

FIRST TEE TOUR | 2008 Season Summary



MAY 21, 2008

McCLENDON KICKS OFF FIRST TEE TOUR WITH DECISIVE VICTORY

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) – Matt McClendon won the first tournament of the year here on Wednesday, as a superbly steady round left him as the only player under par. The 3 shot victory was his first in 2 years, and provided a fantastic jumpstart to his 2008 campaign. With muggy conditions and soggy fairways slowing down the rest of the field, all McClendon could smell was victory and the sweet aroma of honeysuckle. "With Doug Tapp hitting 350 yard drives hole after hole, I knew I was going to have to really step it up", commented McClendon, "Back to back one-putts really kept my round going".

The FTT continues next week at the \$6.1 million Crowne Plaza Invitational at Colonial.



MAY 21, 2008

NEWPORT GOLFER "TAPPS" IN FOR FIRST FTT VICTORY

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) – Swamp butt, greens that wouldn't break, and air horns going off during backswings agitated the next to last group late Friday afternoon; but nothing could stop Doug Tapp. Tapp came roaring back with back-to-back birdies on holes 8 and 9 to take home his first FTT tournament victory. He won both low gross and net, a rarity on the First Tee Tour. "It's great to win," Tapp said. "I called home to Newport, and they're dancing in the streets. I can't wait to get there and celebrate with them."

Four players tied at -2, but Tapp's birdie on the par 5 eighth secured the net championship in a scorecard playoff. A par on hole #4 secured the gross championship.

Air horns were heard by the last group beginning at hole #7. Perplexed by the sound, the puzzle was finally solved on #9 when the teenage worker came down to hurry the groups finishing up. Apparently he had to be somewhere by 9 p.m., and was shutting the gates. The mismanagement of the situation was reported to the committee, who plans to take action with the First Tee. "These is a tour facility, not a putt-putt course," a committee spokesperson said. "Those workers are paid a wage (albeit minimum) to keep things running smoothly out here. We were very disappointed in the staff Wednesday night."

THE FTT resumes Wednesday, May 28th , at the Memorial.



MAY 28, 2008 - STOCKETT WINS IN PLAYOFF

TOUR VETERAN MOVES TO 3rd PLACE ON MONEY LIST

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) - Early round frustration culminated in jubilation for Jonathan Stockett on #9, as he hit the pin, tapped in for birdie, and celebrated what he would soon learn to be his first championship of the year. Stockett's birdie created a 4 way tie for 1st, and he would ultimately win on the 4th scorecard playoff hole (#5). This is the 2nd week in a row that a birdie on #9 clinched the victory. Doug Tapp birdied 8 and 9 to win the Colonial last week.

"It was a rough start with back to back bogeys on 1 and 2. To top that off, I had to play with Kent (Boling). I caught myself looking at those Titleist muscle-back forged blades, and I have nightmares about hitting those things," Stockett

said. "Then things got a little disorienting on #8 with the delay. Adam (Jordan) lost his wedge in the woods left... literally, he lost his club when he threw it in the woods... that took 5-10 minutes to locate. However I grinded out the par there and stuck it on 9. Yea, I think my game came together there on 9."

"It was a little awkward honestly," said Paul Svoboda of Stockett's shot on #9. "It was a great shot, but there was a lot of prancing around and fist pumping afterward, reminiscent of a Davis Love III celebration. It really made everyone in our foursome uncomfortable, but we understood the emotion and had fun with it." The FTT resumes next week at the Stanford St. Jude Classic.



JUNE 4, 2008 - BOGEY ON FINAL HOLE SEALS PLAYOFF VICTORY

TWITTY SURVIVES WARDROBE MALFUNCTION TO WIN ST. JUDE CHAMPIONSHIP

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) – Paul Twitty quietly went about his business here Wednesday, with a steady start to what would be a winning round of golf. It was not without a bit of drama, however. Twitty, after being notified of the current scores and standings by the group's standard bearer, became weak-kneed over his 9th hole tee shot. The mounting pressure and stress of the moment caused him to fidget and struggle to arrange the sunglasses on top of his head at an acceptable position. Numerous attempts were made to secure the sunglasses, but they would not cooperate. Finally, after a missed green, a chip, and a couple of putts, Twitty's bogey and his first victory of the season was secure.

The bogey on #9 forced a playoff with the highly consistent Matt McClendon, and Lance Kauffman, but Twitty's clutch par on #4 proved to be the difference. With the victory, Twitty moves up to fourth on the Tour Money List, and McClendon's tie for second vaulted him back atop the standings.

The FTT continues next week at the U.S. Open.



JUNE 11, 2008 - SVOBODA WINS IN PLAYOFF

WIN COMFORTS FORMER OBU PITCHER AFTER ALMA MATER LOSES CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) – In keeping with the modern era U.S. Open, Svoboda employed a "Blast and Slash" strategy here Wednesday, overpowering this major championship venue with a combination of power and finesse not seen in some time. Towering drives were followed by powerful wedge play into the firm greens- and the combination proved a winning combination.

Hole #4 forecast a magical round for Svoboda. After ignoring the pressure caused by a pull hook drive into the left rough, Svoboda managed a bold punch-out and then launched a dart at the back pin placement leaving an up-hill 5-footer. What ultimately proved to be the winning putt culminated with the requisite Tiger fist-pump as Paul rolled in his fourth straight par.

Conservative play sealed the victory on #8, as Svoboda made the smart play and "layed up," when faced with a difficult third shot around the trees. His confidence in the short game paid off with a chip and one-putt for an unlikely par. It was at this point that his playing competitor Chad Fellers took out his Sharpie and asked for an autograph.

Denver Peacock, who felt like he might have won the tournament after birdie on both Par 3's, exhibited a strange bit of gamesmanship when he ran across the #9 green yelling "That's on you, Jordan!!!!". #4 was also exciting for Peacock. "I

hit the pin on #4 today from 160 yards out," Peacock said. "Too bad the next shot was a tap in for double." The FFT continues next week at the Travelers Championship.



JUNE 18, 2008

MARQUEZ HOLDS ON FOR A 1 SHOT VICTORY AT TRAVELERS.

LITTLE ROCK, AR (AP) - It was a day of lower temperatures and lower scores at the Traveler's Championship on Wed. Mike Marquez shot 6 under for a one shot victory over Paul Svoboda during yesterdays event.

After winning, Marquez said, "I was inspired by Roco's performance on Monday. I told myself, If he can fend off Tiger for 90 holes, then why should I be scared of Adam on 9?" That inspiration must have payed off as Mike bounced back from a 44 last week to shoot 35 this week. When asked about his resemblance to Roco Mediate, Marquez replied "He is someone I've always looked up to... literally."

Several players in the winning group commented about the benefits of playing in running shoes. One player said, "You know, Tiger would not have to get knee surgery if he played in New Balance". The Woods camp had no comment on the matter due to their lucrative deal with Nike.

Other season low scores included Wes Daniels 35, Jonathan Stockett 35, Mike High 36, and Paul Svoboda 37. After just returning from a Dave Pelz scoring school in Florida, Mike High commented, "Good grief, what does it take to win out here? I shoot even par and I'm still 3 shots back." Marquez simply replied, "Welcome to the big leagues brother".

Look out for the new improved Mike High in next week's Buick Open.



JUNE 27, 2008 | STOCKETT WINS AGAIN

INCORRECT SCORECARD TALLY AFFIRMS SECOND TOUR VICTORY ON THIRD PLAYOFF HOLE

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) - From the sound of it, Jonathan Stockett was struggling around the course on Wednesday, trying to keep a failing game from disintegrating into thin air. In reality, the even par 36 was enough to claim his second title of the year, and vault him to #1 on the First Tee Tour Money List.

Stockett expressed disappointment in his shot-making time and again, only to see the outcomes as continually miraculous. Lamenting a pitch and putt on hole 1, Jonathan would have to settle for birdie. On Hole 4, he showed extreme displeasure with his approach shot on the long par 4, only to have the ball lip out of the hole from 155 yards for a "gimme" birdie. His playing partners were annoyed with the contrast of his reaction and the result, especially as their own games were falling apart. "He's killing me," remarked reigning U.S. Open Champion Paul Svoboda, "when I gripe, it's for a good reason. Stockett's faux frustration is just rubbing salt in all of our wounds".

Unexpected drama unfolded on the ninth green, as Steve Manatt seemingly locked up his first victory of the year with a clutch 3 foot putt. However, Tour officials added up the scorecard and somehow Steve finished in a tie for 6th. "I'm looking into the math on this," said Steve, "I have precisely calculated where I stood...I'm not saying there's a conspiracy, but don't be surprised if there's some kind of independent investigation...or maybe an FOI request." Rumors are running rampant that Manatt has contacted Tour attorney Jeremy Hutchinson for more clarification.

Stockett's victory was still not in hand, as Tapp and Twitty tied him at net even par. Twitty was eliminated on the 1st playoff hole, and in unprecedented fashion, Tapp and Stockett went to the 3rd playoff hole (the par 5 8th) where the par by Stockett secured the win. Stockett won both the low net and low gross, a rare feat on Tour.

After a bye week, the tour resumes on July 9th at the John Deere. This year, tour officials have decided to play this event from the forward "Green" tees, at a distance of 2790 yards. Expect fireworks.



JULY 10, 2008 | MANATT BREAKS THROUGH WITH WIN

TOUR PLAYER SHIFTS FOCUS FROM WEB WORK TO RANGE WORK

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) - Fireworks and rain were both predicted for Wednesday, however fireworks are all that went off. Steve Manatt broke through for his first win of the year in explosive fashion on Wednesday, shattering all tour records with a 10 under par performance (gross score of 39) from the 2,790 yard green tees of the First Tee. Adam Jordan won the low gross with a 35.

"It's great to win, even the John Deere. Now that the website is up and running, I finally had time to practice and scout out the course before the round. I did my homework and prep this week."

Indeed he did. However, Manatt was surprised to not hear the crowd erupt as he blasted off on #1. His drive flew off the face and landed softly in front of the green amidst silence. Upon turning around, he realized everyone was trying to send him a blue tooth message praising the shot through his high-tech blue tooth headset adorning his ear. "You know, technology is great, but I still like the roar of the crowd and a personal attaboy from fellow players." He did hear applause on #7 as he chipped in for birdie. "My 2nd shot came up short and landed in a divot there on 7. I hate to blow my own horn, but it was a brilliant shot from a terrible lie. I gotta give credit to the grinded down low bounce sole of my wedge."

Scores were low across the board, average more than 4 under par. 638 yards really does make a difference.

"I think THE COMMITTEE should consider playing from the greens every week," said second place finisher Lance Kauffman. "Golf should be fun, not torture. 3400 yards in this heat is too much for a man my age."

Other highlights included an up and down grudge match from the boys from McCrory, with Peacock prevailing in the net win by one shot. It all started on #1 when Jeff Matthews daughter chose Brogdon over Peacock in the 9-hole side bet with Jordan. "You know, Todd always was first choice. From basketball pick-up games to prom king in '89. It really fired me up there on #1 when little Mary Grace chose him. My mental game took over though, and I turned negative emotions into positive motivational energy." A shout out and thanks to Joel Osteen for the positive influence and turn around in Denver's life. Too bad a net even, gross 49, isn't quite his best game now.

The tour resumes next week at the 3rd major of the year, The Open Championship. Vegas has the early odds at 5-2 on McClendon if he makes it back from Asia, 10-1 on Marquez, and 15-1 on Stockett. Look out though, the early pick on Peacock at 50-1 may be skewed. He has a lesson on Friday.

A tour side note, congratulations to Doug Tapp and family on the birth of their little girl Presley Faith.

See you next week at the Open.



JULY 17, 2008 | TAPP "SKIPS OUT" TO COURSE FOR 1 SHOT VICTORY

FUTURE TOUR STOPS IN JEOPARDY FOR OPEN WINNER

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) - Unseasonably cool temperatures didn't quite mirror that of the real Open being played across the pond, but it was nice change of pace.

One can only imagine the frigid temperatures in the Tapp household after he skipped out on a wife and a one-week old to play, and ultimately win, the Open. Tapp shot 35 Wednesday to shoot a net -5 and take home the major championship.

"You know, this is a major. She understands that," Tapp said. When asked how a one-week old understood anything, he quipped "Yea, I guess you're right. Listen, I've been cooped up for a week. They were happy to see me get out. I needed to breathe a little."

Breathe he did... deeply... simultaneously taking the air out of most tour player's regular season championship hopes. He now sits atop the leaderboard ahead of everyone by more than \$1 million.

"How do I make that up," said Jonathan Stockett, who currently holds 2nd place. "The putt I missed on 9 cost me more than \$5 from Jordan. It cost me close to a hundred K. I should be under a million out."

Eleven players grinded it out. Wess Daniels took home the low gross at 35, winning the scorecard playoff against Tapp on the #3 handicap hole, #8.

"I rolled in a pretty good snake there on eight," Daniels said, "my new putting style is still hard to get used too, but I made 3 or 4 good ones today." Back-to-back birdies on 7 and 8 put Daniels in position, and an up and down par on 9 from the sand assured him of the victory. Daniels uses a unique style of putting. When he gets lined up and ready to putt, he fixes his eyes on the hole, then takes his putting stroke.

"It's a little weird, a little unconventional," said Denver Peacock, who played with him Wednesday. "But who am I to talk?"

The FTT resumes next week at the \$5 million RBC Canadian Open. Look for the right-handed-Canadian-Mike-Weir-5-handicap-look-alike to be the front runner.



JULY 23, 2008 | BOLING FOR DOLLARS

3RD STOP IS RIGHT STOP FOR TOUR PLAYER

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) - After a four week lay-off, most people were expecting Kent Boling to struggle with a rusty short game and inconsistent putting, but Kent surprised the field on Wednesday when he won the Canadian Open by 4 shots. "I

was more worried about getting rust on my clubs today, than rust on my short game," Kent said. "Thankfully, my chrome plated muscle back blades were protected from the weather," Boling said. Boling plays tour caliber Titleist blades.

"Those are man's clubs," one tour player said on condition of anonymity as he contemplated Boling's muscle back blade. "I mean, I see a lot of pros playing cavity backs. If they aren't hitting 'em, I'm certainly not going to try." Titleist muscle back irons, as described on their website, are "for the highly skilled player, providing high performance with traditional feel and shot control"... sounds like Boling's game Wednesday in a nutshell.

Wednesday's start was delayed by a thunderstorm that had some players' back hair standing on end. Stockett, who's back hair resembles that of a Yeti, was especially wired. "Those things totally flared up through my t-shirt like a porcupine," he exclaimed. "I never realized the problem that can cause on the golf course." Of course he was talking first person, not acknowledging the visual problem it caused his foursome.

Mike High, Lance Kaufman, and Paul Twitty were on hole #5 when lightning and thunder erupted. "It was scary out there" said High. "I didn't know what to do. On one hand, I was scared for my life, holding a metal club in all that lightning. But on the other hand, I was trying to win the Canadian Open. It was a no brainer - I decided to play on." Well, that decision paid off as Mike High went on to win the low gross with a 38. After winning his \$10, High said, "given my pastors salary, and the fact that I'm headed to the holy land and Egypt later this week, I'd say this was definitely worth the risk. I need all the shekels and pounds I can get. This is my 25th wedding anniversary we're celebrating."

It's off to the South Course of Firestone for the \$8 million World Golf Championship next week.



JULY 30, 2008 | FELLERS IS WORLD CHAMPION

BREAKTHROUGH WIN VAULTS OUR "LIL' FELLAR" FROM 17TH TO 10TH

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) - With 2 weeks to go, play has dwindled for those ranked in the bottom half of the league. But not for Chad Fellers. He saw as the perfect time to peak, and broke through for a 42, net seven under, world championship. The win catapulted him to 10th place and right on the cut line for the post-season championship.

"World Champion... seems a little lofty," Fellers said. "It goes to show you that a little perseverance and 'switch putting' can go a long way." A reference to yet another unique putting style in the FTT, Fellers is left handed, plays left handed, but putts right handed. "I'll tell you this, I'll put myself up against anyone in the world who would like to putt wrong-handed against me."

Fellers spent much of his day converting wayward shots to miraculous ones. He overcame hitting trees or heavy rough on 8 of the 9 holes, including strokes of brilliance on holes 5 and 8. "I tell ya, some would think I let a few shots get away from me, and was just fortunate enough to gets some good lies in the forest. The reality is that IT WAS A CALLED STRATEGY CHUCK- AND I CALLED IT BRUTHA!" Informed that no one in the press corps was named Chuck, Fellers replied with a quasi-psychotic laugh, and went on to talk about heart, Momma, and how special this win was for he and his fans.

Jonathan Stockett continued to grind away, winning an unprecedented 5th gross championship, a tie for 2nd place in the net, and sits alone at 2nd place overall in the league. A win for Stockett at the PGA, and anything short of an outright 2nd place finish by Tapp, will give Stockett the regular season championship.

As predicted, Mike Marquez showed up yesterday as well, tying for 2nd, and putting himself in position to win the regular season next week. A victory at the PGA for Mike, and a 13th place finish or worse finish by Tapp, and Marquez will be champion.

Both scenarios are possible, but unlikely. Tapp is unlikely to finish low at the PGA. A triple on 9 this week cost him a tie for 2nd, close to \$350,000, and almost a club problem. "I almost snapped every club in my bag," Tapp confessed in a text message. It will also be difficult for Stockett to win at a 1 handicap. Marquez seems to be the most likely candidate to pull off the win, however he's competing against some very inflated handicaps across the league, and the PGA is likely to turn out a big field. If anyone other than the top 3 win the PGA, Tapp is the regular season champion. Yes, the regular season is Doug Tapp's to lose.

The drama is as thick as the heat. The FTT Championship will yet again come down to the final week. Not only at the top of the leaderboard, but on the cut line. A number of players are well within reach of the cut line, as demonstrated this week with Fellers. It's shapes up to be a very interesting final week at the "Blue Monster" of golf.

Will the Monster scare Tapp, or will it be tamed? Will Tapp play "not to lose," or will he be his usual "go for broke - Daly-esque" style to the PGA? Was Tapp's 9th yesterday the beginning of the unraveling, or just a hiccup?

Can Stockett pull off one of the greatest finishes in league history at a 1 handicap? Don't count him out. He finished 2nd in the PGA last year to make the post-season cut.

And what about Marquez? Well, how can you count this guy out at a 4 handicap? He may have just played the handicap roller coaster game to perfection. We would be remiss not to point out that Marquez's 9 hole handicap on the FTT exceeds his USGA handicap. With that in mind, and the score of 44 he has dropping off after the PGA, don't put it past him to bypass the regular season dream in pursuit of post season cash. We'll watch the action on holes 5-9 closely next Wednesday. We all know this 2-3 USGA handicapper would love to walk into the post season as an 8 or 10.

Oakland Hills hosts next week's \$7 million PGA Championship. Come one, come all, for the season finale!



AUGUST 6, 2008 | FIRST TIME WINNER AT PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

"FEILKE MONSTER" SITINGS ALL OVER COURSE

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) - Rain welcomed the seven who showed up to play the league's final event on Wednesday, but the Arkansas sun and summer broke through once again by tee time. This foreshadowed yet another breakthrough win on tour, as it was Jason Feilke's turn to be champion. Feilke fired a 42, net 4 under, to win the PGA, and jump into the top 12.

"Feels great to win, it's been a long time coming," Feilke said. "I almost turned around when the monsoon hit around 4:30. However, I figured I stick around and see what happened."

Stick around he did, with 4 straight pars on the final 4 holes to hold off the two in the clubhouse at 3 under. Feilke, who's known for massive drives, became known as the "Feilke monster" on #1 on Wednesday, as he blasted a drive to 50 yards in humid air as thick as syrup.

"I've been called a lot of things in my life," said the Stuttgart native, "but never the Feilke monster. Isn't that a legend down near Texarkana?," he asked.

The term of course was a loose reference to the "Fouke Monster," a legendary cryptid reported near the town of Fouke, AR, during the early 1970s where it was accused of attacking a local family and blamed for the death of local livestock. In Feilke's case, the term seemed appropriate for a guy who tamed the Blue Monster with monstrous drives. "Call me that all you want I guess. Honestly, I've been battling demons all year, so maybe the monster scared 'em off today." Whatever Feilke Monster, whatever... go rent the movie if you want, but let's not get too deep here. You won, and now have earned the right to play in the post season.

Doug Tapp proved once again to be unflappable, firing a final round 35, net 3 under, to win the low gross and secure his regular season championship. "Another day at the office," said Tapp confidently. "I felt called out by the press in last week's article. I hope I showed them what I was made of today."

Jonathan Stockett, who's hopes of a win were perhaps the only thing larger than Feilke's drives on Wednesday, faltered on Wednesday with a season-high 44, or +7. "I choked. I didn't have it today. The 8 on 8 took me back to Manatt's suicide note several weeks back. You blow it like that, and see a lake... the self-destructive thoughts can really take

over. However, I did finish 2nd overall and played pretty well this summer. 2nd place prize money can go a long way at Pop-A-Top, and we all know their products can go a long way to soothe the pain."

Another big jump in the final week was a move by Paul Svoboda. Boy it seems like we're always talking about the pride of Carlisle. But the guy showed up again, tied for 2nd, and leapfrogged Marquez for the regular season 3rd place price.

"I'm glad to see I got my money back. Now let's see if we can't turn a profit at the post-season," Svoboda said. 4th place finisher Marquez had no comment... just some rumblings about checking the math on the website.

On a surprising and disappointing note, league sanctions were handed down to Denver Peacock after antics on #9. Details were not disclosed, other than Peacock is now seeing anger management counseling. "You know, Peacock's a lawyer. I better not divulge what went down," said one eye witness. "All I'll say is that it was childish and raging, if you know what I mean. This is the First Tee for crying out loud, he should know better." Multiple calls to Peacock's phone were not returned. A review of the scorecard did reveal that Peacock, who finished 4th Wednesday and 5th overall, did take a triple on #8. However it was puzzling, because as one tour player noted, "he's not good enough to get mad about a hole." Ah, but he is a competitor.

The FTT concludes its season in the coming weeks as the top 12 will compete for \$100 and the coveted post-season championship.