A male golfer wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt, light-colored trousers, and a dark blue cap is captured in the middle of a golf swing. He is standing on a grassy area with a body of water and mountains in the background under a dramatic, cloudy sunset sky. The lighting is warm and golden, creating a silhouette effect on the golfer.

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# GOLF

YOUR LIFE, WELL PLAYED

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2021

**MATTHEW WOLFF**

# GEN NEXT

The young superstar (21!) isn't the only one poised for a stellar 2021. You are too.



Leigh and Bobby Tuttle's love of country and golf has instigated a movement to better connect service personnel with civilians through their shared passions.

# The Knockdown with Alan Shipnuck

## G.I. Jovial

Military man Bobby Tuttle officially joined forces with his wife, Leigh, eight years ago. Now their love of the game has given birth to the buddy-golf nonprofit **Fore Country**.

▶ **AT THE DAWN** of the Cold War, two American soldiers found themselves stationed in Germany, fighting the good fight. Major Phil Tuttle was a Green Beret while Captain Thomas Netzer worked in military intelligence. They became fast friends, as did their wives. Eventually both families returned stateside with their young children. Bobby Tuttle idolized his dad and from an early age resolved to become a Green Beret himself.

"He was a real-life G.I. Joe," Bobby says. "I hungered for that life of adventure and selfless service, the feeling of being part of something bigger than yourself."

Leigh Netzer was also drawn to serve like her father, so she attended Virginia Commonwealth on an ROTC scholarship. Bobby and Leigh, four years apart in age, knew each other their whole lives—their families kept in close contact. "As we grew up, there was definitely a flirtatious chemistry," Leigh remembers.

When Bobby returned home from the Middle East, he called Leigh at VCU and asked, were he to visit, would she be so kind as to set him up with a few of her sorority sisters? It remains hotly debated between them whether or not this was actually a ruse to get with Leigh. Either way, sparks started flying during Bobby's leave. But a month later he shipped out for Afghanistan. Bobby and Leigh stayed close (via AOL Instant Messenger!) and when he returned home things turned serious. They wed in 2012.

"We joke that it's an arranged marriage," says Leigh.

The newlyweds were relocated to Okinawa and shortly thereafter Bobby was deployed again to Afghanistan. He was changing transport planes in Germany when Leigh called to tell him she was pregnant. A stranger in a strange land, she relied upon and was deeply grateful for the warm embrace of the other American military families. The Tuttles—including son Weston and daughter Chloe, who would arrive three years later—enjoyed the same sense of fellowship when they relocated to Fort Polk in Louisiana. But they couldn't help but feel a little estranged from the larger community in which they lived.

In 2016, Bobby pursued a master's degree at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, Calif., which welcomes elite soldiers from all branches of the military. The Tuttles resolved to do more outreach with the locals. "I quickly discovered that on the Monterey Peninsula golf is a very big deal," says Bobby, "so that was a natural place to start." Bobby became golf buddies with Rich Patterson, the CEO of the NPS Foundation, who is a member of the R&A and Monterey Peninsula Country Club. "He takes as spirited a swing at the ball as you would expect of a Special Forces member," Patterson says. "I only hope that in his line of work he has a better sense of direction than he does with his driver off the tee."

Through golf, Bobby found what he calls "wonderful friends and mentors," and that opened up a new social world for him and Leigh. "It was kind of magical for us to be >>

### Rallying the Troops

There's a long history between golf and the military. Not only did some of the game's greatest (Jones, Hogan) serve, the military operates 160 or so courses around the globe, two-thirds of them open to public play. And there's more.



### Patriot Golf Day

America's biggest charity golf event is held by **Folds of Honor** and founder Lt. Col. Dan Rooney. PGD provides scholarships to families of fallen and disabled vets. Hear about it at [golf.com/subpar](http://golf.com/subpar).



### PGA HOPE

It stands for **Helping Our Patriots Everywhere**, and through the work of the good people at **PGA Reach**, golf is introduced to vets as a form of mental and physical therapy. We salute all of you.



## Clubhouse



Thanks to Fore Country, you can tee it up with active members of our nation's Special Forces—a badass experience unlike no other.

>> embraced in that way,” she says. The new relationships were edifying for their civilian friends. NPS is in the heart of Monterey, and at the center of campus is the old Hotel Del Monte, a beautiful 140-year-old building that has been repurposed into offices. But the campus, surrounded by foreboding fencing, is off-limits to locals. The Tuttle initiated tours and invited their new friends to events on campus, building a needed bridge within the community. “We’re doing pretty remarkable things on behalf of the nation, but in general the people we’re defending don’t have an emotional connection to the armed services,” Bobby says. “I think it’s critical that we can all come together and understand and support each other.”

In 2018, the Tuttle relocated to Fort Lewis in Washington State. Recognizing what a great connector the game can be, the first thing they did was join Tacoma G & CC. While meeting new people at the club, Bobby heard a common refrain: “Oh, cool, you’re a Green Beret? Can you speak at our dinner?”

To formalize this nexus of golf, friendship and patriotism, Leigh came up with the idea of **Fore Country**, a nonprofit that matches Special Operations Forces with avid golfers in their communities. The Tuttle recently relocated to Fort Bragg in North Carolina, where Bobby is now in a leadership role within the Special Forces community, and in October the first Fore Country event was held at River Landing Golf Course, with 15 SOF badasses paired with local duffers. You can’t be on the front lines against the bad guys forever, so maybe some of these burgeoning relationships will help the soldiers eventually transition to the private sector.

In the meantime, the camaraderie was palpable at the Fore Country gathering. “I don’t care who you are or what your training is, the game of golf will put you to the test,” says Bobby. “Whether you’re an accountant or a Green Beret, missing a three-foot putt hurts exactly the same.”

FOR MUCH MORE FROM **ALAN SHIPNUCK**, GO TO [GOLF.COM/SHIPNUCK](http://GOLF.COM/SHIPNUCK)

## ON THE NUMBER

There’s data behind every swing. We crunch it so you don’t have to.

# 64

**Percentage of private golf clubs that rated their overall financial health as “great” or “good” in November 2020, up 18 percent from 2016.**  
(SOURCE: NGF)

# 56

**Percentage of public golf clubs that rated their overall financial health as “great” or “good” in November 2020, up 33 percent from 2016.**  
(SOURCE: NGF)

# \$49

**The median cost of an 18-hole round of golf during peak hours in the United States.** (SOURCE: NGF)

**Number of American golfers under the age of 30 ranked in the top 15 in the world at the end of 2020, the most since 2000.** (The youngest is 21-year-old Matthew Wolff.)

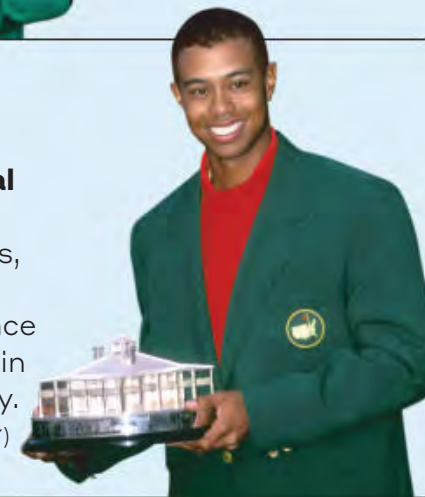


# 19.06

**Dustin Johnson’s total strokes gained at the November Masters; the 15th best of all time.**

# 25.86

**Tiger Woods’ total strokes gained at the 1997 Masters, considered the greatest performance relative to the field in tournament history.**  
(SOURCE: JUSTIN RAY)



# 140

**Days between DJ’s win at the 2020 Masters and the first round of play at the 2021 Masters this spring.**



Research by James Colgan

From top left: Jeremy M. Lange; Stacy Revere/Getty Images; Rob Carr/Getty Images; PGA Tour Archive; Andrew Redington/Getty Images

# IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE

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