

For anyone living under a rock, the PGA Masters Tournament is the first of four golf championship games and will be held this upcoming April (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>) at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Georgia.

Steeped in a proud, uppity history, the Masters and the game of golf itself has grown from best left to high browed good ol' boys, into an exponentially popular past time, with some real noteworthy "nose in the air" rules.

What's surprising to learn by non-golfers, or those who have yet to catch on to golf's awesomeness, is the irony surrounding the club's traditions and the "secret society"-ish rules at the Augusta Club.

In the 1500's, Mary, Queen of Scots (called "the Mother of Golf") loved golf so much that she went to prison for playing just days after her husband was strangled. She was charged with murder, as playing golf instead of mourning was clearly frowned upon. She was beheaded after a life in prison, literally losing her head for the love of the game.

Ironically, "the Mother of Golf" gave her life for a game that later excluded women from the club. At the Augusta Club from 1934 until 2012, no women were admitted. Until the 80's the club admitted no black people. The first woman admitted in 2012 was Condoleezza Rice, killing the proverbial 2 birds with one stone.

Beyond the fact that the Augusta National Golf Club took nearly 80 years to let a woman in, some of its snootier rules are so wonderfully pretentious, it's a wonder anyone gets in at all.

The first rule of Augusta Club is you must never ask to be a member. You must be nominated by a current member, and even then will not be accepted until someone quits or dies. Famously, Bill Gates was rejected for years, because he expressed publicly his desire to join. They finally admitted him in 2002.

Never run at Augusta. At other tournaments, running is common – as fans scramble for a view, but at Augusta anyone caught running has committed treason and will be promptly ejected from the grounds.

Don't bother bringing a cell phone, camera or cooler to the tournament and forget about asking for an autograph.

Winners of the Tournament are not exempt from the rules and just because they get a green jacket doesn't mean they're now members of the club. They don't even really keep the jacket. They get to "borrow" it and take it anywhere they want for a year, then it must be returned to Augusta National. The winner can "visit" the jacket and use it if he returns to play, and if he wins again, he gets another year.

Here's the thing: If Happy Gilmore played the Masters, play would be stopped every 6 holes for a lively musical interlude. Skynyrd, The Cure, and Culture Club would perform and audience participation would be mandatory. But the PGA Masters Tournament is serious, even if the snobbery is fun to watch.