

MICKELSON CHASING HISTORY AT U.S. OPEN

Phil Mickelson made history last month at Kiawah Island, winning the PGA at age 50. Can he make history two months in a row?

The ageless wonder, whose skills had been deteriorating appropriately with his ascending age, defied most golf experts' opinions by capturing the Wannamaker Trophy, seemingly out of the blue. Now, this week at Torrey Pines in San Diego, an even greater challenge awaits: Can Mickelson conjure up another week of magic to win the elusive U.S. Open, his kryptonite?

Mickelson famously has six runner-up finishes in the U.S. Open, but no wins, and capturing the trophy on Sunday would not only complete his career Grand Slam, but it would stun the golfing world in even greater fashion than did his victory at Kiawah Island.

With 45 professional victories, six of which are majors, one would think at least one measly U.S. Open would be on that list. But no, he was runner-up in 1999, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2009 and again in 2013. He has four other top-10s. The second-place finish in 2006 at Winged Foot in the state of New York hurt the most. He was leading by one stroke teeing off on No. 18, needing only a par to win. but he drove it left, hit a tree on the way out, finished with a double-bogey six and handed the title to Geoff Ogilvy of Australia. His famous post-round uttering, 'What an idiot I am' might be one of a number of epithets on his gravestone.

Unless, that is, he can win this week at Torrey Pines, where the stars are aligning for another Phil Mickelson show. He grew up in San Diego. He knows nearly every blade of grass at Torrey Pines. He has won twice on the course, taking what is now the Farmers Insurance tournament title in 2000 and 2001. Now that he knows the secret to winning at age 50, can he duplicate it by winning at age 51? He turns 51 the day before the start of this week's event and it would be the birthday present of all birthday presents to earn the career Grand Slam by finally winning a U.S. Open.

Don't say he can't do it. The golfing world said that about Phil at Kiawah Island and look what happened. Torrey Pines has been the scene of some greatness before (Tiger Woods winning in 2008 while hobbling along on a stress fracture in his leg) and it could happen again.

Phil the Thrill? What will Phil do next? The golfing world awaits what might be another stunner.

- **Patti Dawn Swansson**, on Twitter: "CivicScience polled 2,651 adult Americans and they had **Aaron Rodgers** trailing only all-time quiz whiz **Ken Jennings** as the preferred choice to succeed **Alex Trebek**. Meanwhile, in a poll of Green Bay Packers fans, Rodgers was the No. 1 choice to be tarred and feathered."

- **Mike Bianchi** of the Orlando Sentinel: "I just saw where **Joe West** set an MLB record by umpiring his 5,376th game. By my calculations, that means he's been cussed at exactly 1,978,455 times."

- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times (currently recovering from a serious health issue): "Browns running back **Nick Chubb** will soon have his own breakfast cereal, called 'Chubb Crunch.' Some other possibilities: **Ricky Williams**: Weedies; **Sidney Crosby**: ForeChex; Philadelphia fans: Jeerios."

- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "**Denis Shapovalov**'s loss in the Genava Championship to **Casper Ruud** left Canadians 1-17 in the last 18 ATP Tour finals. So not a surprise, but a Ruud awakening."

- Swansson with an imagined headline in a Toronto newspaper after the Leafs fell to Montreal: "THE CHOKE'S ON US".

- Comedy guy **Steve Burgess** of Vancouver, on Twitter: "Grammarians are upset about the new name Edmonton Elks. Fans of the Toronto Maple Leafs are currently too upset to comment."

- **Steve Lambert** of CBC Winnipeg, on Twitter: "Can Winnipeg avenge the playoff loss to Montreal in (checks notes) 1908?"

- **Jay Busbee** of Yahoo Sports, on chatter that the USFL might again attempt a spring football season: "Christmas music sounds weird in July, and football feels wrong in April."

- **Peter Vecsey**, on Twitter: "Fans at today's Belmont Stakes are reminded not to try to smuggle in — among other things — aerosol cans, alcohol, firearms and **Bob Baffert**."

- Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**: "Two 'Jeopardy' clues were identify the last words of the Gettysburg Address and what team did **Gordie Howe** play for? Nobody got them right. That sound you hear is **Alex Trebek** spinning in his grave."

- Headline at fark.com: "Minnesota catcher needed surgery after a foul tip into the Twins."

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