

Golf Is a Holey Game

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The pungent title of this message is warranted because it expresses a clergyman's excuse for treating a topic as mundane as golf.

For some time the conviction that golf is the remedy for the major disorders of today has enthralled me. The assurance that my opinion is more than an Irishman's (or should I say Scotsman's?) dream was reinforced when our leading dailies headlined the news that President Eisenhower had turned to the playing of golf before preparing to take the highest office in civilization. This convinced me of my obligation to release the secret of maintaining concord throughout the world.

The immediate need is a Lincoln-like soul in the United Nations to propose with infectious fervor that golf, the leveler of the proud and the exalter of the humble, can eradicate from the hearts of rulers the Satanic pride which begets the lust for conquest that blights the fairways of history.

The proposal will demand that every prospective ruler, be he emperor, king, queen, kaiser, führer or president, qualify for his job by learning to play at least bogey golf consistently. Joe Novak's book, "Par Golf in Eight Steps," has convinced me that par, a much more elusive prize than peace, can be attained. And, in learning, the humility which impels a champion to grovel before the eyes of his caddie after missing a three-foot putt will be embedded also in the wielder of the scepter or mace.

We can all picture the camaraderie that would develop at the Nineteenth Hole after a Masters-of-Men tournament. All would be edified by the obedience of their fellow-participants to the Rules of the game and to the traditional standards of sportsmanship. Every golfer records and submits his own errors in play. The

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sportsman does it with the accuracy of a guardian angel. He must confess his unobserved sin in grounding his club in a hazard. He must divulge his mistake of moving his ball in addressing it. Should he, by sneezing, violate the convention of silence when a competitor is stroking a ball, he must voice his apology and his firm purpose of amendment.

Golf's sovereign still is, I think, Bob Jones. This great player of the game was, as Paul Gallico once said, an exponent of humility. Although a gentleman by nature, he once released verbal explosions after scoffing easy approaches. He conquered himself and found that it made the conquest of par easier. When he was carried in triumph on the shoulders of his friends, he invariably sought an opportunity to make a fellow-hero of his vanquished opponent. Laughter came easiest to him when he tried to accept himself as the genius the sports writers described.

My dream, as a priest, is the appearance on the world scene of a dominating figure with the gift of inspiring in rulers the virtues which Frank Merriwell, the creation of Bert L. Standish, kept glowing in my heart as a boy.