

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

01 MAY 2017

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That Little White Ball

Ever since my step father introduced me to the game of golf at the age of ten, I have found myself seduced by this benign game. Ah! But therein lies the problem! This so-called "Gentlemen's Game" is the very definition of deception and treachery. This game, in all its apparent innocence, is alluring, shamelessly humiliating the strongest of men.

I know that golf is just as infectious to women as it is to men. One of the greatest women golfers ever to play the game was Babe Didrikson Zaharias. This lady was a world class athlete and Olympic star, winning two gold medals (80 meter hurdles, and the Javelin throw) and one silver (high jump) in track and field during the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles. Her talents were endless. She was an All-American in basketball. She also played organized baseball and softball, and was an expert diver, roller-skater, and bowler. She was voted "Female Athlete of the Year" by the Associated Press six times from 1932 to 1954. She may well have won it more times had she not developed colon cancer. Despite this debilitating illness, she continued to play golf. A month after surgery and wearing a colostomy bag, she won her 10th and final major championship. She was a founding member of the LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association).

Some of the quotes by Babe Zaharias shed light on her view of golf. *"That little white ball won't move until you hit it, and there's nothing you can do after it has gone."* How true. *"Golf is a game of coordination, rhythm, and grace; women have these to a high degree."* No argument from me. Men, with a golf club in hand, often look like Neanderthals attempting to kill their dinner! *"Practice, which some regard as a chore, should be approached as just about the most pleasant recreation ever devised."* I must admit, I much prefer to play than endlessly hit practice shots on the range. *"It's not just enough to swing at the ball. You've got to loosen your girdle and really let the ball have it."* I had to chuckle at this one! And this last quote sums up the effect golf has on so many of us. *"I played many sports, but when that golf bug hit me, it was permanent."*

So, two weeks ago my brother, John, made his way to California from his home in Virginia to join me in playing golf for seven days. Even though he is 73 and I am 68, there are not enough hours in the day to play too much golf. In our lexicon of golfing vernacular, there is no such thing as "too much golf."

I picked John up at the Oakland International Airport on Tuesday evening. Wednesday morning we were teeing it up at 7:30 with my golfing buddies at Spring

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Creek. After that round we had lunch before our next round, which was the "After Taxes Tournament." The next morning we joined our friend and fellow golf enthusiast, Hank, at the Turlock G&CC for two more rounds. Then on Friday John and I played with my buddies again to start the day, followed by two more rounds to close out a 54 hole day. On Saturday we played one round in the morning. There was a family wedding down in the Fresno area late that afternoon so we weren't able to tee it up again until early Sunday afternoon where we were joined by Hank, and our cousin Jimmy Lake, who drove down from his home in Nampa, Idaho to join us. He's still a heck of a good player at 79! On Monday, John, Jimmy and I drove to Fresno to play a round with our nephew, Ryan, at the Riverside Golf Course. In the afternoon, we drove to Chowchilla where we played another round at the Pheasant Run Golf Course. I wrote an article about this course when I was doing some free-lance writing for a golf magazine about twenty years ago right after the course opened.

On Tuesday, our last day before John flew back to the East Coast, we played two more rounds at Spring Creek. All told, we played 234 holes of golf in seven days which translates to 13 rounds. We had a blast! I guess you could say we were hit by the golf bug when we were kids. Pop, our step father, got us started, and it sure has been fun.

Several people have asked if we were tired after playing so much golf. The answer is a simple, No! In fact, the more we played during the seven days together, the better we played.

This mild looking game will deceive you. In closing, and borrowing a phrase from Country and Western singers, here's my advice: "Mommies, don't let your babies grow up to be golfers!"