

# The 2007 Myrtle Beach Classic

The ride to Myrtle Beach was uneventful. Jeff drove my Odyssey van, and we arrived at the Legends Golf Resort around 4:00 on Wednesday. At the registration desk, I found out that my group of 15 guys would not be getting daily breakfast tickets, and would not be getting a daily ticket for a free drink in the Ailsa pub. I was not pleased at the prospect of informing my men of my false advertising. It turns out that the Legends Resort used to include these for every golfer, but beginning in January of 2007, they stopped including these perks in packages purchased by golf vacation brokers such as the one I used. Although I had booked my package 3 months earlier, it appeared I was out of luck. I tried to purchase a drink ticket for each of my guys, as I thought I wouldn't have much trouble convincing them that they had read my promotional literature



**Jeff, Paul, Mike, Steve, Mark, Ryan, Jacob, Erik, Alan and John at the Ailsa Pub, contemplating their menus.**

incorrectly, and they were only promised one free drink upon arrival. Unfortunately, the main desk could not sell me drink tickets, due to those pesky alcohol laws. I purchased sixteen breakfast tickets at \$6 each to pass around to my boys to help smooth things out.

We found our condo and carried in our stuff. Jeff had brought his bocce balls, and I had brought my guitar (for Erik), my harps, and my chess set, as well as the four golf trophies. Since I was last year's winner of the Tiger Woods Pre-Nike Contract Bobble-Head Doll awarded annually to the person who demonstrates the most improvement from the first day to the second, I had brought that trophy as well.



**A view of the Parkland course's ninth hole, as seen from the patio outside our Turnberry Village Condo.**

Before long we headed to the Resort's practice range. At least the part about free practice range balls was correct. Jeff and I started pounding some balls, but after a while, I switched to the putting and chipping green and practiced some short pitch shots, which is my weakness. Like all amateur golfers, I tend to spend more time practicing those things I am pretty good at than those things I am bad at.

Just before we left the practice range, Phil, Keith and Danny Cook arrived. Phil and Dan had driven down from Morganton that morning, and had picked up Keith at the airport. I see Phil and Dan every month, but I only see Keith once or twice a year. The three of them were staying at the Marriott that night, but they had come this afternoon to take advantage of the Legends' practice facility.

When Jeff and I had had enough practice, we drove back to the condo, played No Limit Texas Hold'em, and sipped gin martinis. We found the Ailsa Pub to be just a 9 iron away, as I had requested, so we walked there for dinner. I treated myself to the filet mignon.

Back at our condo, we watched the Duke/North Carolina game and waited for Scott and Erik to show up. They arrived with about 10 minutes to go in the game. Scott lives in Raleigh, and had picked up Erik at the Raleigh airport. It was good to see them both – especially Erik. I don't think there is any satisfaction deeper than that produced by a child well done. Now that he lives in Spain, his mother and I only get to see him a couple of times a year. The February Myrtle Beach Classic is one of those times.

In the morning we took four of our sixteen breakfast tickets and drove to the clubhouse to sample the Legends breakfast buffet. We filled our plates with bacon, scrambled eggs, sausage, biscuits, and gravy, and then we went back for more bacon. The waitress brought us our juice, and told us to just leave our breakfast tickets on the table when we left. All around us were guests of the Legends Golf Resort – more than a hundred of them. Amazingly, they all looked just like me – fifty-ish, graying, slightly paunchy, dressed in dull golf clothes, and wearing a hat indoors at breakfast. They sat in groups of 4, 8, 12, and 16, and they consumed huge quantities of bacon and eggs.



**Most of the groups at Legends Golf Resort were pretty much like our group, although a bit better looking.**

We drove to the Tournament Player's Course (TPC) at Myrtle Beach. It is perhaps the best of Myrtle Beach's one hundred and fifteen golf courses, and one of the most expensive, and I wanted to play it once in my life. We encountered a frost delay, and our 9:32 tee time turned into a 10:00 or so start time. The course was lovely; as was the weather once the sun warmed things up. After a dozen holes or so, I had taken off three layers, and was playing in my short-sleeve shirt. None of us played very well, although I scored pretty well by staying out of most of the serious trouble. I shot a 90, Erik shot 97, Jeff shot 99, and Scott shot 104.

When we returned to the Legends, we found evidence that others had arrived. In my bedroom were Al Green's things, so I knew he had arrived from Wilmington. On top of the TV, next to the four 2007 MB Classic trophies and the Pre-Nike Contract Tiger Woods Bobble-Head Doll sat the Monkey's Uncle Trophy – a small wooden chimpanzee holding a golf club, something I bought ten years ago in England's Lake District. Its presence there could only be explained one way – Mike Masterson, last year's best story winner, had arrived from Battle Creek.



**Erik shows off his perfect swing form as he tees off Thursday at the Tournament Player's Course (TPC).**

With help from Jeff, my wife, and my mother, I had prepared “goody bags” for each of the competitors. These bags were marked with their name, and held a lucky logo golf ball, many tees, a green repair tool, a used but clean golf towel, a pack of cheese crackers, two Werther's Originals, a copy of the tournament rules, a listing of the 15 competitors, and a welcome note telling the competitor who his condo captain was, who his first round was with, who his second round was

with, and his Friday and Saturday tee times. The bag also contained a CD of music prepared by Jeff, and a small golf gift from the Committee. I took these bags around to the other three condos, and left them to be found by my golfers.

I made some final tweaks in the assigned handicaps, and wrote out a list that could be passed around. Mark Snyder, who had confessed to a 10 handicap, would get 10 strokes. Keith would get 11, Erik 15, Jeff and I would get 18, and Ryan Meador, the second new guy, would get 20. Steve would get 21, Jacob 22, Dan and Phil would get 26, John 28, Scott 29, Dennis 31, Al 32, and Mike would get 50.

When darkness arrived, so did John and Dennis, who had been playing the Parkland course at the Legends. John, also from Morganton, is a good friend. Dennis, from Lansing, is an old friend who moved from Morganton to Michigan a dozen years ago. The MB Classic is the only time I see Dennis. Since playing blues along side Dennis and laughing along with Dennis are two of my greatest pleasures, seeing Dennis is a major reason why I organize this February men's weekend each year.

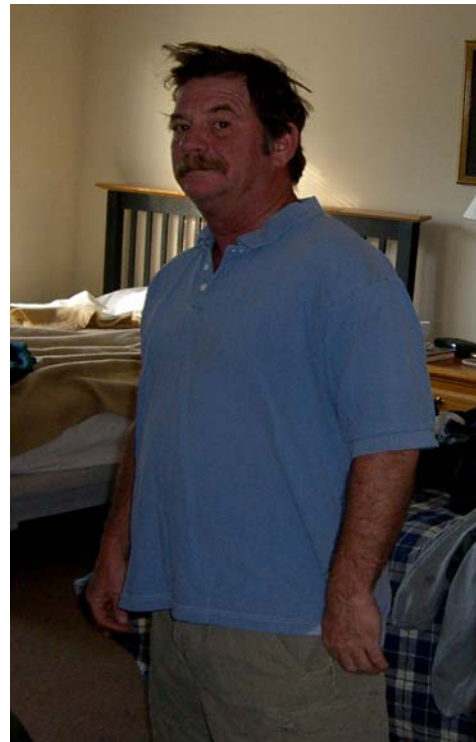


**Jeff, Alan, Keith, Erik and Phil hit balls on the 30 acre practice facility at the Legend's Golf Resort.**

Finally, a little after 7:00 pm, the last of our 15 competitors arrived. Jacob, from Houston, had flown to Raleigh with his friends Steve and Mark. They spent Wednesday night with Ryan Meador,

and the four of them drove to Myrtle Beach. Along the way, they stopped at a golf course near Pinehurst, which delayed their Myrtle Beach arrival by about five hours. Word quickly spread that Mark had shot a 74 that afternoon, and some pressure was put on the Committee to revise the man's handicap. The handicaps were already posted, however, and the Committee had little trouble resisting the pressure.

The arrival of the Texas gang meant two things: it was time to go out to dinner, and we now had enough sober drivers amongst us to be able to drive somewhere. The cab driver who had driven Dennis to the Legends Resort had told him about a seafood restaurant called "Jack's", and he had told him approximately where it was. Jacob drove my Odyssey, accompanied by Jeff, Dennis, Erik and me. Other vehicles started out following us, but Jack's Seafood Buffet wasn't where Dennis had been told it was, so we kept driving on Highway 17 until we got all the way to North Myrtle Beach. We had lost the others somewhere along the way, and since seafood buffets were plentiful, we eventually stopped and ate. Most of the food was mediocre, but the hot crab legs were good.



**Two of the more obviously crazy fellows who faithfully attend the Myrtle Beach Classic are Dennis and Al.**

Back at the Legends, several parties were starting up, but I was pretty tired, so I headed for bed. Jeff, who was serving as Condo Captain this year, had decided that he and Erik would room together, and that I would room with Al. That was no problem. Although Al has some ingrained habits which make him difficult to live with (like staying up late, playing the bongo drums just before going to sleep, and excessive snoring), he realizes this, and often opts to sleep on the couch or the porch. During the entire weekend, he never slept a wink in "our" bedroom.

Friday promised to be another wonderful day. Our tee times at the Legend's Heathland Course ran from 9:32 through 9:56. We were all there early, and all raring to go. The 40 minute frost delay didn't bother us. Soon the day was warm and the fun was plentiful. By tradition, we all play the first day with our condo-mates. For me, that meant Jeff, Al, and Erik. I shot a 90, Erik had a 93, Jeff had a 97, and Al shot 119.



**Alan Green shows the bocce ball throwing form that makes him one of the group's best bocce ball players.**

Friday evening was extra nice, because when we got back to our condos, Danny Scott was there. He has played with us in past years, but couldn't play all three days this year. He did value the camaraderie enough to drive five hours each way to enjoy one evening and night of fun, and one round of golf the next day. Everyone likes Danny, and we were all glad he had taken the time and trouble to play with us.

While others played bocce, I decided to try out the hot tub, located behind the Ailsa Pub. I found Jacob and Steve there, and we discussed the day's golf. Later I walked from condo to condo, enjoying everyone's company. A dozen of us ate dinner at the Ailsa Pub, where most of us had the Guinness Pie and Caesar Salad. Jeff, seated on my right at the head of the table, became so engrossed in his conversation with Jacob (who had temporarily moved from his chair to a stool beside Jeff) that he was totally ignoring his Caesar salad. It sat there untouched, while the rest of us were all but done with ours. In a move reminiscent of the time Mike, unseen by Jeff, slipped under the table at a poker game with a pair of scissors and cut a hole in the toe of the old sock where Jeff kept his poker coins, someone slowly and carefully stole Jeff's salad and returned an almost

completely finished salad plate, with used fork slightly askew. Sure enough, when Jeff turned back around, he was puzzled, unsure of whether he had already eaten his salad or not. All around him he saw empty Caesar salad plates held down by used salad forks, but he didn't actually remember eating anything. Eventually his salad was returned to him from wherever it had disappeared to, and all was once again right in his universe.

After dinner, the Texas boys and Ryan started a game of Texas Hold'em in their condo, and I sat behind Erik and watched him play. Erik isn't much of a bluffer, but his five dollars bought him more than an hour of fun. It was clear to my more experienced eye that Mark Snyder, our new good golfer, was also a skilled poker player.



**Ryan, Erik, Mark and others mill about the first tee prior to Saturday's round at the Moorland course.**

Saturday at the Myrtle Beach Classic is always the most fun day. We play the second of our three rounds, and are all fresh enough to do so. Later the Committee records all the scores, places the competitors into flights, determines deficit adjustments and posts the final round pairings. At Happy Hour, in the condo of the returning Monkey's Uncle Award winner, Dennis serves as Master of Ceremonies for our story telling competition. Every year, that is when I laugh the hardest.

Jeff, Erik and I went to breakfast again Saturday morning, again eating a month's worth of bacon. There would be no frost delay, as the temperature never approached freezing during the night. We would be playing the Legend's Moorland course, which, according to the internet, was loved by some and hated by some. I was matched with John, Jacob and Steve, and we all had a great time. I

might have had a better time than my friends, though, as every putt I took a stab at seemed to find its way to the bottom of the cup, and I shot an 85. John shot 117, Steve shot 108, and Jake shot 114. Later we shared a pitcher of beer in the clubhouse bar, and were joined by all the others as they finished their rounds.

We said goodbye to Danny Scott, and returned to our condos, where I determined the four flights for Sunday's final round. Having 15 competitors meant that one of the four flights would have only three people in it. I gathered advice from Jeff and Erik, and finally determined that the Championship Flight would be Mark, Paul, Ryan and Jeff. The First Flight was Keith, Erik, Phil and Scott. The Second Flight held Dennis, John, Jacob and Steve. The Third Flight consisted of Mike, Al and Dan.



**Jeff explains the important role that the Monkey's Uncle trophy fills at each annual Myrtle Beach Classic.**

I visited the hot tub again, and Jeff and I chatted with some fellows from New York. They had held their annual golf outing at the Legends for several years, and were planning on returning again. Once again I was struck with the many similarities between these golf-based male-bonding groups, despite our varied accents, and the different directions to which we would depart.

Back at the condo, the music had begun. Phil (guitar), Dennis (Jew's harp and blues harp), Erik (guitar), Al (harp), Scott (guitar), Mike (drums), Keith (drums), John (really cool metal ribs and bearings percussion swish-swish thing) and I (harp) entertained a couple of ladies from a neighboring condo out on the patio. Most of the entertainment came out of Dennis's mouth as he

sang extemporaneous blues. When we were done, one of the ladies asked where our group would be playing next. We explained that we performed only once a year.

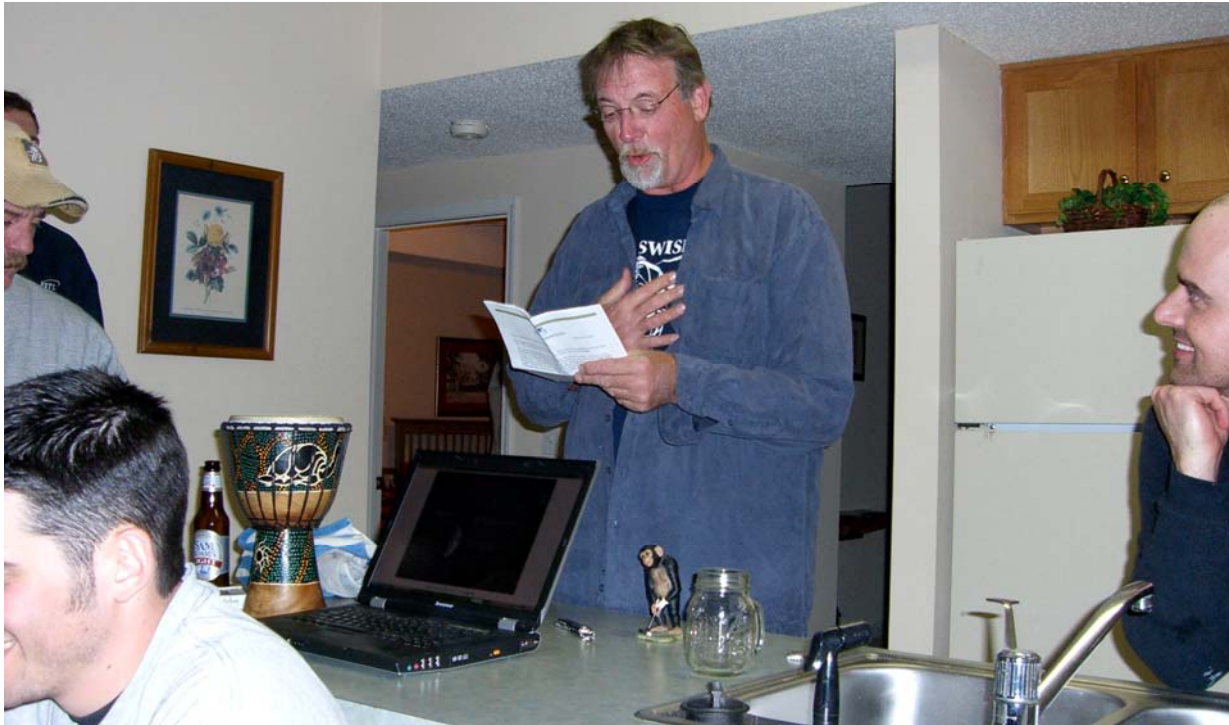


**I don't know who the woman with the wine is, but the pickers are Erik and Scott, and the slapper is Keith.**

Story telling time was held up for half an hour while John (with sober Jacob driving) drove back to Highway 17 and purchased more beer. Shortly after they returned, Dennis held the Monkey's Uncle Trophy high and announced the beginning of the 2007 contest. As before, any competitor could enter one or more times. Any story told had to be at least vaguely connected to a shot witnessed at this year's event. I started off with a story about a shot of Steve's that day. It had been a tough round for Steve. On the 13th hole he was in a deep green-side bunker, with the green sloping sharply away from him towards a sand trap. I thought to myself "The only way he can leave this shot close is to hit the pin". Sure enough, his on-line shot hit the pin, bouncing straight right. It almost stopped fifteen feet away on the green, but the slope took it slightly to the side, and then oh-so-slowly all the way back down to his feet.

Scott told a story about one of Mike's shots. Mike was in a fairway trap, with some railroad ties about ten feet in front of him. After his mighty swing, his ball rested between the railroad ties in front of him. Scott took a picture of Mike in the trap, and another picture of Mike pointing at his ball in the boards, and used his laptop computer to present visual evidence of Mike's woes.

Danny Cook presented a story about one of Ryan's shots. Danny had been riding Ryan pretty hard all day, and toward the end of the round, Ryan was faced with a long shot over a marsh. He was trying to decide whether to lay up short of the trouble, or try to clear the marsh in one shot. Danny chided him for being a panty-wearing sissy, and Ryan went for it and knocked it in the marsh. As Danny was getting back in the cart with Phil, he told Phil "He never should have tried that shot". Ryan then presented the same story from his perspective.



**For the second consecutive year, Mike entry in event's Best Shot Story was delivered in rhyme.**

I'm not sure who presented the story about Jeff's tee shot on Friday. It had bounced down the cart path, and ended up three feet off the ground, nestled in some railroad ties which were providing banking for the cart path. Erik had filmed the ball's position, and also Jeff's shot from that position (he expertly tapped it fifty feet out into the fairway). Most of the story, however, was about whether Jeff could have taken free relief from that position (he could have, because he ended up standing on the cart path for his shot, but he could not have dropped out of trouble on the grassy side of the cart path).

Eventually Dennis asked for additional stories, and none were offered, so the Condo Captains prepared to go in the bedroom to deliberate. At the last second, Mike, just as he had done last year, slowly raised his 6 foot 5 inch frame from his chair, and said that he guessed he would enter again this year. He pulled a slip of paper out of his pocket and once again delivered his story as a poem. After a verse or two, someone (I heard later it was Ryan) started slowly humming "Battle Hymn of the Republic". Very gradually, more voices joined in. As Mike kept going, more voices chimed in, and eventually mine joined too. As the chorus got louder, Mike's voice did too, until he had no

more volume to give. As if rehearsed, he stopped for five seconds, and the chorus dropped to a whisper. Mike then delivered his last stanza, after which our many voices rose as one in a stirring conclusion.

Like last year, I didn't see how anyone could have beaten Mike, but when the judges returned, Jeff announced that the winner was Ryan for his version of the Danny Cook chiding him story. Later Jeff told me that the judges were very impressed by Mike's poetry again this year, but felt it would be wrong to allow him to win using the same gimmick he used last year. Jeff also told me that the judges had been extremely impressed with Scott's laptop presentation of Mike's shot, and that if Scott had embellished the story a bit, he would probably have won.



**Schranz's performance during the awarding of the Tiger Woods Bobble-Head Doll drew much applause.**

After the awarding of the Monkey's Uncle, most of us walked to the Ailsa Pub for dinner. While we waited for our food to be delivered, Dennis stood up, tapped his glass, and commanded the attention of the 150 golfers in the bar and the 10 wait staff. He held up the Pre-Nike Contract Tiger Woods Bobble-Head Doll and announced that the man who had improved the most from the first day to the second day was Mike Masterson. He mentioned that Mike, who was competing with a handicap of fifty, had improved from a 154 on the first day to 131 on the second day. Throughout his presentation he held the Bobble-Head Doll aloft, slightly shaking it the whole time, so that the head never stopped quivering. When he was done with his presentation, the entire house broke into applause. Later I heard that some of those people wanted to meet Mike, the man with the fifty handicap.

As with past years, I have no first-hand knowledge of what shenanigans occurred after dinner on Saturday night. I know there were people out on the 9th fairway throwing a lighted Frisbee, and I think I heard the clink of bocce balls, but all that fun tires me out, and Sunday is always a big day, so I went to bed about 10:00.

I got up around 5:30, and started packing up my clothes. The temperature outside was 31 degrees, and it was clear we would have a frost delay. Jeff was up early too, and we drank coffee and gradually packed up the van for the trip home. Around 7:30, Erik, Jeff and I drove to the clubhouse for the final clump of bacon we will eat this year. We left the remaining breakfast tickets on the table, and I walked to the registration building to go through the check-out routine.



**Phil, Erik, Jeff and Scott throw their bocce balls onto the Parkland's 9<sup>th</sup> hole as the sun goes down.**

Back at our condo, we found that Al, who doesn't eat breakfast, had woken up, packed up, and cleaned up the condo, so we sat around watching TV, waiting for the frost to go away. I called the clubhouse about 8:30, and was told that the hour and a half delay had turned into a one hour delay, so we passed the word to the others and headed for the course. We had the first tee times of the day at the Legend's Parkland course, so we were the first golfers to tee off at 9:00. I watched as Mark's draw turned into a hook, and his ball rolled into the water, then I hit a great tee shot. We both bogied the hole, as did Ryan, while Jeff took a six. On the next hole, Mark ran into trouble, and took a nine on the par four. For the first time, it appeared that perhaps Mark wasn't the man to beat. As

our round went on, Jeff, Mark and I all had our troubles, while Ryan played steadily. In the end, Ryan won the Championship Flight by 9 strokes over both Mark and me.

After we finished the last hole, we watched as the group behind us finished. Erik faced a difficult 40 foot putt. He hit the hole, but with a little too much speed, and the ball didn't go in. If it had, he would have tied Keith, and the First Flight would have been decided on a scorecard playoff.

I loaded my clubs in the van, and began preparing for the Awards Ceremony. I set up the tables and chairs, and bought a pitcher of beer, while my assistant, Erik, lined up the trophies. In addition to the engraved trophy, each flight winner would receive a sleeve of golf balls imprinted "February 2007 Myrtle Beach Classic Winner".



**Newcomer Ryan Meador won both the Monkey's Uncle Award and first place in the Championship Flight.**

The remaining players trickled in and handed me their scorecards, and the final computations were made. The Third Flight had been won by Danny Cook, with a final score of 252. The Second Flight had been won by John White, with a score of 245. The First Flight was won by Keith Linney, with a score of 221, and the Championship Flight was won by Ryan Meador, with a final score of 212. As usual, Dennis performed admirably as the ceremony's MC, entertaining not only our group, but a few other clusters of golfers enjoying a late lunch after their round.

With the trophies dispensed, and with long drives ahead of most of us, the group began to break up. We hugged and shook hands, as men who are fond of each other do at such times. We all knew that good friends and good times are important, and that once again, the Myrtle Beach Classic had contributed to both.