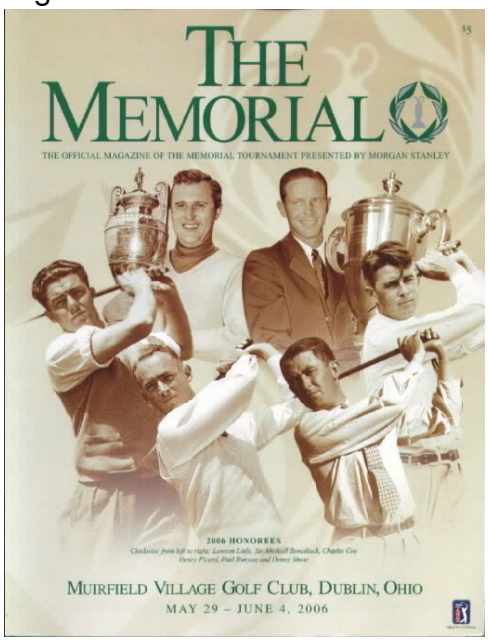
As if the sports spotlight wasn't shining on Ohio already with the excellent play of the Indians and Cavaliers, even more attention will be paid to the Buckeye State this weekend as a stellar field of golfing greats are in Dublin, OH this week for the tournament that Jack built; The Memorial. Headlining that list are the top two draws in golf, Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson, playing together in the Memorial for the first time in five years. Mitch previews the tournament for us.

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In fact, the entire current top ten on the PGA Tour's money list will be teeing it up in Muirfield Village, as Vijay Singh, Zach Johnson, Charles Howell III, Adam Scott, Luke Donald, Sergio Garcia, John Rollins, and Aaron Baddeley will be joining Woods and Mickelson in one of the most prestigious events on Tour. Defending champion Carl Pettersson will have a Herculean task on his hands if the amiable North Carolina living Swede wishes to defend his title.

The star power will be everywhere. If you are a long time fan of golf, it will be hard to sneeze without hitting a former champion of a major. Twenty past winners of the Masters, US Open, British Open, or the PGA Championship will be walking

the pristine fairways that were once part of open farm land where Jack Nicklaus used to hunt as a teenager. Woods, Mickelson, Ernie Els, Vijay Singh, 2007 Masters Champion Zach Johnson, Jim Furyk, Paul Azinger, Mark Calcavecchia, Todd Hamilton, Tom Lehman, Justin Leonard, Davis Love III, Shaun Micheel, Geoff Ogilvy, Jose Maria Olazabal, Corey Pavin, Jeff Sluman, Bob Tway, Mike Weir, and Ohio's own Ben Curtis. I would like to think the Ben will be wearing Browns' gear all weekend, given his love of the Browns. However, since he has an endorsement deal with the NFL, I'm sure we'll have to see him wearing Bungles gear as well for a day or two...let's just hope he plays well, as he'll undoubtedly have his Cleveland outfit on for the weekend.

Despite the presence of so many great golfers, the focus will of course be on Tiger and Phil. Both have won in the past month. Tiger took the hardware at the highly respected Wachovia Tournament in Charlotte, and Phil won in his last start, and impressive victory over the gutsy Sean O'Hair at the "fifth major", the Tour Players Championship. Both are playing with a lot of confidence right now, and it should carry through to this weekend. For Tiger, this will probably be his last tune-up before the US Open, a tournament he desperately wants to win following his mediocre performance at the Masters. Additionally, Woods has always loved this tournament simply because it is so tied to the man he admires most as a professional golfer; Jack Nicklaus. He won the tournament three straight years from 1999 to 2001, and has finished in the top five the last three times he's played, missing last year due to the death of his father.

Phil Mickelson will not be daunted by Tiger, not if you go by his unflappable performance in the TPC. New swing coach Butch Harmon (a former instructor of Tiger) has Phil swinging with the confidence he had prior to his meltdown last year at Wingfoot. Phil will also be using this as a final tune up before going out to seek redemption at Oakmont over Father's Day weekend. He has never won The Memorial, so you know he'd like nothing more than to beat Tiger for a second time in a row at this venue.

As usual, the weather will be a primary concern...rain has altered play in 19 of the previous 31 editions. According to this morning's predictions on www.weather.com, there is a

30% or 40% chance for scattered thunderstorms Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Given that it's late May/early June in Ohio, the old adage of "if you don't like the weather, stick around for ten minutes and it will change" will certainly come into play.

The course will also be quite a challenge again, as Nicklaus has done some more tinkering to make it harder, mostly in the form of changing some fairway bunkers so that they are more in play as a punishment for missing while trying to cut the corner of a dogleg. The biggest change will be on the already unusual par 5 15$^{th}$. The hole is narrow and arrow-straight, right through the middle of a forest, with creeks, bunkers, and one of the smallest greens on the course to contend with. It's also been lengthened by 26 yards by having the tee box moved farther back and downhill, making it an even tougher first shot. Birdies will be plentiful on this hole; but you'll also see lots of ugly numbers as well from those that tend to spray their drives.

The biggest controversy from last year has not gone away, but it won't be quite as nasty. Nicklaus always thought that hitting into a bunker should be punitive, so last year he had furrows drug into the sand traps, making it much harder to hit out as cleanly as most professionals seem to do. The pros whined like Rasheed Wallace, so while Jack still feels the same way, he has changed to way the furrows are made, and it won't be quite as hard as it was last year.

So if you have an opportunity to make it to this great tradition, know that I'm highly jealous. It should be a fantastic competition, and I would be very surprised if the final pairing on Sunday doesn't include either Woods or Mickelson (or both). Ohio is very fortunate to be a cold-weather state that has two top-tier tournaments each year; The Memorial and the World Golf Championships - Bridgestone Invitational in August. If you've ever played golf, or enjoyed watching it on TV, I highly recommend going out and watching a tournament live at some

point. It is really quite amazing to see what they can do.