

# The Spoils of Victory

*GOLF Magazine's Bruce Young caught up with Michael Campbell shortly after his US Open win in June, to get the inside word from golf's newest major champion.*

If it had been possible for Michael Campbell to see his ball as he stood over his second shot from the left hand rough on the 72nd hole of the US Open, he would have seen the numbers 997 appearing through the gnarly Bermuda rough.

Why 997? Two months earlier Campbell had made a promise to himself that when he next had a tournament finish that would justify the purchase of a new Porsche 997 Carrera, he would buy it.

"I guess I could have considered buying it there and then," said Campbell who first laid eyes on the car at the BMW Championship in May, "but Jonathan [coach Jonathan Yarwood] said I should set a target that would provide an added incentive to do well in the coming events.

"Initially that goal was to finish top-three at the BMW and I finished eighth. Then it was the same at the Celtic Manor Wales Open but [I] could only manage 15th and finally last week. I wrote '997' in big writing on the ball in each event to remind myself."

Now Michael Campbell owns

not only a steel grey Porsche 997 but the US Open trophy as well.

Just eight days after his historic win at Pinehurst, Campbell was beginning to put the events of June 19 behind him and look to the future.

"I'm trying to close that door, if that's possible, and move on from here," he said.

Closing the door on the US Open is going to be no easy task, but what Campbell's hinting at is his desire to look forward. His almost unbelievable win at Pinehurst will forever be etched into his memory, but there are more big tournaments to be won.

In the days after his win Campbell celebrated with about 100 of his closest friends and colleagues at a party that would have rocked the foundations of his home in Brighton, England. "We had a marquee, a DJ and a dance floor at the back of the house and a lot of fun," Campbell said. "That party and perhaps even the purchase of the Porsche was a big part of that process of putting that fabulous week behind me and moving on."

I asked Campbell when he first allowed himself the luxury of



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thinking he had the US Open won? “Probably playing the last hole,” he replied. “Even standing on the 18th tee things were rushing through my mind. I had a three shot lead after the birdie on the 17th but I had a flash of the Jean Van de Velde thing then and again, over my second, I actually had a thought about shanking it into the crowd. Strange thoughts, but the mind is a powerful thing. I just forced myself to remain as calm as I could and stay totally focused, but it was hard. I may have appeared calm on the outside throughout the last round but I can tell you I was like a duck on water with those little legs going flat out underneath.”

world’s greatest player coming at me. That’s when you are going to find out just how good you are. A two shot lead after nine, then Tiger makes birdie, I birdie and we started to trade shots there for a while. On such a tough, demanding golf course to shoot one-under par in that situation, under such extreme pressure over the last nine holes, made me very, very proud.”

Campbell thrived in the heat of the battle against Tiger Woods. “It was hard work but I really enjoyed the challenge, the whole scenario. Here I am, the last nine holes of a major championship with the

Campbell had decided only three weeks prior that he would commit to Pinehurst or at least attempt to qualify. “I had been entered for qualifying some time earlier but given that I was beginning to play so well and my caddy Mike’s insistence that I should play, it became an easy decision for me. I had to drive back from Celtic Manor (the venue of the Wales Open) to Brighton on the Sunday evening and then I got up at about 4.30 the following morning to

drive up to Walton Heath. If it had of been in the US I don’t think I would have gone, especially with just the nine spots available.”

Campbell flew across to Pinehurst the Sunday prior to the championship and set up camp at the nearby Pine Needles. He played 18 holes on Monday at Pinehurst, 18 on Tuesday and then just nine on Wednesday, after which he spent a lot of time chipping and putting. By the time Thursday came around he was ready to go.

By Friday evening Campbell was within two shots of the lead held by Olin Browne, Jason Gore and Retief Goosen. “One of the pleasing aspects of my stats that week was that everything worked well,” Campbell said. “No one stat stood out more than another throughout the whole week.” Twenty four hours later as play concluded on Saturday, it appeared the tournament was Goosen’s to lose as he took a three shot advantage into the last round.

“In my mind I was playing for second,” said Campbell, who was four shots behind the leader. “Retief has been there before and was playing so well that I thought, ‘Oh

well, I’ll just go out and play my own game and see what happens’. Perhaps starting out playing for second took some pressure off early.”

As he stood on the fifth tee, one-under for his round, Campbell soon realised he was tied for the lead courtesy of a horror start by Goosen.

As Goosen’s name dropped further down the leaderboard the tournament developed into a duel between Campbell and Woods. When Woods birdied the 15th he was within two of Campbell, who had made great up and downs at the 11th and 13th to keep his nose in front but then missed a good opportunity at the 14th to all but end Woods’ charge.

Campbell found the left hand bunker with a 6-iron at the 15th but made a great up and down. At the 16th he drove it left into the rough and had no option but to lay up. Just as he was doing this, Woods was three putting the 17th to drop three

behind. But when Woods birdied the 18th after a massive drive and Campbell bogeyed the 16th, the difference was just two.

Standing on the 17th tee with the breeze helping, Campbell and caddy, Mike Waite, deliberated over the club. “He had 196 yards to the flag but had so much adrenalin and was hitting the ball so well I knew he could easily pitch it on the front of the green with the 8-iron and it would kick up,” Waite said. Campbell hit it to 20 feet of the flag and when he holed a straight putt for birdie he was again three ahead.

After hitting his drive at the 18th into the rough, he had the luxury of laying it up. “I want to leave myself 80 yards,” he said to Waite. He ended up with 79 according to his caddy, but keen not to see his boss too aggressive with his third at this crucial stage, he deducted a few yards to avoid the possibility of him going

too far beyond the flag. “I told him he needed to think about 69 yards, as that was what it was to the bottom of the gentle swale in the green before heading uphill a little to the flag. Olin Browne’s ball was at the base of the ridge and I said to Michael, ‘Well that’s your target’.” Campbell hit the perfect pitch to four feet and although he missed his putt for par, the cushion was sufficient to allow for a two putt bogey.

As he fell into the embracing arms of Waite, not much needed to be said. Both men knew the significance of what had just been accomplished and how it would change their lives forever.

Much has been made of the rollercoaster career of Michael Campbell since the win. After a fine amateur career that included victory in the 1992 Australian Amateur Championship, Campbell turned professional in early 1993.

*Above & far right: The realisation of a dream come true; Right: Campbell enjoys the spoils of victory with his wife, Julie*

**Here I am, the last nine holes of a major championship with the world’s greatest player coming at me. That’s when you’re going to find out just how good you are—Campbell**



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He played the mini-tours in the US in 1993 with some success and again in 1994 before heading to play several Challenge Tour events in Europe and the British Open that year at Turnberry.

He won three Challenge Tour events in seven starts and had access to Europe in 1995.

In his first season on the European Tour Campbell was brilliant. He almost won the British Open at St Andrews, eventually finishing third and finished second at the Volvo PGA Championship at Wentworth, second at the British Masters, was third in Dubai and fourth at the Johnnie Walker. He finished fifth on the European Tour Order of Merit and should have been rookie of the year, but being

a non-European, that title went to Jarmo Sandelin.

"I think perhaps all that came a little quickly," Campbell reflected. "I was in the limelight before being ready for it but that is the difference between now and then, namely that now I am ready for it."

Another lesson learned from that season was that he did too much, and at the end of the year after playing in too many events, he teed it up at the New Zealand Open with the billing as the 'next best thing' in New Zealand golf. Early in the second round things began to unravel when he was forced to withdraw from a wrist injury.

Things then went from bad to worse and less than two years later he was about to give the game up. "After

the French Open at Le Golf National in 1997 I had missed my ninth cut in my last 11 starts and when I got back to my hotel room that night I remember throwing my clubs across the room and resigning myself that I might have to look for another job."

A few months later Michael started working with coach Jonathan Yarwood, a disciple of David Leadbetter, and by 1999 he was well and truly back. He won the Johnnie Walker Classic in Taiwan late in the year after some promising finishes in Europe and then had a run of victories in Australasia—including the New Zealand Open, the Heineken Classic and the MasterCard Masters.

Success continued and at the end of 2002 he decided to spend more time in the US. His runner-up placing at the 2002 Bay Hill Invitational had convinced him that the US PGA Tour was for him and gave him the required status to play their the following year. He uprooted the family from their traditional UK base and headed for the US. But things didn't go according to plan.

"It was awful," said Campbell, referring to his resulting horror run in the States. "I just wasn't comfortable there full-time at that stage. We had no fixed abode and in the end I was pleased to get back to England and the European Tour." He had almost immediate success on his return, winning the Irish Open.

After a good start to 2004, things again went awry and he would have his worst season in Europe since 1999. "It was last December when I decided to see Jonathan on a more regular basis. The problem previously was that he would come over for a week or so and it would take three or four days to catch up on what I had been doing in the month prior, and by then it was time for him to head back so I wanted to change that." Yarwood, while not full-time as such, began spending more time with Campbell, while

Leadbetter still oversees the work they are doing.


In March of this year Campbell was struggling. He had missed five consecutive cuts up to and including the Qatar Masters and subsequently sought advice from his mind guru, Nick Hastings, a protégé of Campbell's previous mind manager Jos Vanstiphout. "We have worked on clearing my mind of the technical side of things while playing and just to keep it simple and that seems to work best for me."

Campbell also praised Waite for keeping him focused. "Sponge cracks me up. He is a rock to me. No better example was than at the 17th on Saturday at Pinehurst when I holed a really tough and important bunker shot for birdie. I was pumped and as I walked back to give Sponge the club he said in a very low calming voice, 'good shot' It is why we get on so well. I can rely on him to remain focused and calm under extreme

pressure and I am pleased that I was able to win for him also."

Campbell also acquired a new Callaway driver, the FT 3 and is now driving the ball well after struggling earlier in the year.

Campbell has also signed with leading management group IMG, after three months in discussion with them, and the timing appears perfect for both parties. Their worldwide network and clout can likely leverage Campbell to the greatest extent, however the New Zealander is wary of the dangers he faced in 1995 when he tried to do too much. "Their job is to put a number of proposals on the table but I am determined not to overdo it," he said. "I want it to be quality not quantity."

So with everything in place—his family, his swing, his mind, his self belief, his team, his new Porsche and of course a major title—things are looking great for Michael Campbell—US Open Champion. 



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Campbell and Waite knew the significance of what they'd accomplished. Opposite: Campbell pumps his fist after holing a birdie putt on the 17th hole.



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