

# Golf Has Its Perks

On a Sunday afternoon in March, former UL Lafayette golfer Craig Perks picked up his first PGA Tour win, a cool million dollars and the admiration of Tiger Woods.

An extraordinary performance catapulted him from a 203rd world ranking into the history books. He is the first player whose first PGA Tour victory was The Players Championship.

Perks' victory included one of the most exciting and spectacular finishes in the history of golf. Coming off a missed putt of less than two feet on the 15th hole, he came from one stroke out of the lead when he chipped in for eagle on the 16th.

The 17th hole, which is the signature hole at Sawgrass, was just as exciting. Perks sank a 28-foot birdie putt, for a two-stroke lead with only the final hole to go.

But on the 18th hole Perks found himself in trouble, not once, but twice.

It was a grand finale when he once again chipped in, this time for par. So, on the last three holes of Sawgrass, Perks went 3 under par with only one putt.

His finish was so spectacular that it has already been made into a promotional commercial for the PGA Tour, according to the Associated Press.

The 35-year-old will automatically play in the next three Masters, next four British Opens and the next U.S. Open and PGA Championships.

"I think it will allow me to play against the best players in the world," Perks was quoted in a *USA Today* article, as the significance of his accomplishment started to sink in.

The New Zealand native graduated from USL in 1990 with a degree in behavioral science. In 1993, he turned pro and in 2000, joined the PGA Tour.

Before capturing the Players Championship, his best PGA Tour finish had been a tie for second at the 2001 Honda Classic.

By winning \$1.08 million at Sawgrass, he exceeded, in one afternoon, the total \$1.02 million he had earned during his professional career.

"You're unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable," Tiger Woods, defending champion, told Perks when presenting the trophy.

The key to the victory was not giving up, Perks said. "I pride myself on just hanging in there," he told reporters.

Perks now has something in common with fellow golfers Jack Nicklaus and Hal Sutton. They all won the Players Championship in their first attempts.

He and his wife, Maureen, also a 1990 USL graduate, and their two children live in Lafayette. ■



Craig Perks, former All-American, makes an eagle on the par-5 16th hole and soars to win the Players Championship.

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