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## Major title

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## Major title

### *Faxon honored with PGA's Payne Stewart Award*

**B**rad Faxon sat on the first tee at East Lake Country Club in Atlanta on November 2 and watched on an oversized television screen as past winners of the Payne Stewart Award welcomed him into their company.

"The more I think about it," Faxon said, "the better this honor is becoming."

It is a huge honor, one of the best in golf, as the list of previous recipients makes obvious: Arnold Palmer. Jack Nicklaus. Byron Nelson. Ben Crenshaw. Nick Price. Tom Watson. Jay Haas.

That's the distinguished group Faxon entered when he was given the Stewart Award, presented by the PGA Tour in Payne's memory to honor players who share his ideals, respect for tradition, character, and commitment to community work and charity.

Each of the previous recipients addressed videotaped remarks to Faxon that were aired on the big screen during the ceremony prior to the season-ending Tournament of Champions.

"These are guys I idolized and admired," said Faxon, a 1983 Furman graduate. "When I was a kid, growing up in Barrington [Rhode Island], Jack was my hero. Arnold was just past his prime, but one of the greats of the game. Byron was a legend. Ben Crenshaw and Tom Watson were guys I dreamed about maybe playing against some day.

"As I was sitting there, listening to all the nice things they had to say, I kept thinking how unreal it was for someone from Rhode Island to be mentioned in the same category with them."

Faxon modestly says he is "the least accomplished of those guys." And, in terms of winning tournaments, he's right. Although he has won eight times in his 23 years on the PGA Tour — most recently in August at the Buick Championship in Connecticut, when he shot a final-round 61 to rally from seven shots back and won the tournament in a playoff — he has never won a major.

But he has won the respect and admiration of countless numbers of people he's met through golf — fellow competitors, fans, sponsors, spectators, media, partners in pro-ams. And his accomplishments on behalf of charity,



DAVID FULLP/GOLFRANKINDEX.COM

**Brad Faxon is well known for his philanthropic work. Since 1999 he and fellow pro Billy Andrade have hosted the CVS Charity Classic, which has raised almost \$6.5 million for charity.**

**The Payne Stewart Award includes a \$300,000 grant, presented by Southern Company. The grant provides \$100,000 to The Stewart Family Foundation; \$100,000 in Stewart's honor to The First Tee facility in Missouri, which is affiliated with the "Kids Across America" program; and \$100,000 to a charity designated by Faxon.**

especially those benefiting children, are legion.

Talk about respect for tradition? Faxon flew to Scotland last summer to play a 36-hole qualifier for the British Open — the only American touring pro to do so — and, after earning one of the three spots available, was in contention into the final round before finishing 23rd.

That sporting gesture may well have earned him the appreciative vote of the captain of the Royal and Ancient Society of Golfers at St. Andrews, who casts a ballot for the Stewart Award along with representatives of the U.S. Golf Association, the PGA Tour, Augusta National, and each of the past winners.

"I was on the (PGA Tour) Policy Board when Payne passed away," said Faxon, recalling how Stewart died in a plane crash in 1999. "We conceived the idea of an award in his honor to commemorate his sportsmanship and commitment to the game of golf."

Faxon never dreamed then that he someday would receive the prestigious award. "It was kind of out of the blue," he said of the call from PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem informing him that he had won. "I felt as if I had won a major."

That call came in September, which

gave Faxon time to work on his acceptance speech.

"I practiced a lot," he said, "because I didn't want to goof up. I spoke for about 15 minutes. I wanted to get the message across that this award isn't something the next generation of players should hope to win. It's something they should try to win. They should pursue it every day they go out to the course by acting like gentlemen and upholding the traditions and integrity of the game."

That's something Faxon has done, from his days as a junior player at Rhode Island Country Club and Barrington High, as an All-American at Furman, and during two-plus decades on the PGA Tour.

"The game itself brings out the best in people," he said. "You're around people who are successful, who are polite — who, when they shake your hand, they look you in the eye. Those are things we're losing in society today."

"If you're a parent with a child, and you're looking for a sport for them to play, golf will reward them throughout life."

— Jim Donaldson  
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