

SKINS & SKILL SHOTS 2021

INDIVIDUALLY SPEAKING

All post Geneva articles have been about team competitions. Here is a piece directed towards individuals who earned honors and wine change without help. It may have been for only one hole but these men exercised precision and masterful execution of their weapons like Samurai Futaba (portrayed by John Belushi) handled his Samurai Katanas sword. The intent of this piece is to give these golfers their due.

Friday at Little Mountain yielded 5 Skins worth \$80 apiece. Mike Pagnanelli captured the first Skin with a birdie 2 on the tough 4th hole, a 166 yard par 3. Out of 44 golfers, six managed par, Pags birdied, and 37 shot over par, big numbers for a par 3. Jay Green won Skin No.2 with his birdie on 7. Nate McCorkle birdied No.9 and Nick Boggess deuced the par 3 No.12 hole. The last Skin of the day came via Mini-Legend Jack Berger when he nailed a 100 yard eagle on 16. His eagle bettered Todd Abdon's birdie. Jack glowed all night like a proud Papa at his first born son's birth and he refused to apologize of his success. For the past 50 years Jack's swing has been compared to Iron Byron and this eagle is a testament how a Byron Nelson swing pays dividends.

As life would have it, Friday swings into Saturday. There are always a few who have no clue Saturday is a new day. For the rest sunrise brings a fresh start and another Skins game. The difference with Saturday's Skins is the field is divided by "A" and "B" players. Twenty-one golfers consisted of the "A" flight and the ante topped at \$210. Six players won seven Skins pocketing \$30 per Skin. Birdies by Blaise Plageman on No.1, Legend Vince Gatto on No.2, and Nate McCorkle on No.4 dug deep into the pot early. Nick Boggess needed a total of 5 strokes with his birdies on 8 and 9 back to back. Mike Pagnanelli started the backside with his Skin on No.10 with a birdie. Irv Schumaker won the final Skin with a birdie on 17, the hole called "The Widow Maker".

The "B" ledger played this way. Twenty golfers battled the course, good luck, and each other for a piece of \$200. It did not take Ben Lloyd long to get his hands on some of the pot. He birdied No.1. Tom Black's birdie on the par 5

seventh hole was a Skin. Mini-Legend Jerry Graves earned his Skin on No.9 with a masterful birdie. The inward side produced two more Skins, one by Craig Marshall's three on the par 4 fifteenth hole. Steve Miller played the 18th hole as if strumming "Fly Like An Eagle" on his Les Paul guitar, not missing a chord for a birdie 4. Those five Skins put \$40 into their pockets.

Five holes were chosen to house the Skill Shots competition. Each hole paid \$50. Blaise Plageman won his half of buck by hitting closest to the pin on No.3. The 9th hole proved extremely generous to Mini-Legend Jerry Graves. Besides his \$40 Skin, he pocketed another 50 bucks by sinking a 35 footer to record his birdie and captured the prize for the longest made first putt. On a personal note, his play on No.9 cost Vince Gatto and myself three press bets, a pocketful of money and plenty of pride. Tim Black hit the closest to the pin on his second shot designated to the 13th hole and Keith Boggess staked his tee shot on 16 to win that closest to the pin award. The longest drive on No.11 was hit by Mountain Man Nate McCorkle.

I wish to take this opportunity to comment on the longest drive. Year after year this accomplishment seemed automatic. It felt like Don Jander won every time. The last couple years Don has been a scratch opening the gates for someone else. In 2020, Shannon Boothe drove the farthest on 11 fairway and this year Nate won. Should we thank Don? Without Jander something is missing from the Geneva tournament. We became aware last November how eerie the Masters without the roar of the gallery echoing through the magnolias and gardens of azaleas. That same emptiness is felt in Geneva without Jander's hearty laughter crooning through the oak and maple trees, harmonizing with the beat of the woodpeckers. Here is hope Don returns even if he makes winning longest drive unattainable.