

History Lesson

PGA Golf Club is paying homage to PGA Championship and Ryder Cup lore with special new plaques

By Michael R. Abramowitz

When a golfer plays No. 18 at Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield, N.J., they will often pause to reflect upon a special plaque that pays tribute to Jack Nicklaus' famous 1-iron shot in the 1967 U.S. Open. In fact, for good luck, Phil Mickelson tapped the marker twice with his 3-wood as he played the 72nd hole of his thrilling victory in the 2005 PGA Championship.

Meanwhile, Nicklaus' 18 major championships serve as inspiration for the individual hole marker signs that line Harbor Shores in Benton Harbor, Mich., site of the 2014 Senior PGA Championship presented by KitchenAid. A stroll through the course is literally a walk through golf history.

In similar fashion, PGA Golf Club at PGA Village in Port St. Lucie, Fla., is taking a page out of PGA of America history as it pays homage to PGA Championship and Ryder Cup lore with special new plaques that are designed to develop a link between its golfers and The PGA's storied past.

Eighteen eye-catching hole markers featuring tributes that date back to Jim Barnes capturing the inaugural PGA Championship in 1916, were installed along the Wanamaker Course in October (the course was named after PGA of America founder Rodman Wanamaker, who donated the namesake Wanamaker Trophy awarded to the PGA Champion).

The picturesque signs will allow golfers to learn about defining moments in PGA Championship history, including some that may have faded from memory.

For example, in 1942, Sam Snead defeated Army Corp. Jim Turnesa 2 and 1, by holing a spectacular 60-foot chip shot for birdie on the 35th hole of the match-play finals at Seaview Country Club in Atlantic City, N.J. Afterwards, Snead signed a War Bond as part of his winnings in the shadow of the Wanamaker Trophy, while surrounded by members of the U.S. Army and Navy. The following day, Snead reported for duty with the Navy in the midst of World War II. This story sets the scene for the tee box of hole No. 4 of the Wanamaker Course.

Meanwhile, 18 special memories from the Ryder Cup tracing to Playing Captain Walter Hagen's U.S. Team winning the first installment in 1927, will line the Ryder Course (which is named after Samuel Ryder). These markers will recount timeless moments, such as Justin Leonard's remarkable 45-foot birdie putt on No. 17 at The Country Club, in Brookline, Mass., which served as the enduring highlight of the record U.S. comeback from four points down

The plaque on the Ryder Course's first hole looks back at the inaugural Ryder Cup in 1927.



in the 1999 Ryder Cup. The stories are told in chronological order along the Ryder Course, with America's improbable rally recounted on hole No. 14.

"There's an allure to history that is a passion unlike any other," explains PGA Golf Club General Manager Jimmy Terry. "These historical hole markers are now part of the fabric of PGA Golf Club and serve as an attraction for our guests and members to want to come back and experience more. The hope is they leave with a greater understanding of the incredibly rich history of our Association, as well as with some chills down their spine."

Additional signs installed at PGA Golf Club pay tribute to each PGA Champion by year; list the final score of every Ryder Cup; and tell the story of Rodman Wanamaker, Samuel Ryder and the trophies that bear their name. Also, along the Dye Course are new markers that feature the signature of namesake Course Designer and World Golf Hall of Fame Member Pete Dye.

"Jimmy Terry and his team have a clear vision to tastefully educate golfers on each of their courses with story plaques as part of their tee sign packages," said Michael Fryatt, executive vice president of the Prestwick Golf Group, a Wisconsin-based company that installed the signs. "It's humbling being entrusted to help bring their vision to life."

A history lesson designed to leave an indelible mark on PGA Golf Club visitors for years to come! ■