



THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

A MEMORABLE HISTORY OF THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

2008 *The Barclays*

"The players are going to love the course. It's one of the premier courses in the land. It's spectacular." – Phil Mickelson.

"This is the best track we played all year on Tour. Ridgewood could easily hold a major with only minor tweaking." – Sergio Garcia and echoed by several others

"Every single hole is individual ... no two are alike ... it's uphill ... it's downhill ... they're level ... the trees are magnificent ... it really is just such a pleasure. Yes, this will go straight into my top ten, the top ten I've ever seen. It's hard for me to think of another golf course I'd rather be on."
– David Feherty, CBS television color commentator live on national television

The course that received these accolades was a special Tournament Course that was a collection of the finest 18 of our 27 holes to accommodate the modern day golfer. The course played to a par of 71, stretching to 7,319 yards, forming a new Tillinghast course some 66 years after the classic designer's death. The route started with the first four holes on East, then shifted over to 6 Center (the "Nickel and Dime"), followed by 3-4-5 Center, then back to 5 East, which was the ninth hole. The back nine started with 6 and 7 East followed by 2 Center shortened to a long par 4, then 4 West, playing at 624 yards from the ladies tee on 7 Center, and finished with the last five holes on West. To provide additional length, new championship tees were constructed at 3 East, 5 East, 6 East and 4 West. At 4 Center, a new ladies tee was constructed from where they played the normally par-5 hole as a par 4.



*Vijay Singh - 2008 The Barclays Champion
(Photo - Mel Evans/AP)*



*Sergio Garcia - Final Round
(Photo-Getty Images)*

Possibly the summer's most refreshing stretch of weather greeted the touring pros, setting the tone for a week that everyone – the players, PGA officials, members, and spectators – agreed was a tremendous success. The players raved about the golf course while the spectators delighted in a thrilling climax that ended in a dramatic playoff.

After completion of the first hole on Sunday, six players were tied for the lead and another eight players were within three strokes of the leaders. The back nine started with Sergio Garcia, winner of the 2008 Players Championship, holding a precarious one-stroke lead at eight under par, with eleven golfers within two shots. Most couldn't make up any ground, beaten by RCC's long, narrow, and challenging finishing holes; although at various points during the ferocious back- nine dogfight, seven players were within a stroke of the lead. When Sergio bogied 16 after driving in the rough, he temporarily lost the lead.

Playing in the group ahead of Garcia, Kevin Sutherland, whose only Tour victory came in the 2002 Match Play Championship, had birdied 16 to reach eight under and take the lead. Garcia responded with a soaring 4-iron to the back fringe on 17, and chipped close for a birdie. At the time it looked like the shot that won the tournament for Sergio; Sutherland had hit his drive into the trees right of the eighteenth fairway. His ball deflected toward the fairway, landing next to a cart in the rough, from where he pulled his approach shot across the fairway to the left front of the green into deep rough above the deep, front greenside bunker and below the green. From there he hit a brilliant high chip shot a few feet from the pin to save par. Sutherland and Garcia posted identical eight-under-par 276s.

Playing in the last group, 45-year-old Vijay Singh, winner of the 2000 Masters and 1998 and 2004 PGA Championships, his left arm bandaged protecting tendonitis, birdied 13 to go seven under, then made a two-putt birdie at 17 to join the leaders. Both Garcia and Singh missed makeable birdie putts on 18 that would have given either the outright victory. Eighteen players finished within three shots of the lead.



Vijay Singh Wins on 2nd Playoff Hole (Photo-Munson/Star Ledger)

The three-man playoff began at 18, and to the gallery's amazement, first Garcia, then Singh, sank long birdie putts, from 27 and 26 feet, respectively, to prolong the playoff. When Garcia's putt fell into the left side of the hole and it appeared to be enough to win, he celebrated with a series of fist pumps and blew a kiss to the European Ryder Cup captain, Nick Faldo. But when Singh holed his putt, Garcia grinned and gave Singh a high-five. Sutherland drove into the right rough again and was on the back fringe in 3 when the two birdies ended his chances.



The playoff then moved back to 17. Hitting first, Garcia pulled his drive left and hit his second behind a tree in the right rough. After a free drop from a burrowing animal hole, he hit his third short of the green. With Singh already on the green in 2, Garcia's desperation birdie chip missed and Singh calmly two-putted for the win. It was his fourth in The Barclays (and its predecessors), and his 33rd on the PGA Tour. He earned \$1.26 million (from an overall purse of \$7 million) and 11,000 FedEx Cup points for his efforts. Phil Mickelson, with an especially impressive record on Tillinghast courses – second-place finishes in U.S. Opens at Bethpage Black (2002) and Winged Foot (2006), and a win in the 2005 PGA at Baltusrol – was, if not the pre-tournament favorite, expected to draw the largest galleries as long as he remained in contention.

Tiger Woods was forced to have season-ending surgery on his injured knee after his courageous playoff victory in the U.S. Open, and was unable to compete at The Barclays.

The first round belonged to 26-year-old Hunter Mahan, a former Oklahoma State golfer with one victory in five years on Tour, and four top-ten finishes in 2008. After a perfect drive on the first hole, Mahan spun his 98-yard wedge approach back into the hole for an eagle. He followed up with eight birdies and just one bogie for a nine-under-par 62 and a four-stroke lead while establishing a course record for the new Tournament course. Mahan expressed his surprise at shooting such a low score but attributed it in part to the perfect course conditions he encountered playing his round in the morning hours. Mahan finished the tournament with rounds of 73-74-73, well out of contention.

Mahan's closest pursuer was Paul Casey with an eight-birdie 66, while Dudley Hart and Kevin Streelman were among five golfers at 67. Defending champion Steve Stricker shot 68, making four birdies down the stretch, including a holed-out bunker shot on the fifteenth. Phil Mickelson, Sergio Garcia, Vijay Singh, and Kevin Sutherland all carded one-under-par 70s.

Playing for a position on the Ryder Cup team, Steve Stricker charged to the lead in the second round, parlaying birdie-eagle-par-birdie on holes 2 through 5 into a 64 and a three-shot lead at 132. The eagle came when he spun a 70-yard wedge shot back into the hole on the par 5 third.

First-round leader Mahan faded with a 73, but maintained second place by a stroke over Dudley Hart, who came home in 69; and both 2007 U.S. Open winner Angel Cabrera and Kenny Perry were among five players to card second round 67s. Sergio Garcia and Anthony Kim were also in the group and finished tied for sixth place with Casey and Kevin Streelman. Eight strokes behind the leader were both Mickelson and Singh, both of whom carded his second consecutive 70. Among those who missed the cut, which came at 141, were Padraig Harrington, Ernie Els, Retief Goosen, Fred Couples, and 2008 U.S. Open hero Rocco Mediate.

The complexion of the championship changed dramatically on the twelfth hole in the third round when Stricker, still with a three-shot lead over Mahan, tried to get home from the right rough but instead hit his shot far to the left into waist-high grass and bushes. After declaring the ball lost and laying up on his second attempt, he took a triple bogie 7. Mahan, on the other hand, hit his approach into the face of a bunker fronting the green and hit his sand shot over the green, leading to a double bogie 6. At that point Stricker found himself in a tie with five others at seven under but he added three more bogies over his last six holes to fall into a tie with eleven others, Mahan among them, for eleventh place.





Kevin Strelman Narrowly Misses Playoff (Photo Munson/Star Ledger)

Taking up the slack was 29-year-old Tour rookie Kevin Strelman, a Q-school and Duke University graduate whose parents once lived in nearby Glen Rock before moving to Illinois, where Kevin was born. His uncle, Wendell Breithaupt, once belonged to RCC and his paternal grandparents are buried in the cemetery to the right of the seventh hole. Kevin never got to play the RCC course when visiting relatives in New Jersey, “didn’t even know it was there,” as he admitted during the tournament. Strelman birdied the sixteenth hole with a twenty-five foot putt from the fringe to take a one-stroke lead over Singh,

Garcia, and 2003 Masters champion Mike Weir (67), who was sporting a full playoff beard, and Paul Casey (69), a veteran of the European Tour and also seeking a Ryder Cup position.

With thirty-eight golfers within six strokes of the lead, Sunday’s final round promised to be as exciting as it would be wide open. Strelman started the final round shaky, three-putting the first green for a bogie. Sutherland, on the other hand, birdied the first two holes and joined the logjam at 7 under par. Remarkably, the scoreboard remained relatively stable for several holes. Garcia’s birdie 2 at the tenth hole put him in the lead.

Mickelson shot a final round 68 to get to four under and finished on even terms with Stricker, who carded 71.

There were almost 20,000 spectators at Ridgewood on Saturday, even more on Sunday, and a total of some 75,000 for the week. The tournament was a great financial success, and the PGA Tour was able to donate almost \$1 million to about thirty local and area charities selected jointly by RCC and the Tour.



Photo - Getty Images

