

Ex-starting pitchers find success with small white ball

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Being a starting pitcher in Major League Baseball means a lot of days off from work. And like a lot of people with free time and money, golf fills in those hours.

Some of the former starting pitchers playing in this week's American Century Championship golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe say their prowess on the greens has something to do with being the best athletes on the diamond. A couple said it in jest, while Rick Rhoden didn't have a hint of sarcasm when he voiced that opinion.



Rick Rhoden is the only former starting pitcher to win Tahoe's celebrity golf tournament.

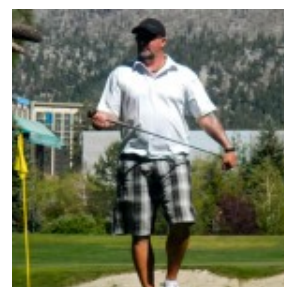
Rhoden has room to brag about his ability in both sports. In his 16 years as a Major League pitcher he won 151 games, had a

3.59 ERA, was an All Star twice, and played in two World Series.

Since retiring in 1989, he has won the ACC tourney eight times, the last being in 2009. He has qualified for the U.S. Senior Open, and has three top 10 finishes in the Champions Tour.

“It’s pretty much the same motion with transferring your weight,” Rhoden told *Lake Tahoe News* of the similarities of pitching and golfing.

While David Wells is one of 22 pitchers to throw a perfect game, his golf abilities don’t match. He says it’s the Atlanta Braves pitchers who give his profession a good reputation for what can be done on the links.



David Wells

During Tuesday’s practice round his tee shot on hole 8 didn’t even go 200 yards. He picked up the ball and moved it to closer to where the others in the foursome were making their second shot.

The only similarity between the two sports is “that you get pissed,” Wells said. He added that golf was more likely to benefit hitters than pitchers.

On the other side of the Stateline golf course Greg Maddux was proving former Braves pitchers know what to do with a little white ball. But he said there are no similarities between the sports.



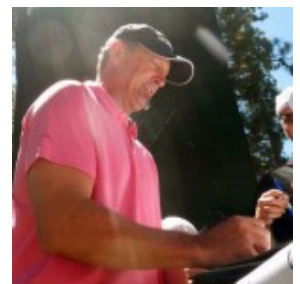
Former Braves pitcher Greg Maddux benefited from having a putting green at Turner Field. Photos/Kathryn Reed

"Golf is way harder," Maddux said while signing autographs as he sat in his cart at the start of hole 15.

Fellow Braves teammate John Smoltz is also in the field at ACC.

Stories abound about how Maddux, Smoltz and Tom Glavine not only competed on the mound against opposing teams, but among themselves when it came time for golf.

According to *Golf Digest*, "When Atlanta won the 1995 World Series, they convinced then-team president Stan Kasten to install a putting green inside Turner Stadium after the Braves moved there in '97. The artificial-turf green covered 360 square feet, included four holes and was surrounded by a floor-to-ceiling, panoramic mural of Augusta National." (A restaurant has since replaced it.)



Bret

Saberhagen

What Bret Saberhagen says is similar between being a starting pitcher and playing golf is the mental game. But the three-time All Star and two-time Cy Young winner also said having time allows his brethren to fine-tune their golf game.

For Hall of Famer Goose Gossage, it was all that time off between starts that allowed him to feel comfortable with a club in his hand.

“A relief pitcher couldn’t golf all day and do what I did,” Gossage told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I didn’t get to start the ninth with a three-run lead and no one on.”



Goose Gossage said his pitching schedule helped his golf game.

He also didn’t work every day and got paid more.

The other starting pitcher playing in this year’s celebrity golf tournament is Mark Mulder.

Notes:

- The first round of the three-day tournament begins today.
- Go online to find out the pairings.
- First tee time July 20 is 9:10am.
- This 23rd annual event has a purse of \$600,000.
- Corporate partnerships for the tournament have been secured through 2015.