

St. John's Men's Club  
21st Annual Golf Tournament

## Team Merritt wins Shoot out

*Savannah Harbor Golf Course, May 27, 2010  
By Charles L Williams*



*Tom Johnston, Bob Merritt (Captain), Henry Stevens, Dana Stevens*

It began on a day where they took six putts on the 1<sup>st</sup> hole and ended with a clutch shot from the only member of the team that didn't have artificial joints. Coming from behind to stun the clubhouse leaders, Captain Bob Merritt, Tom Johnston, Henry Stevens and rookie Dana Stevens reclaimed the "RALSTON CUP" in one of the most hotly contested contests in years.

Competing under stellar weather conditions with pin positions set by people that probably would have made fun of you in gym class, Team Merritt combined strong woods and irons with a putter wobbling like a stop sign in a hurricane, to upset the determined front runners of Team Shepherd. They had a strong start with Bob picking up the **PROXIMINTY** prize on # 8 then made the turn at 9 under only one behind the leaders of Teams Stone and Shepherd.

Henry stepped up on the pivotal 13<sup>th</sup> hole, with all joints “well-oiled” and pitched to 4’ setting up a FIVE putt for a bird/net eagle and 14 under par. Two more birdies followed before they approached the 18<sup>th</sup> tee and saw the 18 under glaring at them from the leaderboard like the “Hot” sign at the Krispy Kreme.

They were the last group on the course and needed a natural birdie as they made their approaches on the long final par 4. Bob and Henry mis-clubbed short; Tom’s took a bad bounce to the back fringe, leaving the rookie Dana as their only hope. He had to back off twice, first when Bob tried to keep him calm by telling him “it’s all up to you Dana. If you don’t get us close then we LOSE! And we’ll always be known as losers.....forever,.....but don’t get nervous.” As Dana hands then shook violently on the club, Henry stepped in and offered to move his son to an office “with a window” at the firm. Apparently, getting out of the broom closet was the right motivation as Dana spun his “Pro V” Titiliest to within 3’ of the flag, setting up their only one putt of the day and scoring a net Eagle to win the tie-breaker and return the “Ralston Cup” to the Team Merritt trophy room.

With a 2<sup>nd</sup> place that will be remembered by all, the team of Sandy Shepherd, Dr. Ed Shepherd, George Oelschig and Kurt Oelschig, after initial reports of “no we can’t play, too hot, too old” registered just in time to “get some fresh air and enjoy the camaraderie”. This attempt to lull the field into believing they weren’t contenders anymore was soon dismissed as Dr. Ed unveiled the old “Billy Baroo” on the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole and sunk a 15 footer for birdie for a net ONE, soon followed by George’s putt for a net EAGLE on 4.

The roars from the crowds could be heard all over the front 9 as these 2004 & 2005 Cup winners made their move. Ed and George were definitely there to play ball, and while Sandy and Kurt gave them some assistance in getting them to the hole, their skills were evident around the greens and soon they were cruising to a solid 10 under at the turn.

Birdies were followed by a net eagle on 16 that gave them a one shot cushion over the field coming into 18. At that point George and Ed turned over the driving duties to the younger backs and Kurt slammed one down the right side of the fairway to capture the “**Dunbar Cup**”. It was only a wedge in for the foursome on this 375 yard par 4, but to this pin position only a perfect shot would due. With all mulligans gone, they were 6” from a natural birdie and ended up tapping in for the par to close at 18 under. Ultimately, this par cost them the championship, but when the history of this event is written it may be said that “this was their finest hour”.

In 3<sup>rd</sup> place at 17 under were Leroy Suddath, Mickey Rhinehart, Tom McGoldrick and Jim Holtzclaw. Mickey had a nice 5 footer on # 4 to give them a net eagle, and Tom and Jim were playing a “strategy” game by giving Leroy many tactical looks that helped them make the turn at 8 under and briefly held the lead at the start of the back 9. Their Achilles heel was #15, the short par 3. It was only playing 132 yards and was one of the few pins that didn’t have you reaching for a bottle of *Pepto-Bismol*. Either the heat or nerves got to them, and the resulting par on this finishing hole was the only gap in an otherwise great card.

In 4<sup>th</sup> Place, Team Cooper, previously known as “Patti Cooper’s Husband’s Team” narrowly avoided the **Ezekiel 25:17** warning (*see Rule 9*) after spending ten minutes looking for something to hit from the cat-tails along #2 then again from the mulberry trees on the right of #4. The rules committee gave them a break because of the two rookies Bill Chisholm and visiting Mike Chastain. A bad bogey on #6 cost but to their credit, Max didn’t let them give up. Frank Trowbridge split the uprights for a net eagle on #10 and Mike tapped a wicked breaking putt on 14 to go 15 under. On the last hole, Bill Chisholm even held the long drive slot for brief time with a scorcher, but bogeys are like the party guest that never wants to leave.

In 5<sup>th</sup> place, with last years Long Drive champ and zero handicapper Walter Hagan batting cleanup, Ross Haire, Rick Wright and Don McElveen, had the most limited strokes in the field. The key was going to be if they could make some putts, but for this team they were about as rare as finding a *Prius* without an “Obama” sticker. Their game killer came at the 14<sup>th</sup> hole, a short 284 yard par 4. Nobody could get it down with the putter for the red number and walked off at 13 under, way behind. Walter captured the **PROXIMITY** prize on # 15 to win dinner for two at Johnny Harris. Those chicken dinners were a good consolation but this time there was no coconut cream pie this time as they were out of contention for the cup.

In 6<sup>th</sup> place, Neil Victor, Chris Zipperer, Carter Hubbard and Gavin Dunbar, started par, birdie, eagle and looked to have the day well in hand. Gavin’s second attempt to play in this tournament was slightly overshadowed by his choice of hats. To be fair, it might have been some sort of Nova Scotian headgear, but it really looked like it was discarded by Crocodile Dundee. In any case, on # 6 “Gator Gavin” somehow mistook a 2’ fast downhill putt for a 40’ uphill putt against the grain and **actually coiled in his backswing** sending Neil, Chris, Carter and the rest of the spectators diving for cover. They somehow recovered to have a good run of nine under with contributions of all members. On 17, they had a good opportunity to make an extremely rare bird with the back right pin position. All the mulligans ensued to no avail and cup hopes for Team Victor slipped the surly bonds of earth.

In 7<sup>th</sup> place, the 2009 defending champions Team Stone, with returning members Marshall Stone, Curtis Mears, and Bill McNeal were joined by substitute Buzzy Brennan. Even with the limitation due to the “Stone” rule (*see Rule 11*) this group got a great start; however at #4, Buzzy landed a 9 iron about 12’ below the cup on this par 5. The putt had a slight break to the right at the very top, but they had close four attempts with and settled for par. The spectators wondered why they didn’t use a mulligan in that situation and this appeared to be an early error. On #9, Curtis got them close enough for Buzzy to birdie/net eagle and they were tied for the lead with Team Shepherd at the turn. This is when the trouble started. Bill stopped in the clubhouse to meet “*Mr. Glenlivet*” and like him so much that he invited him to ride in his cart. The scores from #10 on were somewhat hazy because “*Mr. Glenlivet*” is not known for his penmanship. At #18, Marshall said “we didn’t defend, but all five of us had a great time!”

New to the field was the “Hey Buddy” team consisting of Walter Strong, Steven Hamm, Todd Baiad and John Kappa. It started when John stuck a 5 iron on the 199 yard par 3 to within 4” of the cup and it was “Hey Buddy, can you do that again?” When they made the turn, it was “Hey Buddy, where is the beer cart?” They didn’t seem nearly as intimidated their first time out nearly as the *Flatbelly Boyz* and made the turn at a respectable 8 under. On # 12, Capt. Walter had to come through with a clutch pitch when John’s shot went over the green with the velocity of a Dunbar putt, but they couldn’t capitalize on several of their back nine stroke holes and the “Hey Buddies” debut was only good for 8<sup>th</sup> place. They seemed happy with the effort and many, many, “Hey Buddies” were heard at the 19<sup>th</sup> hole.

### **The 19<sup>th</sup> hole**

It was a shoot out in the best sense of the term. Two teams tied at minus 18; two teams at minus 17 and four teams at minus 15. All spots were decided by tie-breakers.

After the awards ceremony a toast was offered to the late George Backus remembering his support of this tournament as President of the Men’s Club.

Marshall Stone was awarded with a “Greg Norman” Golf Shirt to replace the dress shirt that he has worn since Team Stone was founded, in 1993.

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Join us next year for the 22<sup>st</sup> Annual St. John’s Men’s Club Golf Tournament when we return to Savannah Harbor on Friday, May 6, 2011

Many thanks to **Ed Derst** for helping with registration again this year.

**See the attached rules below:**

## 2010 St. John's Men's Club Golf Tournament

### RULES

- 1) Captain's Choice – Captains pick best drive and approach shots. Everyone plays within one club length & putt everything out. If your best shot is in the rough, you must play from the rough; in the sand, play from the sand.
- 2) Record NET score on scorecard. You snooze, you lose.
- 3) Maximum score on each hole is bogey. Pickup after par putt/stroke.
- 4) Everyone has two mulligans.
- 5) Tiebreaker is from #18 back, so play hard on last few holes. It has decided many tournaments.
- 6) Beer cart is “pay as you go”.
- 7) **LONG DRIVE** on # 18 is only for St. John's Men's Club players. We love everyone, but only a church member gets to take home a silver cup.
- 8) All teams play from the Silver tees. Players 80+ from the most advanced tees.
- 9) **Slowplay**. You should be concerned if you can't see the group in front of you. You will be given one warning by the tournament director, then bad things will happen. See Ezekiel 25:17
- 10) **Challenges to stroke allotment**. *Captains may question team strokes by submitting a “Stroke Challenge Form 1A” found on the tournament website. If accepted for review by the Rules Committee, the Captain will be notified no less than seven business days, no longer than 14 business days from the time of acceptance. Acceptance of “Form 1A” does not constitute agreement with or opinions expressed by the Team Captain, and merely advises the TC that the “Form 1A” will be reviewed at the next quarterly meeting of the Rules Committee, time permitting.*
- 11) The “**Stone**” rule – “No team shall receive more strokes than holes.”  
*Endorsed as of May 1, 2010 by the management of the SJMCGT – see rule 10.*