

THE MASTERS 2002: The world is watching

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
April 13, 2002 Saturday,, Home Edition

Copyright **2002** The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
ajc.com

Section: Sports;; Column

Length: 709 words

Byline: FURMAN BISHER

Body

Augusta --- The leaderboard was beginning to look like a case for the Immigration Service. Singh. Goosen. Harrington. Garcia. Cabrera. Jimenez. Bjorn. At that moment, you had to go down to Phil Mickelson to find an American in the **Masters** fray, and he was tied for sixth. It was, you might say, following an ideal set forth by Bobby Jones and Clifford Roberts, explaining all those many sponsors' invitations to foreign players by Augusta National management through the years, grievously offending stateside critics.

Until Gary Player won the championship in 1961, the **Masters** was mainly home-cooking. Only Americans won. Twice, foreign players launched a challenge, as in 1968, when the crestfallen Roberto De Vincenzo tied with Bob Goalby, but signed for an incorrect score and uttered the immortal epitaph, "I am a stupid."
AJC

George Knudson of Canada tied for second the next year. Player won twice in the '70s and took personal command of the foreign challenge until 1980. Severiano Ballesteros won in a blowout, and from that point forward there was hardly a year when a player from over the borders wasn't playing a heavy hand. Since that time, 11 **Masters** have been won by players from overseas, all from Europe until Vijay Singh broke the ranks two years ago.

Friday, April 12, was being observed as the day of Arnold Palmer's last **Masters**, but Singh became point man again for the foreign threat. Meanwhile, what was going on in the **Masters world** of other champions, tested now by the new dimensions of the course?

Well, other than Singh, not so good. Tiger Woods was lurking, and while he's good at that, the game was getting away from him. Jose Maria Olazabal was holding his place on the board, and you have to say he's in striking distance, considering that two days of action remain. Bernhard Langer and Craig Stadler would make the cut at 1-over, and that brings up memory of the most unlikely playoff in any **Masters**. Quick now, who was Stadler's playoff victim? Out of distant memory comes the name of Dan Pohl.

Throughout the week, journalism has dealt excessively on Woods, on David Duval, on Charles Howell III, Jack Nicklaus, and of course, Palmer. Suddenly, it struck. Where is Ballesteros? Is he in town? Finally, I had to check the pairings, and there he was, matched up with Steve Stricker and Kenny Perry, whose course in Franklin, Ky., I plan to stop over and play on the way to the Kentucky Derby.

How did it go with Seve? Not too well, but there he was, still darkly handsome, chatting away after a round of 81 and out.

THE MASTERS 2002: The world is watching

"Do you give any thought to when you might not come back to play?" he was asked.

"I will be back," he said. "I will be back many times."

Nick Faldo was on the edge when the rain squall struck. Fred Couples, yes. Tom Watson was cruising along until he ran into a 41 on the back nine. Ben Crenshaw posted a 35 on the front nine, then had a train wreck. Larry Mize, the hometown, came close at 148. Otherwise, the elder former champions were merely playing it out. Tommy Aaron broke 80 both days, Charles Coody did not, and no one expected more. Player, the little warhorse, would not make it, but he was here for the show. Nor would Ian Woosnam at 155. Fuzzy Zoeller was shot down by a couple of double bogeys.

When the rain struck, Palmer had just parred the 12th, his third par of the day, and was on his way to the 13th. Then something out of thin air brought up a flying memory out of the exciting year of 1960, when Palmer won and in the process, "Arnie's Army" was mustered.

We had a part-timer at The Atlanta Journal who covered prep sports for us, a "stringer" in our terms, also just a year removed from the penitentiary for forgery. On the side, he ran one of those flying banner aviation services. On Saturday afternoon, in the heat of Palmer's charge, a tow plane flew over with a banner that read, "GO ARNIE!"

The next day the plane came over again and the banner read, "GO --- Arnie's Army," as if a message from his screaming throng. The next day I ran across our enterprising "stringer" and asked him if that was his plane towing the banners.

"Sure was," he said. "A fellow paid me \$900 Saturday. The one Sunday was mine, on the house." furman@ajc.com

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: TOURNAMENTS (89%); IMMIGRATION (78%); GOLF (78%); SPORTS & RECREATION (76%); COOKING & ENTERTAINING (55%)

Person: PHIL MICKELSON (57%); TIGER WOODS (55%)

Geographic: AUGUSTA, GA, USA (59%); KENTUCKY, USA (90%); UNITED STATES (91%)

Load-Date: April 13, 2002