

SHELL SHOCKED

The Gods of Golf

By Art Stevens

I was hitting some balls on a driving range recently when Bobby Jones appeared suddenly next to me. He had been standing there for some moments but I was focused on trying to hit golf balls as far as I could and didn't notice him at first.

But it was Bobby Jones. I recognized him from earlier postage stamps that had his photo on them. Jones is considered one of the greatest golfers who ever lived and his presence on a golf course was always a dramatic, exciting event. He was a champion through and through.

I studied him for a moment studying me. "Is that really you, Mr. Jones? Have you come down from heaven to give me a few pointers? I sure could use them."

He smiled. "I've come down from heaven to prevent the game of golf from being defamed and defiled. You are truly the worst golfer I've ever seen and I was sent here to change that. I'm going to change your status from the worst golfer who ever lived to a mediocre one. In your case that's 100 rungs up the ladder."

I couldn't quite figure out if I was being insulted or praised. It didn't matter. I had Bobby Jones standing at my side ready to help me hit a golf ball with consistency every time. The fact that he was a ghost was irrelevant. I would have welcomed Attila the Hun if it turned out that he hit for par every time he went into battle.

Jones brought out an old wooden golf club and proceeded to demonstrate some practice swings. He then put a ball in a tee and told me to watch his form. He then proceeded to execute the most perfect golf swing I ever saw and hit the ball with ease. The ball soared into the air and

kept rising. It seemed to lift off like a rocket and soon became a dot in the sky. It then began its downward descent and was still flying as far as the eye could see. I never saw it land. It just kept going and going. At the very least the ball went a thousand yards. I had never seen anything hit so long and far.

All I could think of was my own shot which if it went one hundred yards I'd consider that a good day. "Can you show me how to hit a golf ball that far, Mr. Jones? I'd be the envy of my friends," I said.

"Don't get too far ahead of yourself," Jones said. "I'm here to protect the game of golf, not you. If it were up to me I'd send a lightning bolt down every time you swung a golf club hoping that you'd get the message and go back to stamp collecting. But, no, you insist on getting out to the golf course and ridiculing the game of golf. The Gods of Golf selected me to rectify this horrendous situation and make you a better golfer."

"How are you going to do that, Mr. Jones? Golf pros right here on earth have tried and failed. I just can't learn how to exercise the proper golf swing. My balls go into trees, brush, bunkers, ponds and golf carts on other holes. They dribble into the ground and chase rabbits. When alligators see me coming they sprint the other way. No one wants to play with me. So I'm usually out hitting alone."

Jones looked to the heavens in much the same manner as Clarence the angel in "It's a Wonderful Life." He said, "I'm going to sprinkle some golf dust on you and that will change everything. Please close your eyes." Soon I felt some faint powder streaming over my body. My eyes remained closed until I could no longer feel the golf dust.

I opened my eyes and Jones was gone. I eagerly teed up a ball and hit it. As usual, the ball hugged the ground for the first ten feet and then lifted itself up in the air and went about 300 yards until it fell in the middle of the fairway.

I then used a five iron on the fairway and sure enough the ball headed to the trees on the far right. But once again, just before it reached

the trees, it made a sharp turn, went high in the air and proceeded to land about six inches from the cup on the green.

This became my pattern. I'd hit the ball and it started out in the usual way-- toppers, slicers, even occasional misses. But each time the ball made a correction and either went 300 yards on the fairway or onto the green.

I decided to invite a friend to play golf with me. I told him my game had improved and that I was ready to go public. I went out with him and my hitting pattern stayed true to form. A poor shot followed by the ball self correcting. My friend didn't say a word until I had hit about six such balls. He then turned to me and said; "I see that Bobby Jones paid you a visit also."

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