-hole playoff ever in the event as the USGA changed soon after to a 2-hole aggregate score format. Torrey is also the venue of the annual Farmers Insurance event held there early each year, so most of the Tour Pros know the course pretty well.

Torrey Pines has kikuyu fairways which means typically deep and thick USGA rough, as well as poa annua greens, a grass type that grows pretty quickly during the day and can lead to bumpy putting surfaces as the day gets longer. Fast and bumpy greens with some wind blowing can be quite awkward for the players, in fact in the abovementioned 2008 Open, the two Pros in the playoff were the only ones to get under par that week, and even then it was only just one below!

Remember Tiger's putt on the 72nd hole to force the playoff with Rocco? [Click on this link](#) to watch the video until the end and see the not-so-smooth roll. It was only moments before Tiger made this putt that Lee Westwood had just left a birdie putt agonisingly short that would have got him into the playoff as well.

That tournament was also referred to as '*The Battle of Wounded Knee*' as Tiger famously won his 14th Major limping around with a fractured tibia and a torn ACL.



Torrey's iconic downhill par three 3rd hole

As for the contenders, I'm not doing the shotgun approach this time and naming a dozen or so of the usual suspects. This time I'm going with one from my heart, a group from my heart, an individual from my brain, and an individual from both my heart and my brain.

Let me explain.

The group is all the SA golfers teeing it up. To have one of ours involved all the way makes staying up late into the early hours of Monday morning – remember this event is being played on the West Coast – so much easier, not that I need that much motivation in Majors, but it would add a cherry on the top to see one of ours winning. We've been starved of Major contention for quite a while now, so I'm hoping for more of the same after the PGA last month.

The pure heart option is **Phil Mickelson**. The current US PGA Champion turns 51yo on Wednesday, is looking for an improbable 2nd consecutive Major at this highly improbable age, but even more importantly, needs a US Open title to complete his Grand Slam. This would take him into the rarefied atmosphere of only Tiger, Jack, Gary, Ben and Gene, the most elite club in golf's history. He's also finished as a runner-up six times in this event, so just maybe he fully deserves this one.

The individual from my brain says **Xander Schauffele**, the local San Diego man who's played in just four US Opens, but has finished T5th, T6th, T3rd and 5th. The World #6 is one of the most consistent players around and seems to always be on Major leaderboards, and being on home soil will be huge for him. He's the 1st player to begin his US Open career with four straight Top 10's since Bobby Jones between 1920 and 1926.

Then lastly, there's a pick that satisfies all of my cravings, and that's **Branden Grace**. He's definitely back in form, after winning earlier this year on the PGA Tour, and then contending just about all of the ways in the PGA. His game is suited to US Open-style course set-ups, where he can control his ball flight, especially if the wind blows, be pretty accurate for narrow fairways and thick rough, and he possesses a great short game. Added to that, he's a tough competitor, and with more confidence from recent performances, he's definitely trending upwards right now. Lastly, though,

there's the fact that he's had to pre-qualify for this event.

Can you imagine the story if a pre-q'er was to win the US Open?

I'm writing the story already!

NB: Schwartzel, van Rooyen, Frittelli and Thomas Aiken also came through the pre-q successfully.

TV times are from 3:45 pm on all four days.

Events

Unfortunately, due to the Covid issues, the Father's Day picnic for this Sunday at the club has had to be cancelled.

The Race to Steyn City

The **Jack Nicklaus Champion of Champions** event for the **Golden Bear Trophy** looks just about confirmed for the final weekend of November at Steyn City later this year, so the four top finishers on the table of the 6 Nicklaus Majors, with your 4 best of the 6 to count, will represent the club at this Nicklaus club event.

This Saturday sees the US Open leg being played, and it leaves just the Open Championship and Olympic legs to be completed.

League News

Our **Men's BB League** team had another great win on Sunday with a solid performance over Glenvista, and after a shock loss for the league leaders Kyalami, now find themselves tied together with them on top of the log. With two other clubs tied in the 3rd spot, five points behind with just three

games remaining, **Liad Hadar's** team needs just one more win to gain promotion back to the top division for next year.

Ladies League

Elaine Rubens' Thursday 2 team lost 2&1 against Bryanston last week, and **Grizelda Ruiters'** Thursday 1 side beat Parkview 3-0.

Shop News

Odyssey 2-Ball Ten and White Hot OG Putter

Odyssey's new range of 2-Ball Ten Putter are in store, as are their latest re-incarnation of the original and legendary White Hot Putter. All have the Stroke Lab shaft, and some of the new 2-balls have the Triple Track lines.

[Find out more >](#)



That's about all for this week.

Chat soon,

Kappy.

A weight off your shoulders
Rise to the occasion

Your swing is only as good as your shoulder strength. Make sure your shoulder and its surrounding muscles are healthy and strong to get the most out of your game.



If you're a golfer, you're at risk of a rotator cuff injury. This is due to the repetitive nature of a swing and repetitive stress on your shoulder and the surrounding muscles. The good news is, with the right exercise plan, you can prevent damage and injury. A great exercise to strengthen your shoulder and your shot is the dumbbell lateral rise.



Stronger you, stronger game

When you're in good physical condition, you're able to swing better and more consistently without fatiguing as easily during a round. By having a look at your swing, we can identify any areas that could be improved with some fitness work.

Book an assessment >



For **all shots** and **all golfers**

The new Srixon Z-STAR offers all the spin you need for more controlled greenside shots. But it's also packing serious speed for more distance off the tee.

Pick a sleeve up in the shop and experience the difference that these balls can make to your game.

There are very good reasons we feel so comfortable recommending Z-STAR.

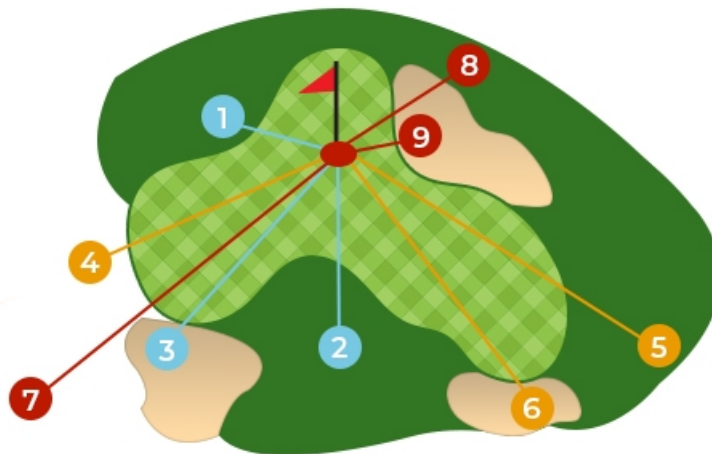
[Find out more >](#)

Break 100 **Keep it simple around the green**

If you're struggling to Break 100, we're betting you take too many wedge shots inside 70 yards.



In these situations you should have a singular focus: “Get onto the green with one wedge shot”. To do this more often, ignore the flag, it’s usually guarded by some form of trouble. Go for the fattest part of the green.



Try break 36

Place 9 golf balls at various spots around the practice green and see how many shots you need to chip and putt all 9 into the hole. If your score is over 36, you’re going to struggle to Break 100 out on the course. Let’s get together at the practice area and sharpen your short game.

[Improve your wedge play >](#)

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