

Record crowds witness stars battle for ACC lead



Mardy Fish was in the hunt last year at the ACC, and goes into the final round this year as the man to beat. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – This time it was the swing of a golf club that pushed retired tennis great Mardy Fish to the lead on the second day of the American Century Championship at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course.

The three-day celebrity golf tournament wraps up Sunday.

The sports celebrities were out in rare form with swarms of fans, many of whom followed Warriors guard Steph Curry among

others.

Fish is in the lead going into Sunday, scoring 50 points, with longtime player and actor Jack Wagner just behind with 48 points. Mike Modano is tied at 45 with pitcher Mark Mulder, who won the tournament last year. Chicago Bears linebacker Brian Urlacher is in fifth at 41.



Retired baseball pitcher Derek Lowe gladly quenches his thirst with an adult beverage provided by fans. Photo/Susan Wood

All the players seem to be in good spirits at the end of their rounds, with compliments to their fellow competitors, a genuine happiness about being there with the fan support, and some with gratefulness their families could cheer them on.

“Daddy, daddy,” Fish’s 2-year-old son called out as the tennis pro made his rounds. At one point, the youngster was holding a golf club.

“He’s pretty good at his swing. It’s been great having (the family) here. He was able to walk a few holes with me. And we’ve got another one on the way,” a beaming Fish told *Lake Tahoe News* when asked if the family support helps the game given Mulder’s family presence was strong last year. “This is a great family atmosphere.”

There must be something to that. Mulder’s children were seated in the front row of their father’s press conference.



2015 ACC champion Mark Mulder is in the hunt for the lead this year. Photo/Susan Wood

Whether it’s using family support, fans cheering or a mechanism to calm nerves, the sports celebrities try to pull out all the stops they can to win on the 18-hole course.

For Mulder, he told *Lake Tahoe News* during his press conference that he still trains in high altitude.

For hockey greats Mike Modano and Jeremy Roenick, it’s a “bro-mance” of sorts since they played together Saturday, according to Modano. Both men had major compliments for each other,

despite Roenick allegedly giving Modano a concussion when they played hockey against each other.

For ex-soap opera star Wagner – a crowd favorite over many years – it’s knowing that in his competitive nature he can be grace under pressure when the bright sun hits him like the bright illumination of a studio light.

This could be especially put to the test Sunday when he, Modano and Mulder will need to fight off Fish. Fish and Mulder are lefties, even though Fish played tennis right-handed.

“We’re all hitting the ball pretty well,” Wagner said, while complimenting Fish. Fish places fourth last year. But at the end of the day, the actor made it clear he’s been there before and plans to play for the title on Sunday.

Wagner characterized the competition as “eat or be eaten.”

All the competitors appear to realize the big stage they’re on, with Mulder telling *Lake Tahoe News* that he thinks “these are the biggest crowds ever seen at this tournament.”



Record crowds have been descending upon Edgewood Tahoe for the 27th annual celebrity golf tournament. Photo/Susan Wood

The moments are priceless and lasting. Mulder shook his head when also telling *LTN* he was excited to see Heather LeMaster come out and make the record 336-yard drive this week. LeMaster is a long-drive golf pro.

“That’s so impressive to see something like that,” he said. “But that’s what this event has come to.”

Tickets sales are up 66 percent and concessions increased 40 percent from last year. Many of the “concessions” were cold alcoholic beverages to balance the near record heat on a beautiful picturesque Lake Tahoe day.

Some of the celebrities even stopped to partake in the beverages with fans hugging the ropes. Baseball pitcher Derek Lowe, who played on the Boston Red Sox World Series team, rushed up to get his own cup of vodka lemonade from a large group of Stockton fans.

When asked by *Lake Tahoe News* what he thought of David “Big Papi” Ortiz retiring this year, he said: “He shouldn’t.”

There were good spirits throughout the grounds.

Jordyn Bsharah of Reno was speechless when she got Green Bay Packer quarterback Aaron Rodgers to sign the Packers golf bag she bought at Edgewood.

“I bought it for him, but it’s really for me,” she said, turning to friend Patrick Mahoney, while jumping up and down.

The biggest fan draw was Curry, who seemed to prompt a cheer every time he drove or putt the ball. When the ball didn’t cooperate on the 12th, he acted like he wanted to elbow it in. The crowd erupted.