

# Here Come the Playoffs

*Now 40 years old, the PGA Tour stop in Westchester County has undergone a dramatic makeover*

BY CHUCK STOGEL

**T**he PGA Tour's annual visit to the Met Area enters a new era this August, both for the tournament and for all of golf. First, the name of the event has changed. Called the Barclays Classic when the global financial institution assumed title sponsorship in 2005, the tournament has been renamed, simply, The Barclays. This is now the fifth official name change to the tournament that began life in 1967 as the Westchester Classic.

Secondly, the annual date of the tournament has been returned to its dog-days-of-summer origins to coincide with the debut of the FedEx Cup playoffs. The Barclays runs August 23 through 26 at Westchester Country Club in Harrison, N.Y., and the event will be the first in a new four-tournament FedEx Cup elimination series that culminates with the Tour Championship in Atlanta (see sidebar, page 51).

Having won four out of the last five majors, Tiger Woods could only manage a t-16th finish at the 2001 Buick Classic.



The Classic has always drawn an international field, with Sweden's Fredrik Jacobson staring down a chip shot here.

"Everything will be stepped up a notch with The Barclays being a playoff event," said PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem. "The players will feel more pressure, the tournament will take on added importance, the fans will be more involved.... It will set the stage appropriately for the playoffs."

Because of the playoff format, The Barclays is certain to have a stellar field that will include local favorite J.J. Henry. The event has a purse of \$7 million, with \$1.26 million going to the winner. Of course, the PGA Tour would prefer to focus on the 9,000 FedEx Cup points awarded to the winner, which is double the points allotted in a regular PGA Tour event.

"There can only be one 'first-ever' and we're thrilled that The Barclays was chosen to be the first," said tournament director Peter Mele. "We are also the only full-field playoff event, which will provide tremendous drama for the spectators as the players try to move on to the second round."

One notable player who generally avoids coming to Westchester but is virtually guaranteed to appear this year is Tiger Woods. The world's No. 1-ranked player missed the cut as an amateur in 1994 and has only played in the event three times as a pro, finishing t-43 in 1997, t-16 in 2001 and t-13 in 2003.

This will be the 41st Tour event to be held at Westchester, the seventh-longest continuous venue on the PGA Tour schedule. The club's 6,839-yard, par-71 West course, designed by Walter Travis, is a parkland style layout that is very popular among the pros and annually places three or four holes in the tour's ranking of top 20 toughest holes for the season. Nonetheless, after 2008, The Barclays will move into a rotation of Met Area courses, beginning with Liberty National Golf Club in Jersey City, N.J., in 2009.

Finchem added, "Westchester is a great course, and we are committed to playing there at least three of the next six years."

## Ten to Remember

The following is a look at ten memorable moments from the history of the PGA Tour's annual visit to Westchester County.

### 1967

The inaugural Westchester Classic was extraordinary in many ways. One, of course, because it was the first, succeeding several years of high-profile pro-ams with tour pros in Westchester and the short-lived Thunderbird Open. Not only was it won by Nicklaus, but the next six finishers (in order) were all



established players: Dan Sikes, Roberto de Vicenzo, Gary Player, Arnold Palmer, Doug Sanders, Chi Chi Rodriguez and Lee Trevino. The tournament, though, was dubbed the "Wet-chester Classic" because of

steady, drenching rains, and holds the distinction of being the last tour event to finish on a Wednesday.

### 1970

Bruce Crampton was certainly a worthy winner, edging Nicklaus



and Larry Hinson by one shot to claim a \$50,000 first prize, but historically this event was most notable as the last 18-hole round that Ben Hogan (left) played on the PGA Tour. After shooting 78 in the first round, Hogan withdrew and never again completed another full round in tour play.

### 1982

Double eagle. It's often forgotten that Gilder's sensational 3-wood second shot from 251 yards on the par-five finishing hole occurred in Saturday's third round and not on Sunday. Still, the deuce capped a round of 65 and extended his lead

NICKLAUS: LEONARD KAMISLER; HOGAN: JULES ALEXANDER

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## How the Playoffs Work

With the start of The Barclays at Westchester Country Club, the PGA Tour enters a new world of playoff golf. All season long, players have been earning points based on their finishes in official PGA Tour events. Following the conclusion of the Wyndham Championship in Greensboro, North Carolina, on August 19, the top 144 players on the FedEx Cup points standings will be eligible for the playoffs. The players will be seeded from one to 144, and their points will re-set for the start of The Barclays. The number-one seed — the player who accumulated the most points during the regular season — will start the playoffs with 100,000 points. The number-two seed will start with 99,000, number three with 98,500, and so on in declining increments down to the 144th-seeded player, who starts the playoff with 84,700 points.

The Barclays is then the first of a grueling four-week set of playoff tournaments, and not every player will advance. The playoffs will be worth double the points of most regular PGA Tour events (9,000 points to the winner vs. 4,500), giving more players a chance to move quickly up the points list. After The Barclays, the top 120 playoff points earners will advance to the Deutsche Bank Championship outside Boston, and the remaining 24 will be out. The process repeats itself at the Boston event, after which the top 70 advance to the BMW Championship at Cog Hill G&CC outside Chicago. Finally, the top 30 playoff points earners after that event advance to the season-ending Tour Championship in Atlanta, where the first-ever FedEx Cup winner will be crowned. That player will be the one who sits atop the points list after the four-week playoff, and he will have started his quest at Westchester Country Club.

either the week immediately before or after the U.S. Open.

The roster of winners over the years includes the likes of Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Johnny Miller, Raymond Floyd, Hale Irwin, Lee Janzen and Curtis Strange. Vijay Singh, who won his first PGA Tour event at here in 1993, is the event's only three-time winner. The roster of champions speaks to the challenge of Westchester Country Club and the magnitude of this event, now forever changed but still a Classic. ■

**Chuck Stogel** has covered every PGA Tour event in Westchester County since 1967. He is based in White Plains, New York.

**Sergio Garcia displays some serious body english on this near chip-in.**

Still, 1991 Buick Classic winner Billy Andrade asserted, "This is a wonderful course and a setup that asks you to hit every shot in the bag. It would be a shame to move it."

Many other current Tour stars agree, citing the fact that the Tour rarely visits classic tracks like Westchester anymore. But tournament officials are undeterred, and are eager to showcase The Barclays to a wider audience.

"Changing venues presents both opportunities and challenges," said Mele. "Having the tournament move around the New York area will allow more fans and sponsors to experience the event."

When the tournament began as the Westchester Classic in August 1967, with now-defunct Eastern Airlines as a presenting sponsor, its \$250,000 purse was the richest in golf.

Subsequent title sponsors included American Express (1976-'78), Manufacturers Hanover (1979-'89) and Buick (1990-2004). Barclays has continued to benefit local charities, and the company is a major supporter of The First Tee of Metropolitan New York.

The first 14 Westchester tournaments were held in either July or August. All but one since (May 18-21, 1995) have been staged in June,

from three to six strokes after 54 holes, with a tour record-equaling 18-under-par 192. Gilder's 69 in the final round cinched a five-stroke victory over Peter Jacobsen and Tom Kite. To commemorate the feat, the club embedded a plaque in the fairway (right).

"I get asked about that shot all the time, by people all over the world, and I don't mind at all," said Gilder. "It was one of the highlights of my life. When I hit it, we couldn't see whether it went in or was really close. I knew from the people jumping up and down, and screaming — it was like an immense roar — something good



happened. Finally, when we got to the green, the ball was in the cup."

### 1988

A four-way playoff of international dimensions comprised Seve Ballesteros, Greg Norman, David Frost and Danbury, Conn., native Ken Green, who were tied at 18-under 276 after 72 holes. The playoff was short-lived, with Ballesteros winning with a birdie on the first extra hole.

### 1990

No player has won the week before the U.S. Open and then won the Open; but two champions have won the Open and then again the week after, both at Westchester. Hale Irwin was the first, replicating his

romp around the 18th green at Medinah Country Club with a similar high-fiving jaunt when he completed the 72nd hole for victory in 1990 at Westchester. The celebratory move drew thunderous applause from the crowd ringing the green. (For the record, Els also accomplished the U.S. Open/Westchester feat in 1997.)

### 1993

Singh, then 30 years old, came from five strokes off the pace in the final round to shoot 66 and record the first of his 31 PGA Tour victories. He has since become the winningest 40-and-over player in PGA Tour history.

### 1995

There have been 13 playoffs in the 40 years at Westchester. The 1995 edition was the longest, with Singh defeating Doug Martin in five extra holes, registering a birdie to win.

### 2001

Garcia (below), at 21, became the youngest player to win at



LEONARD KAMSLER

Westchester, outdueling Scott Hoch by three shots. Garcia "prepared" the night before the final round by taking in *The Fast and the Furious* at the nearby Rye Ridge Theatre.

### 2005

If Gilder's double eagle is the most famous shot in tournament history, then Padraig Harrington's final putt for an eagle to snatch victory from a stunned Jim Furyk has to be, due to the circumstances, the most dramatic. Harrington (right) would have needed to two-putt from 65 feet on the enormous, contoured 18th green just to get into a playoff. Instead, the Irishman rammed home

a curling, double-level snake to win the tournament outright.



### 2006

Singh, one shot back of a resurgent Billy Andrade after 54 holes, closed with a 3-under 68 to become the first three-time winner of the tournament.

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