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It looks like the Palmer torch has been passed to a new generation. Arnie's grandson, Sam Saunders, was sitting in 10th place as Sunday began at the Honda Classic. Sam was our Bay Hill club champion at age 16 and beat some really great golfers by 17 strokes for the title. He was heavily recruited by universities with strong golf programs like Florida, where his father was a grad, and Wake Forest (Arnie's alma mater). Sam has a mind of his own and wanted to make his own statement so he accepted a scholarship from Clemson.

He played three years before going off on his own, and if you had asked me earlier this year if he had a chance to make it as a pro I would have said no. But that was before Arnie really started coaching him just like his father, Deacon Palmer, did with him. He may have Arnie's genes and connections to help get started, but Sam has the guts and determination to make it on his own. Players need a great coach and in Arnie he has a great one who knows what it takes to win.

I know golfers are getting younger but missing a Tour event to attend your high school graduation is a new one. Japanese golfer Ryo Ishikawa will miss this week's CA Championship at Doral to attend his high school graduation. The 18-year-old Ishikawa will attend his graduation ceremony in Tokyo on Monday, leaving him little time to prepare for the event, which starts Thursday. Ishikawa, who won the Japanese tour's 2009 money title, is scheduled to play in Tampa and at Bay Hill later this month. He is also scheduled to make his second Masters appearance in April.

So are you like me and feeling that things on the PGA TOUR are getting more interesting as we anticipate the return of the No. 1 player in the world? Earlier this week at the Honda we had a taste of two great young players competing for the championship, at least briefly. Camilo Villegas and Anthony Kim even played a Saturday round together in the last group but Kim wasn't up to it, dropping down early. Tiger may return as early as the Arnold Palmer Invitational later in March and almost certainly will play the Tavistock Cup televised on Monday and Tuesday March 22-23 on the Golf Channel. The gallery is limited to invited members from the two prestigious Orlando private clubs, Isleworth and Lake Nona, with no opportunity for press questions. When he returns I'd be shocked if when he's in contention and does an interview that he will ever answer any personal questions. Why should he? It will just be great to have him back.

Fred Couples is lighting it up on the Champions Tour and attendance and ratings have risen as a result. Tom Lehman, Corey Pavin and several others are also making it interesting.



SST PURE Wins Twice

SST PURE continues to add victories in 2010. While still only in March, players with a history of asking SST to PURE their clubs have now won nine times this year. Traditionally we wait until after the Masters to publish the first list of money won by the players who PURE their clubs, but a peek shows it's already on pace to eclipse even last year's record \$137 million.

Camilo Villegas posted his win at the Honda Classic. Villegas first PUREd his clubs at Doral a few years ago. Once again the story is the consistent week after week domination of the top 20 by players that PUREd their clubs. Justin Rose captured third and Paul Casey and a resurgent Vijay Singh tied for fourth. Other top-20 players were Charlie Wi, Will MacKenzie, Jerry Kelly, J.B. Holmes and D.J. Trahan.

Out west, Fred Couples won the Toshiba Classic, his second win in a row on the Champions Tour. Couples is now that Tour's leading money winner. Here again we find a long list of players with a history of PUREing their clubs in the top 20: Tom Lehman, Loren Roberts, Olin Browne, Nick Price, Dan Folsom and Bernhard Langer.

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