

Nine is fine

The Forecaddie always is on the lookout for unusual approaches to serious golf.

Although Tiger Woods won't try this any time soon, the Man Out Front salutes teaching pro Christopher Smith for a remarkable feat in Oregon's biggest golf tournament, the Oregon Open.

Smith finished tied for the lead at 11 under par with Portland pro Scott Krieger at Eagle Crest Resort in Redmond, Ore.

Krieger won a sudden-death playoff with a birdie on the third extra hole. He had an advantage, though: He carried five more clubs than Smith.

The enterprising Smith, who teaches at Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in North Plains, Ore., played the entire event with only nine clubs – driver, 4-wood, 21-degree hybrid, 5-iron, 7-iron, 9-iron, gap wedge, lob wedge and putter.

Smith carried six clubs in October 2005, when he shot the best round in the history of speed golf – a 5-under-par 65 in 44 minutes, 6 seconds at Chicago's Jackson Park Golf Course.

"Nine clubs was a lot for me," joked Smith, who had not played in a regulation tournament in almost a year.

A Wie-sy week



AP/NAM Y. HUH

It was all Michelle Wie all the time at the John Deere Classic. Until an escalating heat index cut short the 16-year-old phenom's historic bid to make the cut, USA Network's cameras didn't miss many of Wie's 27 holes or her eventual withdrawal because of heat exhaustion.

But the oppressive temperatures weren't the Hawaiian teen's only concerns. Wie's attempt to become the first woman in 61 years to make the cut at a PGA Tour event also suffered an early blow because of, of all things, bugs.

On her second hole (No. 11) in Round 1, Wie backed away from addressing the ball three times because bugs were biting her. The distractions didn't help. She blocked her tee shot into a hazard far right en route to a double bogey.

"I hate bugs, and I was starting to get a little aggravated," Wie said.

According to Wie's mother, Bo, it was her daughter's shampoo, a flower-scented concoction, that

attracted the biting pests. Early lesson: When it comes to combatting mosquitoes and the like, it's better to use Deep Woods Off than Redken.

An even more curious episode came after Wie was taken to a local hospital with heat exhaustion after only nine holes Friday. In a "Dewey Defeats Truman" moment, the PGA Tour sent to several golf writers a congratulatory e-mail that gave kudos to Wie for making her first cut.

The Man Out Front can only assume the e-mail was intended to congratulate Michael Connell – a 31-year-old rookie who made his first cut in 13 Tour starts.

Two of a kind

Paul Azinger debuted an interesting new look at last week's John Deere Classic. Azinger, an avid poker enthusiast, signed a deal to sport a Pokerstars.net logo on his shirt, a potential multiyear endorsement.

Pokerstars.net is a nongambling site that hosts free tournaments and teaches people to play various poker games, which is perfect for Azinger, who plans to play in the World Series of Poker in Las Vegas the week after the British Open.

The Tour suits in Ponte Vedra Beach are likely to raise

an eyebrow with this affiliation, but asked his comfort level, Azinger said, "Let me put it this way: If I'm watching a golf tournament Sunday afternoon with my family, I'm a lot more comfortable watching a commercial for Pokerstars.net than I would be watching a commercial for Cialis."

As of July 17, the Tour had not called. Said Azinger's agent, Tom Elliott, "I'd be surprised if they do, considering Pokerstars.net is not a gambling site, and the Tour is playing the B.C. Open at a casino (Turning Stone Resort) this week."

They said what?



“ I would like to talk to (Wie). But she is not approachable to me. . . . I don't feel like I can go up to her and ask, 'What's your goal? Why don't you just play on our tour and beat the great players on the women's tour? Do you ever want to win?' ”

– Nancy Lopez

Tap-ins and lip-outs

>> **David Duval** has made the cut in five of his past seven PGA Tour starts after missing five in a row. The highlight was a tie for 16th at the **U.S. Open**.

"My golf game is really good," Duval said at the John Deere Classic.

One reason he gives, believe it or not, is weight he has put back on. In the last eight years, Duval has gone from slightly overweight to highly fit and cut, and now back to thick in the torso. "(Fitness) was an avenue I wanted to explore for my golf, but I think that if anything the ill effects of it were more that I changed my center of gravity, kind of thinned out a little bit too much and lost kind of my legs and my butt. . . I've always been thick (in the middle). That's just how I'm built, and that's what hurt as much as anything."

>> Cricket isn't exactly the game of choice in Spain, but it didn't stop **Sergio Garcia** from making an impressive debut in the intrinsically English game.

Garcia turned out to play for the caddies in a pickup game at nearby **Helensburgh** during the **Scottish Open**. Garcia scored 24 runs in his time at bat, but refused to bowl (pitch) for fear of injuring his back. His fielding wasn't as respectable, however. The Spaniard dropped the only ball hit at him.

>> A key word on the PGA Tour this year is "incentivize." Commissioner **Tim Finchem & Co.** concocted the condensed-schedule **FedEx Cup** as a way to entice the game's aristocracy to put it in play more often. Similarly, the Tour has set up a structured payment plan for players bound for this fall's **Qualifying School**. To persuade players – renowned procrastinators when it comes to the Fall Classic – to sign up early for Q-School, the Tour has created three deadlines.

For applicants signing up to play first stage before Sept. 6, the price is \$4,250, \$250 less than last year. From Sept. 6 to 5 p.m. Sept. 20, the tab is bumped up to \$4,500. Once it gets to Sept. 21 or later, the fare balloons to \$5K.

While the Man Out Front understands the logic behind the Tour's structured fee system, having a player send in a check for Q-School with two months of competition remaining is a jinx akin to giving a pitcher who has a no-hitter going a sixth-inning "Attaboy!"

>> While getting his game in shape for Hoylelake, the Forecaddie tripped across a new putter in Ireland. **Nike's "Unitzer"** is a one-piece putter that **Paul Casey** used to win last month's **Johnnie Walker Championship** on the European Tour. **John Cook** also had it in his bag during his big finish in Memphis (T-3). The new putter will be available this fall. . . . One of the Man Out Front's favorite players took the plunge this month. **Johnson Wagner**, a large-hearted lug who captured his breakthrough Nationwide Tour title earlier this year, married his college sweetheart, **Katie Winn**, July 1 in Chester, Va. The honeymoon in Bermuda featured copious amounts of scuba diving and relaxing, but no golf. ○