

Nike live!

Golf tournament coverage reaches television viewers

By Tammy Hayes

Perhaps the next best thing to playing golf at Prestonwood Country Club is watching the Nike Carolina Classic golfers swing their way through the tournament.

But for those who couldn't see the latest tournament action in person, the event was televised live for the first time ever by the Golf Channel, May 16-18.

The Golf Channel's first day ever on the air was January 17, 1995. But the idea for the channel was conceived in 1990 when the PGA tour was held in Alabama.

According to Mark Oldham, the vice president of tournament affairs, the Golf Channel's origins began when Arnold Palmer was staying at the home of Joe Gibbs during the tournament. When Gibbs followed Palmer through the tournament, he saw the potential for the success of a channel strictly for golf.

Now, six years later, the Golf Channel is currently broadcast to 2.5 million people.

"The subscriber base is continuing to grow each day we're doing business," Oldham said.

He said that the company expects to expand, televising to 6 million people, by the end of the year.

Local residents receive the Golf Channel through Time-Warner Cable.

The Golf Channel decided to cover the Nike tournament at Prestonwood because of its timing in the overall tournament schedule. The channel mainly covers the senior tour and the LPGA tour. The Nike tournament at Prestonwood was held at the right moment when the channel had time in its programming to cover it.

"Over the last 18 months, we've found that the level of play in Nike golf is unbelievable," producer Keith Hirshland said. "We found out in a hurry with our first event last year that we were in for a treat."

Partly because the Golf Channel covered the Prestonwood tournament, the course was altered to meet the needs of the channel.

The Golf Channel, along with the club and tour, made the decisions on the course.

The tournament's front nine holes were played on the club's Meadows course and the back nine were from the Highlands course.

Another major reason the course was altered was because tournament director MaryMac Webb wanted holes one and 10 to be close to the club house, preventing golfers from needing transportation.

"It was a combination of what might look best on television and what might be the most exciting way to play the course," Hirshland said.

In order to show footage from the back nine holes, 80,000 feet of cable were run throughout the course. The channel brought in over 100 people to set up and produce the coverage for the Golf Channel.



QUIET, GOLFERS AT WORK—Bill Andrews holds up the "Quiet" sign on the first tee of the Nike Carolina Classic. The event was televised by the Golf Channel.

Because of the numerous holes and the size of the fairways, golf is one of the most expensive sports to produce, according to Oldham.

"It's a major production," he said. "On a football field, you've got 100 yards and you know what your field is. Baseball and basketball are the same way. With golf, it varies from place to place. Each golf course is different."

Both Hirshland and Oldham said they were impressed with the Prestonwood course.

"Compared to other courses we televise, it's among the top courses," Oldham said. "The aesthetics of the course are beautiful. It looks really good on televi-

sion."

"This is an event," Hirshland said. "Even though we travel around to 35 different golf tournaments a year, there's one Nike Tour event here."

Hirshland said that the channel is looking forward to returning to Prestonwood in the future. In the meantime, local golfers can continue to follow their favorite tournaments on the channel.

"The thing that sets us apart (from other channels) is our commitment to the game," Hirshland said. "We're not only the Golf Channel, we're golf's channel. We don't have anything else on our plate."

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Prestonwood Notebook

Durham golfer nails hole-in-one, wins car

The most exciting and controversial moment of the Nike Carolina Classic was a hole-in-one that nobody saw.

Durham's John Maginnes aced the 205-yard fifth hole with a 1-iron, but he and his two playing partners didn't realize the ball was in the hole.

"There wasn't any gallery out there, so we didn't know it was in until we got up there. I just thought it was close," Maginnes said.

There is no question that Maginnes had a hole-in-one, but a controversy arose over the awarding of a Buick Riviera, which supposedly would go to the first golfer to score an ace in Saturday's round.

However, the insurance contract stipulated the third round rather than the third day, and because Thursday's opening round was washed out—it was the second round that was being played on Saturday.

The latest word is that Maginnes is likely to win the automobile, which is worth considerably more than the \$1,700 check he picked up for a 54-hole total of 212.

"It's pretty much a done deal [that he will get the car]," said Julian Williamson, marketing director of the classic. "I've talked with Maginnes since the tournament and that's what I told him. The Buick people say all that needs to be done is the necessary paperwork."

That paperwork, said Williamson, includes signatures of Maginnes' playing partners to verify the feat.

Nike golfers say it takes about \$1,000 in tournament earnings to break even for the week. If that's the case, then 28 golfers who made the cut actually lost money despite receiving a paycheck.

One of those below the \$1,000 mark, however, did make a small profit. That would be none other than Vance Heafner, Prestonwood's director of golf. Since Heafner had no travel expenses, he at least had a little left over after his caddy and the government took their cut. Heafner, incidentally, finished the tournament with a 54-hole total of 215, which is one under par.

Another Prestonwood golfer, Chuck Tickle, was only amateur in the tournament. Tickle failed to make

the cut after shooting a 72-76, but still had memories of the 1995 tournament when he advanced to the final two rounds.

Top prize of \$36,000 in the Nike Classic went to Glen Hnatik, who set a Prestonwood record by shooting a 64 on the final day of the \$200,000 event.

Hnatik, who had a three-day total of 205, didn't claim the title until winning a playoff with Craig Perks, who sunk a 25-foot birdie putt on the final hole to tie for the lead.

Hnatik, who won with a par on the first playoff hole, registered his third career win on the Nike tour and jumped into the top 15 on the money list. He also became the fifth player in tour history to win tournaments in three different years.

The pros aren't the only winners at Prestonwood. The new men's match play champion is Preston Edmondson, who defeated J.R. Robinson in the final round.

Other flight winners included Steve Metzger, first flight; Tom Howard, second; Steve Sims, third; Jack Wallace, fourth; and Dick Shannon, fifth.

In consolation play, the winners included Tom Haler, championship flight; Jim Larson, first flight; Rick Braswell, second; Keith Brokke, third; Tal Holloway, fourth; and Alan Sowards, fifth.

June's dining calendar includes a Father's Day Buffet on Sunday, June 16. There will be seatings at noon and 2 p.m.

Dad will be treated to a special seafood and prime rib buffet with all the trimmings. Reservations can be made by calling 467-2566.

In the formal dining room, authentic French bistro cuisine and wines selected by the sommelier will be offered each week night in June. The standard menu and wine list also will be available.

Prestonwood Country Club is a private club and attendance at all functions and activities is for members and guests only.

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