

## **Golf Day** **By Nick Cook**

The ball lay on the fairway, a couple of swings away from the green I reckoned. A 5-iron might have done, but I opted for a 3-iron, preferring power to lift. I took a final swig of beer, left the bottle in the cart, and headed out to knock the ball into high orbit. On the eighth try, the club made contact with the ball and launched it solidly into a nearby tree. Dave, my golfing partner, was packing up the glass pipe with what was left of our stash and took the lighter from the corduroy drawstring pouch. He smiled and declared that yes; we were showing improvement since the last hole.

The afternoon sun was setting and few golfers remained on the wooded course. In an hour or two the place would close and we would have to leave. We were at Hole 6, a long course - 473 yards from tee to the hole. A skilled golfer could have made it to the green in one or two powerful swings. Dave and I were somewhere around our fifth or sixth stroke, I think, and nowhere near the green. We were playing skins, one who gets the ball in with the least amount of strokes wins that hole. Keeping track of my stroke count was getting difficult. I would get distracted and have to start over. I looked back towards the tee area to mentally replay my golf ball's journey.

Stroke One: I used a driver to knock the ball over 500 feet to the left, 80 feet forward. Stroke Two: a beautiful shot that made a long beeline for a bush way down across the fairway. Stroke Three: I grazed the ball with the bottom of the club; pushing the ball forward a couple of feet, but Dave wasn't looking so I didn't count that stroke. Next Stroke . . . um . . . Stroke Three was it? Yeah. Stroke Three: I whacked the ball to the base of a slope in the middle of the course. Stroke Four: I used an 8-iron to pop the ball to the top of the hill.

The figure of a golfer, arms crossed, with his clubs now stood where I was re-enacting Stroke Five. His baseball cap cast a shadow over his face, but I could feel his gaze. The stoic picture of this man with his clubs strapped across his back like weapons made me dub him the Golf Warrior. He had been waiting there for some time for us to finally finish the hole. Dave knocked a beauty of a shot that landed just off the green. I cheered the shot and raised my 3-iron in the air. Indeed, it was best one either of us had made that day. The Warrior impatiently shifted his weight from foot to foot. By the time I got the ball on the green, he was sitting down, visibly annoyed at the delay.

I wound up winning that hole in the end. Dave got overconfident after his one good shot and wasted several strokes putting the ball around the green. As soon as we set foot off of the course, I heard the dull thud of the Golf Warrior's ball hitting the green behind us. From our cart, we watched him sink the ball in the next stroke.

"Hey man, you can go ahead and take the next hole if you want", I offered.

"Thanks. I will", replied the Golf Warrior.

He quickly gathered his clubs and made his way to the beginning of the next hole, ten feet away. The party ahead of us was still playing out that hole. We knew from watching them thus far that it would be another five minutes before they would be finished. The Golf Warrior meticulously planted his tee, picked out which driver to use, and placed the ball on the tee. The party ahead of the Golf Warrior had not yet made it

to the green.

"What is *with* these people?!" asked the Golf Warrior, approaching us.

"I dunno. Maybe they are just out playing golf, enjoying the afternoon", said Dave.

"I got no problem with people enjoying their afternoon, as long as it doesn't get in the way of me enjoying my afternoon," replied the Warrior. "Jesus, it's golf etiquette to let faster players go on ahead! I'm not going to be able to get my 18 holes in today! What is with this?"

"Well, I guess that's just the way it goes, huh?" Dave concluded.

The Golf Warrior grunted a reply and returned to the tee area to practice some swings. Between swings he would lightly toss up some divots to test the wind. Dave popped open another beer and pondered aloud (though out of earshot of the Golf Warrior) what would make the Warrior go completely ballistic at this point. I thought going up and asking for some pointers on stroke technique would make him lose his shit. Dave agreed and added that explaining to him the difference between a driver and a putter would further rile him up. Either way, the noise from our giggling conversation did not help our relationship with the Golf Warrior.

When the next hole was cleared of golfers, the Golf Warrior rocketed the ball way across the water trap and inches away from the green in one powerful stroke. Strapping on his clubs, he broke into a brisk jog off to the green. With that corner of the golf course now free from people, Dave reopened the corduroy drawstring pouch and declared that more doobage was needed if we planned to get through the course by nightfall.