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It's spring, and that means the Masters is just a few short weeks away. Did you know that Greg Norman will be playing in his first Masters in years? He qualified with his outstanding finish in last year's British Open. Norman insists his history of Masters "circumstances" will not overshadow his emotional return to Augusta after a seven-year absence.

Norman is now 54 years old and was three times a runner-up at the Masters. He says that the changes made to Augusta since he last played a competitive round left him stunned.

"I can tell you the golf course is 7,700 yards since I last played it, and that's adding about 420 yards," he said. "I was absolutely shocked to tell you the truth. There's phenomenal changes, right from the very first hole. The tee now is back where the old putting green was when I last played there."

Do you remember the year The Shark came apart on the back nine and who the eventual winner was? The year was 1996 and Greg gave up a six-stroke lead to eventual winner Nick Faldo.

This will mark the first time that Greg's wife, tennis legend Chris Evert, will get to see the course that gave him so much heartbreak over the years. "Chrissie has never seen the Masters," he said. "So to get her there and to see what I think is the greatest golf championship and my favorite golf tournament of all time was another factor. I love the tradition and the heritage of Augusta. I grew up on the golf course, and my length was really a huge advantage for me in the early 80s. So that's why every time I go back there, I put away all of the negative stuff, because I love all of the positive stuff. It's such an easy thing for me."

When the players return to Bay Hill in 2010 for the Arnold Palmer Invitational, they will be playing on all new greens and the course will have new bunkers strategically placed due to recent technological advances in the game. Arnie told me that he plans on closing the course in mid-May to rip up all the greens and sprig them with a new grass called "Emerald." With his Palmer Course Design Company now headquartered at Bay Hill, they will build a laser 3-D topography model of the greens and then make significant changes that will be incorporated into the new design. Greenside bunkers will be changed and some fairway bunkers will be eliminated and others added. The course is set to re-open in time for the King's 80th birthday celebration in Latrobe and Bay Hill on September 10.

Peter Jacobsen will be in the booth this week for NBC as well as playing in Arnie's tournament, sparking rumors of some imminent changes in the NBC broadcast team.



SST Gets Fifth Win in Transitions Sweep

Retief Goosen has a history of asking SST to PURE his clubs that dates back to the 2006 season. His win at the Transition Championship this week means that players with a history of asking SST to PURE their clubs have already won five times this year. Last year players with PUREd clubs won 37 times, so 2008 is off to another hot start. This was actually Goose's third win this season but I only count PGA and Champions tour victories.

What's even more impressive is the total domination of the top 20 by players with a history of playing with PUREd clubs. Starting with the top five all the players fall into the SST PUREd camp. Nine out of the top 10 finishers have learned they can count on SST PUREd shafts. Sixteen players with PUREd shafts were in the top 20. **Here's the honor roll for this week:** Brett Quigley and Charles Howell III tied for second, followed by Steve Stricker, Charlie Wi, Steve Flesch, Bo Van Pelt, Kevin Na, Stuart Appleby, past Ryder Cup captain and British Open winner Tom Lehman, past PGA champion Rich Beem, Matt Kuchar, Jonathan Byrd, Kenny Perry, Jeff Overton and Briny Baird.

In the tournament stats, SST dominated the all important categories: Goosen captured lowest scoring average, the driving distance leader was Alvaro Quiros and Richard S. Johnson led in scrambling.

The Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill is this week and the star-studded field will also include some of the world's best players who also play with clubs PUREd by SST. Back-to-back British Open champion Padraig Harrington returns and will be joined by Asian Tour Champion Jeev Mika Singh.

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