



Inside The Ropes

By Monroe S. Miller

It was cool — I had the chance to watch the 1998 US Women's Open at Blackwolf Run as an official member of the media, from 'inside the ropes' as we ink stained reporters say.

The Open was actually my second experience as a media person. The first was as a staff writer for The Capital Times. Rob Schultz got me the media pass, the neat kind you actually tie to your belt, and I watched the Packers defeat the Cleveland Browns in a preseason game at Lambeau Field in Green Bay almost ten years ago. My daughter Christie was able to use my ticket to attend the game, too, so it was a big deal in a lot of ways.

It was quite an experience, and I learned how well the press is treated. There was preferred, free parking right next to the stadium (I still park for free, on the street but blocks away!). We got there right before the kickoff, avoided all traffic hassles — the fans had already arrived and parked — and rode an elevator to the press box.

Ah, the press box at Lambeau Field. There's a place to spend some time. The Packers provide the print and electronic media reporters a buf-

fet right in the press box that would suit members of the most exclusive country clubs in Wisconsin. And it was, again, no charge!

The view of the game media people have isn't for sale anywhere else in Lambeau Field — clear glass unobstructed view, 50-yard line seat, comfortable chairs — unless you are in a skybox for \$30K a year (or more).

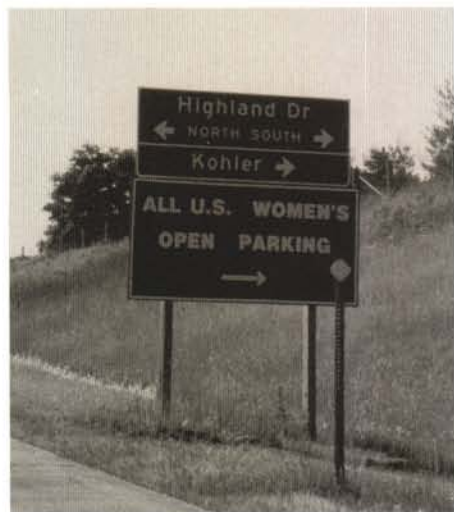
Rob's only advice was "keep your

mouth shut and take a few notes." That was easy enough and I escaped undetected, even though I sat right next to Bud Lea from the Milwaukee Sentinel. He's a veteran reporter with considerable fame and I couldn't resist visiting with him. I did not, however, ask for an autograph. Normally I would have.

Halfway through the fourth quarter we went down to the Packer sideline,



My headquarters for the day, as a member of the golf media!



Traffic was backed up on Rt. 23 on the first day of the Women's Open.

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out of the way of players and coaches, but literally right next to them. I was stunned by their size, by the sound of the hitting on the field, and by the talking among players on both teams.

And then — WOW! — down to the locker room for interviews with players, into the interview room with coaches, and after it was all over, a conversation with Linde Infante in the concourse of Lambeau Field. Rob provided an experience I won't forget.

The USGA gave me the opportunity for a similar experience this past July 4th holiday.

Shortly after the announcement naming Blackwolf Run host of the 1998 US Women's Open, Mike Lee arranged to get me on the media list for the Open as editor and chief reporter for *The Grass Roots*. I received all press releases concerning the Open and an invitation to apply for press credentials for the tournament.

I read the application blank, considered if I could actually get away from work on the Thursday before the 4th of July holiday weekend, and

decided to return it completed. And then I forgot about it.

The reason I forgot about it was that I did not expect to get credentials. The questions on the form included things like, "how many phone lines will you require?" and "how many desks are needed?" C'mon! This is *The Grass Roots* we talking about, not *Sports Illustrated* or *Golf Digest* or *The Capital Times*.

But the USGA deemed our journal worthy of a media pass, so I had it safely in my pocket when we headed up to Kohler for the Open on Thursday, July 2nd. I wasn't sure what privileges came with it, but I wasn't expecting much. My interest was the course, Mick Lee's job of preparation, and the players, not the credentials.

That was wrong. By early Thursday morning I am sure Open officials and Kohler Company execs figured out this was a bigger deal to golf fans in Wisconsin than they had hope for in their wildest dreams. Traffic was horrific, backed up past on/off ramps and onto Highway 23, both

east and west. I groaned at the thought of the big wait in the car getting to the parking lot and the likely even longer wait for a shuttle ride to the golf course.

We inched toward the lots north and east of the foundry and office complex, but as we got closer could see that an occasional vehicle was moved straight through to the Village. I wondered if, maybe, the privilege to go straight through past the lots and closer to the course was for media types, which I was for that one day.

I flashed the credentials the USGA sent me and whizzed right into Kohler, past the American Club to the stop sign, left to a lot I knew was within walking distance of the golf course. We were directed into a grassy parking lot, exchanged credentials for a badge and armband and camera pass, and boarded a new, air-conditioned mini-van. The ride took all of two minutes and we were deposited at the front door of the media tent.

(Continued on page 34)



The entrance road took fans past the practice range, . . .



where Jan Stephenson was fine tuning her game for the Open.



Wisconsin players included Sherri Steinhauer of Madison, here headed for the 8th tee, and, . . .



Martha Nause of Sheboygan, here hitting from the bunker on hole one.

(Continued from page 33)

It wasn't the kind of tent you conjure up in your mind when you hear the word 'tent'. First, it was huge and covered the area of a good-sized golf course maintenance building. There was flooring in the tent, bright lighting, air-conditioning, and it was well appointed. There were rows upon rows of desks (long tables, really) and phones at each chair. Offices, an interview room, printed material by the bushel, and television sets all around were also there to use. On the one hand I felt like a rube as I gaped in awe. On the other hand, the special treatment gave me the feeling of a big shot!

No doubt the guys who write — newspapers and magazines — for a living or those involved with radio or television don't feel like I did. What the USGA really did was give them a comfortable setting to do their jobs. Clear, honest writing and reporting is hard work, and for a few days in July the media tent was their office. It needed to be reasonably comfortable.

Media credentials extended to me the opportunity to carry a camera, something the regular fans couldn't do. I shot a lot of pictures, some

which are included here. The point of the rule, I guess, was to minimize the distraction to players, and that makes sense. They have the same 'no camera' rule at the Masters in Augusta each year.

The 'inside the ropes' armband gets a person closer to the action, meaning the players. But I didn't take advantage of it because Cheryl was with me and she isn't a member of the media like I am!

But even from outside the ropes, we had a fantastic time. The golf

was great, the golf course was just the best, and I don't know how much better the weather could have been. A clear and sunny and moderate day in July is a rare event. Rain had fallen and given the course a deep green color, but there wasn't a wet area to be found. The course was spotless and immaculate, which allowed focus to fall on the competition, just as it should for any golf tournament.

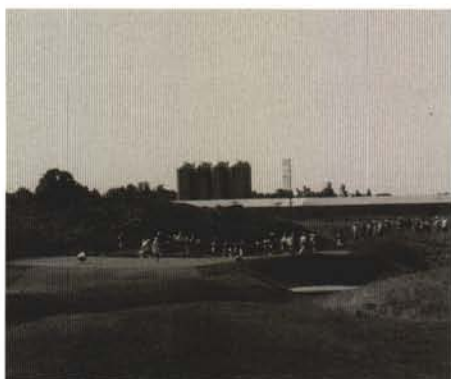
Mike Lee and all the crew at Blackwolf Run received unanimous



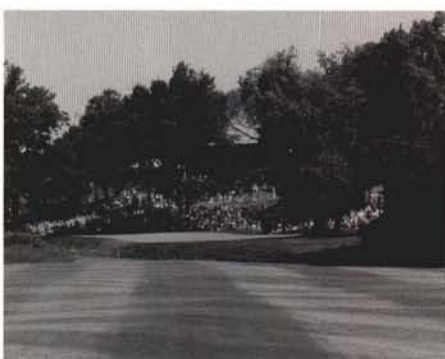
The view from the TV camera tower behind the 15th green. Down the hill behind the tower is the golf course maintenance facility.



A great feature of Blackwolf Run is its embrace of the Wisconsin landscape, as shown by the barn used as a shelter on the front nine, and...



the silos across the road from third tee.



The ninth green into the hillside below the clubhouse drew a huge crowd, ...



as did the eighteenth green.

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praise. And they deserved it. For the WGCSA, we have a young superintendent among us who has reached a professional level of success that brings pride to the entire organization. The success of the tournament opened eyes all over the country — attendance records were broken, a playoff resulted, and tons of interest



The USGA Museum had a display for all to enjoy.



Junior Golf received a big boost from the Women's Open.

in the golf was shown.

I am certain the USGA extends media privileges in the hope of extensive reporting on the tournament, but I am not doing that. The golf media took care of it and did so superbly. My point to these ramblings was to give

you a bit of a look from the inside. It was fun and it was a neat experience. But the real experience was seeing a great golf course at its best with the world's best women's players.

That is what the 1998 US Women's Open was all about. ♣

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