

The 2010 Barclays, By Andrew C. Mutch, PhD

To win, it's an incredible year. There's nothing like the feeling of winning a PGA Tour golf tournament. You feel like you are the best player in the world for this week. I mean, it's just an amazing feeling to think there (are) 125 of the best players in the world started this week and I came out first. And it's an amazing feeling and one I'm awfully proud of.

- 2010 Barclays Champion, Matt Kuchar

The preparation of the golf course, the impeccable clubhouse facilities, the way the membership welcomed the TOUR -- all were factors that contributed to a first-class event and record-breaking crowds. In addition, the players' enthusiastic response to the venue was unprecedented.

- PGA Tour Commissioner Tim Finchem

After Ridgewood's thrilling and successful Barclays event in 2008, which Vijay Singh won in a dramatic 3-way playoff, the PGA Tour once again returned The Barclays to the club from August 24-27, 2010. The first of four post-season PGA Tour playoff events, The Barclays invites a field of 125 of the game's top players. As before, Ridgewood's demanding Tournament Course was utilized, comprised of a routing of the finest 18 of our 27 holes to challenge the greatest Tour professionals in the world. The 2010 course played to a par of 71, and stretched to a whopping 7,319 yards.

Leading up to the start of the tournament there were quite a few prominent stories emerging, the most active of which was discussion surrounding the appearance of Tiger Woods. The Barclays was slated to be Tiger's first official tournament following his much-publicized divorce. Many speculated that Ridgewood would provide an excellent opportunity for a fresh start, following many months of personal turmoil. Woods arrived at Ridgewood near the back of the pack at No. 112 in the FedEx Cup point standings, a position altogether unfamiliar to him.

Another topic of conversation was the heavy rains that preceded the start of the tournament for days, softening the course and setting the conditions for low scores. Much press was given to the wet pre-tournament conditions, leading to assertions that the course would favor the big hitters on Tour. While this assertion may have been true in theory, in practice, and with the aid of four consecutive days of glorious sunshine, it was left to the most skillful shotmakers to fight for the title. One final sidelight occurred early Wednesday morning when the cell phone alarm of Jim Furyk failed to rouse him with enough time to make his 7:30 a.m. Pro-Am tee time. Furyk's battery died overnight along with any chance for him to improve upon his No.3 standing in the FedEx Cup points. According to PGA Tour Policy, any players failing to compete in the Pro-Am, unless by injury or family emergency, will be disqualified from tournament play. Following Furyk's DQ ruling, quite a few players spoke out, including Phil Mickelson, who stated "It applies to only half the field and yet it affects the integrity of the competition. I cannot disagree with (the Rule) more. I have no idea how the commissioner let this rule go through. It's ridiculous." As for Furyk, he accepted full responsibility for the situation, saying, "I have no one to blame but myself."

With the pre-tournament talk completed, it was time for the Pros to finally play – and play they did. Tiger Woods stormed out of the gate carding birdies on 4 of his first 7 holes. He eventually birdied the 18th to record a stellar 6-under-par 65 - his lowest round of the year. "It's exciting to hit the ball flush like this again," Woods said. "It's something I've been missing all year. It felt good to hit the ball and shape it both ways and really hit it through the wind." Woods finished the day tied atop the leader board with Vaughan Taylor. Ryan Palmer, Adam Scott, and Brian Gay shot first-round scores of 66. Although the field was afforded the luxury of playing "lift, clean and place" during Thursday's opening round, Ridgewood put up an excellent defense.

One player with a strong local tie to Ridgewood, Kevin Streelman, made his mark on Friday after a blistering round of 63. Streelman's parents are from nearby Glen Rock, and his paternal grandfather and grandmother are buried in the George Washington Memorial Park alongside the 7th fairway.

Streelman's gallery was teeming with family and friends, who saw him card a back-nine 29 with six birdies, missing the RCC course record by one stroke. His 63, which was the low round of the tournament, put him a stroke behind the tournament's leader, Jason Day, and in a tie for second with Vaughn Taylor at 7-under par. After his round on Friday, he reflected on the day, stating "All the support doesn't hurt. I feel comfortable here. I'm going to enjoy it, I feel sure of that." He later admitted, "It's probably my favorite week on tour."

While Tiger's opening 65 and Streelman's second-round 63 were noteworthy and charged with energy, Saturday's play at Ridgewood demonstrated that steady wins the race. Certainly, this is true of Martin Laird and Matt Kuchar, who were the only players in the field to card all three rounds in the 60s. Laird, in particular, was brilliant in round 3, shooting a 65. A native of Glasgow, Scotland, Laird vaulted to 12-under par and a three stroke lead. Justin Johnson flexed his muscle, shooting a 64 to finish the day in T-second position at -9, along with Jason Day. Adam Scott finished with a 68 on the day to claim 4th position, followed closely by Kuchar, Streelman, Ryan Palmer, Justin Rose, and Vaughan Taylor.

During Sunday's final round, an important sub-plot developed surrounding European Ryder Cup Captain, Colin Montgomerie's Captain's Selections for the upcoming event at The Celtic Manor in Wales. The drama unfolded during the round at Ridgewood when Montgomerie made his selections public, tapping Luke Donald, Edoardo Molinari and Padriag Harrington for the team, and leaving off Paul Casey (#9 in the World Ranking) and Justin Rose (2 PGA Tour victories in 2010 and 10 Top-25 finishes.) To complicate matters, Harrington was given the news on the 7th fairway while playing alongside Casey. When asked how it felt to finish the remaining 12 holes with Harrington after the selection, Casey said "It was difficult. Can I go now?"

Apart from the Ryder Cup selections, far more immediate drama was unfolding on the course. Matt Kuchar arrived at Ridgewood with 10 Top-10 finishes to his credit in the 2010 season, but no victories. His final round 66 under stifling pressure became one of the best closing rounds of the season. Kuchar battled down the stretch, but despite one clutch shot after another, Laird still had enough of a lead to afford two putts on the 18th green to claim victory. However, the man who led the entire field in putting for the week displayed a case of nerves, forcing his first putt well-past the hole, and missing the return to force the second playoff in as many Barclays at Ridgewood.

Even before the playoff began it was apparent that Kuchar possessed all of the momentum. His steady and fearless form throughout the day on Sunday, in contrast to Laird's even par 71, foretold the eventual outcome of the playoff. Off the 18th tee both players hit the rough. Kuchar then proceeded to hit the shot of the year, skimming a low 7-iron under tree limbs, with the ball rolling off the back right apron and curling to a halt only 2-feet from the hole. Kuchar's dramatic 182-yard shot ensured birdie, and ultimately earned him his first victory of the year and the #1 spot in the FedEx Cup ranking.

"I knew I had to keep it low under some limbs, and just kind of chase it up and run it on," said Kuchar of his winning shot. "I saw Martin play his 72nd hole and it looked like he a similar shot. Looked like he was in the left rough, looked like he chased one up to the back. I was basically trying to hit a similar shot. I was looking to have it just land 15 yards short of the green, start chasing up. And I went with a 7-iron, the lie was pretty good. I was kind of deep enough in the rough that it ended up being a pretty good lie - and the shot came out beautifully. I ran up to that back right bank and saw the crowd just all of a sudden, the momentum built and they went just like a wave of people standing up and cheering. I knew it was getting good. That was an exciting way to kind of cap off this tournament." With his victory, Kuchar joins a host of illustrious Ridgewood champions like Pate, Watson, Trevino, and Singh.

As for the 2010 Barclays, it was regarded by everyone involved with the event as a resounding success. As with the 2008 event, numerous local and national charities benefitted greatly through inventive and successful programs, including Tickets For Charities, the Red Cross Shirts for Savings

Drive, The First Tee Program, and Birdies for the Brave. With two unqualified triumphs under its belt, The Ridgewood Country Club looks forward to again hosting the Barclays in 2014.