



## **MBBC XX – VEGAS VACATION TRIP REPORT**

The seed for changing the location of the MBBC was planted many years ago by its founder, Scott Woods, who, on numerous occasions, suggested that the tournament go to other locations such as Arizona, Las Vegas and eventually, Ireland/Scotland. Those suggestions were largely rebuffed or ignored by the other members of the group until late-2014/early 2015. Around that time, during down time at work, Scott once again sent a random email about various things involving the MBBC and suggested that since the group's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary was approaching in 2016, they should consider relocating the tournament for that anniversary and continue to do so every 5<sup>th</sup> year or so. It was Scott's thought that the 20<sup>th</sup> year should be held in Arizona, the 25<sup>th</sup> in Las Vegas and then Ireland/Scotland to be determined. For some reason, the suggestion took hold this time, and while it was still a pipedream, the chatter started flying. By March, 2015 (with MBBC XIX still to be played in May), the group had essentially agreed that MBBC XX would be held somewhere other than Myrtle Beach, but the official destination was still to be determined. As part of a birthday gift to her husband, Sandy Woods had made arrangements for the group to get together and attend the NCAA basketball tournament in Pittsburgh. For reasons never actually disclosed, during the drive from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, Eric Drossner took the bull by the horns and made the decision that MBBC XX would be held in Las Vegas. He announced his decision to the group upon his arrival at Dan Hoelke's house, there were no objections to his decision, and so it was...

MBBC XIX went forward as scheduled in May, 2015 in Myrtle Beach. Much of the chatter during the trip was about the fact that MBBC XX would be played in Las Vegas. Droz captured the title in MBBC XIX and would carry the tie breaker to Las Vegas (it would not help).

No more than two (2) weeks after returning from Myrtle Beach, chatter about the following year's trip to Las Vegas began. None of the foursome was very familiar with the courses in Vegas, and all made efforts to speak to anyone and everyone about different courses. Scott caught a serious case of Vegas fever, and contacted Jason of VIP

Golf Services in Las Vegas to try and price out a trip that was still a little less than a year away. Jason was surprisingly helpful, especially after Scott made it clear that the group intended to play some of the top courses in the area. Jason proposed several courses and gave a rough schedule and estimate.

Shortly thereafter, Paul contributed to the excitement about Vegas with an updated version of the MBBC website, which included a countdown clock. The countdown clock would prove to be a favorite for Scott and Dan, who would stare at it on an almost daily basis. Milestones such as 200 days to go, 100 days to go, etc. triggered emails and texts amongst the group.

The agreement to hold MBBC XX in Las Vegas also triggered a significant power shift within the group. Over the years, Droz had taken over contacting the package provider in Myrtle Beach and making the arrangements. Scott and Paul had other duties, but, for the most part, Dan's contribution consisted of simply showing up. However, there is no doubt that Dan is an expert in all things Las Vegas, and he would become a major player in planning the trip. One of the major advantages of Las Vegas (at least for Scott and Dan) was the relatively cheap flights available through Southwest. Dan already had a Southwest credit card, and encouraged the other members of the group to obtain one as well in order to rack up points for the trip to Vegas. Scott promptly applied for a card and began charging anything and everything on the card in order to accumulate points.

Dan began his advanced scouting of Las Vegas almost immediately. There was a general consensus among the members to avoid staying at The Flamingo, but after numerous discussions, it became clear that The Flamingo was the most viable option. Since The Flamingo was the most likely host for the foursome, Dan also advocated obtaining and using a Total Rewards card for any and all gambling activities before the trip in order to accumulate points that could be used toward the room at The Flamingo.



Everybody found old cards and made efforts to use them during any and all gambling sessions at home. On at least 3 occasions, Scott left work to go to the Harrah's in Baltimore for a hit-and-run session in the hopes of building up points. However, it was quickly realized that a 1-2 hour gambling session yielded only about a \$0.75 credit toward the room in Vegas. Despite the lack of a significant return on the investment, efforts to build up points continued. Dan would make by far the largest contribution by obtaining a Total Rewards credit card and beginning to charge anything and everything to that card. Dan was quickly upgraded to a Platinum Member with added benefits. Dan's past trips to Las Vegas also gave him numerous points, and it became very clear that entirely because of Dan's connections, there was a very good chance that 1 room, if

not both, would be comped. Droz actually traveled to Vegas about 2 months before the MBBC for business. He stayed at Aria, but managed to spend some time in a Total Rewards casino trying to generate points toward the room. He also placed a group bet on our old friend, the Gauchos of UC Santa Barbara, who came through with a big win adding a little more money to the room pot.

The thrill of going to Vegas for our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary also motivated everyone to play significantly more warm-up rounds. Scott also asked everyone to record their warm-up rounds and anything else related to MBBC prep, as he planned on creating a video of the entire trip. The countdown to Vegas seemed endless and was largely unbearable, but months turned to weeks and weeks turned to days and finally it was time to head to Vegas. Everyone got their traditional trip haircuts.



### **Friday, May 20, 2016**

Obviously, with long flights to Las Vegas, everyone's day began pretty early. Everyone was awake by 4:00 a.m. and began heading to the airport. Scott's father-in-law gave him a ride to BWI and he was the first to depart with a direct flight to Vegas on Southwest. Dan got dropped off by his entire family for his direct flight from Pittsburgh to Vegas.



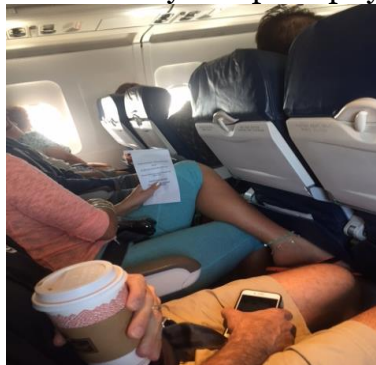
And apparently, it was Droz's turn to drive to the airport, so he picked up Paul before the sun came up for their flight to Vegas by way of Phoenix.



Scott was the first to arrive in Vegas, and Dan arrived shortly thereafter. Scott and Dan grabbed their bags and went to get the rental car. Not surprisingly, renting a car at McCarron International Airport is *a bit* different than renting one in Myrtle Beach. Scott and Dan had to haul their bags onto a shuttle to the rental car facility. Scott had made reservation several months prior, but had actually screwed it up and gotten the wrong vehicle (something he never told anyone else) and decided to upgrade to the minivan. For unknown reasons, a rental company employee had to “break into” the rental car in order to get the keys for us.



Dan and Scott got the rental car and headed to the Flamingo to check in. Meanwhile, Paul and Droz were in Phoenix and finally ready to make the hop to Las Vegas. In what was perhaps a sign of Paul's luck, he had the misfortune of sitting next to a bride-to-be, who advised Paul that she did not like to fly and promptly grabbed the barf bag.



While Paul and Droz were on their way to Vegas, Scott and Dan checked in at The Flamingo. Scott bypassed the valet service and self-parked. They checked their bags with the valet and then went to check in. As a platinum member, Dan got to go into a



special room for check in and didn't have to wait in line with all of the "common people." The hotel confirmed that the group had adjoining rooms, although they would not be ready for a few hours. Scott and Dan managed to avoid doing any gambling and quickly got back in the family truckster and headed back to the airport to wait for Paul and Droz. Dan and Scott sat in the cell phone lot for awhile and Dan had a chance to watch Scott's Odds and Preview Video, which Scott had been unable to figure out how to upload onto YouTube the evening before. Droz and Paul finally arrived. They grabbed their bags and Dan was able to direct them to the correct exit for a nearly perfect airport pick-up. Everybody sat in their traditional seats in the rental car, and so it was off to Rio Secco for the opening round of the 20<sup>th</sup> version of the Myrtle Beach Birdie Championship. What was supposed to be about a 30 minute ride, turned into close to an hour ride as Scott showed his age and had difficulty exiting the airport and getting on the correct road. Scott made at least 3 wrong turns causing the group to circle the airport at least 3 times, before finally heading in the right direction.

The group arrived at the secluded and upscale Rio Secco Golf Club, where they promptly went through one of the greatest traditions of the MBBC, the unpacking of the golf travel bags.



After "taking care of some business" the group headed to the range for the usual driving "display." Dan grabbed a 7 and 7 and Scott paid a small fortune for a 12 pack of beer. We hit a few putts to get a feel for the greens and headed to the 10<sup>th</sup> tee for the start of MBBC XX – Vegas Vacation. Temperatures were cool, but it was VERY windy with gusts up to 40 miles-per-hour. Droz began the MBBC with the opening tee-flippy...



...giving Scott the honor of the first drive of the tournament. Scott promptly crushed his drive greenside. Paul, sporting a brace for his injured wrist hit a hybrid into the fairway, Dan snap-hooked his drive, but managed to catch the fairway and Droz thought he'd play smart and laid up with a 5-iron.



Surprisingly, all 4 drives found the fairway on the first hole (which may be the first time that's ever happened). Scott's drive was on the fringe of the green. He hit a pretty poor chip leaving about 8 feet, but was able to drain the putt for the opening birdie of the MBBC and matched Droz's record for the fastest birdie in MBBC history.



We would not have to wait long for more fireworks. Droz would respond on the 11<sup>th</sup> hole (our second of the day). He hit a poor drive, but managed to find his ball just out of the desert. He then hit a beautiful approach shot to 6 feet and managed to drain the putt to match Scott's opening salvo.



The 3<sup>rd</sup> hole of the day, the Par 3 12<sup>th</sup>, would feature one of the more memorable moments of the trip. The group was getting ready to tee off, when the cart girl, Keli (spelling according to Dan), showed up. Keli was a bit of a butter face, but she made up for it with her personality (likely only friendly enough to get a good tip, which she got) and her golf skills. Dan decided he needed a re-fill of his 7 and 7. There was apparently a conversation between Dan and Keli about her golf skills and she decided to show off those skills by using Paul's 7-iron to promptly put one on the green.



The rest of the round was pretty disappointing after the fireworks from the opening 2 holes. After shooting a disastrous and foreboding 61 on the front nine, Paul took off his wrist brace and caught fire, shooting a sizzling 41 on the second nine. As evidenced by the videos that Scott was taking, Droz had numerous birdie putts, but really struggled finding the speed of the greens and couldn't find a second birdie.

Despite the lack of any more birdies, everyone enjoyed the course and were excited to be in Las Vegas. However, everyone was pretty exhausted after a long day. Originally, the plan had been to go out for a nice dinner on the first night, but after some debate, the correct decision was made to push back the nice dinner to the next night. It was agreed that we would stop somewhere on the ride home, possibly somewhere Dan could catch the Penguins playing in the Eastern Conference Finals against the Tampa Bay Lightning. We quickly found a Buffalo Wild Wings (believed to be a first for the MBBC). Unfortunately, Dan watched the Pens lose Game 4, evening the series 2-2. Everyone scarfed down their dinner and was pretty satisfied. Despite being exhausted, everyone was also anxious to get to the hotel and head out in Vegas. We headed back to



The Flamingo and took advantage of the valet parking. Our adjoining rooms were ready, and, per usual, Dan and Droz shared a room and Scott and Paul shared the other room. Everyone got showered and dressed and headed downstairs. For months, Dan had raved about the Deal or No Deal machine that was supposed to bring hours of entertainment for the group and, more importantly, easy money. The problem was finding it, as it would only be in certain casinos. We decided to start at The Mirage. After searching for several minutes, Dan asked someone and we quickly learned that the machine we were looking for was not there. We headed to the casino bar and decided to start the trip off right, with a shot of Tequila.



The shot went down surprisingly well despite the long day, and Scott decided it was time to start gambling. Officially, Scott made the first bet of the trip as he sat at a black-jack table. Before the trip, Scott had sent out a Prop Bet Challenge, which included some gambling props, such as What would be the result of Scott's first hand of blackjack. (For the record, Scott pushed his first hand). Everybody else played some games before it was decided to move on. We decided to head back to The Flamingo or head next door to The Cromwell (formerly Bill's Gambling Hall). The Cromwell proved to be a big upgrade over Bill's. The layout is largely the same, but it looks (and smells) much better. Everyone scattered and settled in to their favorite games for a long night of gambling. Droz had talked for a few months about 3-card poker. After mixed results at Blackjack and Blackjack Switch, Scott decided to join Droz and Paul at a 3-card poker table and quickly fell in love with the game as he hit a few big hands. Everybody seemed to be doing pretty well at the tables (or at least nobody lost big), but as the night dragged on, we headed back to The Flamingo for some more gambling before finally heading to bed after a very long day.

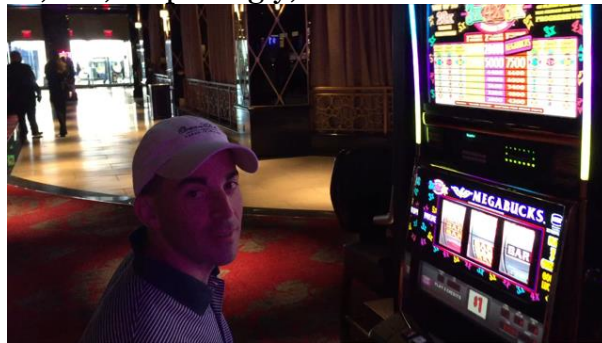
### **Saturday, May 21, 2016**

Months before, everyone had agreed that after a long day of traveling, playing golf, drinking and gambling, it would be smart to play just 1 round of golf the next day and to not tee off until later in the day so that we could sleep in. Not surprisingly, no one was really able to sleep in, but it was nice not to have to wake up at the crack of dawn and rush to the golf course. It was thought that we would have breakfast at The Flamingo's buffet restaurant where we've eaten MANY times before over the years, but... turns out that place isn't there anymore. So, we headed over to the food court and had pretty decent breakfast sandwiches. With still a good bit of time to kill, we gambled a little bit at The Flamingo





After The Flamingo, someone had some chips left over from The Cromwell from the night before, so we headed over there to cash those in. Paul took advantage of that to play a quick slot machine, but, surprisingly, did not win.



By then, it was time to get in the car and head out to our second round at a course which had been recommended by the package provider and which none of us knew anything about... Reflection Bay. (Spoiler alert, it would actually become a big favorite for everyone). The course was in the middle of a development/resort that seemed to be in the middle of nowhere, approximately 20 minutes from downtown near Lake Las Vegas.



We were loaded up on our carts and because we were so early headed to the driving range/practice facility for another display of driving and putting. After waiting for about 45 minutes, we finally were sent off the 10<sup>th</sup> tee. Once again, the wind was up, but, otherwise, it was a beautiful day in Las Vegas. Strangely, once again, all four drives on the opening hole found the fairway.



The course was beautiful and in great shape and we largely had it to ourselves. Wind was a factor on all of the holes. Despite being able to “sleep-in” nobody was really playing very well and there were not any legitimate birdie opportunities until the 18<sup>th</sup> hole (our 9<sup>th</sup>), a 502 yard Par 5 that was downwind. Scott and Droz hit massive drives (with the help of the wind). Scott’s second shot was a 9-iron which ended up 25 feet from the hole for eagle. Droz missed the green with his second shot, but was able to chip to 8 feet (although he was not happy with it). Dan was on in 3, but only a little closer than Scott for his birdie putt. Scott was able to roll his eagle putt next to the cup for a tap-in birdie. Dan learned a little from Scott’s putt and was able to drain his birdie putt to get on the board. Unfortunately, Droz was not able to make it 3 birdies on the hole.

At the turn, we were hooked up with beer and hotdogs, by the cart girl Jen (a.k.a. J-Ho). She gave us a decent discount for about 15 beers, although she got the difference as her tip. The second 9 was not very impressive as everyone struggled. None more so than Droz, especially at the 150 yard Par 3 4<sup>th</sup> hole. Unfortunately, there is no video from it, but Droz had difficulty getting his ball on the green going back and forth at least 10 times and, according to the scorecard, ending up with a 15. After shooting 42 on the front, he would shoot 66 on the back for a 108. No one was able to make any birdies on the second 9. And so, after 2 rounds, the MBBC standings were: Scott -2, Droz - 1, Dan - 1, Paul 0.

We piled into the car and made the drive back to the hotel to get ready for our dinner at Lavo in the Palazzo. Paul had raved about the food and especially the meatball appetizer. We made the walk to the Palazzo and surprisingly arrived in plenty of time for our reservation and were seated fairly quickly. Our waiter (whose name we got but I can’t remember, although there is some belief that his name was Scott) was very

friendly, perhaps overly so, as he criticized Scott for his drink order, but he did take a couple of group photos for us.



Paul was correct about the meatball and everyone seemed to enjoy their dinner. There was a strange dynamic that popped up at Lavo. There seemed to be numerous groups of girls some of which were bachelorette parties. Apparently, Lavo waiters are known for spanking any women who are willing to get spanked with a paddle as this went on at several tables and was pretty entertaining. There was some talk of Scott getting paddled, but that did not happen.

After dinner, we decided to do some gambling at the Palazzo and the Venetian. To the best of my memory, the results were somewhat mixed with again no one winning or losing big, although we were at Palazzo for a decent amount of time. There was quite a bit to see at The Palazzo, as the girls seem to be getting younger and younger (or maybe we're just getting older) and wearing less and less. After a long 2 days, and a big meal, everyone seemed to be getting a little sleepy, but it's Vegas, so everyone rallied. There was no real plan, but to head back toward The Flamingo. We stopped into the "lovely" Casino Royale. Scott and Paul played some blackjack and blackjack switch while Dan and Droz hit the craps tables. We were there for quite a while. In fact, Dan had time to go down fairly big before rallying back to... even steven. Dan refused to give up on finding The Deal or No Deal machines. (In all candor, I had little interest in looking for them. I can't speak for the other members of the MBBC). Dan pushed for a trip to The Bellagio to look for them there, since Droz had played them there a few months earlier. Sure enough, there were 2 Deal of No Deal Machines. Unfortunately, one of the machines was out of order and the other was... "occupied" by an Asian woman, who apparently had no intention of leaving the machine any time soon. After staring at her for a while, we started to wander around and couldn't resist the "temptation" of \$25 blackjack tables. Despite the relatively high stakes, no one lost or won big. There were constant patrols to see if the Asian woman had left the Deal of No Deal machine, but she had not, and she won the battle of wills, as we gave up and decided to head back to the hotel. There was some additional gambling at The Cromwell and The Flamingo, but nothing memorable and eventually everyone headed up to the rooms with 36 holes to be played the next day.

**Sunday, May 22, 2016**



Despite a fairly long couple of days, everyone was in good spirits and up in plenty of time to make the relatively short trip to the Paiute Golf Resort. Scott had pushed for these rounds. It would actually probably become the groups' least favorite courses, although they were still pretty nice. Like other Vegas courses, Paiute is in the middle of NOWHERE, although it is very scenic set between the Sun and Snow Mountains. We were greeted by a crowded parking lot and chilly temperatures with even stronger winds than the previous 2 days. Everyone put jackets on to deal with the howling winds and cool temperatures. We were sent off the Wolf Course. There was some debate between playing the gold or white tees. (We played the Wolf Course from the Gold tees, but would move up to the white tees for the afternoon round). We did not have to wait long for the first birdie as Droz found the mark from the fringe of the 382 yard Par 4 1<sup>st</sup> hole.



Paul would join the party on the 480 yard Par 5 6<sup>th</sup> hole. His third shot ended up 6 feet from the hole, and Rover was able to drain the putt for his first birdie of the trip.



Temperatures got more comfortable as we got further into the round and the sun climbed. The wind continued to blow pretty hard though. Scott would get back on the board on the 167 yard Par 3 12<sup>th</sup> hole, draining an 8-footer for birdie.



The rest of the round was relatively quiet with the exception of Scott lipping out for another birdie on the island green of the Par 3 15<sup>th</sup> hole.

Lunch was in the clubhouse. We were waited on by a 65-year-old guy, which was disappointing, but the lunch was pretty good. Droz was able to watch Ryan play his baseball game through facetime. After lunch, it was back out for a second round on the Snow course. Because of some of the “struggles” in the morning and because of the wind, we agreed to play from the white tees in the afternoon. It actually started to get a bit hot during the afternoon round. Despite moving up a set of tees, the play was not much better. There was little action until the 288 yard Par 4 7<sup>th</sup> hole, where things got very interesting. Obviously this was a short hole, but the green was blocked by a fairway bunker. Because of the wind, it seemed like a driveable hole. Scott lead off and hit a terrible drive that hit something and bounced over the fairway bunker and ended up near the front of the green. Droz and Paul both hit their tee shots over the back of the green. Dan hit a terrible drive and ended up in the desert. However, he found his ball, and hit a miraculous shot leaving himself a decent putt for birdie. Paul also hit a decent chip leaving himself with a decent birdie putt. Unfortunately, both would miss their putts. Droz hit a gorgeous chip leaving himself approximately 2 feet for birdie. Scott crushed eagle putt, hitting the hole and ending 12 feet away. Somehow, Scott was able to drain the putt for his 4<sup>th</sup> birdie of the trip.



Droz's putt for birdie was... interesting. Paul attempted his birdie putt before Droz. Droz's marker was in Paul's line, so Paul decided to move it. Paul then missed his birdie putt, but nobody bothered to move Droz's mark back to its original location because Paul was too pissed about his miss and Droz was too busy setting up his Go Pro camera to get a close up of his birdie putt. Unfortunately, Droz would miss his putt.



Dan would make up for his missed opportunity on the very next hole, the 152 Par 3 8<sup>th</sup>. Dan fired a dart to approximately 4 feet and drained the putt.



Paul was able to fire his second birdie of the day on the 145 yard Par 3 14<sup>th</sup> hole, hitting his tee shot to about 6 feet and making the putt.



Everyone seemed to tire as we made our way through 18. There were still some chances, but nobody was able to convert, and the 4<sup>th</sup> round ended with the scoreboard as follows: Scott – 4, Droz – 2, Dan – 2, Paul – 2.

On the ride home, while Dan had Nate and Jake point the phone at the television so he could watch the Pens, we decided to stop at the grocery store for some essentials. We made a quick stop and stocked up.



We headed back to the hotel, showered and got dressed. Everyone (especially Droz) was starving, and we agreed to go to The Yardhouse for dinner. Dan was able to watch the Pens, although they would lose Game 5 in overtime. For some reason, everyone was willing to do another shot of Tequila...





After dinner, Dan's quest to find and actually play Deal or No Deal continued. Since he and Nicole and their friends had played it at New York/New York, the decision was made to go there. We decided to take a cab, and so began the most interesting cab ride in MBBC history, although the rides with Romeo many years before rank up there as well. We were picked up by George (or Jorge), who is believed to be a Vietnam veteran likely with some PTSD or other mental problems. For reasons that he can't remember, Scott decided to take some video of the ride, which seemed to fire up George/Jorge whose catchphrases included, "I love Jesus. I love Jesus." and "I don't discriminate, I penetrate."



George/Jorge managed to get us to New York/New York safely and without further incident. Unfortunately, we would not see George/Jorge again.

A quick search of the casino was unsuccessful in locating the correct Deal or No Deal Machine. We checked with the casino staff and they confirmed that they no longer had it. We decided to stick around and try our luck at the tables. Dan and Droz once again hit the craps tables. Scott joined them for a brief period of time, but didn't have any luck and was also bothered by one of the rudest craps dealers he's ever encountered.



Dan and Droz continued playing craps and actually found a hot table a little while later. Meanwhile, Scott and Paul were struggling at just about any other table game.

Scott was struggling so badly, he even played a few hands of War, which actually went better than expected. After a successful night at New York/New York (for some) we grabbed a cab back to The Flamingo and shortly thereafter headed to bed with a long ride to Wolf Creek in store at the crack of dawn.

### **Monday, May 23, 2017**

Monday's round was probably the most highly anticipated of the trip, as it was being played at Wolf Creek, a course that everyone was familiar with because of the Tiger Woods video games. The course was described by our package provider, Jason, as "a love it or hate it" course. When the schedule had been made months before, the round was booked for early in the morning. The day/night before, we realized that it was kind of silly to play early in the morning after a long night out and with such a long drive (over an hour) to the course. Scott tried to call Jason the day/night before to see if he could push back the tee time, but since the day before was Sunday, Jason was not available. Jason would actually call as we were driving to the course. While very tired and somewhat hung over, everyone managed to crawl out of bed at an ungodly hour to make the trek to Mesquite, Nevada. It was a long drive on the highway, but it wasn't too bad, and with the time change, some were able to call/Facetime families back home.

We pulled into the parking lot and dropped our clubs off. From the parking lot Wolf Creek looks like a relatively normal golf course set in the mountains. Things changed when we drove the carts down to the first tee box and got our first glimpse at the awesome opening hole.



They took a group picture, which they showed as at the turn, and which we all agreed to buy. We all managed to get off the tee on the first hole, although some drives were better than others.





There would be a huge turning point in the title race on the first hole. After his drive ended up in a desert area (which Droz may have illegally hit out of), Droz's approach shot on the Par 5 ended up 2-3 feet from the hole setting himself up to move within 1 birdie of the lead. However, Droz's putting stroke would let him down, as he was unable to convert.



The second hole was just as picturesque as the first. We had to walk up a long set of steps to get to a very small tee box among the rocks. We could not see much of the fairway and had to hit our drives over a large rock formation.





Each hole was different than the others, with some being harder than others. It would not take long for the first birdie of the day, with Paul making the 453 yard Par 5 5<sup>th</sup> hole look too easy.



Paul hit a massive drive, and then got on the green in 2. He coaxed a very slippery eagle putt to 2 feet and then sank the putt for birdie.

There were only a few birdie chances through the rest of the front 9. Dan missed an 8-footer on the Par 4 7<sup>th</sup> hole, which Paul had unsuccessfully tried to drive. Dan's 47 was the low score for the group on the front 9 with the high score of 55 belonging to Scott.



At the turn, we bought hot dogs and the framed pictures taken on the first tee. Scott missed a golden opportunity on the Par 4 10<sup>th</sup> hole to extend his lead, missing a 6

footer. Scott would miss another opportunity on the Par 5 12<sup>th</sup> hole. He hit a massive drive and got onto the green in 2, but could not take advantage as he 3-putted. Scott would finally get on the ledger at Wolf Creek on the 301 yard Par 4 13<sup>th</sup> hole. He hit his approach to 5 feet and was able to sink the putt.



Unfortunately, there would be no more birdies during the round. Temperatures got warmer and everyone started to tire and the effects of 3 nights in Vegas started to set in. As we waited on the tee box of the Par 3 15<sup>th</sup> hole, we checked off another tradition, as Dan showed off his skills at bouncing a golf ball on his wedge. (We did not play any tee box hockey, though)



On that same hole, Dan would hit a beautiful tee ball to about 12 feet for an excellent look at birdie. Dan hit what appeared to be a perfect putt, but it turned in the last 1/2 foot and somehow stayed out of the cup.



There were no other birdies and, for the most, part, we crawled through the final holes. After 5 rounds, the scoreboard read: Scott – 5, Paul – 3, Droz – 2, Dan -2. Paul

and Droz bought shirts in the clubhouse and we made the long drive back to Vegas. Some took advantage of the long ride back to... relax.



When we got back to The Flamingo, Dan headed up to the room because he had to do some work for a couple of hours. Scott, Droz and Paul headed to the food court to grab a late lunch/early dinner, during which Paul gave Scott a pep talk telling him that he needed to go to bed early instead of going out and drinking that night, so that he could avoid choking away another MBBC title. (Scott would actually not heed Paul's advice and it very nearly did cost him the title.)



By then, it was getting later in the afternoon. There was still plenty of time to gamble and since Dan was "working" Scott, Paul and Droz decided to head to the pool, which was pretty historic because after years of never going to the pool, we have now gone to the pool in back-to-back years. Just getting into the pool was a bit of a process as you needed a room key and ID (because you had to be 21). Droz and Paul forgot their ID's and had to go back up to the room, while Scott found a nice shady spot. Dan would eventually come down too and we paid \$50.00 for a pitcher of margaritas. There was not a whole lot to see at the pool, but it was nice to relax for a little while.





After hanging out at the pool for a couple of hours, we headed back upstairs and got ready to head out for the night, with no real plan about what we were doing or where we were going. Scott got ready first and decided to head downstairs before everyone else. In the weeks leading up to the trip, there had been a lot of talk about a Super Bet. Paul strongly pushed for betting on the Dodgers whenever Clayton Kershaw was pitching as Kershaw had been absolutely dominate up to that point. Kershaw and the Dodgers were playing Cincinnati that night and the money line was set at -405. Scott actually decided to lay \$50 on the Reds +375, and nearly pulled it off, but the Dodgers pulled it out 1-0. Scott would win a second bet on the Giants, who also won 1-0. Scott then decided to take a seat at a Pai Gow table, while he waited for everyone else to come downstairs. Eventually Dan came down and joined him. Droz came down and since he hates Pai Gow with a passion, he headed over to the craps table. Paul also bypassed Pai Gow and headed over to play craps, before eventually joining us later. What was initially thought to just be a time waster until we figured out what we were going to do, turned into a lengthy session, as we were having some success (as much as you can at Pai Gow) and, more importantly, we were having several bowls of loudmouth soup. Paul wasn't as successful, but he did manage to get a massage.



After The Flamingo brought in its Asian closer at the Pai Gow table, we decided it was time to head out. We decided to head over to The Bellagio to see if The Deal or No Deal

Machine was Asian-free. Perhaps it was the alcohol, but there was a palpable sense of excitement as we headed over, as if something big and memorable was about to happen.



The gambling gods were smiling down on us as the Deal or No Deal machine was free. We put in \$80.00, and played \$20.00 per spin, and while Dan was confident in what was about to transpire, I think it's safe to say that the rest of us had our doubts. It did not take long for the fun to begin, as Scott was the first to make a successful spin allowing us to play the "bonus" round with a top available prize of just over \$1,000.00.



Our enthusiasm attracted a bit of a crowd, but, unfortunately, at our age, this appears to be the best we can do, even in Las Vegas.



Dan somehow knew that they were from Toronto, Canada and for reasons never entirely clear to me, we also let them pick numbers. We managed to successfully navigate the first round of picks, but naturally rejected an offer of \$140.00. A second negotiation of the cases yielded an offer of \$168.00, but rather than take a \$100.00 profit, we decided to press on, and the wheels naturally fell off the cart in the next round. We ended up "winning" \$56.62 in our first try at the bonus round.





After playing for approximately 2 hours and building up our pot to nearly \$700.00, we were playing what had been mostly agreed would be our final bonus game. We were presented with an offer of \$175.00, which would have pushed our profit to nearly \$800.00. There was a lengthy discussion about whether or not to take the deal, with Mike from California offering his advice as well.



While there is no video of the decision, I am fairly certain we did the dumb thing and did not take the deal. I'm also fairly certain we played for a little while longer before deciding to call it a night. While Scott went to the bathroom, Dan, Droz and Paul decided to put money back in the machine and were apparently unsuccessful in 3 consecutive spins losing us an additional \$60.00. We cashed out and headed back to The Cromwell after midnight to play some more blackjack, craps and 3-card poker. At some point, Paul and Dan headed up to the room. Scott and Droz grabbed some pizza before heading up around 2:00 a.m. with little time before waking up for 36 holes the next morning at Coyote Springs.

## **Tuesday, May 24, 2016**

Coyote Springs was recommended by someone that Paul knew, and since nobody knew anything about it, it was added to the schedule. After some discussions with the package provider, for a variety of reasons, Coyote Springs became the site of the final rounds. Since we were not leaving until the next day, we decided to play 36 holes. Coyote Springs is in the same direction as Wolf Creek, but not nearly as far. It still in the middle of nowhere. In fact, many of the reviews of the course point out that there is absolutely nothing around the course, so there is nowhere to go for lunch. The reviews also mention that the course has a trailer for sandwiches, which weren't highly recommended, a review that would prove to be very accurate. Exhausted after a long night, we rolled out of bed and had to wait a little longer for our car. We made the 45 minute drive to the course.





While the clubhouse and parking lot were less than impressive, the course itself was actually very nice, and also very scenic. We largely had the course to ourselves. The heavy winds and toward the end of our first round were the heaviest we experienced all week and lead to a debate about whether or not to even play the afternoon. While the rest of us were mostly trying to shake out the cobwebs, Dan got on the board on the 483 Par 5 2<sup>nd</sup> hole. His third shot ended up 5 feet from the hole, and he was able to drain the putt for his 3<sup>rd</sup> birdie of the trip.



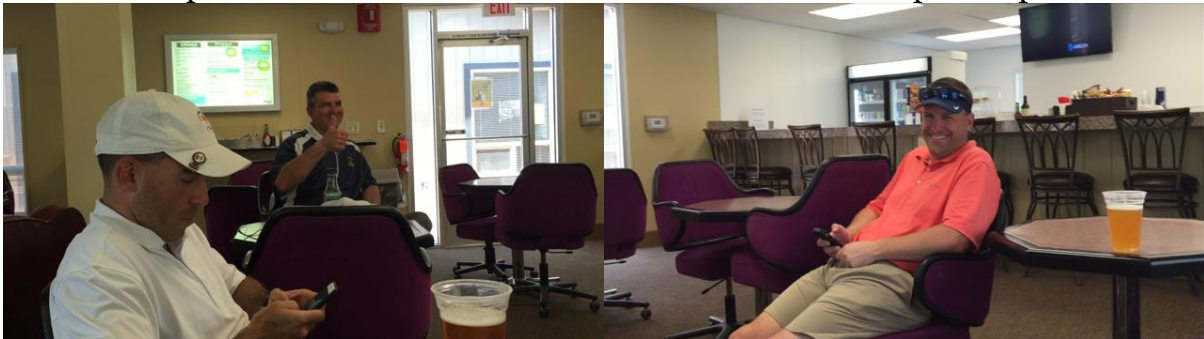
Droz, who was hoping to get hot and tie Scott for the lead and win via the champion's tiebreaker would make some noise on the 346 yard Par 4 9<sup>th</sup> hole, when he drained a 30-foot putt for birdie to move to within 2 of the lead.



The back 9 of the first 18 would prove to be extremely difficult, mostly because of heavy winds that were gusting up to approximately 50 miles-per-hour. It was nearly impossible to get the ball anywhere close to the hole. In fact, the wind was blowing so hard on the Par 3 17<sup>th</sup> hole, that Dan hit a 5-wood.



We crawled through the opening 18 with Scott's lead now 5-3-3-3 and someone just 2 birdies from tying the lead and Droz just 2 birdies from taking the lead by virtue of the tiebreaker. We headed to the food trailer to grab a drink and some lunch and discuss whether or not it was worth it to play the afternoon round, which was free. The lunch was pretty gross with Paul being the most vocal about his displeasure. The discussion about whether or not to continue was relatively brief, with everyone agreeing that we would press on rather than affect the outcome of the championship.



And so we headed out for the afternoon round. Heavy winds continued through most of the front 9. At one point, it rained for about 20 minutes.



Scott had a chance to put the championship on ice on the 6<sup>th</sup> hole, but couldn't drain a 12-foot putt. Dan also had a chance to pull within 1 of the lead, but couldn't get a tricky 6 foot putt to drop. About half way through the round, Droz had all but given up, even at one point, sitting down on the green, while Scott did tricks with the golf cart on the wet cart paths.



While the golf was pretty bad, the course was fairly interesting. We noticed a lot of jackrabbits, and Paul was intrigued by the trashcans, which were in the ground and per Paul seemed like a good place to hide drugs.



The wind finally died down on the final 9 of the MBBC. Unfortunately, no one had enough gas left in the tank to make a run at Scott. For the first time ever eliminations were videoed and for what is believed to be the first time ever, all 3 eliminations occurred on the same hole, the Par 3 17<sup>th</sup>. Paul was officially the first to be eliminated, as he needed to chip in from well off the green to stay alive. He did not make it, as he actually hit it over the green and into the water and then dropped a ball and hit that ball over the green and into the water as well.



Droz was also off the green, although slightly closer and also needed to chip in. He could not hole out, and his 3-year run as the MBBC champion was officially ended.





And finally, Dan was eliminated as failed to make a fairly legitimate putt with the soccer style golf balls he had started using during the final round.



And so, Scott had finally captured his first title in more than a decade with the final scoreboard showing: 5-3-3-3.



There was talk of having a trophy presentation and having a big celebratory night out, but neither of those things happened. In the parking lot of Coyote Springs, we went through one of the saddest traditions of the MBBC, putting our golf bags back in the travel bags. We then made the long drive back to the hotel. On the ride home, there was a discussion about where to go out for dinner that night. Originally, there was some talk of eating at a steak house at MGM, but we eventually agreed to stay close to home base and eat at Giada at The Cromwell. We tried to get a reservation, but after initially getting someone on the phone and being told that a certain time was available, Paul got

disconnected and then couldn't get back in touch with the restaurant. We got back to the room and showered and changed and headed over to The Cromwell. Dan got to watch the Pens win Game 6 of the conference finals to force a game 7, which they would eventually win (as well as eventually win the Cup). We played 3-card poker while we waited for a table to become available. Our table finally became available and dinner, at least according to Scott, was fantastic.



Since it was our last night in Vegas, everyone at least pretended that we were going to rally and make a night of it. However, everyone was completely exhausted, and the thought of early morning flights made a big night highly unlikely. We did manage to head back over to The Bellagio to see if we could make another run at Deal or No Deal. We stopped off at the ice cream stand at the entrance to The Bellagio and fulfilled another tradition of ice cream on at least one night. We tried Deal or No Deal with mild success, but the enthusiasm just wasn't there, and we decided to head back to the Flamingo. We played for a little while longer before everyone decided that enough was enough and headed upstairs to bed.

Scott was the first to leave early the next morning. He dropped the rental car off and then took the shuttle to the terminal and caught his direct flight back to Baltimore. Dan, Droz and Paul followed shortly thereafter, and everyone made it home safe and sound bringing to a close the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Myrtle Beach Birdie Championship.

There is absolutely no doubt that Vegas was a huge success for the MBBC. Everyone was able to use points for their flights. Thanks almost entirely to Dan, we were also able to get the rooms almost entirely for free. Golf was not completely unreasonable and the only variable is the gambling. Perhaps the only drawback is that everyone agreed that it took about 2 weeks to fully recover from the effects of playing 7 rounds in Vegas on very little sleep. There has been some talk of putting Vegas on the schedule every few years, but that remains to be seen...