

My diary from the U.S. Open

BY CARR MCCALLA

Tuesday, June 13, 2006: The alarm went off at 4 a.m. this morning. My flight leaves Baton Rouge at 7 a.m. (or so I thought). When I arrived at the airport, I was informed that the flight crew didn't get in until late last night and in order for them to get enough rest we wouldn't be leaving until 8:25 a.m.

As a consequence, I'll miss my connection in Atlanta. Instead of arriving at 1 p.m., I won't get into New York until after 3 p.m. I'm planning on going to see the Yankees-Indians game tonight with Henri Wolbrette from our Board and Mark Hill, Executive Director of the Kentucky Golf Association (they're also working as Rules Officials at the Open). The only good news is that the delay shouldn't create any issues in terms of getting to the game (maybe even for batting practice).

Didn't make batting practice, but got to the game in the top of the first inning. We had great seats, down the third-base line in the second level. It was a pitcher's duel, with the Yankees winning, 1-0, thanks to a Robinson Cano home run into the right-field seats. Thankfully, we had one of Henri's New York friends with us to guide us through the subway and train systems. After a late dinner in Manhattan, we finally got back to the hotel around 1 a.m. and into bed about 30 minutes later.

Wednesday, June 14, 2006: We were at Winged Foot by 8 a.m. today. After a wonderful breakfast at the USGA Hospitality area on site, Mark, Allen Richardson from Tennessee, and I set out to walk the course. I had been fortunate enough to play Winged Foot about 15 years ago, but must confess that I didn't remember all the holes. It is really a beautiful venue, unbelievably green with deep, deep bunkers and tree-lined fairways. The USGA is altering the rough heights this year, having an intermediate cut of rough that's not too severe, a first cut of primary rough that's a bit higher, and then another cut of primary rough that I'm just hoping we don't lose any balls in. Their philosophy this year is that the farther off line you hit it the more difficult your recovery should be. They are also moving the tees around a bit, especially on holes No. 3 (par 3) and No. 12 (par 5). The third hole will play anywhere from 215 to 245 yards and No. 12 will go either 570 or 640 yards. I like the changes. I think it makes the players think a bit more and will make for a fairer, more exciting Championship.

We were back at the hotel by 2 p.m. to get ready for our Rules Meeting and Dinner. We bussed to Brae Burn Country Club for the 4 p.m. meeting where USGA staff briefed us on the idiosyncrasies of the course setup. This year they have put in ball drops on all of the TIOs (temporary immovable obstructions, e.g., scoreboards, TV towers, concessions stands, etc.) near the greens and are making the ball drops mandatory when taking relief from the TIOs. This is different from the way TIOs are treated on the PGA Tour so I'm sure we'll have to explain it to some of the players when it comes up (even though they all received a detailed explanation of the procedure). Eddie Merrins (the 'Little Pro' from Bel-Air Country Club in Los Angeles) spoke to us briefly and we all received a copy of his new book, *Playing a Round with the Little*

Pro, which he also autographed for us. Eddie grew up in Meridian, Miss., and played golf at LSU years ago. I was worn out so when we returned to the hotel I went straight to bed.

Thursday, June 15, 2006: I have a late starting time today. Don't go off until 1:36 p.m. so I slept in until 7 a.m. or so. My group today includes Sean O'Hair, Olin Browne, and Mark Hensby from Australia. I've never had any of the three in previous events so I'm looking forward to being with them. I'm off early tomorrow (7:11 a.m., the second starting time of the day) so I can catch a 6 p.m. flight back home. I started only working the first two days of the Open a couple of years ago. The USGA doesn't need nearly as many rules officials to help after the cut and it allows me to get back home by late Friday night, have the weekend at home and be at work Monday morning.

Staying through all four rounds requires a Monday flight home and I can't be at work until Tuesday morning.

Tiger Woods is in the group in front of us today. He's playing with current U.S.

Amateur Champion Edoardo Molinari and last year's U.S. Open Champion Michael Campbell. It should be a challenge for my group today as playing in front of or behind Woods is never easy because of the crowds.

Zero rulings today. The only issue I had was crowd control. On two of the first four holes, the marshals didn't manage the crosswalks very well and my group had to wait a couple of minutes after the green and/or fairway had cleared to play because there were still people crossing the fairway. Needless to say, my players weren't pleased. I radioed in to the supervisor of the marshals to alert them to the fact that we were having problems and it was impacting my group's ability to play their shots in a timely manner. While they assured me they'd take care of it, I decided to move ahead to be sure that the crosswalk marshals stayed on their toes. For the rest of the round I stayed in the drive zone when my group played off the tee, then moved forward to the green for their approach shots and stayed there until they finished the hole before going forward again. Our pace was good until we reached the par-3 10th where Olin Browne struggled to a triple-bogey six. By the time we finished the 10th we were out of position and were put 'on the clock' by one of the officials assigned that duty as we started the 11th hole. Hensby's drive on No. 11 went right and hit a spectator right on top of the head, bounding forward another 20 yards. The spectator was a bit bloodied but in good spirits when we reached him. Hensby spent a minute or so with him to be sure he was OK. In spite of that we made up some time on 11 and were back in position by the time we reached the 12th tee. Winged Foot was the winner today as there was only one score under par (a 1-under 69 by Colin Montgomerie). My group had 73 ((Hensby), 76 (O'Hair), and 80 (Browne).

Friday, June 16, 2006: My alarm went off at 4:45 a.m. but I must confess I caught about 20 minutes additional sleep before



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