



The Sampler



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Selections of writing from my journey on the PGA Tour

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Quick Note

I put together this free e-book to show people what they can expect if they purchase any of my other accounts of the PGA Tour. Each e-book has this same format: title page, table of contents with clickable links, a dedication (where this “quick note” is), and the content from each tournament round. My e-books, on average, are around 30-35 pages in length.

My goal is to provide an entertaining supplement to the television or other regular news coverage you peruse while following a PGA Tour event. Although my approach is through a first-person narrative, I do this to help tie together all of the interwoven stories at each event, whether that be about members of the media, the players, or other characters that help to portray what really happened on a given week.

Thanks for reading, and I hope to see you on the course.

Cheers,

Tom Collins

Samples from my coverage of the Farmers Insurance Open:

#1

I would rather go back in time as a weak Spartan and try to take on an army of Persians by myself, perhaps dying honorably, than drive around San Diego. I've lived in Northern Virginia and had many experiences driving the beltway, but the key difference is that people in Northern Virginia seem to value their own lives. I feel like everyone around here almost WANTS to die, or wouldn't care either way. All that's important is that they drive as fast as possible everywhere they go. But, I'm sure they make good time when they're not getting arrested or caught up in a 16-car pileup.

That being said, I love the weather here. And once you actually GET to a location, life is grand. Torrey Pines is beautiful. I walked both the North and South courses on Wednesday, and I don't think you can beat the sights for a public golf course. Although, as I walked the course during the pro-am, I heard from more than one person that "public" is a bit of a misnomer. When I reached the 3rd hole on the South course—a picturesque downhill par-3 that I'm sure will be one of the main shots on television—I spent some time talking with one of the volunteers.

Me: "I can't believe this is a public course."

Volunteer: "I don't know if I'd use the word 'public' to describe it. This course is a cash-cow for San Diego, and if you want to play here, it's like you need to have an agent and have 'your people call their people.'"

#2

The rest of the round was difficult to watch. I wasn't sure if I hadn't had enough caffeine, or if the pace was just that bad. Everything seemed to slow way down, and I heard more and more vocal frustration coming from Piercy. He was 7-under par going into 18, yet I couldn't help but feel that he was scrambling. But, he birdied 18 to take the first round lead with a 64.

Piercy had the first round lead, meaning he would be in an interview in the media center. I had a question I wanted to ask him: "You hit some great shots, but I couldn't help but feel that you were scrambling out there by the end. What are you going to work on at the range?"

But seriously: I can't ask that. That can only screw him up mentally. Plus, I was more interested in the questions the other "big name writers" in the media center were going to ask, especially because I knew that most of them hadn't left the media center all day. And if they had, I hadn't seen them following Piercy. Now, I'm not saying they had to—who knew I'd be following the first round leader for most of the 18. What I am saying is: what forced questions are these yahoos going to throw out there without any knowledge of the round other than 9 birdies and 1 bogey?

While two questions were alright—one asking him if he thought about a 59 during his round and the other asking him about what some of the pros were doing with the Ping wedges—for the most part, the

questions were pretty pointless. They hadn't seen the round, so they were asking questions about college and how he ended last year.

"You got off to such a great start last year, and then this year, missed two cuts."

Way to try and screw a man up. Why even open your mouth?

Finally, before everyone started to leave, the director of the media center got on the intercom and said: "Is everyone alright with beer? Does anyone want wine?"

Are you kidding me?

Samples from the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro Am

#1

After Kenny G was announced and one guy from the railing above the crowd clapped, Kenny G ran like Puck into the crowd and grabbed some guy with a brown jacket on, and announced to everyone that this person would be caddying for him today. Oh, I get it: it's like a stunt or something. Kenny G wanted to pick a military man out of the crowd to honor our troops. Well that was nice of him. I wondered if that random military guy even knew who Kenny G was.

Whoever was working the introductions with the microphone seemed to be running out of things to say. He wanted to say more than just "here's so-and-so, and he's about to hit the ball," but what came out of his mouth sounded more like: "Our next player loves long walks on the beach, fast women, and margaritas. He's an Aries. Let's hear it for him."

From where I stood, pinned against the bush left of the tee, I couldn't really see where the balls ended up—only the players' swings. When I realized that this group would be going off together in a TWELVE-SOME, complete with this dude on the microphone following their every move, I almost had a violent seizure. As soon as a hole opened up in the bodies in front of me, I bolted out in front of everyone. I was going to see the course, not listen to that yam-bag with the microphone explain golf. One individual had the pleasure of driving around in a cart with two speakers attached to the top of it so the emcee's voice could carry far and wide as loudly as possible.

"Okay, it looks like they're going with Tony Romo's drive. So everyone: that means the other player can pick his ball up."

I couldn't walk away fast enough. I wondered if that guy in the cart has ear plugs.

#2

After hitting his tee ball, Murray took notice of a house party going on just right of the fairway. Murray walked a little closer and shouted: "Bloody Mary!" Well wouldn't you know it, about 5 minutes later,

somebody was running out to meet him with a Bloody Mary. Murray limped over and took a sip, nodded in approval, and shouted back to the house: "God bless you!"

Murray took the drink with him back towards his approach shot. He thinned it short of the green, but someone from the house understood.

"Just need to have another sip! It's good for the knee!"

On 16, Murray sliced his tee-ball behind a tree on the right, and I walked back behind the ball to get a better view as well as save my own hide. While Murray's caddie got the yardage, Bill walked over to an older woman with his Bloody Mary, still $\frac{3}{4}$ full.

"I'm assuming you're an adult, right?" The woman started laughing. "Will you hang onto this? I've tried to give this away already but it's like everyone is on the clock around here. Nobody will touch it."

Bill then turned to a group of people in the house nearby, who were sitting out on the porch with their drinks and finger foods.

"How much you want for this place?" They just laughed. It's like nobody can handle Bill Murray.

After chunking his shot under the tree and swinging the club at the ground in disgust, Bill was staring at another nearby home, a home that looked like something out of Grimm's Fairy Tales.

"Little do those people know there's a witch in that house that's planning on eating them. And their little dog, too."

When the group was teeing off of 17, it hit me that I really hadn't seen what Mediate and Herron had done on the back 9. Oh sure, maybe a shot here and there, but for the most part, I'd been mesmerized by Bill Murray. I can't even imagine what it's like to play golf with him.

Samples from the Transitions Championship:

#1

Out of nowhere, a rust-colored squirrel the size of a house-cat hopped toward me and stopped in front of my ball. He just sat there and stared. The thing was only 5 feet from me, and I think it was the first time I have ever been slightly intimidated by a squirrel. But, I had a driver in my hand, so...just TRY something funny you big-ass squirrel. Make my day.

A parade of carts flew by from around the corner, so I had to wait. Well, I suppose I couldn't really hit at that moment even if I wanted to—I had this gargantuan squirrel standing in front of my ball flexing his muscles.

Riding in one of the carts that rounded the corner, wearing his trademark Transitions lenses, was Kenny Perry. I had to think that all of these carts and cameras meant he had just come from shooting a

commercial of some kind, and it was fun to watch Kenny bend his head around as he was going by to look at me. When I turned back to my ball, the body-building squirrel was still there, staring right back. And then I had an epiphany, and finally understood what Kenny Perry and this squirrel were staring at: I was about to tee off of the back tees. Although Kenny was gone at this point, the squirrel seemed to be waving its arms, telling me to abort.

“No mister! The Island Course is 7,310 yards from these tees with a rating of 76.4 and a slope of 143! You haven’t played in 6 months! You must be smoking some really good crack!”

“You know what, Mr. Squirrel? I got this. Step aside. And yes, I do smoke some really good crack.”

And with that, the squirrel shrugged its wee shoulders and hopped along on its merry way to scare the living crap out of another golfer.

#2

I caught back up with the group as they were finishing 11, and after asking around, figured out that the putt Mediate just tapped in was for bogey. One thing I realized, however, was that Mediate was using a short putter. I can’t believe it took me this long to see that, but that was amazing to me because I had always seen him using a long putter. I wondered what the reason for the change was.

On several holes at the Copperhead Course, the designer—aside from having marital problems during the drafting—has this devious penchant for exposing important approach shots to the elements, as I had already seen on the 3rd hole. To maximize the level of punishment on players, the designer will use this characteristic on parallel holes. I say “important approach shots” because these shots in particular require the most skill: they’re either over water, to an elevated green, or around a dogleg. Of course I know that all shots are “important,” so maybe that’s a bad word to use. But this subtle design characteristic is the reason why I also love the second shot on 12, which is similar to the second shot on 3, except the yardage is a little shorter—meaning the ball is going higher up into the air and the wind can play kickball if it wants to.

After watching Mediate make par, I walked toward the 13th tee. The pathway for the players and caddies from the 12th green to the 13th tee is narrow and “exposed” to the entire crowd, meaning it’s long enough for fans to walk beside players and caddies for a good 20-30 seconds before they reach the tee. I found myself walking next to Rocco’s caddie Matt. I just couldn’t help myself.

“Hey, Matt?”

“Yeah?”

“Just wanted to apologize to you for almost hitting Rocco yesterday. I was the single you let play through on that par-3.”

“Oh yeah!” He slapped me on the shoulder.

“I thought I was going far enough left that the ball wouldn’t come anywhere near Rocco up in the trees.”

“Oh, don’t worry about it. That’s a fun little course, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, it is. I knew I recognized you, but I had no idea Rocco was...”

I trailed off, because Matt shot me a quick smile and turned his attention to the tee, where Rocco was already standing waiting for a yardage.

As soon as the group in front walked off the green, Daly seemed to hit immediately. Until today, I didn’t have an appreciation for how fast John Daly plays golf. Daly stuck it close, which the crowd up by the green loved. Daly wasn’t able to deliver on the birdie, however, as his ball circled all the way around the cup and lipped out. Rocco made another bogey to move to 4-over, after another missed up-and-down from the left rough.