



Notebook: Players 'stunned' to find course in good shape

Sep. 24, 2009

By [Mike McAllister and Helen Ross, PGATOUR.COM Staff](#)

ATLANTA -- Considering the amount of rain that has fallen on the Atlanta area in the last week, the players competing in THE TOUR Championship presented by Coca-Cola were pleasantly surprised -- perhaps even shocked -- to find East Lake in such good shape.

Of course, it's helped that for the last two days, conditions have been relatively dry, with the sun even shining for extending lengths.

"I'm surprised at how playable the golf course is," said top seed [Tiger Woods](#) after playing nine holes Wednesday morning. "The fairways are pretty wet, obviously, picking up a little bit of mud. But the greens are unbelievable."

No. 2 seed [Steve Stricker](#) played nine holes on Tuesday and echoed Woods' comments.

"I came down here with the expectations of there being puddles everywhere, super soft, greens plugging -- and it's far from that," Stricker said. "It's in unbelievable shape for the rains they've gotten here. The greens are actually firm."

Like Woods and Stricker, [Heath Slocum](#) is in the top five in points and controls his own destiny this week. He said he's "absolutely stunned" at the conditions after a week's worth of wet conditions that resulted in more than 11 inches of rain, including four inches on Monday.

"The fairways were a hundred times better than I thought they were going to be," Slocum said. "I thought we were going to be out there sloshing around. The course is in great shape."

Quotes of the day

"I'd be like Sylvester. I just swallowed a Tweety bird and that would put a big smile on my face." -- *Jim Furyk when asked about the possibility of winning the FedExCup title without winning a Playoffs event*

"Well, how long is the putt?" -- *PGA TOUR commissioner Tim Finchem when asked how he would handle a putt worth \$11.35 million*

The forecast for the rest of the week includes a 30 percent chance of precipitation on Thursday and Friday, with Saturday expected to be the worst day, with a 60 percent chance. Early-morning showers may hit on Sunday, but that afternoon should be dry.

"If we don't have any substantial rain," Slocum said, "...not only the players are going to enjoy it, but I think the fans are going to see a good show this week." -- *Mike McAllister*

A FAN'S FAN: Woods was on the sidelines at Land Shark Stadium on Monday night as the Indianapolis Colts beat the Miami Dolphins, 27-23.

Woods and Colts quarterback Peyton Manning are good friends. The two played together in the pro-am at the Quail Hollow Championship earlier this year.

Manning is one of several high-profile athletes who probably can boast of having Woods on speed dial. Among the others? Roger Federer, Charles Barkley and Michael Jordan, who will serve as an unofficial assistant captain in two weeks at The Presidents Cup.

So just what does Woods get from watching someone like Manning or Jordan or Federer performing in their element?

"Well, no one is trying to rip Jordan's head off, maybe unless he's playing the Pistons," Woods said with a grin.

"But overall it's just amazing the speed and how fast a decision (Manning) has to make. As we all know, I mean, the

Colts, their defense is not the most powerful defense, so he has to score just about every single opportunity, and he does. He brings his team right on down there. You know he's got to throw it, and you still can't stop him. That's impressive." -- *Helen Ross*

THAT PUTT FOR \$11 MILLION: One of the big questions to ask the players this week is what it would feel like to stand over a putt on the 72nd hole that might be worth \$11.35 million (the \$1.35 million first prize and the \$10 million bonus for winning the FedExCup).

Woods, for example, said the money doesn't matter, that he's simply in the moment and wants to make the best putt he can. Others have said the same thing.

But [Jim Furyk](#) isn't buying it.

"This is obviously a unique situation," said Furyk, the third seed. "If a guy stands over a putt for \$11 million, it's impossible that he's not going to realize what's going on."

Heath Slocum already has drained one pressure-packed putt in the Playoffs, a 20-footer for par on the 72nd hole to win The Barclays. What if Slocum, the fifth seed, faces a similar situation on the par-3 18th on Sunday?

"I'd like to say that I'd walk up to that (putt) prepared for it to go in and hope I could still feel my hands when I was making the stroke," Slocum said. -- *Mike McAllister and Helen Ross*

PLAYER OF THE YEAR CANDIDATES: There may be a lengthy list of potential choices for this year's Player of the Year when the ballots are distributed following the Fall Series. With four different major winners and eight multiple winners -- including six in the top 15 in FedExCup points -- the front-runner may very well be the player who emerges with the FedExCup title on Sunday.

"It's ... interesting to sort of kick around the notion of Player of the Year with an eye on what happens this week," said PGA TOUR commissioner Tim Finchem. -- *Mike McAllister*