



Fred S. Ridley

Chairman, Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters Tournament

Press Conference

Monday, April 7, 2025

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Good afternoon. My name is Fred Ridley, and I am honored to serve as chairman of Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters Tournament. I appreciate you being here today for a special announcement that I am very excited about.

Tiger Woods was scheduled to join me this afternoon, but his recent injury prevented him from being here in person. I know I speak for everyone at Augusta National and throughout the golf world in wishing Tiger a successful recovery, and we want him to know he is truly missed by everyone this week.

I'd like to start by welcoming those in attendance who are representing the TGR Foundation, as well as our other special guests who are with us. Thank you for being here.

Tiger Woods secured his legacy in Augusta when he won his first green jacket in historic fashion in 1997. As we all know, he has since won four additional Masters, the most recent of which was in 2019. Tiger's legacy stands side by side with the other greats of the game who have left an indelible mark on the Masters, legends such as Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Byron Nelson, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, and of course, our cofounder, Bobby Jones.

Tiger's career in golf demonstrates that his love for the game and all that it represents extends well beyond the championships he has won. As one example, he has developed a passion for golf course design. It is this passion that will come to life in Augusta just a few miles down the road.

I'm thrilled to share the news that Tiger will lead the design of a short course as part of our redevelopment of the Augusta Municipal Golf Course, commonly known as The Patch. With the schedule completion a year from now, this nine-hole par-3 course will be great fun and serve all golfers, ranging from those being introduced to the game to the most avid players.

Tiger's design will be called The Loop at the Patch, a name that will pay tribute to caddies who have used the course as a gathering spot for decades.

So much good will come from this project, and I thank Tiger and TGR Design for all they are doing to make this happen.

I also am excited to announce that Tiger's commitment to the Augusta community will go beyond this golf course. Soon after he turned professional, Tiger began to give back. His philanthropy has taken many shapes through the TGR Foundation. For more than two decades, Tiger's belief in the power of education has made a positive difference in the lives of students and under-resourced communities.

One of the foundation's most impactful and familiar programs is the TGR Learning Lab. This concept was launched in 2006 in Anaheim, California, and provides underserved youth with access to education in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math, often referred to by the acronym STEAM. This program also prepares students for college

and their careers and lives that will follow. The goal is to unlock the potential in every student, and that goal is being met.

The second TGR Learning Lab opened just last week in Philadelphia at Cobbs Creek, and a third is scheduled for Los Angeles.

Today I am proud to share that Augusta National is partnering with Tiger and the TGR Foundation to develop the fourth location here in Augusta. With an expected 2028 opening, TGR Learning Lab Augusta will be located in the Harrisburg neighborhood at the former Lamar Elementary School. It will add complementary program to the Richmond County school system with a focus on STEAM education. There are 27 Richmond County schools within a 10-mile radius of the proposed location of the lab that together can serve more than 23,000 students from the school system.

Students at the lab will have access to The Loop to learn the game of golf as well as the values of the game that will positively influence them throughout their lives.

For our part, Augusta National will make a meaningful financial contribution to the lab's construction and ongoing operation. I'm sure others will want to join us in this worthy endeavor.

Investing in STEAM education for our youth will strengthen our community and drive economic growth. It will spark innovation and deliver a skilled workforce that will serve Augusta for many years to come. These are worthy investments, and TGR Learning Lab Augusta will help make all of this a reality.

Tiger's philanthropic legacy intertwined with his many magical moments at Augusta National will forever be celebrated in this community. I thank him for his commitment to uplift our city.

Although he is not here, Tiger wanted to convey his excitement about these opportunities to better the Augusta community, and he has recorded his comments about today's announcement.

TIGER WOODS: What an honor to be here and to have this moment to be able to be part of Augusta National but just in a different way. To have the ability to be able to design something that's going to impact the community, something that I truly believe in, in education and STEM and giving back to the underserved, and to be able to do this with Augusta National, what an honor.

Thank you so much for allowing us to be able to share this with you. It's a momentous day for all of us at the TGR Foundation, to be able to have this moment, to be able to do this in conjunction with Augusta, be able to be bicoastal and do something at a place that has meant so much to me in my lifetime, this is, again, quite an honor.

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Thank you, Tiger. I certainly wish you were here with us today, but knowing your determination in everything you do, I'm sure you'll be back soon.

We wish you well and look forward to both of these projects coming to life.

The renovation of The Patch is well underway thanks to the work of Tom Fazio and Beau Welling. Today we are happy to share some special elements of the project along with the master plan for the main course.

We are leaning into the nickname The Patch as the course was fondly referred to by local golfers. You will see the primary and secondary logos pay homage to the course's history with a nod to the cabbage garden that was tucked away behind the 14th green and later the 10th tee.

As you enter the property on the new Jim Dent Way, you will see a brand-new relocated clubhouse with an outdoor pavilion, a driving range, and expansive practice areas for local schools and the general public.

The redesign of the third oldest course in Augusta also recognizes the prior course routing on 11 holes by utilizing existing corridors of the original design.

We know once this project is complete, it will strengthen this nearly 100-year-old public golf facility while keeping it affordable. This preservation will uplift those who have loved playing here while fostering opportunities for others to come enjoy the game.

I've asked for the master plan to be distributed to all of you. It also will be posted to Masters.com and golfthepatch.com.

With that, let's open it up to questions.

Q. How did this come about? Was it like a lightbulb moment for this?

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Well, I don't know if it was a lightbulb moment, but I happened to be playing golf with Tiger about a year ago, a couple weeks before the Masters, and I thought I would mention The Patch Project, which I think we were formally announcing that week at the tournament.

It was clear when I shared the concept that it sort of piqued his interest, and that was sort of the beginning of a conversation, a dialogue that took place between our organizations, and after that a few meetings took place, and the idea just sort of grew from what we were doing to how Tiger and TGR could be involved.

He then sort of moved into discussing the big idea of the TGR Learning Lab, which to me is just very exciting. We also recognize the importance of deepening Tiger's legacy in Augusta and with the Masters, and this we felt was an enduring way that we could be forever connected with Tiger and all he's done at the Masters and now all that he's going to be doing in this community.

Q. You've been involved with this club for a very long time. Is this something that has been in the back of your mind as far as contributing to Augusta and the community? Because it does seem to have ramped up a lot under your leadership.

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Well, I think that it goes back to an undertaking that we had shortly after I became chairman, and that was to really take a look at our mission and our core values, to just reexamine them not with the thought that there was any big change that needed to be made but just to make sure that they remained relevant in providing a foundation for us to really move into the future and do the things that we wanted to do as a club and as a golf tournament.

One of our core values is contributing to our community, and so -- and also to promoting and developing the game of golf and its values.

This really fit right into that. I think it really was -- I don't think we've really changed that much, but I think maybe we've refocused a little bit and realized that Augusta, Georgia, has been really good for the Masters tournament. And we've always been supportive of the community, but I think in recent years we've been a little more intentional about it, and we've been a little more out in the open about it.

I think that's the right thing to do.

Q. I may have missed it; anything on timing of when some of these facilities may be open?

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Yes. The Patch is under construction. It's been cleared. We plan to have a grand opening about this time next year. We're going to have it ready for the Masters.

As it relates to the TGR Learning Lab, that's scheduled for an opening in 2028, although the curriculum there will be implemented before that going into the schools in Augusta. So that momentum will build up to 2028 when we hope to have the facility open.

Q. You mentioned The Patch being a favorite hangout of the caddies. I wonder if there's going to be an homage to the caddies and the sort of important, integral nature of the caddies to the Masters tournament?

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Well, the caddies at Augusta are part of our legacy, and we certainly intend to continue to honor them at The Patch. They've been a big part of that history. I know that those that are still around are very excited about the project.

Q. The Patch has been a very affordable golf option for a lot of people in this golf community. Have you thought about what the rates might be when it does open? The other is where exactly will this Loop short course be? Is it on the First Tee property or adjacent to The Patch?

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: As it relates to the first question, we haven't decided specifically, but I can promise you that the word "affordability" will continue to be the watchword. We realize that this is an asset for the community and everyone in the community, and we have every intention and we will -- I commit to you that we will continue to have it be an affordable place for people to play golf.

As it relates to The Loop, it will be sort of at the top of the property, if my direction is correct, sort of the northwest corner of the property, which is the high point. You'll drive in off of Jim Dent Way, come right past The Loop and into the clubhouse which you saw on the screen.

It'll really utilize the topography and the elevation of the property very well.

Q. Have you had any discussions with Tiger regarding what kind of philosophy he's going to put into the nine-hole design? It's a par-3 course, but are there going to be any elements of the par-3 course that you have over here?

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: You're talking about any holes at Augusta National? I don't know if that was your question, but I'm going to leave that up to Tiger and to Bryon Bell to decide. But I know that they've got some ideas, and I know that this whole concept of a short course is something that's near and dear to Tiger's heart. I know he's stated that he grew up playing on short courses. So I'm sure they're going to make it really interesting for these people, for everybody -- the young people and everybody else that are playing it.

Q. Is there any thought to incorporating The Patch with the Drive, Chip & Putt or the Augusta National Women's Amateur in terms of the activities surrounding those events?

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Well, certainly anything is possible. Next year there will be a logical connection with the opening, with the grand opening.

As far as the Drive, Chip & Putt goes, I think having these young boys and girls that qualified for the national finals to be here at Augusta National is really what they're striving for.

But I do think there will be opportunities as part of a sort of two-week celebration of golf to have something included at The Patch. But next year is going to be a big announcement, that's for sure.

Q. The selection of the site for the TGR Lab, great move for native Augustans, replacing a beloved elementary school that had aged out. You're going to be behind the oldest high school in the country at Richmond Academy. Was this spot picked on purpose? I notice we've got some school board officials here. I'm sure they had something to say about this, too.

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Well, we've been extremely grateful for the enthusiasm and the partnership and the cooperation of the school board. The fact that this was a vacant facility obviously made it a great candidate. And when you look at its location in the Harrisburg neighborhood, close to Richmond Academy and several other schools, I understand, and then really in direct proximity to the HUB and the Boys & Girls Club that had been a big initiative of ours and others in recent years, it really made a lot of sense because it really needs to be near the people that it's going to serve.

So, yes, that was intentional.

Q. Do you envision that this could potentially be the beginning of a long-term business relationship, if you will, between

Augusta National and Tiger Woods?

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: You know, we're just so excited about what we were talking about doing here in Augusta that we really haven't thought much beyond that. Again, with Tiger's legacy as part of the Masters tournament and part of the history of the Masters, this made so much sense.

We'll certainly talk about that in a few years maybe after we successfully execute on this one. But this is the one we're focused on right now.

Q. For a lot of us who are local, we do often play The Patch. What kind of hole changes could we see with the actual course, if you can discuss any of that?

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Well, I'm going to defer to Tom Fazio and Beau Welling on that, specifically. I do know the course is going to be somewhere in the neighborhood of 6,700, 6,800 yards from the back tees. So it will be a challenging course for good players, but there will be plenty of tee options to make sure that it's accessible and playable by everyone.

But knowing the quality of the work of these two gentlemen, you can be assured it's going to be spectacular.

Q. When you have the Lab opened up, is it going to be a selection process where some students who are interested apply, or is this something that will be open to all Richmond County students, or will it be open to maybe Columbia County students or some of the students in surrounding counties, as well?

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Well, right now the focus is Richmond County. I would have to defer to the experts when it comes to curriculum and exactly how all that's going to be implemented. But the idea is that it is free. It is open to many, many -- as we said, potentially 23,000 students. It really focuses on three things: academic achievement, health and well-being, and college and career opportunities. So that's the mission of the Learning Lab.

But it will provide many, many people in this area with the opportunities.

THE MODERATOR: That concludes the press conference. Chairman Ridley will return to the interview room this Wednesday at 11:00 a.m. Thank you for your time today.

CHAIRMAN FRED S. RIDLEY: Thank you, everybody.