

# TheMilwaukeeChannel.com

## Who Will Master Augusta National This Week?

[Chuck Garbedian](#), Contributing Writer

POSTED: 7:20 PM CDT April 7, 2004

**MILWAUKEE** -- The 2004 Golf Season officially opens this week with the playing of the season's first major, [the Masters](#) at Bobby Jones' creation, the Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Ga. While competitive play begins on Thursday, there is already a lot going on leading up to this point.

The feel good story early in the season was the resurgence of John Daly the golfer. His early season win at Torrey Pines set the stage for a Masters run that was closed and completed when Adam Scott knocked in his 10-footer for the win at The Players Championship. What that did was enable Long John to remain in 10th place on the PGA Tour's 2004 money list, which was his last hope to get into Augusta and compete for an XXXL (at least, in his case) Green Jacket. The only cloud over JD's season so far was the pending trial of his wife Sherrie Miller Daly and his in-laws on federal drug ring and gambling charges. Last Friday, a plea agreement was reached with Sherrie and her in-laws prior to the opening of the trial. In the deal, Sherrie and her mother, Billie, will serve five years probation with six months of house arrest. Sherrie's father, Alvis Miller, will serve up to two years in a federal prison. All have proclaimed their innocence and no doubt John Daly's RV is already on the grounds looking for a space to set up shop for the week.



There is a new movie due out to a theater near you on April 30 entitled, "[Bobby Jones' Stroke of Genius](#)". The film, which opened in Atlanta on March 30, stars Jim Caviezel ("Passion of the Christ") as the legendary amateur golfer and professional lawyer. Also starring on the big screen are an exact replica set of clubs that Jones used to make history that are manufactured by a company called [Golf Links to the Past](#). Golf Links is offering a limited run of 1,930 Bobby Jones Grand Slam sets at a cost of \$3,500 each. The set of fourteen forged hickory shafted clubs are fully playable, individually numbered and come with a certificate of authenticity. It is just the item for the discerning collector.

Speaking of clubs, I had the opportunity this weekend to put into play a [TaylorMade TP Rescue Aid](#) which turned out to be a good news, bad news proposition. The good news -- I absolutely killed it, hitting far more quality shots than I can remember ever hitting with a standard 3-iron (it's a 3FW- 19-degrees). The bad news is that I now have a collection of 3-irons I'll never use again. However, they look nice stacked neatly against the wall of the home office. The TP is a wonderful club that is easy to step up to and put into play. It sits square at address with a slight offset and just goes off the club face. It makes you kind of wonder how we ever got along without it. Kind of like how golfers felt after former Masters Champion Gene Sarazen invented the sand wedge.

Speaking of TaylorMade, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary in the golf business this year, all of their staff players, defending champion Mike Weir included, will be sporting a new retro

ook this week at Augusta. TM announced that as a nod towards its heritage a quarter century ago both the staff bags that will be carried and the hats that the tour staff will wear will pay homage to TaylorMade's birth year of 1979. That means the big buckles; retro logos and color schemes of 1979 are in on the staff bags. As for the stone or green colored hats (to be worn on days one and two of competition and are available at retail), the nod will go to the retro logo and a special edition 1979 patch that also graces the staff bags.

[Callaway Golf](#) has a new Arnold Palmer Masters Collectors tin out that features a bronze coin of The King and four commemorative golf balls (one for each of his Augusta wins) just in time for the Azaleas to bloom and celebrate Palmer's 50th Masters. If you're a hard charging fan of The King then this is a must have.

If you didn't get enough of Martha Burk at last years Masters or you would like a comprehensive behind the scenes look at what exactly took place, Alan Shipnuck (author of Bud, Sweat and Tees) is out with a new read entitled; "The Battle for Augusta National; Hootie, Martha and the Masters of the Universe" (\$25 Simon & Schuster). Whether you are pro or con on this issue, it is an extremely entertaining and informative look at how one issue can be pulled in several directions at the same time.

Now, what about the tournament itself? While I may not be able to accurately tell you who'll win the 2004 Masters, I can almost assuredly tell you who won't win it -- Tiger Woods.

I have seen absolutely nothing that leads me to believe that Woods is even close to being on form for the springboard to the rest of the 2004 season. I have said in the past and stated publicly that as far as majors are concerned he is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end when there is Major Championship speak in the air. But this season, I just don't see it. I know El Tigre has one win already (as well as six cuts made, four top-10s and five top-25s in six events) with more than \$1.8 million in the bank (fifth on the PGA Tour money list) but Woods isn't about dollar signs or stats, so adding up all those numbers and dividing them by events isn't how the man has been measured in the past by his own standards.

I find it ironic that Nike finally puts a driver in his hands (a prototype Ignite model) that he likes and his swing won't let him put it in play. He's the first one to mention the swing "flaws" and that "10 percent" of his shots are off the planet. Are you telling me then that Tiger Woods at 90 percent isn't better than the field at 100 percent? Is this the same guy who got food poisoning last year prior to the final round at Bay Hill and then increased his lead at the end?

Everyone, including the number one player in the world needs help with his swing now and then. The easy fix would be to hook up with Butch "Butchie" Harmon again but don't expect that to happen anytime soon. For Woods and Harmon to reunite, Tiger would have to admit he was wrong in dismissing Butchie in the first place and that just doesn't happen in the Woods camp (seen Fluff Cowan or Hughes Norton hanging around Tiger lately?). Woods is relying on Stevie the Fifth Beatle" Williams to be his "eyes" on the range and to provide feedback on his swing. Now, as nice of a guy (ahem) as Stevie is, I don't think he carries nearly the teaching cred that Harmon does and it shows. I believe that rekindling the Butch Harmon fire is the way to go, otherwise the door is wide open this year at Augusta, much as it has been for most of this season so far.

If not Tiger then who? I think the time is ripe for Phil Mickelson to step to the forefront and

claim his first major. I also like Darren Clarke this year as well as Ernie Els. If Sergio Garcia can keep his emotions in check (either up or down) he's got a real shot. For Davis Love III it depends on how healthy his back is for the week. Jose Maria Olazabal can never be counted out as long as the driver is going well. John Daly, even contending, would be a huge story. From the kiddie table, maybe an Adam Scott or a Charles Howell III, but a lot of things would have to go right for that to happen. From the outside a Paul Casey or Fredrik Jacobsen both have the tools to compete well at Augusta.

And who knows, maybe Tiger will dial it altogether and notch major championship number nine to start the Grand Slam talk all over again. It can only happen at Augusta at the start of the season.

[Read Garbedian's past columns.](#)

*Chuck has more than a decade of experience in dealing with many aspects of the golf industry - from teaching to radio talk shows. He has been media chairman for the Greater Milwaukee Open since 1992 and is a fill-in host on Steve "The Homer" True's "World's Greatest Sportstalk Show" on WISN Radio 1130. Chuck is the women's golf coach at Wisconsin Lutheran College, an NCAA Division III school. He is also a member of the Golf Writers Association of America.*

Copyright 2004 by [TheMilwaukeeChannel.com](http://www.themilwaukeechannel.com). All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.