

# Masters Dreams Part of Spring Rituals

Every spring brings it rituals. We know that April showers bring May flowers. There's the annual spring cleaning of our homes, the pruning of our flower beds and planting of our gardens. The spring youth sports season begins and so, at least in my life, one day blurs into the next as each evening during the week brings practices or games for my children. Weekends, too, are filled with sports activity.

But there's one spring ritual that happens every April which brings a smile to my face as I wait with anticipation for its arrival in February and March. It has beauty, history, tradition and ability to create heroes and legends in the most challenging of circumstances.

It's called The Masters.

Unlike any other golf tournament, The Masters comes at a time of year when renewal is in the air. To see Augusta National on television is to truly believe that God has blessed the hallowed ground on which golf legends such as Bobby Jones, Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods have roamed for nearly 80 years. The flowers and trees, along with the greenest grass that one could ever see, provide a unique, colorful and serene experience.

If there's a golf course in heaven, it's Augusta National.

Some will scoff at my assertion that watching the Masters is a religious experience, but with four holes to start the back nine that have so confounded and bewildered the world's best golfers for more than eight decades that they are commonly known as "Amen Corner," who can really argue? Our Easter rituals bring incense, flowers and a new paschal candle. The Masters brings the same sights, sounds, scents and some ways, hopes for renewal and hope.



*Image of The Masters 2011 Monday practice at Augusta National Golf Club*

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Growing up, Masters weekend meant watching hours of golf, hanging on every big shot, monster drive and missed two-foot putt. Sundays were usually accompanied with a cookout as we watched the final 18 holes. As the final group walked up the 18th fairway in hopes of winning the coveted winner's green jacket and the gallery roared like no other - often with the tournament on the line - I remember having chills many times.

This year, nothing has changed. The course is resplendent in beauty. The golfers are scrapping and fighting their way through the back nine. The grill is being fired up; friends are coming over to watch the final few holes.

Someday, I dream that my Masters ritual will have a new wrinkle. Instead of watching on TV, I'll be standing on the hallowed grounds of my golf heroes, current and past, seeing the beauty of the flowers and trees and ultimately, standing behind the 18th green as the final group walks up the fairway.

It could happen. After all, I have faith!