

Isleworth wins Tavistock event

Joe Lewis was able to maintain his neutrality as the owner of both clubs.

• By Steve Elling
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The massive, oddly shaped structure situated on the first tee box at Isleworth Country Club pretty much says it all. It's a metaphor in metal.

It's a huge multi-hued mobile, probably 30 feet tall, that creaks and groans when the wind blows, its parts casting odd shadows on the world-class golfers assembled below.

It looks like it was assembled with an acetylene blowtorch from pieces of a battleship, replete with welds and rivets. The sculpture has a Pentagon-sized price tag from Sotheby's, too: \$12.5 million.



But some just are not sure what to make of the Tavistock Cup matches between Orlando enclaves Isleworth and Lake Nona.

"Just think about it," said Joe Lewis, who founded the host Tavistock Group, which owns the two exclusive clubs. "This artwork under normal circumstances is going to be sold by being put into an auction house in New York or London or somewhere. Just have a look at that sculpture. How could you site that anywhere better?"

With Lewis, one of the world's richest men, watching from behind the 18th



green, the world's priciest boutique golf event finished up on Tuesday, with Isleworth whipping crosstown sister club Lake Nona 171/2 to 121/2.

With his teams adorned in red and blue uniforms, Lewis was hard to miss in his day-glo orange shirt, which he offered as proof of his neutrality.

"I have to be careful what I wear," he cracked.

For a guy with a reputation of being publicity shy, Lewis was shaking hands, kissing babies and patting everybody on the back after the third incarnation of the Tavistock competition wrapped up. Tiger Woods had pocketed \$310,000 and the fellows from Lake Nona, including Ernie Els, Retief Goosen and Sergio Garcia, had put on another good show for the select audience of members and guests.

The Tavistock is looked upon as a curiosity in the U.S., but it seems popular in his native England, where it's broadcast live.

"What's interesting to me, what you guys don't know, is that I have had non-stop calls all day from pals of mine in Europe watching this live," Lewis said.

"It's fascinating. Over there, it's like Monday Night Football for us. What else have they got to do on Monday or

Tuesday evening? It comes on at 6 in the evening onto about midnight and all the guys are just loving it."

Woods, always the top drawing card wherever he plays, is dealing with some dire personal circumstances on the home front because his father is gravely ill in California. He played anyway.



"I enjoy it," Woods said. "It's fun for all of us to be here, and obviously I am dealing with a situation at home that is a little bit different. But still, it is what it is."

"It works because it's a fun atmosphere. You look at the players involved and you can understand why."

Don't be surprised if it grows even larger next year at Lake Nona, where there's room to expand on the invitation-only audience that numbered about 5,000 on Tuesday. Tavistock has signed a three-year contract extension with the PGA Tour, and the purse of \$2 million may be hiked yet again next year. The 10 players on the Isleworth roster received \$100,000 per man and Woods, the stroke-play medalist, won a \$200,000 bonus.