

LIVING WELL IN THE CITY BEAUTIFUL  MAY 2008

# ORLANDO

## HOME & LEISURE



## SILVER SPOON WINNERS

ORLANDO'S TOP RESTAURANTS AND BEST CHEFS

TAVISTOCK TALES

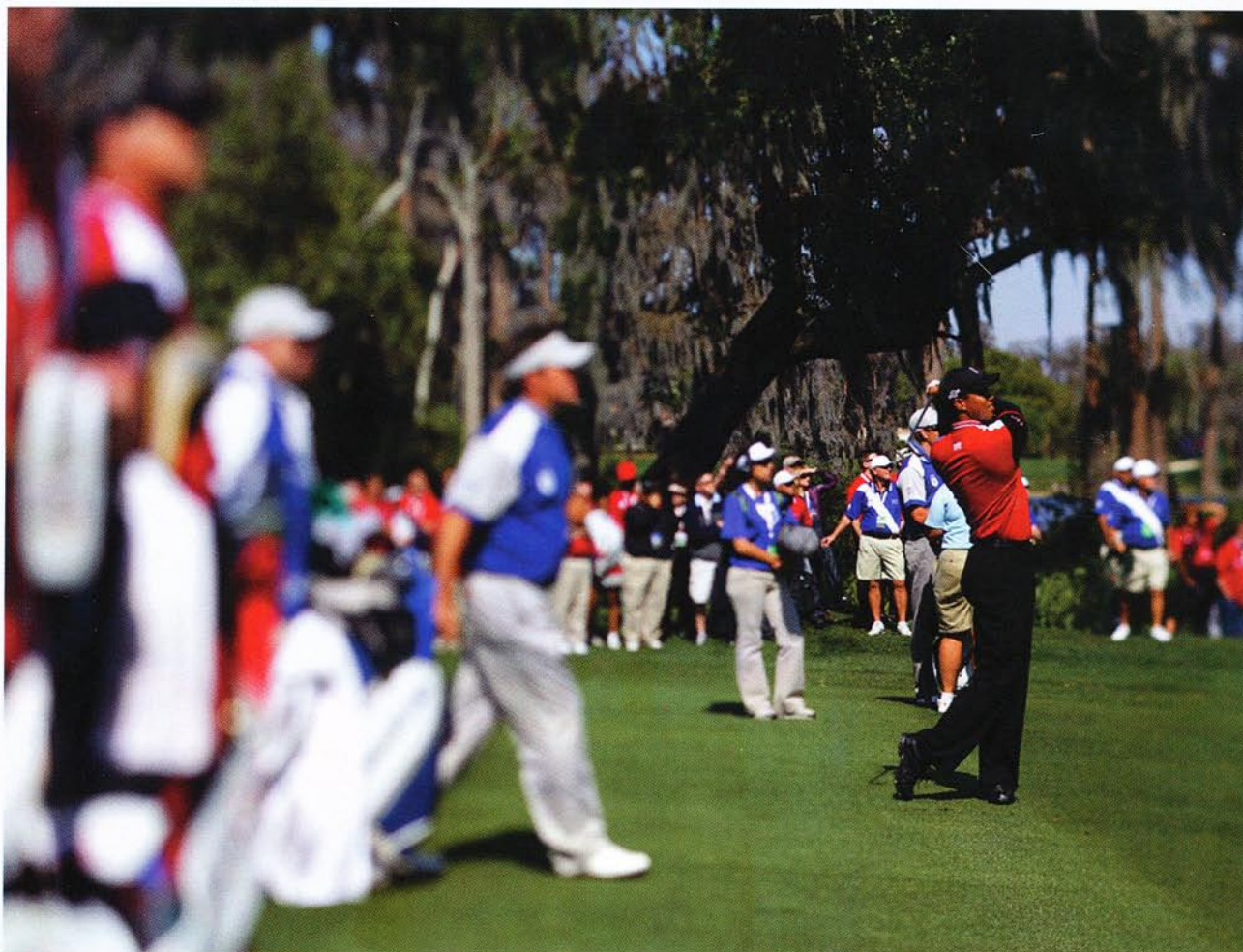
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## TAVI TALES

*“Golf is a day spent in a round of strenuous idleness.”*

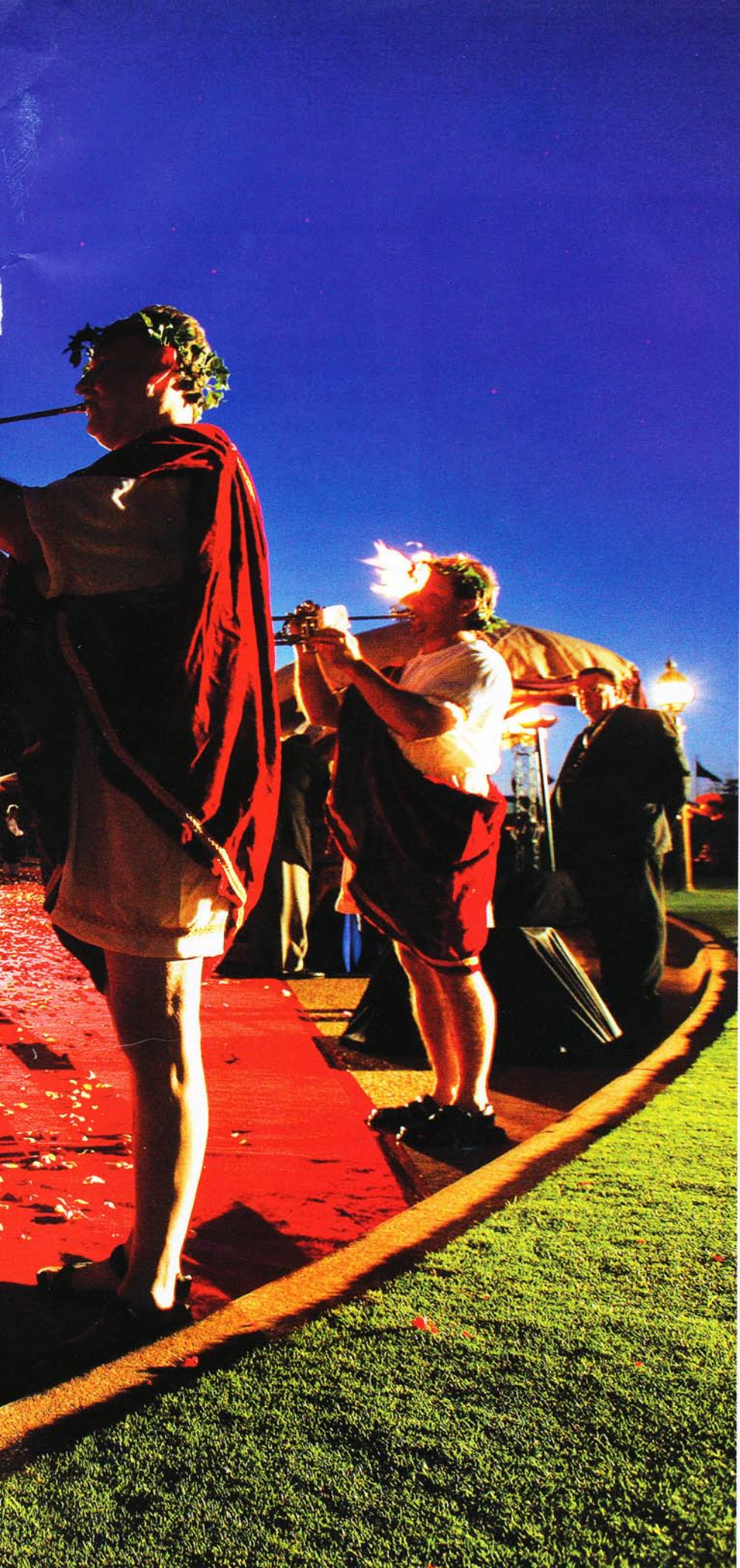
*-William Wordsworth.*

BY PAM BRANDON • PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY BOGDON

They can't be serious. Your Gucci loafer-clad tootsies can't even touch the tony fairways of the Tavistock Cup unless you are wearing a red or blue golf shirt. This passé fashion statement is *de rigueur* at the annual schmoozefest, where that nylon-spandex shirt is as coveted as an Armani cashmere top; you're on the VIP list if you're a member at Isleworth or Lake Nona, a tournament sponsor or an invited guest. Otherwise, you'll be watching this as a recap on The Golf Channel.

Though the haute couture of Boca's tennis matches and Palm Beach's polo fields is missing, this exclusive golf tourney is one of the most sought-after tickets in sports, with the gallery limited to about 3,500 invited guests and no ropes on the fairways for unparalleled access to watch the best players in the world compete. Played each spring between the two courses, the cross-town rivalry match is "intimate" compared to the crowd of 100,000-plus that throngs Bay Hill, says Winter Park's Helen Miller, who has been a loyal spectator at every Tavi tourney.





On a crisp, sunny day, the whomp-whomp of a helicopter signals that Tiger Woods has arrived, his big white bird swooping down on the Isleworth Golf & Country Club fairways. Tee time!

Rules, rules, rules: Along with the Isleworth-red-shirt and Lake-Nona-blue-shirt rule, there are no cell phones and no cameras. Requisite plastic badges dangle around everyone's neck; if yours is gold or silver, you have carte blanche to wander in the clubhouse where legendary investor Joe Lewis, founder of the Tavistock Group, is rumored to be holding court.

The rest of the elite audience seems happy to hang out in the Grey Goose Vodka tent or stroll the emerald-green fairways on a cloudless afternoon, cocktails in hand, in pursuit of stars such as Woods and the adorable Ian Poulter.

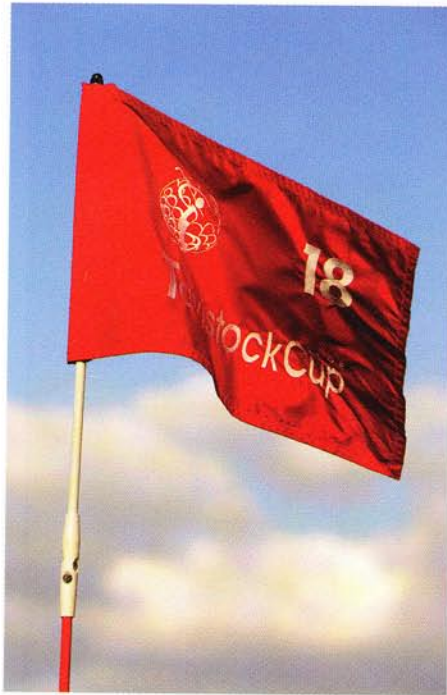
So what's the big draw? "Unlike any other golf tournament, you can walk right on the fairway," says regular Bob McClelland of Orlando. "You can talk to the players and stand within feet of Tiger as he putts." It's a social affair – with plenty of sotto voce banter from the gallery – but when the pros putt, you can hear a pin drop. And no one asks for autographs.

When the sun goes down, the coveted party is the Tavistock Cup Gala. This year, the Isleworth clubhouse is transformed into an opulent Roman bash. To enter, you need the hefty gold Roman coin attached to a lavish invitation.

Just past the red carpet, a Bacchanalian Roman Bath beneath a sheer white swath of ceiling-to-floor fabric recalls Nero's bawdy Rome. Men and women in barely there (seriously "barely") Roman togas fan one other with palm branches, giving and receiving table massages. ("How do I get to the Roman bath?" asks one guest.)

Central Florida's beautiful people are in the company of golfers Justin Rose, Stuart Appleby, Robert Allenby, Paula Creamer (taller than she looks on television) and Annika Sorenstam, among others. Best-dressed guests from the U.K., South Africa, Australia, Argentina, Bahamas, Jamaica and Mexico highlight Tavistock Group's international clientele.

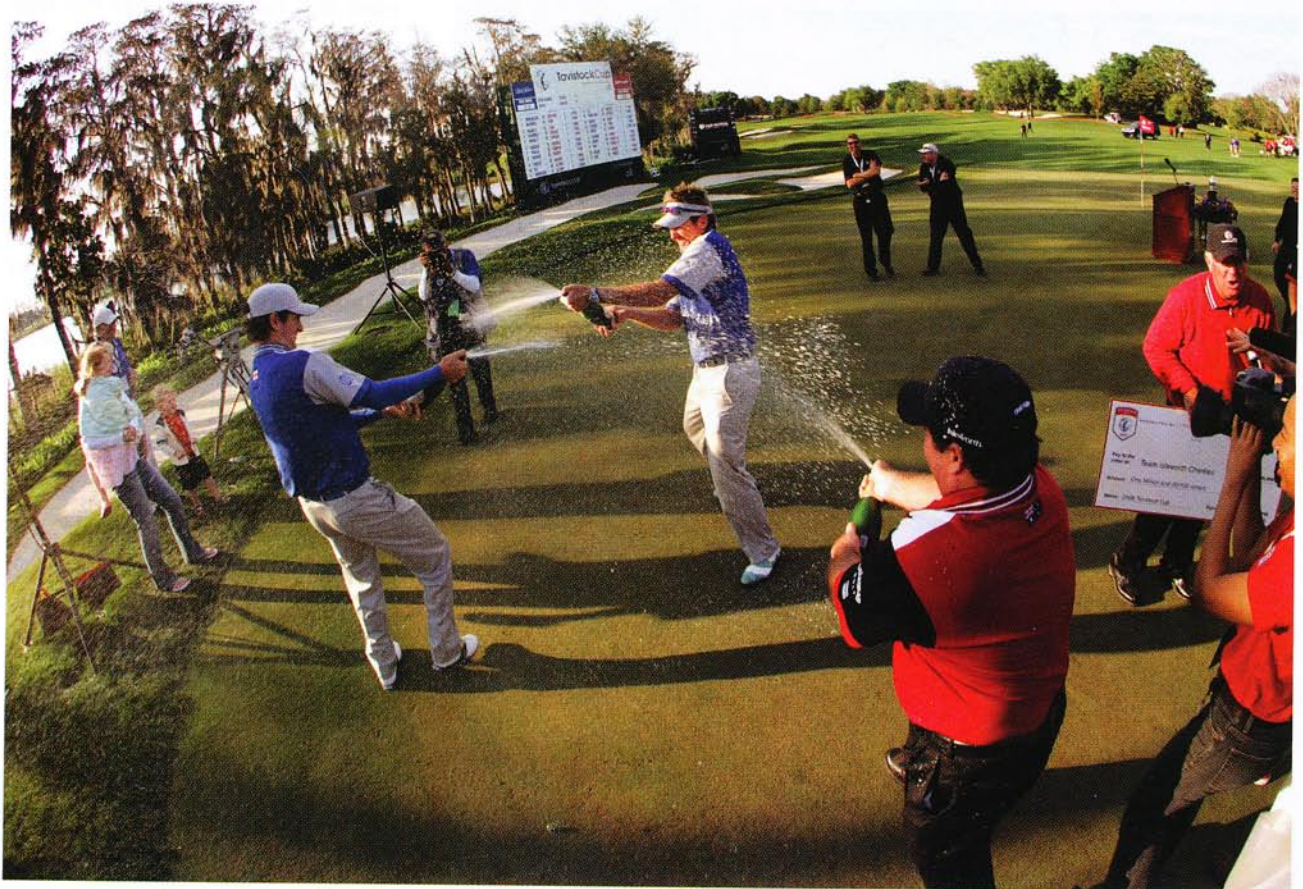
Women's dipping necklines replace the day's red-and-blue golf tees, with Armani, Roberto Cavalli, Prada and Dolce & Gabbana among notable couture. Rose's wife, Kate, is a standout in a short green number. And, yes, Woods is the only guest in designer denims and an untucked shirt, outshined (at least sartorially) by Poulter,



who has appeared in a blue sharkskin suit with a white shirt and skinny tie.

Cuisine is lavish, but does anyone really eat at these affairs? Champagne, mojitos and martinis are the chic drinks *du nuit*. Every turn holds a surprise, from scantily clad, Roman-inspired dancers to dueling gladiators, jugglers, acrobats and a room for gambling. The climactic close is the high-ticket raffle on the veranda, where veteran golfer Gary McCord announces the big winners. And we mean big: The grand prize is twin Cadillacs; other winners walk away with an Air Nautique boat, a trip to Rome and Venice, his-n-hers Cartier watches and an iMac. How to top this? The pressure's on, Lake Nona!

THE PRESSURE'S ON LAKE NONA TO TOP THIS YEAR'S  
EVENT WHEN IT HOSTS THE CUP IN 2009.



## Behind The Velvet Rope: Tavistock's Private Parties

Forget the fact that the Tavistock Cup tournament is itself reserved for a few invited guests and that even fewer of them make it into the Tavistock Gala. The most private festivities are the parties that light up lawns along the fairways, thrown by residents for selected friends. None of these is more coveted than Deb Linden's high-society soiree. Linden is owner of Island One Resorts and a veteran host.

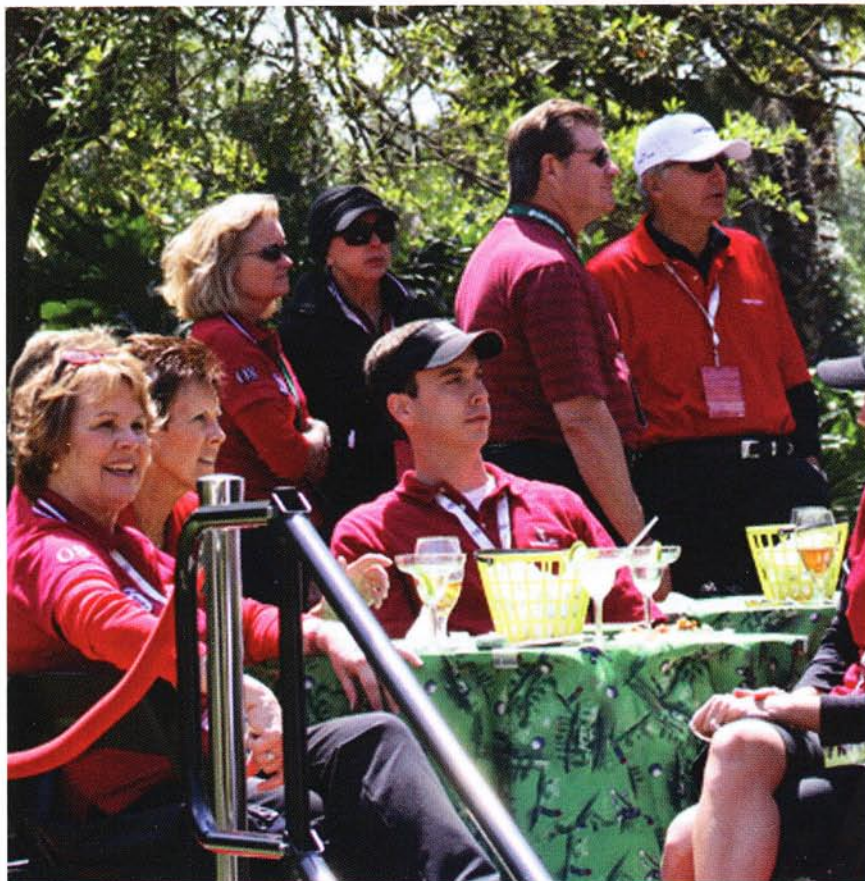
A fleet of luxury cars greeted guests arriving at Linden's spectacular course-side home, while attendants serving food and drinks lined the spacious screened lanai. Tables covered with capricious golf-themed cloths proffered

creative canapes and finger foods arranged in oversized martini-shaped serving dishes.

Just outside, Linden thoughtfully improved the sight lines by placing dining tables on an elevated platform overlooking the course, allowing her guests to nosh comfortably as the golfers and the gallery moved past. It was clearly a hometown crowd: Her guests, most clad in the obligatory Isleworth red, mingled familiarly between appearances of the foursomes and seemed to be as engaged by the camaraderie as they were by the competition. —Loren Wheatley

Team Isleworth reclaimed the 2008 Tavistock Cup presented by Citi Private Bank. With a \$3.8 million purse (\$1 million to charities of choice), rookie J.B. Holmes led Team Isleworth to victory with a **-4 (68)** score to claim the low medalist for Day Two, winning \$500,000. Ian Poulter of Team Lake Nona finished runner-up, while Mark O'Meara and Tiger Woods shared third place.

The tournament debuted in 2004 as a friendly rivalry between Isleworth and Lake Nona, two master-planned golf communities owned by the Tavistock Group that are home to many of the world's top golfers. The Tavistock Cup has become the World Golf and Country Club Championship, an officially sanctioned PGA Tour event. The event garnered 10 hours of live coverage on The Golf Channel with distribution to more than 80 different countries.



Hostess Deb Linden (above, center) poses with Christina and George Mezzo on her back porch during the Tavistock Cup. Guests sipped and snacked while the world's best played through on the adjacent fairway.