

## VGC Masters Tour 2013 – Jottings

With 19 VGC golfing 'tragnics', we commenced our 2013 Masters Tour on Thursday 4 April 2013 at Harbour Town. A few had some 'interesting' flights getting to the start, with the Qantas flight full of the Johnny Young Talent Team from the 'burbs a highlight. Avoid LAX at all costs!!

Up front let me say that overall the accommodation and facilities were great and the organisation with Paul Wright (from VGC) fantastic. Having Greg Gilson with us was a 'bonus' and between these two gentlemen, things ran seamlessly and with minimum hassle. Great job guys.

### The Golf

For me, playing golf in the US was a little 'different' than I expected. Courses are well manicured and maintained. With minimum run (well watered fairways), the short shot makers like me are somewhat outclassed by the 'heavy hitters'. That said, placement was at a premium on nearly all the courses we played and if you found the right 'spot', your next shot was so much easier. Greens were OK and are reasonably true with only a couple of courses hiding dead elephants under the greens.

Courses played during the tour included:

- Harbour Town
- Heron Point
- Kiawah Island (Osprey Point)
- Kiawah Island (Ocean Course)
- Kiawah Island (Turtle Point)
- Pinehurst #'s 8, 7 and 2

In order I would rank my top three (3) as:

- **Kiawah Island (Ocean Course)** with the last six holes 'home' along the ocean just spectacular - **especially hole 17**. We played in benign conditions, but it is easy to see why Adam Scott regards these six holes as among the toughest 'stretch' he has played.



There were some great holes on the front side with holes 2 and 9 memorable.



- **Pinehurst # 2** - where the 2014 US Open will be played - is a fantastic layout. Whilst not apparently overly difficult tee to green - again placement is key to a reasonable round - my personal view is that the greens at Pinehurst #2 are the first line of 'defence' for this course. Didn't appear to be a lot of 'flat' spots on the greens and the undulations were at times

scary. It will be interesting to see how to pros approach it next year.

- **Harbour Town**. I could never quite get used to the houses running through the course -which of course is what's expected in 'gated community' styled courses. I visited the occasional front lawn, but mostly no one was home.

Holes 17 and 18 – with the candy styled/barber shop red and white lighthouse the feature -are great holes. Hole 9 – with the bunker in the green – and 16 are also interesting holes. Harbour Town is not an overly long course, but as was usual on this trip, if your ball was in the right position your next shot would usually be OK.

Water was often a feature of these courses. The alligators – yes they are not rubber inflatable imitations – also liked these 'ponds' with their number quite prolific in some locations. Play moved along very briskly when these giants were around!

When playing golf on these US courses I would recommend that you enjoy the 'moment' and look at what is around you rather than taking your score (and yourself) too seriously. You can always 'get serious' at the next home course competition you enter.



I was fascinated by the 'design' work that had gone into most of these courses. I might prefer the look (and playing) of 'links' type courses, but these courses had to be admired for the way they were 'sculpted' and maintained. **[Kiawah (Ocean) was obviously 's-p-e-c-i-a-l']**

As a by-line, the hot dogs at the half way were sensational – what are we missing in Aus. that we can't 'do a dog'? - and the beer (funnily enough) always went down well wherever it was drunk.

### The Masters

We had come to be at the Masters – and we were in fact the primary reason that Scotty ended up with the green jacket! The golf course itself has a 'presence' that everyone with an interest in golf can align with. We went to the practice day (Wed) and



days 1 & 2 of competition before moving on to Pinehurst on the Saturday. I was a tad sceptical of the practice day, but for me this was in fact the 'best' day. Not huge crowds and I followed Steve Stricker and a young amateur at a nice leisurely pace. I 'walked' the course covering every hole. It helped with vantage points on days 1 & 2 and I felt I was more in the action rather than 'spectating'. The US Masters golf fan appears to like to 'stop and prop', setting up a chair for the day. The Aussies on the other hand like to walk the course and I suggest anyone going to the Masters in the future do the same.



After playing golf at Pinehurst #7 on the Sunday, I recall myself and colleagues 'taking over' the Ryder Cup Lounge at Pinehurst's Carolina Hotel for the afternoon to will home Adam Scott. What a wonderful finish with our man bringing home the bacon – for a second there we were thinking Steve W thought it was about him – punctuated by the spirit, endeavour and demeanour of Angel Cabrera. What a memory. How lucky we were to bring Adam 'home'!!



### After thoughts

- Again the organisation provided by Paul and Global Golf was great. Everything worked for 'us' as punters, and we didn't really hear about the hiccups that I know occurred but were handled well.
- If you are going on these trips, enjoy the people you are with as they are great fun and you learn much about yourself (and them). This is my # 1 tip. If you are going on a trip immerse yourself in it and enjoy what you are seeing/doing. Taking yourself too seriously may make you a 'pain in the butt'.
- If you get the chance and can schedule in a 'lay day or two' do so. A visit to Charleston would have been great.
- Playing golf in the US I found to be 'different' – little run, all carry, placement at a premium – but a terrific experience. Again don't take yourself too seriously and enjoy being there.
- **Note:** I was lucky enough to travel with a mate to visit Bandon Dunes on the way home. This is a 'must' for every golfer at some time. We played two of the five courses – Bandon Dunes and Pacific Dunes and found them to be of exceptional standard. Challenging layouts beautifully kept and maintained. More 'linksy' than the courses we had visited and played in the States, but absolutely spectacular. Put Bandon on your 'bucket' list.