

Work Daze: The golf gulf

by *Bob_Goldman*

Unlike the typical tourist who goes to Florida for the mosquitoes, sand fleas and jellyfish, I'm the sort of weirdo who appreciates the opportunity to bake my brain and broil my belly under the warm tropical sun. Imagine my surprise, then, when I was awakened early one morning on a recent Florida trip to the sound of obscenities and curses - the kind of salty language I had not heard since my last trip around the horn with Capt. Nemesis, or my last trip around Manhattan with a New York cab driver.

Throwing open the velvet drapes in my condo, I did not see the prime parking lot view, for which I had paid handsomely. What I saw was a great sweep of green, grassy landscape, pockmarked with tiny islands of sand, and dotted with a series of poles on which tiny, numbered flags fluttered in the Florida breeze.

As my eyes adjusted to the sunlight, I could see that it was from this greensward that the curses emanated. Even more frightening, the men who were so vehemently shouting obscenities were also swinging wildly with clubs, just like the Spartans and the Persians in the Battle of Thermopylae.

Certainly the gladiators were dressed in combat gear. They wore the most frightening amalgamation of plaids and pastels - colors and combinations that would never appear in nature.

It was only much later, after calming my nerves with a flagon of pina colada by the kiddy pool that I realized I was not watching a battlefield, but a recreational arena, the site of that theoretically fun sport called golf.

I am discussing golf in a business column only because golf is so important in business. There are better sports, but when it comes to schmoozing your way to the top, nothing beats golf. And if you doubt me, try inviting your boss to spend the weekend at a quilting bee, or searching Civil War battlefields for antique bottle caps with your metal detectors.

In fact, there are some career consultants who would tell you that it is virtually impossible for any man or woman to climb to the highest levels of corporate life without mastering the game of golf. (In certain refined corporate cultures, like the Teamsters, you can pass if you play tennis. The problem comes when some bigwig asks, "What's your sport, sport? Golf or tennis?" And you have to answer, "Actually, I prefer napping.")

Fortunately, there are ways one can give the appearance of being a golfer without actually having to go to the trouble of learning the game, or, if you are truly devious, without ever having to play it. Here are four fore examples:

- Buy really expensive golf equipment.

Golf is one of those sports where it's all about the stuff. You'll never have to hit the greens if you can spend hours in the clubhouse, pontificating about the "torque ratio of a titanium versus a plutonium shaft." When the conversation gets over your head, it is always safe to talk about "PINGs." You might say, "What I really need is a set of PINGs." Or, "I just traded in my PINGs and I added six shots to my handicap." (Don't worry if you don't know what a PING is. No one else does, either.)

- Remember, in golf, a handicap is a good thing.

Unlike business, where your career might be hurt by your handicaps of sloth, indifference and hostility, a handicap in golf can be a good thing, since it is subtracted from your total score. So, if it takes you an embarrassing 300 swings to do nine holes, subtracting your handicap of 450 gives you a score of minus 150, which is not only better than Tiger Woods, but means you never have to leave the club house in the first place.

- Don't waste money on golf lessons.

Many beginners spend fortunes learning the game from so-called pros. Instead of paying \$200 an hour, you can achieve the same effect from playing miniature golf at \$3 an hour. Regular golf is just like miniature golf, only they don't have wind mills on the course, unless you're playing in Holland, in which case, make sure to put golf cleats in your wooden shoes, or everyone will laugh and throw Gouda at you.

- Don't worry if you're a lousy player.

Your wretched playing will make your boss feel better, and isn't that what getting ahead is all about?

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