

by Jimmy Roberts of NBC Sports



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# Suggestion Box

**I**n its wildest dreams, the PGA Tour couldn't possibly have hoped to get the amount of publicity that its new venture, the FedEx Cup, has generated. There's a problem, though: A healthy dose of that attention turned out to be less than flattering. Media criticism is one thing, but when the complaining comes from your own members... ouch!

Let's review some of the most common gripes that I heard during my three weeks of covering the FedEx Cup playoffs: The schedule is too compact... nobody kept the players informed... the money should be cash and not deferred.

What a bunch of nonsense. Here's why: This is exactly what the players themselves asked for — a season which ended earlier and brought together the big names to play together. Mission accomplished. Now the players are complaining about the schedule?

That's chutzpah, though not as much as it takes for them to claim they were kept in the dark. According to a high-ranking Tour official, there were eight player meetings over the last two years dealing *exclusively* with the FedEx Cup concept.

"We usually had about 10 guys at those meetings," he said. "Never more than 12, and it was always the same 10 guys."

As for the deferred money, these guys need to talk to their accountants. If your daily routine includes searching for someone to break a hundred (dollar bill) and you haven't seen the inside of a commercial aircraft since the Clinton administration, deferred money is a *good* thing!

Oh, and by the way... that 10 million dollar figure is wildly inaccurate. It's likely to be worth more than that. A lot more. Newly minted FedEx Cup champion Tiger Woods gets to have those funds marinate in a self-directed retirement account until he turns 45, which will be in 2020. Do the math: Using a conservative estimate of an 8 percent annual

rate of return, the actual figure is somewhere in the neighborhood of \$29 million.

So why is everybody complaining? Well, partially because that's what players do, but also, there's something else. While the play-off concept didn't fall flat, it could have been better and the Tour needs to shoulder some of the blame.

"We've just created too many of these specialty events," one player told me.

The Presidents Cup and the World Golf Championships-Bridgestone Invitational come to mind. They're often mentioned in any discussion of schedule congestion.

And the whole idea of characterizing the FedEx Cup as *playoffs* and "a new era in golf" was a misstep, and maybe an overreach. Football, baseball, basketball, and hockey have playoffs. Golf has the majors.

What to do? The only solution might be an unrealistic one. Wipe the slate clean and reconfigure the schedule from the start in 2008. Start with the four majors and the Players Championship, then strategically place other events at points which make for a workable flow... for everybody.

Example: After the PGA Championship, schedule two second-tier events that would still count for the FedEx Cup points race... then begin the four-week "FedEx Cup Championship Series"... take a week off, and then hold the Ryder/Presidents Cup.

The Tour will get it right. They understand this thing needs to be tweaked. As that same Tour official told me: "So we didn't hit a home run in our first at-bat. We'll take a solid double out of the box. It's a good place to start."

He's right. Every week in this series was tremendous; a great month of golf at a time when the Tour normally has long gone off the radar screen. That's an accomplishment. The majors will always be the championship index in golf. That doesn't mean there isn't room for something else. ■



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