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Special Coverage of the
Southern Pines Invitational

Report from Mid Pines

Richard Matlock Withstood the Elements and an Early Surge by Michael Wood to Take the Southern Pines Invitational

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By Chuck Dūmbáss, Dimpled Orb Digest, © 2002.



SOUTHERN PINES, North Carolina (DOD) - **T**his year's Southern Pines



Invitational was once again played at the luxurious and inviting Mid Pines Inn & Golf Club in Southern Pines, North Carolina. All the participants from last year's event were there except Louis Crossley, who inexplicably withdrew to attend, of all things, a wedding. Michael Wood invited Mark Kimmet to replace Crossley. This allowed Steve Williams and Dennis McClane to reprise their couplet from years past.



Wood expertly conducted the first Calcutta on the Monday before departure. All were present except McClane and David Mirts. Mirts seldom attends because of general personality quirks. McClane simply had better things to do. Williams, bidding with McClane's proxy, drew the premium bid from McClane, as the players anxiously looked forward to the tournament.



The entire company appeared at the first tee at the appointed time, no one having been left at home, or diverted to Rockingham on the way.

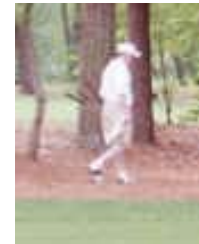


To the surprise of everyone except McClane, Williams opened with a pendulous plus 5 at Pine Needles, tied with Wood. In hot pursuit were McClane and Toby Hyke at plus 4. No cheating was obvious.

Wood was out of his mind on day two at Mid Pines. His round included an Eagle at five, a Birdie at Twelve, and 5 pars. The result was a spectacular, near record, 27 points and a plus 5, phenomenal for a man who once thought nothing of teeing off with a putter.



After two days, Wood had staked a commanding lead at plus 10 in the overall. With steady play continuing through Friday, Hyke was a shock at second, with Williams a surprise at third. McClane and Williams played well early, and bankrolled nicely as a result, as did Wood (left). Richard Matlock (right) was seen prowling the woods at Pine Needles on Friday. Unfortunately, the rest of the group was playing at Mid Pines at the time.



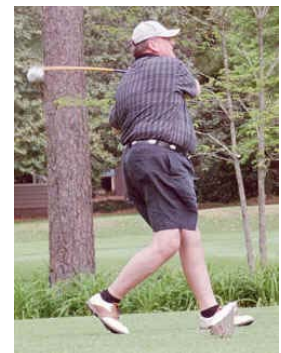
Coming from nowhere on Saturday at Pine Needles, Mike King deadlocked for first, much to the exuberance of his partner and owner Matlock (left). Matlock began his meteoric rise with a fine round in spite of frigid temperatures in the low 80's.



By Saturday, Williams had nearly returned to his fabled form, although he did manage a tie for first with Matlock and King. He faded out of the money on Sunday, and finished second overall. Still, his game has improved dramatically from his four-point days. He continues to putt (in fact, to do everything) like he was born with his wand in his hands.



Hyke did little after Friday. His failure was characterized by the loss of his putter and zero points at the turn on Saturday, and the desperate purchase of Wood's old driver before Sunday's round. None of these strategies yielded positive results. Being forced to play with Mirts also hampered Hyke's performance. He did hang on for third in the overall.





Wood's collapse over the last two days was unprecedented, aided by the capricious purchase of a new "Yellowhammer" driver for Sunday's round. Wood glibly welcomed the driver into the fold, then christened it with several swats up the tenth fairway in an unconventional direction. The result was a free fall of majestic proportions out of contention for the overall. Wood later commented effusively, "When I suck, I really suck." His weekend total of minus 17 is a feat unlikely to be duplicated. Wood is pictured at right forlornly seeking divine intervention prior to Sunday's round.



Thus, with solid play and the leaders faltering, Matlock and King had their game faces on. They were poised for a run at the overall on the final day at Mid Pines. Playing in the second group on Sunday, Matlock took an early lead with 11 points at the turn, all the more remarkable considering the intemperate and blustery conditions. Adding three more by the Fourteenth, Matlock appeared to be a lock. But his play deteriorated as the weather improved.

Despite a near total collapse with a bad case of the hooks, Matlock limped home for the Sunday money at plus 4, and with it, the overall crown. Using canny wagering, King once again rode Matlock's coattails to the bank.

Matlock also profited. He later remarked, "Gosh, I had to take my wallet out of my back pocket for the ride home. It was so full of money, sitting on it was giving me a backache."





Unfortunately, Wood elected to retain the rotating trophy he won in last year's event, so no laurels were available for this year's winner.



As for the other players, Mirts was never a factor. His game is naught but a sad and distant memory. The likely cause is lack of play brought on by numerous dissipations, including cell phone calls during rounds, and an unusual penchant for pharmaceuticals.



Carl Tranthams' golf lessons and bionic shoulder couldn't solve a tragic case of happy feet, bred by years of unbridled life in the Buschs with the Clan.

Despite the whiff pictured at right, Kimmet's a player, but apparently came in slightly overvalued as a first-time participant. His best was a tie for second on Sunday at plus 2 with Dan Moore and David Lewis. He failed to place in the overall.

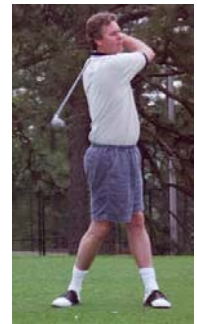
Moore searched endlessly for his game on the range, but vainly found only blisters. His consistently wretched play earned a tie with partner Lewis for fourth in the overall, and a payout of \$17.50 each. That won't buy dinner,





but don't tell any of their current or soon-to-be ex-wives, or the winnings will be used to calculate alimony and child support. A recent mug shot of Lewis appears at left.

Greg Logue's game evidently lingered in Knoxville. Logue has intimated he will hang up the spikes to become the nonplaying tournament director if his points are reduced to single digits. As shown at right, it will require prodigious effort before next year's event for Logue to avoid that fate.



As usual, the drinking was immoderate, but no one had to be bailed out of jail. The conduct of the group was surprisingly benign, despite the mysterious appearance of a moribund reptile on Trantham's pillow.

As is his custom, Williams regaled the company at dinner with an exquisitely detailed rendition of the now legendary "Incident at the Showhouse," and traditional asparagus legerdemain.



The patrician behavior is attributable in part to the gradual maturation of the group since the early years at Myrtle Beach, and in part the truancy of Crossley, who was thoroughly missed. Crossley is suspected, however, of a cameo appearance via Federal Express in the guise of one "Beach Bang." Common decency prevents sharing the contents of Bang's licentious missive. Though characteristic of a thoroughly depraved mind, the guys enjoyed Bang's poetry. The demonstrative evidence of Bang's frolic with Williams' dog was equally memorable.



Conspicuous by his absence was the incomparable Larry, the crew's esteemed waiter from last year. Recall his particular fondness for Hyke, whom he referred to as "Swinger." Apparently Larry has only recently completed a stay in the North Carolina State correctional system on charges stemming from domestic difficulties. Although on parole, Larry evidently was advised by the Club that his services are no longer required. Perhaps he could fill an empty slot in next year's field if he is not incarcerated then. Mike, pictured at left, endeavored to fill Larry's shoes.

Moore endured merciless badinage for donating amaretto coffee. He was later vindicated by Logue's purchase of "Frapuccino" on the return trip. Logue didn't wreck Moore's van, but Moore gained insights into why Logue's van suffers from transmission trouble.

In the aftermath, Marti Rose is still a Woolf McClane employee despite misspelling McClane's name on his mug. McClane had vowed a pink slip for the perpetrator. The pink slip remains available if McClane (right) can remember where he put it.



Finally, our intrepid heroes are pictured above with the lovely and gracious Ebony, a member of the dedicated staff who fearlessly served the group. The sport coats lend a welcome air of respectability to what would be otherwise considered a menacing and reprobate assembly. These and other photos may be viewed at the following address:

<http://www.walmart.com/agt/bounce.gsp?ID=2844z1bfbeltn93vg3tm>

The password is frothage. To copy a picture, enlarge the thumbnail, right click on the larger image, and select "Save Picture as..."

If anyone knows the current whereabouts of last year's group photo, please advise the tournament director. ■