

Golf's most prestigious tournament gets underway in Augusta, Ga.

Warm-up question:

Have you ever attended a big sports event like the Masters golf tournament? What was it like?

Listen: Link to audio [[HERE](#)]

Read:

STEVE INSKEEP, HOST:

The Masters begins today in Augusta, Ga. It is the most **prestigious** tournament in golf. It's played on Augusta National Golf Course with the azaleas and Amen Corner, some holes that destroy careers. The winner gets \$3.2 million and also a nice green jacket. Reporter Steve Futterman is in Augusta. Good morning.

STEVE FUTTERMAN: Good morning.

INSKEEP: And I'm glad you're there to help me **turn the page**, 'cause I'm still kind of stuck on the basketball tournaments. They were so incredible. So what's the mood like for the Masters?

FUTTERMAN: Well, as it always does, the Masters has really taken over the city of Augusta. There's the usual **pilgrimage** of golf fans. Hotel rooms, with their **inflated prices**, are packed, and those **prized** tickets, you can only get them on the secondary market. They are not cheap. As for the players, Tiger Woods remains the biggest name in golf, and he is back. Last year, he had to drop out at the midway point. He then underwent ankle fusion surgery. He is still dealing with issues resulting from a 2021 car accident, and the big issue for him this week could simply be his ability to play and walk the hilly 4-mile course for four straight days.

TIGER WOODS: The ankle doesn't hurt anymore. It's fused. It's not going anywhere, so that's fine. It's other parts of my body that now have to **take the brunt of it**. The back, the knee and other parts of the body have to take the load of it.

FUTTERMAN: And Woods has not won a major tournament since the 2019 Masters.

INSKEEP: Yeah, I'm just reflecting on what you said, that he's still the biggest name in golf, and he has not been in top form for half a decade. Let's talk about

somebody who has not won the Masters ever, even though he is a big name, Rory McIlroy. Are you watching him?

FUTTERMAN: Oh, yes. He's here once again and trying to finally win a Masters. It's become a bit of a sad **saga**. McIlroy has won the other three majors - the U.S. Open, the British Open and the PGA - but never here. He has come close, was second in 2022, and it's always a question that comes up here at Augusta. Will this be his year? Tiger Woods this week said there's no doubt in his mind that McIlroy will eventually win here. McIlroy said that was nice to hear, but...

RORY MCILROY: Does that mean that it's going to happen? Obviously not, but, you know, he's been around in the game long enough to know that I at least have the potential to do it, and, I mean, I know I've got the potential to do it, too. It's not as if I haven't been a pretty good player for the last couple of decades.

FUTTERMAN: And if McIlroy does finally win, he would become just the second golfer to win all four majors, the so-called grand slam, in the past half-century.

INSKEEP: Anybody new to watch for?

FUTTERMAN: Absolutely. His name is Ludvig Aberg. Remember that name.

INSKEEP: OK.

FUTTERMAN: Golf **aficionados** know who he is. Occasional golf fans might not. He's 24 years old from Sweden. He played college golf at Texas Tech. He turned pro last year. He's already ranked eighth in the world. It's been a remarkable rise, but now he's playing in his first major, and it's the majors where the great golfers really come through. He knows a lot of eyes will be on him.

LUDVIG ABERG: Obviously, I'm feeling all the first-time things that everyone's feeling, but I'm also, you know, trying to be OK with all those things coming at me at the same time 'cause I think once you start fighting it, once you start trying to push it away, I think that's when it becomes tricky.

FUTTERMAN: Now, over the years, there have been many so-called can't-miss stars. This weekend, we could get an idea whether Ludvig Aberg will live up to those very high expectations or if someone else will surprise people and win at this most remarkable golf course.

INSKEEP: Steve Futterman, enjoy walking the grass. And don't step on any azaleas.

Vocabulary and Phrases:

- **Prestigious:** Respected and admired as very important or of very high quality.
- **Turn the page:** To move on from an event or experience, often to something new or different.
- **Pilgrimage:** A journey to a place of particular interest or significance, often for religious purposes.
- **Inflated prices:** Prices that are increased or higher than normal, often due to high demand and limited supply.
- **Prized:** Considered valuable and worth having.
- **Take the brunt of:** To suffer the worst part or greatest impact of something difficult or unpleasant.
- **Saga:** A long and complicated story with many details, often involving historical events or long periods of time.
- **Aficionado:** A person who is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about an activity, subject, or pastime.

Comprehension Questions:

1. Why is the Masters considered a prestigious tournament?
2. What do people often do as part of their pilgrimage to the Masters?
3. What physical challenges is Tiger Woods facing during the tournament?
4. Why is Rory McIlroy's potential win at the Masters significant?

Discussion Questions:

1. If you could attend any famous sporting event in the world, which one would you choose and why?
2. What qualities do you think make a sports tournament prestigious? Discuss using examples from different sports.
3. What makes someone an aficionado of a sport like golf? Are you an aficionado of any sport or activity?
4. Discuss the pressure new professionals like Ludvig Aberg face when participating in major events for the first time. How would you handle such pressure?
5. In what ways do sports and large tournaments impact a city or town like Augusta during the event?
6. Do you think it's fair for prices to be inflated during major sports events? How does this affect local residents and visitors?