



Andrew Edson heads [Andrew Edson & Associates, Inc.](#), New York and Long Island, and admits he has broken 100 once -- but he's hopeful of repeating.

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USGA CAVES, RIGHTFULLY SO, AFTER ITS PR DISASTER

By Andrew Edson

It was to have been a fun and memorable Thursday with my son Garrett as we brandished a pair of tickets to the U.S. Open golf tournament in Bethpage, NY. While the weather gods weren't smiling, the crowds that descended on the famed municipal Black course were.

Yes, it was raining, even as Tiger Woods teed off at 8:06 am as seen on NBC's "Today" show, however, what's a little rain and you could argue -- at least the USGA (U.S. Golf Association) did -- that play had commenced.

But the skies continued to pour wet, creating Woodstock-like conditions for those old enough to remember that coming of age event, and play was suspended after 10 am.

Still the crowd came calling, queuing up in the cold, damp and yes, wet, to seek shelter, enter the merchandise pavilion and wallow in the mud. Would play resume? Would it be cancelled?

No one, official or otherwise, had the answer and any communication was null and void.

So it came time for us to leave as did most that bought, won or were given tickets. Staying as the ground drowned in almost three inches of rain was senseless and we made our way, slowly and deliberately, to the shuttle bus line to find our way out. Still, no word, although plenty of banter on the line that there should be a "rain check" of some sort.

Getting home finally to dry off, we finally heard that the rest of the day had been scrubbed, but that the USGA had deemed there would not be any recompense or "rain check". After all, golf was not baseball or tennis, but, err golf. And, the players had (and still do) other commitments if the tournament was prolonged, never mind the prestige of playing in the US Open.

Sort of the "public be damned" argument that William H. Vanderbilt, then head of the New York Central Railroad, was cited as saying in 1882. Or, to bring it even more current and topical, the insistence by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that the just-held election results in that theocracy was accurate and valid.

This only intensified the hue and cry led by NBC sportscaster and analyst Mike Francesa ("Mike'd Up") that the USGA made an egregious error in this decision. The blogs and airwaves got busy and the USGA, based on its initial decision, had walked into a minefield of negative public opinion, especially among the golfing set. Their decision was consuming the headlines and not the level of play or expected play. Public pressure was mounting.

Ultimately, the USGA acquiesced and reversed their decision to permit Thursday ticket holders to re-enter Bethpage with stubs in hand, if play extends beyond Sunday. The weather prognosticators and weather gods seem to think the Open will go well beyond the original Sunday concluding date. If it does, it will be poetic justice; however, the USGA still needs to take a course (no pun intended) in crisis communications. The damage has been done and golf was the loser.

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