



Photo Courtesy of The PGA of America.

Radar Delivers on Cue

by Dick Harmon

Mike Reid's five-wood is a well-worn trusty weapon. It proved key in his dramatic victory in the Senior PGA Championship at Laurel Valley Golf Club, a win that launched him to No. 8 on the Champions Tour money list before the dog days of summer.

The win opened a portal to a whole new career for the soft-spoken Provoan, affectionately nicknamed "Radar."

In this the 20th year since Reid won the Utah Open, that shot, the subsequent eagle putt and win, vaulted Reid front and center of both the local and national golf scene. The \$350,000 payout was Reid's biggest career check.

"I've never even heard of anybody being three down with one to go and win," said NBC-TV golf analyst and hall of famer Johnny Miller, who, during the broadcast commented that Reid needed to make

eagle on the final hole to have a chance to overtake Jerry Pate.

"If there is any player on any tour who can hit a five wood straight and land it soft and be on line, it is Mike Reid," Miller said.

And Reid delivered on cue.

"He hit it perfect and his five-wood shot fluttered to the green like a butterfly in reverse," Miller said a couple of weeks later at a media gathering for the Champions Challenge to be at Thanksgiving Point.

Reid's dramatic shot and putt overshadowed a flubbed strategy by Pate to layup on the par-5 18th, a move Reid said was the correct move by the leader. Pate safely hit to within 20-feet but his birdie putt came to rest five feet short and then Pate missed what should have been the winning par putt and made bogey.

It helped that Dana Quigley's approach to that green with a hybrid club overshot the target and landed in a tricky slanted sand bunker. His up and down for par also helped Reid, who was almost apologetic that Pate and Quigley's mistakes cost them the title. Reid knows that pain. It was his bitter defeat in the 1989 PGA Championship to a surging Payne Stewart at Kemper Lakes. Reid had led going down the wire and couldn't hold on.

Welcome to golf.

This time, it was Reid's skill, acumen and famed radar-like accuracy that paid off down the stretch. The others? They just didn't handle the heat.

The 205-yard approach across the lake on 18 was a perfect setup for Reid. His club, a Taylormade 5-wood, is so worn, there is a shiny spot on the face. The club is out of production, a weapon you cannot buy.

"It's so well-used, it looks like a piece of crap," said a friend who was on hand, John Haddow.

TaylorMade gave Reid the club and sent him several club heads and shafts to his specifications. You cannot get those heads any more, they are not made. Reid's had the club for 10 years.

"It's a TaylorMade railor. I feel comfortable with it. I like the feel of it. All my woods are out of production right now. Before they went out of production, the representative was kind enough to send me seven five-wood heads and seven four-wood heads. I still have about five of each. I'm now on my second of these series. My three-wood is the newest club in the group, it's only five years old but out of production. My Titleist driver went out of production but I like it. The five? I've been fortunate to get some extra copies.."

Reid said his shot was into the wind and the green was soft. "Yeah, it probably backed up a bit. The fun thing about that shot is that I couldn't wait to get the club out of my bag because there were about three ways I could hit it and have it work out. The one place I didn't want to hit it was over the green where Quigley hit his shot in regulation.

"It was about 205 yards and the yardage was so perfect for the club into the wind, downhill and I thought those factors would cancel out. I don't always hit it on the button but I knew with the downslope lie, if I hit it thin, it would work. If I hit it on the heel, it would work, if I hit it solid it would work. The only thing that wouldn't work is if I hit it off the



toe and it followed the wind and got riding the wind and made it to the water.

"I hit it off the heel and it made it fade off that lie and the wind brought it down real soft."

Reid said you can say what you want about new

technology, but for him, it is important to have a club he felt comfortable with and he knew what his mishits would produce. "Not that I can hit it well, but if I know where the miss-hits are going, that is key."

Reid said one of his favorite Johnny Miller quotes is

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"serenity in golf is knowing where your misses are going." People don't realize the fairway there has a hanging lie. The first day his left foot was in a hole and he just didn't feel comfortable taking a wood out so he laid up and made par.

The next four times he played the hole he had a good lie on the 18 fairway that wasn't so awkward but was still awkward.

"I don't fault Jerry for laying up at all with the awkward lie. He did some pretty poor shots on the attempts he made. Earlier in the day, we played that whole before to make up a round and he hit a four-iron 20-yards right of the green. I heard about his shot the previous day that didn't clear the water, so clearly he was uncomfortable with the shot. With a one-shot lead, I'd have done the same thing, lay up, hit a wedge and two putt."

Reid found out the next day that many of his friends turned the TV off after No. 16 when Reid looked out of it. They were the same who turned it off at Chicago and started the barbecue when it was apparent he wouldn't win.

But Reid has a special perspective about golf, his win and his game.

He understands. His win was surreal. In his humble way, Reid made the following statement in reflection, his voice cracking with emotion and awe.

"Sometimes, and I don't know why, you receive more help on the golf course than one man can give to another. I was fortunate to receive that help but I don't know why. It's only happened a couple of times

but they are unforgettable moments."

The victory earned Reid entry to the Mastercard Tournament of Champions for five years; entry to all the majors; entry to the Legends, and exemption for the next two years on the Champions Senior PGA Tour, provided he stays in the top 50 money winners, normally top 30 or top 70 all time.

So, what was he thinking when he stood over the 20-foot eagle putt, the second shot that actually won the tournament. He was the only player in the field to shoot under par for all rounds.

"I thought if I holed it, it would tie for second. I had nothing to lose. A three-putt wouldn't cost me any position in the field," Reid said.

"I thought, just give it a run. I was a little upset I didn't make a better run at the birdie putt on 17 that may have made a difference. I looked up a little bit and miss-hit it. On this, I thought at least I'll keep my head still and hit it solid. When Jerry's putt came up short, my caddy reminded me it didn't break as much towards the water as we'd thought. I played it a little straighter and it hit right in the middle. It was pretty exciting."

A win with an eagle? And Reid's supposed to be short with the driver?

"Since I've turned 50, the courses have been shorter. For years I wouldn't have survived on the tour if I hadn't been pretty good with fairway woods and long irons. And that was just to hit the greens in regulation. Now, I'm in an atmosphere where, on these golf courses on occasion, I use fairway woods

and long irons to reach greens into par fives. The number's are different on the card but it's like I'm playing a par-4 on the tour.

"I just have more opportunities. It's nice to see my name in the eagle category now."

Reid said the confidence he gained from the win helps him to be more relaxed and optimistic on shots, thinking that if he's handled the pressure once, he can do it again.

When he lost the 1989 PGA to the late Stewart, Reid thought he might get another chance but it never materialized until May. "Time has a way of marching on. This was like a stranger bumped into in a crowd and off it went. It hadn't been until the last few years that I thought that was my chance and that was it. But then I turned 50 and got this mulligan and got out there again and this is just a great feeling."

Reid's major victory isn't diminished that it isn't one of the four considered the "real majors" such as the PGA Championship, U.S. Open, Masters or British Open, although he salutes the big ones like the 1989 one that got away.

"It's not apples and apples. You have to remember anyone who can hit the ground with a club has a chance to qualify and play in the U.S. Open and British Open. I think those are the four majors that we recognize and are these are important tournaments on our tour and we attached that name to them. I'm not going to change the definition. It's still a great complement to win that tournament. If you saw the way it was set up, it's a great accomplishment to win it."

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