

The Sounds of Augusta

TO SEE THE COURSE IS ONE THING. TO HEAR IT

IS ANOTHER **By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief**

I was fortunate enough to attend the Masters Tournament last month, thanks to Club Car Inc. The Augusta-based manufacturer of golf cars and utility vehicles held a press outing, which included a trip to Augusta National Golf Course on Wednesday to watch a practice round and the popular Par-3 Contest.

Augusta National, despite the politics surrounding its ongoing expansion to keep the 1932 design in the “present,” is still a place to behold, even at 7,445 yards long.

For the golf fan, Augusta is an amusement park for the senses. I thought of that while I was there and observed life around me.

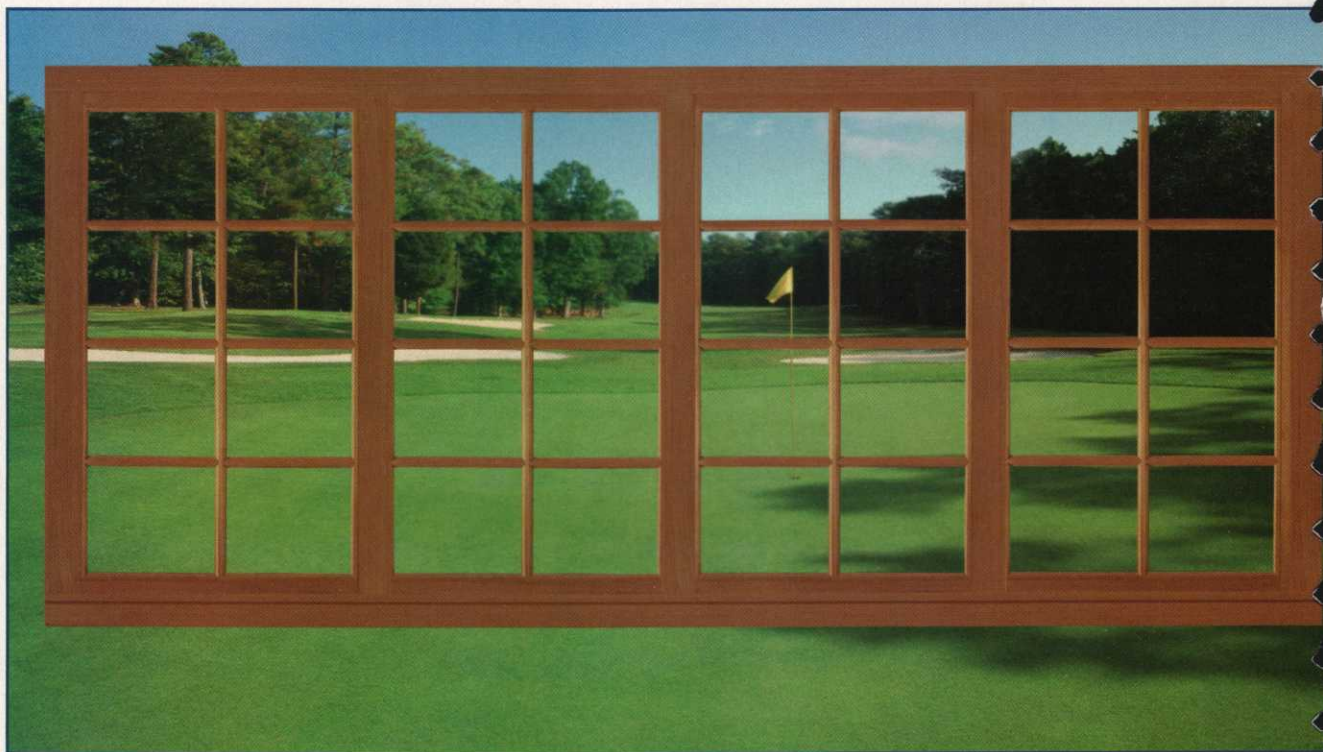


To see Augusta in its early spring splendor is one thing. But to *hear* it, as I sought to do, is another. I listened to the experience that is a day at Augusta, and here are five sounds I'll never forget:

1 The “thwack” created by the world’s greatest golfers when they hit off the tees. These guys bring their “A” games to this tournament, arguably the most acclaimed of all the Majors, and it sounds like it. The “thwack” sound they make is so precise and so perfect. I wish I had close to a “thwack” like that. Yeah, these guys are good, all right.

2 The sound of the rumple created when the green cellophane paper is removed from the famous Masters egg-salad sandwich. It’s a distinctive sound that speaks words for which we long. It says the egg-salad sandwich, a tasty staple of the Augusta foodservice operation, is ready to be consumed.

3 The sound of money rustling in the Augusta National gift shop. There’s gold in them green hats and polo shirts — not to mention a million other items for sale from playing cards to clocks to coasters. When it’s busy (when is it not?), this mother of all gift shops resembles the New York Stock Exchange’s trade floor. It’s where dollar bills — make that 100-dollar bills — go to die.



4 **The sound of happy chatter.** Find me a person in a foul mood walking the Augusta grounds during Masters week, and I'll find you a patch of *Poa annua* on one of the course's pristine bentgrass greens. It can't be done! Augusta National, perhaps, is the greatest place on the planet to be from April 3 through April 9 every year.

5 **The sound of the roaring crowd.** The Masters fans know how to roar, and they do it with style. For instance, when Jack Nicklaus, who played his final Masters last year, was in-



troduced on the first tee during the Par-3 Contest, a loud but polite and appreciative roar — one that exclaimed, "Thanks for the memories, Jack" — resounded throughout the venue, landing pleasantly on the tens of thousands of ears in attendance. It was a sweet sound, indeed.

Quotable

"The golf course superintendent is in a stronger place."

— *Certified Superintendent Tim O'Neill, 2005 president of the GCSAA, on the state of his profession.*

"For a good golf course, you need drainage and common sense. If you are short on the latter, get more of the former."

— *Michigan State Turf Professor Paul Rieke, quoting what he was told several years ago by a pioneer turf researcher.*

"To quote an old superintendent, 'I should have been a mason. Bricks don't wilt.' "

— *Mike Beall, superintendent of the University of Georgia Golf Course in Athens, Ga., on his chosen profession.*

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