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Golf mourns Stewart's death

By Doug Ferguson
The Associated Press

Beneath the knickers and tam o'shanter cap that made Payne Stewart one of the most recognizable players in golf was a game and a passion that made him one of the most respected champions.

He embodied the spirit of the Ryder Cup, playing on three winning teams, yet displayed sportsmanship in the midst of a controversial celebration. His 18 victories around the world included three major championships, such as his dramatic comeback on the final three holes to win the U.S. Open in June.

Stewart was among five people killed Monday when a LearJet he was aboard flew uncontrolled for hours and crashed in South Dakota.

Arnold Palmer called Stewart's death "one of the most terrible tragedies of modern-day golf."

Stewart was on his way to Texas, where the Tour Championship in Houston awaited the top 30 on the PGA Tour's money list.

The tour said his spot in the field will not be replaced. A blue ribbon was attached to his nameplate in the parking lot.

"It is difficult to express our sense of shock and sadness over the death of Payne Stewart," PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem said. "This is a tremendous loss for the entire golfing community and all of sports."

Also killed in the crash were Stewart's agents Robert Fraley and Van Ardan and two pilots, said Bill Curry, a spokesman for Stewart's family. Fraley was CEO of Leader Enterprises Inc. and Ardan was president of the sports management company.

"A true sportsman on the course and a gentleman off it," said Masters champion José Maria Olazabal, choking back tears. "We have lost a precious man and someone who still had good years ahead of him."

Curtis Strange was leaving a news conference in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., where he was named Ryder Cup captain for 2001, when he saw the first television reports.

"We have lost someone who is truly a great ambassador for the game," Strange said.

Stewart often played practice rounds in regular pants and a hat, and not many people recognized

him. Once the tournament started, however, his presence was unmistakable in traditional golfing garb that no one else considered wearing.

"Not everyone can get away with that," Strange said. "He had a personality to do that."

He had game, too. Stewart's finest moment in a 20-year professional career came on Father's Day at Pinehurst No. 2, the famed course in North Carolina that became a stage for remarkable drama in the final round.

A year after Stewart lost a four-stroke lead in the final round of the U.S. Open at The Olympic Club, he trailed Phil Mickelson by one stroke with three holes to play, then one-putted the final three greens for a stunning victory.

His 15-foot par putt on the last hole was the longest ever to decide the Open in its 105-year history. Stewart thrust his fist in the air, an unforgettable image, let out a roar and later broke down in tears.

"He was a great credit to golf and to our country," said former Masters and U.S. Open champion Billy Casper. "Golf lost a great man."

Men's polo out of the water

■ The men's water polo team finishes fourth during a weekend tourney

By Nick Haselwander and Inge McMillen
for the Emerald

It may only be Oct. 26, but at least one Oregon team has wrapped up its season — for a couple of weeks, anyway.


The Oregon Club Sports men's water polo team waded through a six-team, season-ending tournament during the weekend, finishing in fourth place after losing to Washington State for the second time in a row in the third-place game.

"We just have a very young team," said senior Ben Gottlieb, the Ducks' coach, coordinator and captain. "Right now, we don't have the amount of experience that you need at this level."

"The younger players are a little intimidated because they don't have the drive and the heart, but that will come from experience. I

know that we will be a much better team by the next tournament."

Gottlieb was pleased with performances by Duck freshmen, Alex Steely and Anthony Tran.



Along with Gottlieb's strong offensive performance, the team got a big boost from junior Dave Nelson as well.

Oregon takes a break now, but it will hit the water again soon in home-and-home matches with Oregon State. Times and dates are yet to be determined.

After those matches, the Ducks head up to Federal Way, Wash., for a 16-team tournament on Nov. 20-22 that will include teams anywhere from Edmonton to Central California.

Ski team anticipating arrival of winter

Members of the Oregon Club Sports alpine ski team are aiming to race in the USSA national

championships for slalom and giant slalom skiing this spring.

The team is counting on championship-caliber performances from strong returners and four new skiers, co-coordinator Chuck Leavitt said.

"Some members are really experienced racers — people who have raced all their lives and could have gotten scholarships to ski," Leavitt said. "Then we also have new people who have never raced before."

Skiing is demanding in that it requires strength, coordination and agility, Leavitt said.

"More, it takes a drive and courage," co-coordinator Mark Lorenz said. "You may be hitting speeds of 30-40 miles per hour with gates flying at you."

There are also the elements. "You don't get to ski in Palm Beach, Florida," Lorenz said. "There's negative 10 degrees or rain, sleet and winds straight up the hill, smack in your face."

Practices in the snow begin during winter break at Willamette Pass.

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