



MBBC XXIII – TRIP REPORT

(*Disclaimer – once again, I am writing this trip report some 11 months after the trip. I used to look forward to writing these stupid things, but I write so many goddamn reports for work, that I really don't feel like sitting in front of the computer to write another one. I have also set the bar too high with the inclusion of pictures and other things, and I hate to let everyone down, so... The good news is that I took fairly extensive notes on my phone, so I have quite a few gems that almost certainly would not have been remembered.)

There was absolutely no doubt that the MBBC XXIII would be held in Las Vegas. The only issue that came up was when it would be held. Due to Paul's niece's bat mitzvah, the trip had to be moved up 2 weeks. There was some talk of moving back into June, but the risk of high heat was too great. As usual, Dan was in charge of accommodations. There was some talk of changing the host hotel with not everyone being really excited about New York/New York, but due to cost considerations, we decided not to change. Dan was able to secure 2 rooms (although they were not adjoining). The total cost was \$968.00. Once again, Scott was in charge of setting the schedule and booked through Jason of VIP Golf Services. Scott made the unilateral decision to take Wolf Creek off the schedule in order to avoid the long day. Scott and Jason put together another solid lineup with Bali Hai, South Shore Country Club (a private course across Lake Las Vegas from group-favorite, Reflection Bay), Spanish Trail Country Club, Dragon Ridge Country Club and Cascata. The cost of the golf was \$1,298.00. Scott booked the rental vehicle with points that were about to expire from a credit card that he no longer used. As the defending champion, Droz was able to choose the location of Saturday night's Champions' Dinner. Droz took an inordinate amount of time choosing, claiming he was doing research and needed to talk to "foodie" friends. Ultimately, Droz selected Tao at The Venetian. Droz also made the decision to make a reservation at Hell's Kitchen for the last night of the trip.

The MAJOR issue of the offseason was Droz's proposal to end the traditional format of the MBBC for a match-play format involving handicaps. Droz's argument was that the birdie-only format had grown a bit stale and resulted in some less than stellar golf. Surprisingly, there was virtually no opposition to his proposal. There was some dispute regarding the handicaps Droz assigned to each player, with Dan strenuously objecting before and during the competition

to the number of strokes that Paul was getting. (I originally wrote that I was too lazy to find Droz's email with a summary of the new format, but then looked on the website, and, of course, Paul had included the new format in a separate link.) The new format included 2 singles matches and 3 team matches involving Captain's Choice, Better Ball and a modified Alternate Shot. Everyone was intrigued by the team aspect of the new format, which actually proved to be the best part. There were also bonus points for "slaughters," which sadly came into play in most rounds.

Scott and Dan booked their flights on Southwest with points. Droz and Paul booked through American. Of note, in the months before our trip, there was an issue regarding Supermax jets crashing, which caused airlines to discontinue the use of those jets and caused some concern that flights could be canceled. (I seem to recall Dan's flight getting changed to some bizarre itinerary sending him through Nashville, but he was able to correct it... I might have made this up... It's not included in my notes.)

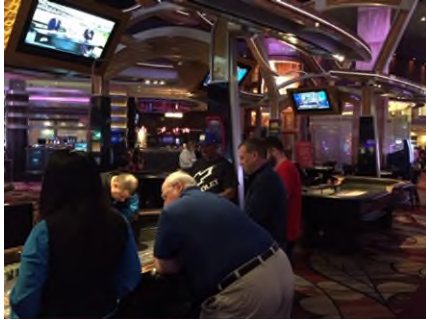
There was VERY little golf played in the months before the trip. Dan started a new job with Nonni's Cookies, so he did not really play at all. Scott played once in August of 2018. Paul went to the range and Droz played a few times at his home course. In the weeks leading up to the MBBC, there was the usual exchange of texts and emails about how much money everyone was going to win, which led to the introduction of what has become one of Dan's favorite gifts:



Friday, May 3, 2019

As usual, Dan and Scott were up at the crack of dawn for their 6:15 and 6:35 flights. Paul and Droz were not leaving Philadelphia until 8:30. Dan's dad spread mulch the day before so he refused to give Dan a ride to the airport, which meant that Nicole and the kids had to take him. Scott got a ride from Sandy's Dad. It was Paul's turn to pick up Droz.

Dan was the first to land, arriving obscenely early. Scott was not too far behind. Scott and Dan met up at baggage claim and took the shuttle to the rental car facility. There was a long line at the rental check-in desk (Luckily, they knew how to "hold" the reservation). Dan and Scott drove to New York – New York to try and check in. The rooms were not available, so we checked our bags. With at least an hour to kill before Droz and Paul arrived, we decided to gamble. Scott played black jack and won \$55.00 in about 8 minutes to get the trip off to a good start. Dan played craps and lost \$11.00 but was snake-eyes away from hitting the "All Small."



Paul texted to say that they had just landed earlier than expected, so Dan and Scott headed back to the airport to pick them up. Since there had not been a Penn State tailgate the year before, it was the first time all members had been together since the previous MBBC. We headed back to New York – New York, but the room was still not ready. We grabbed lunch at the food court (Droz was especially hungry) and then got ready for our 1:00 p.m. tee time at Bali Hai.

The main attraction of Bali Hai was the fact that it is located around the corner from the hotel. After our bags were loaded up, we were greeted by a “hostess” who likely works a different job at night. (Unfortunately, I did not take any pictures... something of a theme for the trip, as it would turn out). She gave everyone jello shots and also gave each cart a wireless speaker shaped like a water bottle.



If anything came from our round at Bali Hai, it was the playing of music during the round. Something we never would have done, but we all got used to it, and it actually became a regular thing during the trip.

We warmed up at the less than stellar driving range, which was not helpful for those of us that had not swung a club in several months.



The course was crowded, so after a bit of a wait, we were finally sent to the first tee to begin the opening round of the 2019 MBBC.



The format for the opening round was Captain's Choice. This was a team match with Scott and Paul playing against Dan and Droz. Each player would tee off and then each team would choose the best tee shot and play out from there. 2 points were at stake for the members of the winning team. It was meant to be a relaxing round of golf to start the trip. We grabbed a few drinks from the cart girl as we went around and generally had a good time. The golf was less than stellar. Because of the format (most significantly that there aren't any legitimate birdie putts), Scott took very few photos or videos.



According to Scott's commentary on the video this photograph was taken from, Dan was putting for eagle on what is believed to be the Par 5 second hole. Dan will probably remember, but it is unknown if he used his drive or Droz's before then getting on in 2. The fact that video was taken suggests that all of the shots were Dan's. He would miss the eagle putt but tap-in for the birdie.



Scott got friendly with a gorilla at the turn.

The course was very well conditioned but was not the spectacular layout that we're used to. With holes running next to each other back and forth, it got a little repetitive and while the view of the Mandalay Bay is cool, it gets a little old after a while. Scott and Paul looked set to win the match, when lightening struck on the Par 3 16th hole. Droz had found the water, forcing the team of Droz and Dan to take Dan's tee shot, which was in the back bunker. Scott and Paul were in another bunker. Unfortunately, there is no video, but Dan hit a beautiful bunker shot that rolled into the cup for a miraculous birdie that turned the tide of the match. Dan and Droz went on to win 68 – 71, earning each of them 2 points.

We headed back to the hotel. The line at the check-in desk was very long. Paul tried using a self-kiosk to check-in despite Dan telling him he couldn't do it that way (Dan was right).



Once we were finally able to check in, we headed up to our rooms. In order to maintain traditional sleeping partners, Scott and Paul were in 1 room, while Dan and Droz were in the other. We all showered and got dressed for what had been a much-anticipated night at Top Golf. First, we did some gambling at New York – New York. Dan and Paul played craps while Scott and Droz played blackjack (Droz hates blackjack, so I'm very confused why he would have been playing it with me but I'm guessing he was doing so very reluctantly.) According to my notes, for the session, Dan was up \$26, Scott was up another \$110, Paul was up \$85 (although he would lose a \$50 bet on the Celtics -2 versus the Bucks in the playoffs) and Droz was down \$7.

We then made the longer than expected walk to Top Golf, which while technically is part of MGM, is actually located on the other side of it. Top Golf had been talked about for months in the build-up to the MBBC. There had been some talk of going there the year before and Paul was very disappointed that we couldn't fit it in, so he insisted that we would do it this year. Dan was the only one who had ever been to one before, and he raved about it. It was decided that Friday night was the only place it really fit into the schedule, so a reservation was made about a month out. It would prove to be a somewhat disappointing experience. Despite having a reservation, we still had to wait a while before being taken to our bay. We ordered food and drinks. The food was just okay, and the ball tracing gimmick got old pretty quickly. On top of all that, the final bill was more than \$400 with tip. It is generally agreed that we will never return to Top Golf.



After Top Golf, we decided to continue gambling at MGM. Dan and Droz played craps and hit the All Tall/All Small. Dan won \$476 and Droz won \$445. My notes only indicate that Paul and Scott were “around even.” We were all in bed before 1:00 a.m., which means Scott and Dan had been up for 24 hours.

Saturday, May 4, 2019

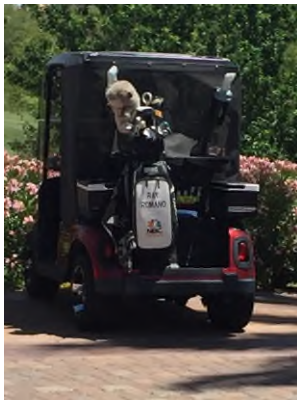
Dan was up early on Saturday and headed downstairs to play craps by himself. Things did not go well as he lost \$194. Scott and Paul apparently made the smart decision to sleep in. Droz played craps for approximately 10 minutes (only 4 rolls) and lost \$198. However, he made up for it somewhat by complaining to the hotel about a leak in their bathroom. He told the hotel that there were 4 people in the room, so they gave him a \$100 drink credit. Paul made a quick stop at the sportsbook to throw some more money away.



We had bacon, egg and cheese croissants for breakfast, which were actually not as good as we remembered, and we were off to our second round at the extremely private South Shore Country Club. We had a 12:50 p.m. tee time.



South Shore had been recommended by Jason of VIP and, once again, Jason did not disappoint. South Shore was an absolutely gorgeous, although very difficult, layout.



Apparently Ray Romano is a member, but we never saw him.



Droz off the the tee on Hole #2.



Droz off the tee on the Par 3 4th hole. According to the stats, he made a bogey...

The round at South Shore was one of 2 during the trip where we would play our own ball. Dan would be the first to make an official birdie on the 340 yard, Par 4 7th hole. He hit his approach to 10 feet and drained the putt.



Scott would respond on the 132 yard, Par 3 14th hole, when he stuffed his tee shot to 6 feet and managed to coax the ball into the cup.



Those would be the only two “official” birdies of the 2019 MBBC.

The wind seemed to pick up making the final few holes even more difficult. Here are a few shots from the picturesque final few holes:



The tee box of the 190 yard, Par 3 16th hole... no one made par



Off the tee on 17... subsequent pictures suggest Scott had to reload



Apparently, Droz played #17 well, as he found the fairway and the green, but could not drain the lengthy birdie putt. (I'm sure he remembers...)



On the tee at #18.

Scores for the round were as follows:

Dan – 92

Droz – 93

Paul – 97

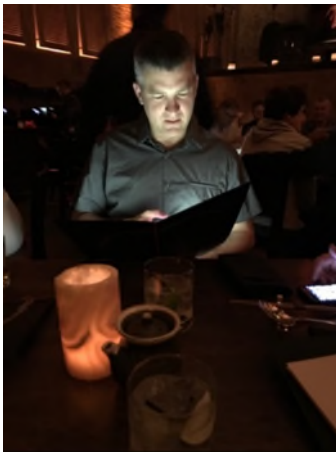
Scott – 113 (dear Lord)

Under the new format, we used net scores. Paul earned 4 points because his net score of 82(!!) beat everyone and because he beat Scott and Droz by more than 10. Dan's net score of 85 earned him 2.5 points (he also beat Scott by more than 10). Droz's net score of 93 earned him 1.5 points (he also beat Scott by more than 10).

After our round, we headed back to the hotel to get ready for the Saturday night tradition, The Champions' Dinner. Droz had chosen Chinese food at Tao at The Venetian. We decided to cab it, but that was a bit of an issue because of the Canelo Alvarez vs. Daniel Jacobs fight being held at the nearby T-Mobile Arena. (Canelo Alvarez would win by unanimous decision.) We managed to get a ride and decided to head directly to the restaurant. We were early for our reservation, so we sat at the bar to have a drink and watch the NBA playoff game between Houston and Golden State.



We were waited on by an attractive bartender named Josselyn. She took this picture, but once again I failed the group by failing to get a picture of her. Dan commented to her that she looked a lot like Vanessa Hudgens. She said she'd heard that before but was surprised we knew who that was... (translation = you guys are old). Our table was ready shortly after that, so we headed upstairs to eat.



The restaurant was not very well lit...

Dinner was pretty awesome. We ordered lots of food and had a good time.

After dinner, we decided to leave The Venetian and head to our favorite venues, The Flamingo and The Cromwell. Before we got there though, we stopped at Casino Royale. While not the nicest casino on The Strip and generally a white trash hangout, Scott and Dan are fairly big fans because of the usual cheap tables and because they have Black Jack Switch. Scott and Dan found room at a Black Jack Switch table and sat for a while. As usual, people who sit at a Black Jack Switch table are not familiar with the rules, so Scott and Dan have to explain it to them, which happened again on this night leading to one of the funnier moments of the trip. Scott told a woman how to play her hand, which involved a series of splits and double-downs. She lost all of her bets leading Scott to say, "Sorry it didn't work out for you," which Dan thought was hysterical. Everyone grew tired of Casino Royale, so we headed to The Flamingo. Dan and Droz played craps, while Scott and Paul played blackjack and had a few IPA's with Yuki.



We left The Flamingo and headed next door to The Cromwell, where eventually we all hooked up at a craps table. We also played with a sneaky hot girl named Jamey (I think she spells her name with a “y”), who was from Iowa and for some strange reason was playing craps by herself while her boyfriend was in their room. (Yet again, I let everyone down by not getting a picture of Jamey.) ** Update *** After publishing this trip report, Dan did some creepy facebook stalking and was able to track down Jamie (she does not spell it with an “I”) and produced this picture. Dan also revealed that he had played craps with Jamie and her no husband at The Flamingo for over an hour before we met up at The Cromwell...



Craps was up and down (mostly down for Scott), but we managed to stay at the table for a while and had a good time and a few drinks, before finally deciding to pack it in and grab an Uber back to New York – New York. Scott was pretty hammered and has limited recollection of berating

the Iranian driver for not knowing about the MBBC. Everyone was headed for bed, before Scott made a detour and decided to try and throw some money away at \$25 Pai Gow. Scott actually went on a huge run (at least as big of one as you can make at a Pai Gow table) by playing 2 hands and betting \$50 - \$100 per hand, as well as the bonus. At one point, he hit a straight flush, which earned a decent bonus payout. Scott contends that he rarely, if ever, lost both hands. His phone died at some point during the night and he was still playing when Dan came looking for him at 7:00 a.m. with a tee time at Spanish Trail set for 8:00 a.m. Scott cashed out for about \$1,000 and headed upstairs to change.

Sunday, May 5, 2019

Since Scott was still drunk and tired, Dan drove to Spanish Trail Country Club. We had tried to play Spanish Trail the first 2 years we'd gone to Vegas without success and were finally able to fit it into our schedule. It would be somewhat disappointing, and we likely won't be back. The course was crowded. It was a decent track but not really anything spectacular. We were supposed to play our own ball as part of a team format, but because of Scott's condition, we played Captain's Choice. It was Dan and Scott versus Droz and Paul. Scott played fairly well considering his condition and he and Dan won the match 69 – 71 earning each of them 2 points. We had lunch at the clubhouse, which was decent, before heading to our second round of the day at Dragon Ridge Country Club. Dan drove to Dragon Ridge while Scott took a quick power nap. This was our second time playing Dragon Ridge, although no one seemed to remember any of the holes, except for the one where Droz hurt his ankle. The format for Dragon Ridge was Chapman Alternate Shot with Dan and Paul teaming up against Droz and Scott. We teed off at 2:00 p.m. Dan and Paul's net score of 85 bested Droz and Scott's 87 earning 2 points for each member of the winning team.



Apparently, the only thing of significance that happened in the round was the sun reflecting off of the Luxor, as this is the ONLY picture I have from the entire round...

After 36 long holes, we headed back to the hotel. We showered and changed and decided to eat dinner at Tom's Urban, the restaurant at New York/New York that used to be ESPN Zone. The place was dead, and the food was pretty good. The waiter was a little annoying and also said we could use the drink credits that Droz had gotten because of the bathroom link. This would turn

out to be an issue at checkout. After dinner, we decided to head over to MGM, where Dan, Droz and Paul played craps.



The security guard in the background was not happy that I took this picture.

Scott tried to rally but could not and finally headed back to the room by himself at 10:30. (My notes do not indicate how everybody did after I left.)

Monday, May 6, 2019

Everyone was up the next morning at a normal hour with Scott feeling especially refreshed. Scott was feeling so good that he headed down to the sportsbook and bet on the Red Sox to beat his beloved Orioles. He had made the same bet the year before and lost. History repeated itself as the Orioles, one of the worst teams in baseball, went on to defeat the Red Sox, one of the best teams in baseball. We had breakfast sandwiches from Greenberg Deli and then it was off to Cascata for a 10:06 a.m. tee time.

Cascata is a high-end course in the mountains. We had originally scoffed at the idea of ever playing it because of the sticker price, but Jason got us a decent deal, so we decided to give it a whirl. We pulled up to an unmarked gated entrance and were allowed to drive up to the beautiful clubhouse. We were met in the parking lot, and our bags were taken to our carts, while we went inside to check in.



Inside the Cascata clubhouse

After checking in, we headed down to the basement, where our bags had been loaded onto our carts. There we met our caddy, Mike.



We then “launched” out of the clubhouse through the automatic doors to the practice facility with Mike hanging on the back of one of our carts.



We striped some balls on the driving range and smacked a few putts on the practice green. Dan said the greens were “slow and bushy.” (Dan says he was being sarcastic). We then headed to the first tee.



Each player played their own ball for the round in what was supposed to be a dramatic finale. It would prove to be anything but dramatic with some miserable play on a difficult course.



Paul on the first tee at Cascata

Signs of what a struggle the round would be were apparent on the first green where Dan, despite being warned by our loopier that the greens would be quick, promptly putted off the green.

Probably the most intriguing hole on the course was the 531-yard, Par 5 3rd, which features a steep drop from the tee box. High winds made the tee shot even more difficult.



There were few, if any, legitimate birdie opportunities. In fact, I have no videos of any attempted birdies. Despite the beautiful course, it proved to be a frustrating round as reflected in the final scores:

Droz – 96

Paul – 105

Scott – 108

Dan – 109 (Dan declared that he would prefer not to ever return)

Paul's net score of 79 earned him 4 points clinching the MBBC title under the new format with the final scoreboard looking as follows:

Paul – 10

Dan – 9

Droz – 5.5

Scott 3.5



Post-round with Mike

We headed back to the hotel and showered and got ready for dinner at Hell's Kitchen, which had been a HUGE hit the year before. We walked to the Bellagio to check and see if the Deal or No Deal machine was still there. It was and, as usual, people were using it. We headed to the bar located in front of Caesars called Spanish Steps. We had a couple of drinks and debated the pros and cons of the new MBBC format with everyone agreeing that they missed the excitement of birdies yet loved the team competition rounds. We then headed to Hell's Kitchen for our reservation. We sat at a window with a view of the strip, and the food was once again fantastic. After dinner, we headed back to the Deal or No Deal Machine, which was available. We went in for \$400 with visions of huge final night winnings. We went down almost immediately and eventually lost it all despite at one point battling back to \$440. After that disaster, we headed over to The Flamingo, where Droz played craps at an automated machine. He actually had some decent success and it has become part of his future gambling plans. As is usual for this crew, despite plans for a wild final night, with visions of a long day of travel the next day and no one

wanting to blow it all, everyone fades pretty quickly, so we headed back to our home hotel and eventually headed up to bed.

Tuesday, May 7, 2019

Scott and Dan's flights were leaving relatively close to each other, so Scott drove to the airport. Scott dropped Dan off and then headed to return the rental car. Droz and Paul took a cab a short while later.

Everyone got home with little problems bringing an end to MBBC XXIII.