

FEARLESS GOLF

## THE RISK-TAKERS ISSUE



IT'S A NEW WORLD IN GOLF, AND IT'S NOT FOR THE MEEK. WE PRESENT THE GAME'S BOLDEST.

Photos: [View exclusive outtakes from this photo session](#) →

SOCIAL-MEDIA GURU

### Ian Poulter

Ian Poulter wears risk on his bright pink sleeve; then he might try to sell you the sweater by tweeting about it. Since Poulter turned pro in 1995 he has sported soccer jerseys on the golf course, barber-pole-striped hairdos, and pants prominently featuring the claret jug (prompting Seve Ballesteros to quip, "That will be the closest he'll ever get to it.") Which isn't true: Poulter, now 35, finished second in the British Open in 2008. The brash Englishman, who once posed naked for the cover of a magazine, started a flamboyant clothing line in 2007 and won his first PGA Tour event at the Match Play Championship in 2010. He's bringing "caddie cam" to the tours, and he has embraced the world of social networking, which occasionally causes him some turbulence. More than a million Twitter followers monitor his thoughts [@IanJamesPoulter](#), and that kind of scrutiny has prompted the occasional apology. This is the same guy who told Golf World UK, "Don't get me wrong, I really respect every professional golfer, but I know I haven't played to my full potential, and when that happens, it will be just me and Tiger." It was Poulter and Tiger joking around on the putting green at Woods' tournament last December when Woods made a playful jab about a ball-marking rules infraction that cost Poulter the tournament the week before. Poulter got it back to all square with Woods when he tweeted to his friend and new No. 1 in the world, [@WestwoodLee](#): Tiger called across the putting green today & said, "Don't you know how to mark your ball?" I said, "Settle down, No. 2."

Too funny.

BY MATT GINELLA

PHOTOS BY NATHANIEL WELCH



WEB-EXTRA

### Arnold Palmer

He jumpstarted the 1960s with a birdie-birdie finish to win the Masters, then doubled down two months later by driving the first green at Cherry Hills to come from seven back to haul in the U.S. Open. He was forevermore The Charger, a genuine American hero who always went for broke, a burden that for the next five decades he has carried with matchless grace.

• MORE ON ARNOLD PALMER

BY JAIME DIAZ

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES



WEB-EXTRA

## Dan McLaughlin

Talk about pushing all your chips to the center of the table: In May 2010, 30-year-old Dan McLaughlin of Portland, Ore., gave up his job as a photographer to pursue a career as a professional golfer. The rub is, he had never played golf. Funded only from his modest savings account, he started a training regime of 50 hours per week, lessons followed by practice, practice, practice. His aim is to develop sufficient skills after 10,000 hours to qualify for the PGA Tour, his ultimate goal to prove that champion golfers are made, not born. Lessons started with a putter, not a driver, and it wasn't until August that he moved beyond the putting green. Is there any chance he'll make it? Follow his progress at [thedanplan.com](http://thedanplan.com).

BY RON WHITTEN



WEB-EXTRA

## Mike Whan

The 60 years of the LPGA Tour has been a constant struggle for survival, yet it has endured as the oldest and most successful women's professional sports organization. The risk taken by Whan was that he left a secure job in the business world to become commissioner of the LPGA during the worst recession in the tour's history and after four years of mismanagement that strained ties with many longtime business partners. Whan has sold everything from toothpaste to hockey sticks, and now he has to sell sponsors on the potential of a tour whose No. 1 player--first Annika Sorenstam and then Lorena Ochoa--has retired within two years.

BY RON SIRAK

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/GETTY IMAGES



CLASSIC RISK + REWARD

## Phil Mickelson

What's riskier, Phil Mickelson deliberately stalling a plane he was piloting (with Amy sitting next to him) in 1994, or the 6-iron he shredded off pine straw on the par-5 13th at Augusta to set up a win at the 2010 Masters? What's chancier: Skiing so wildly in 1994 that he lost control and careened into a tree, fracturing a leg and an ankle, or whaling with a driver to reach the par-5 18th at Pebble Beach in two at the 1999 AT&T (splash). Jumping off a mini-trampoline to dunk at halftime of a Phoenix Suns game, or carrying two drivers while winning the 2006 Masters? Risks are relative, and all we know for sure is that Phil can't resist taking them. In the end he has four majors, 38 tour victories and millions of fans to show for it.

BY GUY YOCOM

ILLUSTRATION BY GARY TAXALI



**At 21, there's still plenty to come in Wie's world.**

WHEN IS EARLY TOO EARLY?

## Michelle Wie

The risk was the path taken, and, as with any journey, miles had to be traveled before the choice could be evaluated. At 12, Wie played the LPGA Takefuji Classic. At 14, she accepted an invitation to the SONY Open on the PGA Tour. Missing the cut by just one stroke after making an ocean of putts might have been the worst thing that happened to Wie. It created the false impression she was that close to being competitive with the men. She played against the men 16 times before interest waned in 2008, and in total she went six years without a victory. Still only 21, it's too early to fully evaluate the risk taken by Wie, but the success of other youngsters who chose a more conventional route does raise questions.

BY RON SIRAK

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES