

BASF First-Class at People vs. the Pros

By BRIAN BROWN

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Playing in the qualifying tournament May 16 at Stillwater Country Club for the 2005 People vs. the Pros was the last thing on my mind. The spring of 2005 brought me four dead greens and two others with significant "Winter Kill" at my course. As all golf course superintendents know, spring is a very busy time of the year with limited staff and a full "To Do" list. With the extra anxiety of dead turf my golf clubs didn't find themselves out of their corner in my office very often. It was only after receiving an email from Jack Mackenzie the Friday prior to the Monday tournament that changed my mind. Jack mentioned that this tournament is one of the biggest fundraisers for our association and that we could lose the tournament if more Superintendents didn't play. Friday, I e-mailed Scott at the MGCSA office to sign up. On second thought, maybe I did need part of a day away from the course. I did enjoy the tournament the prior year at North Oaks. I also had fond memories of playing Stillwater Country Club some 20 years prior in junior events. To top it off with my low handicap and only playing golf twice prior to the tournament, I could enjoy the day without trying to win. Monday morning came and I was second-guessing my decision. I forced myself to break away and arrived five minutes before the shotgun start.



Brian Brown tees off at Barton Creek in Austin, Texas.

Much to my surprise I was 3-under par for the day with only a few holes to play. Reality set in and I managed to finish the last three holes four over par and one over for the day. I still didn't think much of the score with the great course and weather conditions. The handicapped event winner I felt would bring a score in the middle sixties. Much to my surprise when I came into the clubhouse I was informed that I won the tournament. Wow! An all-expense paid trip to Texas to represent the MGCSA at a tournament where I could win \$100,000. From day one after qualifying, BASF and the People vs. the Pros were very professional. I completed the registration and handicap forms and before I knew it I received a tournament package in the mail. The items included hats, four golf shirts with which color to wear each day, and a dozen ProV1 golf balls. Not only were these items included but there was a list of activities for my wife during our stay. They included a 1-hour massage, shopping trip to Fredricksburg, and a cooking class.

Wednesday

My wife Penny, 6-month old son Cameron and I arrive in Austin, Tex. I picked up the furnished rental car and, after a short drive, Barton Creek was within view. What a sight, the 15-story spa and resort surrounded by the breathtaking hill country of Austin. The resort is first-class with valet parking, luggage help, club storage and a concierge. Our room was great, mini-bar and all. I now know how the rich and famous live. At the player registration I received more golf balls, shirts, a nice Nike luggage bag and all kinds of other knick knacks. My first practice round came as an eye-opener to golf at Barton Creek. The name Crenshaw Cliffside was appropriately named with many cliffs and a strategically designed course that emphasized putting. The greens were large and 2/3 sloped from front to back. The most challenging aspect of play for the whole week was the warm season turf grasses. I was surprised at how different the golf

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BASF Tournament—

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ball lies in the rough and how it comes out, especially around the greens. Our first reception for Superintendents came Wednesday night. The BASF people really set the tone for the week with great food and fellowship. I met Matt Curl along with his wife from Illinois and over the weekend my wife Penny and I enjoyed their company at the four different banquets.

Thursday

Breakfast was delicious and included about every breakfast food imaginable. In Barton Creek fashion live piano music played and the fine dining room overlooked the golf course and vast hill country. Unlike breakfast, my golf game and second practice round on the Fazio Foothills course was lousy. The course hosts the Canadian Tour's first event of the year and features vast elevation changes with many shots over canyon areas. It is a very difficult course with a half-dozen holes ranked in Texas' top 20 holes. Thursday night brought the opening rules meeting and dinner. A rules official with vast PGA tour experience explained the rules. The handicap system was taken very seriously. Close to 50 individuals who qualified for the event were denied entry due to handicap verification.

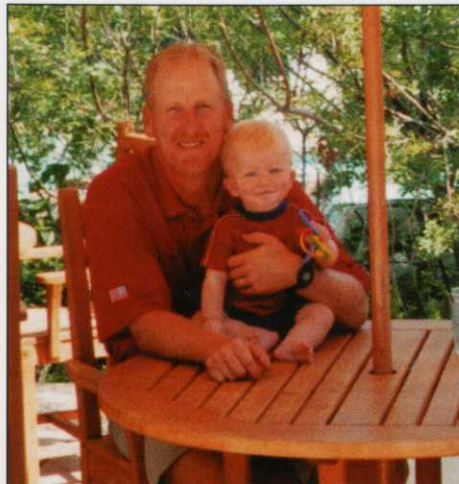
Friday

My opening 81 disappointed me. With the very windy conditions I found myself only six strokes behind in the superinten-



Spectacular views at Barton Creek.

dent's Cup. Friday night BASF held our formal Superintendents Dinner. This was the fanciest dinner that I have ever had. It was a complete seven-course meal with some food items that could not even pro-



Brian and son Cameron enjoying life.

nounce. Once again this was BASF saying how special we were to them. What made this dinner even more special was that, while the tournament is a way for BASF to market, this dinner had nothing to do with marketing and was solely for our enjoyment.

Saturday

Playing the Crenshaw course I fared better with a 75 in spite of finishing bogey, double. This brought me within two strokes of qualifying for the Superintendent's Cup and the \$10,000 cash and \$10,000 in products. Penny received her massage at the spa and took her trip shopping to Fredricksburg. Saturday night was the only night dinner was not furnished. This was a nice time to explore the wonderful town of Austin.

Sunday

I woke to the sound of thunder. Unfortunately the intense thunderstorm lasted until late afternoon. With 3+ inches of rain the third round was cancelled along with my hopes of qualifying for the Superintendent's Cup. With my low handicap I didn't have high hopes of qualifying for the \$100,000 and chance to play against Justin Leonard but felt I was in good position to qualify for the Superintendent's Cup. Sunday night was the Dinner and Awards Ceremony. An announcer from ESPN introduced Justin Leonard and Ben Crenshaw along with

showing a motivating video of the 1999 Ryder cup matches with Justin Leonard and Ben Crenshaw as the captain. What a nice couple of guys. During the dinner I ended up holding and walking my son Cameron around. Ben Crenshaw walked by, smiled and said what a cute kid he was.

Monday

Tournament day came with all the fanfare of boom camera trucks, camera crews, and spectators. Outside of all the camera crews there must have been 15 carts of VIP's following the action. I was fortunate enough to golf with the 50 and under qualifier, Jeff Jumonville, on Friday. Although not a superintendent Jeff works in the golf industry for Callaway Golf. He qualified at Barton Creek at which he is a member. Although Justin Leonard is famous I witnessed two examples of his humble personality. While getting ready to tee off on the fourth tee box there was some activity with cameras and vehicles making a commotion. The organizers frantically motioned the group but Justin spoke up, "Ah, that don't bother me." Then, walking from the 12th green a cart was in the way of the beverage cart. Justin went out of his way to try to move the cart stated, "Let me move that for you." The cart person quickly refused and intercepted him.

BASF's first-class commitment to the superintendents can be summarized with what happened on Monday. After Sunday's rainout of the third round two superintendents were tied for second place. Monday morning Rafael Martinez and Matt Curl played off for second place and a chance to play in the Superintendent's Cup with first place of \$10,000 cash and \$10,000 in products or \$5,000 cash for second place. Matt Curl ended up losing the playoff but unexpectedly received a check from BASF for \$2,500. BASF gave this prize solely out of the goodness of their hearts when they wouldn't have needed to do anything. I understand the marketing reasons for BASF sponsoring this event, but what struck me about the entire event was the behind the scenes things BASF did for us Superintendents. I would like to thank our local BASF representatives David Oberle and Chris Higgins. I also would like to thank BASF for allowing me the chance to represent the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association at the 2005 People vs. the Pros at Barton Creek and for their support of the MGCSA.