

Eyes on Kuchar in Atlanta

By Doug Ferguson
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

ATLANTA—Matt Kuchar is the face of golf in Atlanta this week at the Tour Championship, just like he was 10 years ago.

There's one difference. Actually, there's about 10 million differences.

Kuchar is the No. 1 seed in the FedEx Cup going into the final playoff event, which starts Thursday at East Lake. That gives him a slight edge in the race for the \$10 million bonus, the biggest payoff in golf.

It's hard to believe that Kuchar, perhaps the most celebrated amateur golfer at Georgia Tech since Bobby Jones, wasn't even sure he wanted to turn pro when he graduated a decade ago.

He had won the U.S. Amateur. He lit up Augusta National with his engaging smile and a game good enough to be the low amateur at the Masters in 1998. Then came the U.S. Open at Olympic

Club, where he held his own against golf's best and tied for 14th. Not long after that, a businessman tossed out the idea of staying an amateur.

"He said, 'Nobody has really done it since Bobby Jones. There's plenty of money to be made in the business world. It's not that you have to turn professional to make money,'" Kuchar said. "And he encouraged me to still stay competitive as an amateur. He said, 'The doors that will open for you will be in golf, and the better you do in golf — if you keep playing Masters tournaments, if you keep playing well in Amateurs — it's only going to open more doors.'

"So it was a neat opportunity." Kuchar went to work for Liberty Associates, a boutique investment banking firm in south Florida, a job that entailed plenty of golf with prospective clients, a chance to see how business gets done as efficiently on manicured fairways as in boardrooms.

Chasing the amateur dream, however, soon turned into a sprint.

Kuchar played the Texas Open on a sponsor's exemption in the fall of 2000 and missed the cut by one shot.

He was furious with himself and wanted to tee it up the next week to prove he was better than that.

"And it was then that I knew I needed to really go week in and week out to see how good I could be," he said.

It took him time to find out. He won his first PGA Tour event two years later at the Honda Classic, immediately went into a tailspin and didn't emerge until hooking up with Chris O'Connell, a Texas-based coach who taught him a one-plane swing that was more about making a consistent swing than a perfect one.

The plan has worked to near perfection.

No one has more than his 11 top 10s on the PGA Tour this year. His consistent play, coupled with a victory at The Barclays, has put him atop the PGA Tour money list for the first time in his career, his first Ryder Cup team and No. 10 in the world ranking.



Carly Niness (right) makes a play against Purdue last season.



Steve Nash (middle) poses at a house party for his film "Into the Wind," part of ESPN's "30 for 30"

Suns' Steve Nash directs new film

By Rachel Cohen
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Six-year-old Steve Nash woke up every morning eager to turn on the TV to see where Terry was.

Like Canadians young and old, the future NBA star was captivated in 1980 by Terry Fox's determination to hobble across the country on his artificial leg to raise money for cancer research.

Now that Nash is adding documentary director to his eclectic list of interests, the subject of his first film was natural.

"Into the Wind" airs Tuesday on ESPN as part of the network's "30 for 30" series.

It has already been shown at the Toronto International Film

Festival and on Canadian television.

The 21-year-old Fox, who had lost his right leg to cancer, ran for 143 days, crossing two-thirds of the country on his Marathon of Hope.

He never completed the trip, halted by newly discovered tumors, and died in June 1981.

Nash said on a conference call Wednesday he was fascinated by "the conflict between being this humble, quiet kid who wanted to shy away from the spotlight, and at the same time his quest was built on attention."

The two-time MVP co-directed the film with Ezra Holland, his cousin and business partner in production company Meathawk.

"Hopefully this is the first of many," Nash said.

Those many may have to wait.

The 36-year-old Nash is signed with the Phoenix Suns for two more seasons, and he said "I would probably bet that I'd play more."

For now he's thrilled to get his start as a director while he's still playing.

Renowned for his decision-making and vision as a point guard, he found those the greatest challenges in the world of film.

"You're always questioning your decisions," Nash said. "You have a clear vision of how you want it to go. You try your best to execute it to the intent, but you continually question whether that's the right way to go. Just trying to find a balance between being positive and progressively critical and at the same time not debilitating yourself or overanalyzing."

Changes on the way

By Alex Angert
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Nobody is safe.

After an embarrassing loss against Dartmouth over the week-end and a disappointing final non-conference record, coach Erica Walsh is looking to shake up her lineup going into Sunday's Big Ten home opener against Michigan State.

"We have a whole new season ahead of us," she said. "We're prepared to make some changes."

Noticing the team hasn't been able to win on talent alone, Walsh is looking for grit, desire and character out of her starters during Big Ten play.

The coach took blame for her players' lack of heart following their most recent loss, and she is hoping to see an attitude and commitment adjustment through practice this week.

"They have got to earn their spot in the next three days," Walsh said after practice on Tuesday. "They've got to earn it with their coaches. They've got to earn it with their peers. And it's going to be about effort and not just talent. I would expect some changes come Sunday."

During practice on Tuesday, players ran back-and-forth, sprinting from one goal to the other and then jogging back to the start line. As soon as the last player made it back, the whistle blew and the players were off again.

The coaches pushed the players to the limit, as most had to rush for water and take a seat as soon as practice finished.

As for what the coaching staff is looking for from the team it is simple.

"That they are committed and they are willing to make sacrifices and willing to put themselves out there and give everything they have," assistant coach Ann Cook said. "That's all we can ask."

Cook added it's somewhat of a learned skill to get slipped into this mindset and it has slipped from the players a little bit as of late.

However, the coaches have made it clear to the team that anything can happen this week and things may get shaken up.

"She's definitely mentioned that basically it's whoever wants it the most," junior Carly Niness said. "Maybe you might not be as good as someone, but if that person is not working their hardest then they're not going to play."

Niness said the team opened up practice with the dreaded beep test, which examines the players endurance by having them run between two points faster and faster as they try and keep up with the beeps. The test was followed by two 15-minute scrimmages and a lot more running.

Throughout the entire practice, the coaching staff would make the players repeat pieces over-and-over again, drilling in the importance of hustle and making plays perfect.

"If this group expects things to be different in the results column, they need to make changes," Walsh said. "They need to commit themselves. I think one good day of training doesn't say they've re-committed themselves but it's a good start."

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