

PLAYER POOL

XVI



Dear Members of the Player Pool,

Once more we find ourselves about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. I know I am not alone in expressing great sadness we will not all be together in person this tournament, but I take solace in knowing that the Player Pool carries on.

Such is the life of a Player Pooler that only one among us can spend the offseason with any sort of mental clarity or happiness. Whether it be through soul-searching solo hikes, boundary-pushing expeditions beyond the reach of man, the study of great sporting champions past and present, rescuing innocent animals, or the simple pleasures of hearth and home, each of us has their own way of coping with defeat and returning refreshed for a new year. I hope you find these stories of the past twelve months as inspiring as I do.

As careers blossom, children grow, the pressures of adult life mount, and Josh finishes training, our collective spirit will be tested. It would be easy for a less-devoted group to lose touch and see their enthusiasm for glory whittle away, replaced by a dispiriting resignation to the mundane tasks and chores of every day life. But I know that will not be us and I look forward to the day when an annual March reunion is an unquestioned mark on all our calendars.

Last, I want to close with another yearly tradition as important as any other: the public thanking of Dr. Zahm for his contributions to the drafting process, the website, and (undoubtedly) great content for years still to come. Without his work, we would be nothing but just another group of guys doing just another tournament pool. And that, I think we can all agree, is something we never want to be.

A handwritten signature consisting of the letters "R" and "Z" joined together in a fluid, cursive style.

The Comptroller
3.15.23
Raleigh, NC

The Defending Champion

‘11, ‘22

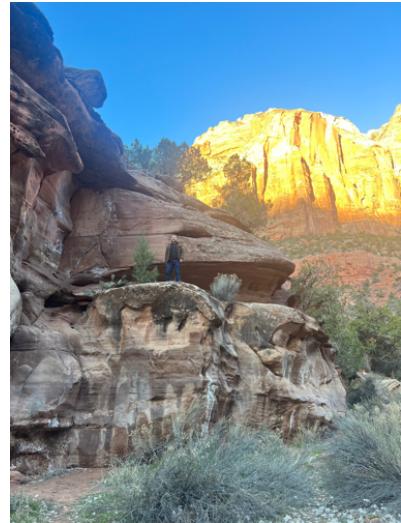
Nine years of frustration finally gave way to a resounding Rob victory in 2022, his second title overall. Never ashamed to bask in his glory, Rob was surprised to see the toll the media attention was taking on his young family (Lizzy 4, Marie 6). “They couldn’t even go to school without their picture being taken,” he told me. “So the choice was obvious: I invited the paparazzi to Cabo with just me.”



The Curse of the Gator?

‘08, ‘18

Coming off his 2018 title, Farach had a right to feel invincible in March of 2019. But there's little denying that ever since he touched The Gator on the Wild Dunes Harbor Course, his scores have been in a precipitous decline (from 363 to 304 to a dismal 252 last year). While outwardly still a leading figure at Houston Methodist Hospital, the curious timing of a trip out west with Laura, Natalie (10), and Simone (7.5) has many wondering: Do these raw images capture a tenacious defender and former champion? Or are we looking at a shell of a man trying too hard to convince the world the Gator has not sapped all his strength?



The Mala(s)tacks

‘16

Year Three of the Malatack Experiment is here and despite a lackluster fifth place performance in ‘22, don’t expect them to abandon their unwavering commitment to risk-taking, off-the-sheet picking, and outside the box thinking. Let’s not forget that they roared onto the scene in ‘21, nearly snatching Dr. Zahm’s first title from his grasp before settling on a second place finish.

As Patrick admits, the ups and downs of the Player Pool are similar to the ups and downs of the market. In this way, his whole life is one big Player Pool. How does he cope with the stress? Heli-skiing, golfing (including a recent eagle on a par four) and time with his girlfriend and their dog. A recent Malatack family reunion in Napa doesn’t hurt either.



For James, he knows that even as he stares at a potential sixth season in a row without a title there's no time for self pity with Lucas (8), Harrison (3), and Daphne (1) watching their father's every move. Last year's crushing Player Pool loss (in addition to losses by the Phillies in the World Series and the Eagles in the Super Bowl), prompted Lucas to ask his dad the hardest question of all: Why do my teams always lose big games? "When I heard that," James told me, "I knew I had to be strong and just keep going. Keep believing."



Bryan ‘09, ‘12

After winning two of the first six Player Pool titles, Bryan's drought without a ring now extends to nine years, the longest such streak outside of Alex. To add insult to injury, Bryan finished in last place in '22 and also holds the second lowest overall point total. Bryan's solution? Go to see championship-caliber Philadelphia teams in the World Series and NFC Championship to remind himself what it takes to get to the next level.



Josh ‘10, ‘13, ‘17, ‘19

Dare we say that marriage, finishing training, and establishing himself in Cleveland (I think he's in Cleveland) have softened Josh at last? It's been three years without a Josh title, a mere blip for us mortals but a veritable slump for Player Pool's self-professed GOAT.

In a wide-ranging interview, Josh tells me he's abandoning the NBA player offspring strategy, which made him so famous, as it's now attained such widespread adoption that counter maneuvers are necessary to stay ahead of the curve. Even Buddy Boeheim (a '21 draftee) was a step in this direction as his father was not a notable player in the league.

Below you will see the following: A picture of Josh and his wife Hope. A picture of Josh sleeping, which he says demonstrates the amount of effort needed to win this year. A picture of an old Jokic driver's license to demonstrate the look Josh is giving when he sees his competition this year. And finally a picture of Hope as a child with Chuck Berry, with no context provided for how that is relevant to the Player Pool.





Alex ‘07*

Until a couple of days ago, Alex was enjoying a quiet offseason spent reuniting with the University of Michigan on research, taking Elias to kindergarten, Harlan to preschool, and doing his best to stop Spencer (1.5) from tackling both. Then, the texts started flying. While some might admire Alex not being tethered to his phone, few could be found on our text thread. Talk of waiting for Alex to pick naturally led to talk of his lack of participation in the NBA text thread, which naturally bled over to what was once a taboo topic but now has gained trained traction in the mainstream media:

Is Alex's '07 title legit?

Whatever your feelings on this complex legal and moral question are, what's not up for debate is that Alex has not won since.

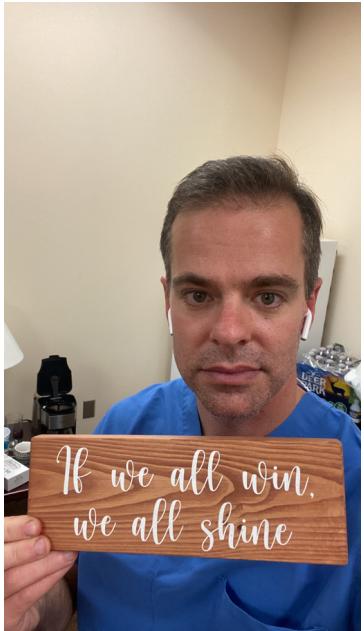
"Sometimes in the middle of the night I'll think about '19," he told me. It was a year Alex finished in second, losing to Josh. "I still have it. And if I believe, good things will happen."



The Comptroller

'14, '15

The glory days of back-to-back titles in '14/'15 seem like a long time ago now but I'm betting on a new change to turn my luck around. Tomorrow I will be signing to join UNC (and leaving Duke in the process), a move that will no doubt make Rob happy. Selfishly I'm hoping that UNC energy rubs off on me although maybe this wasn't the best year to do it. We got a dog this past year (pictured) and I'm slowly figuring out the rules for hockey.



Dr. Zahm ‘21

No longer the defending champion, the luster still hasn't worn off Adam's '21 title. The Player Pool's Renaissance Man, Adam spent his offseason delving into oil painting ("I really tried to capture what a loser Doleac is for not getting a chair," he explains), saving a cat from a tree, reserving the venue for Player Pool XXX, and getting one of his photographs featured on the homepage of ebird. All while a hit for his life is still out from the Philadelphia Parking Agency he pissed off and he gets the first round of papers at his new lab published this year. What a guy.

