

Golf Insider

BYRON NELSON, 1912-2006

'A sad day for golf'

'Lord Byron' was revered by all those who knew him

STAN AWTREY
Cox News Service

Atlanta

Byron Nelson, who won golf tournaments with his pure swing and fans with his gentle and gracious spirit, died Tuesday at his home in Roanoke, Texas. He was 94.

On the course, "Lord Byron" was best known as a Hall of Fame golfer who won 11 consecutive tournaments in 1945, the year he won 18 events and compiled a record stroke average of 68.33. Nelson won five major championships in his career.

Off the course, he was known as a man who quietly enjoyed helping other people, whether by sharing his insight into life or by paying their way through college.

"He was wonderful to me personally and wonderful for the game of golf," said four-time PGA Tour winner Billy Andrade.

"When you get the name 'Lord,' that means something."

Nelson's death is the final chapter in one of golf's greatest periods. His primary contemporaries were Ben Hogan (nine majors), Sam Snead (seven majors) and Jimmy Demaret (three majors), who all preceded him in death.

"He was the last of that era with Hogan and Snead," said two-time Walker Cup captain Danny Yates of Atlanta. "It's a sad day for golf. It's a big loss of one of the last great ones."

Nelson was born Feb. 4, 1912, on his family's farm in Waxahachie, Texas. He began to caddy at Glen Garden Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas, when he was 10 and once defeated future-great Hogan for the club's caddy championship.

After working as a file clerk in an accounting office and for a bankers' magazine, Nelson decided in 1932 to become a professional golfer. By that time, he had crafted a graceful, fluid, repeatable swing that was so good that the U.S. Golf Association eventually named its robotic club-tester "Iron Byron" in his honor.

"Hogan was a grinder and beat range balls until his hands bled. Nelson was more of a natural,"



CURTIS COMPTON / Cox News Service

Byron Nelson served as honorary starter at the Masters from 1981 until 2001 (above). The golfing legend, who died Tuesday at his Texas home, was widely respected.

A LEGENDARY CAREER

- In 1945, he had 18 victories, 11 in a row.
- Retired at 34 to spend more time on his ranch.
- Won 52 career PGA Tour events; made 113 consecutive cuts.
- Masters icon: two-time winner, 20-year honorary starter.

said Rand Jerris, director of the USGA's museum and archives.

"Any of today's golfers would pattern their swing after him. He was simple, effective and pure. Byron Nelson's swing was full of rhythm and grace."

Nelson won 13 times in 1944, a record 18 times in 1945 and wound up credited by the PGA Tour with 52 victories, sixth on the all-time list. He won 14 other "unofficial" tournaments. He made the cut in 113 consecutive tournaments.

"What Byron accomplished, that goes down to probably one of

the greatest years in the history of our sport," Tiger Woods said recently after winning the Deutsche Bank Championship for his fifth victory in a row. "Consistency I mean you've got to have one bad week somewhere. He never did. What Byron accomplished there goes down as one of the greatest streaks in all of sport."

Nelson won the Masters in 1937 and 1942, the U.S. Open in 1939 and the PGA Championship in 1940 and 1945. His total might have been shortchanged because most majors were canceled during World War II.

"He won five, but we imagine that he would have won quite a few more if he had played with a full schedule," Jerris said.

In 1946, at age 34, he retired from full-time competition to work his 673-acre ranch. He was elected to the PGA Hall of Fame in 1953 and to the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1974.

IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR GAME

Perfect pitch

For all of your pitch shots, your weight stays in your front hip joint as you swing. But don't just stand there on your front foot and swing your arms up and down as if you were chopping wood. Take care to rotate around your front hip axis as you swing the club.

The less-accomplished pitcher's lower body is very active on the backswing, but dead during the forward swing, leaving the hands and arms to over-manipulate the club. To be a good pitcher, you should do just the opposite: Use minimal leg action during the back swing while your upper body creates the length and leverage necessary for the shot. Then, during the forward swing, use a good deal of leg action, moving the back knee aggressively to the target.

The key to your upper-body action is that while your hands and arms stay low, your club head is elevated above your shoulders by the setting (cocking) of your wrists. This gives you what I call "low hands-high club head." The club head is high enough to loft the ball in the air, but your arms and hands are under control because they haven't moved very far from where they were at address.

After your hips and upper body turn the club away from the ball, it's your lower body that controls the club face during the downswing. A common mistake is to abruptly stop the arms at impact in an attempt to put a "hit" on the ball. When this happens, your front wrist collapses, sending the club head past your hands in a flipping action that makes controlling the distance of your shot almost impossible.

You can avoid being a "flipper" by keeping your chest moving well into your follow-through. To do this effectively, you must keep your hips rotating as you swing through the ball with no change of pace or speed. In other words, don't add or subtract any energy—simply "hit it with your turn." This keeps you hitting down and through the ball with no unwanted bursts of power.

At the finish, the back of the left hand faces the sky, as does the club face, indicating that the club face never shut down. As proof, you will be able to see the scoring lines on the club face. This is accomplished by allowing no rotation of the forearms through impact.

Summary

1. The weight starts, stays and finishes in the front hip joint, there is no weight shift as there is for a full swing.

2. There is a hip turn as in a full shot, but not as forceful.

3. There is very little leg action going back, the legs are quiet but the arms are active. This reverses in the downswing where the legs are active and the arms are passive. In the correctly executed pitch shot, the hands and arms feel "dead."

4. The club swings along the body line and the wrists cock the club head upward, producing low hands-high club head.

5. You can see the lines on the club face at the finish because the forearms haven't rotated.



PGA Tour player Tommy Armour III sets the club for a pitch shot using low hands-high club head.



Note how Tommy Armour has rotated his body even though the pitch shot is only about 20 yards.

COMMENTARY

Finally, a fail-safe plan to win back the Ryder Cup

By ALAN TAYS
Cox News Service

Straffan, Ireland

This has got to stop. That's five losses for the United States in the past six Ryder Cups, seven in the past 11, going back to 1985.

Tom Lehman's U.S. team wound up with the same tread marks on its backside as Hal Sutton's drubbed dozen in 2004 at Oakland Hills. Back then the chief complaint was Sutton's pairing of Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson, also known as "Fire" and "Gasoline."

Lehman's pairings here at The K Club offered no similar broad-side-of-a-barn target. Woods with Jim Furyk and Mickelson with Chris DiMarco had torn it up at the Presidents Cup, right?

Well, to quote the philosopher Sergio Garcia, "The Presidents Cup, with all due respect, is not the Ryder Cup."

It's fruitless to rehash all the tired theories for the Americans' biennial punching-bag impersonation. It's time for action. So here's a five-point plan for reclaiming the Cup at Valhalla in 2008:

1. Give it the old college try

What are the Americans most passionate about? Their college football and basketball teams. Want to get ex-Florida Gator DiMarco REALLY fired up? Pit him against a Georgia Bulldog.

To stir up some passion, figure out all the rivals of the U.S. players' schools, and make the Euros wear those colors.

2. Harness power of the press

A Dublin magazine angered Woods with fake nude photos of his wife. But then it apologized and pulled copies from newsstands. What kind of yellow journalism is that? If you're going to deliberately insult someone, don't chicken out and apologize later. Stick to your guns. Make all the U.S. players good and angry. They'll probably play better.

3. Think small

Bring back the old "smaller British ball" and make the Euros use it. If that doesn't work, go to Haskells, then gutties, then featheries. As a last resort, there's always dried sheep dung.

4. Drink up, lads

Ian Woosnam and Darren Clarke got lots of air time on Irish TV pounding champagne and Guinness after the matches. During the winners' news conference, Woosee was, well, woosy. What if the Euros did their celebrating beforehand? Open a bar on the first tee and make it free for the boys in blue.

5. Expand our horizons

Why does a country, the United States, have to play against a whole continent? Whose lame-brain idea was that? What? Mr. Nicklaus is holding on Line 1? Oh, never mind.

We should change our designation to "The Americas," bringing in Canada (Mike Weir; Stephen Ames) and South America (Angel Cabrera). Better would be to let the United States add as many countries as there are in Europe (45). Tell you what—give us Australia and South Africa and we'll call it even.

THE GOLF DOCTOR

Dying for power

I know it sounds simple, but I can guarantee you that the only thing you'll kill when you think "kill" is you swinging a golf club in your chances of hitting a good shot. How many times have you watched someone top the ball or hit a foot behind it and look up to say, "I was gonna kill that one."

Your brain is a powerful weapon, so train it to think about "quality distance," i.e. a long ball that's in the fairway. Instead of the "kill" word, use soothing words and phrases that promote the prerequisites of power—tempo and timing.

To implant the image in your brain of you swinging the club with all the time in the world, video yourself hitting drivers, and then watch it over and over in slow motion while repeating one of the phrases below, or one of your own. Be careful not to critique your golf swing. All you want is to link the visual image to your concept of power under control and the verbal cue.

When these are merged into one image, the phrase will act as a prompt for power. When you repeat it as you play or practice, it will pull up what's attached to it—in this case, your most powerful golf swing.

—T.J. Tomasi

LINK YOUR SWING TO THESE PHRASES

Here are some anchor phrases that you can repeat as you watch your swing:

- The Sweet Surrender to Gravity
- No Ball Before Its Time
- The Ball is on the Arc; I Don't Have to Find It
- Cultivate the Wait
- Effortless Power, Not Powerless Effort
- Passive Power
- Finish High and Let It Fly
- Give the Club Time to Change Directions
- I Give Myself the Gift of Time
- There Is No "Now" in My Swing
- "Let" Rather Than "Make"
- Time is Mine
- I Have All the Time in the World
- I Control My Mind and My Time



Dr. T.J. Tomasi is a teaching professional at Nantucket Golf Club on Nantucket Island, Mass. To ask him a question about golf, e-mail him at: TjTomasi@aol.com.

ASK THE PRO

Q: I have a tough time aiming at the target. Is there a procedure I should use? I already stand behind the ball first, but I still aim too far to the right, my friends say — L.L. from the Web

A: Golf is basically a find-the-target game, and then, as Harvey Penick said, you need to "take dead aim." To help you pinpoint your target, use a four-point reference system that takes advantage of the way your eyes naturally gauge distance and direction.

Once you have a clear image of your shot, pick a specific target where you want the ball to land. Then pick a marker in the distance—a tree, fence post, bunker or rooftop—in line with your landing area.

Draw an imaginary line back from your distant marker, over the landing area, to the front of the ball. Now, pick out a close-up or intermediate target on that line—a divot, old tee or some other mark. The fourth point is the ball.

SCHEDULE

All Times EDT
WORLD GOLF CHAMPIONSHIPS
 American Express Championship
 • Site: Hertfordshire, England.
 • Schedule: Thursday-Sunday
 • Course: The Grove (7,125 yards, par 71).
 • Purse: \$7.5 million. Winner's share: \$1.35 million.
 • TV: ESPN (Thursday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; Saturday, 1:30 p.m.; Sunday, 1:30-6 p.m.).

PGA TOUR
 Southern Farm Bureau Classic
 • Site: Madison, Miss.
 • Schedule: Thursday-Sunday
 • Course: Annadale Golf Club (7,199 yards, par 72).
 • Purse: \$3 million. Winner's share: \$540,000.
 • TV: None.

CHAMPIONS TOUR
 Greater Hickory Classic
 • Site: Conover, N.C.
 • Schedule: Friday-Sunday
 • Course: Rock Barn Golf and Spa, Jones Course (7,046 yards, par 72).
 • Purse: \$1.6 million. Winner's share: \$240,000.
 • TV: The Golf Channel (Friday, 2:30-5 p.m.; Saturday, 1:30-4 p.m., 2:30-5 p.m.; Sunday, midnight-2:30 a.m., 6-8:30 p.m., Monday, 1:30-4 p.m.).

PGA TOUR
 • Next event: Corona Morelia Championship, Oct. 5-8, Tres Marias Residential Golf Club, Morelia, Mexico.
 • Last week: Karrie Webb held off Annika Sorenstam by a stroke in the Longs Drugs Challenge in Danville, Calif., for her tour-high fourth victory of the year.

NATIONWIDE TOUR
 • Next event: Mark Christopher Charity Classic, Oct. 5-8, Empire Lakes Golf Club, Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.
 • Last week: Cliff Kresge won the Oregon Classic for his third Nationwide Tour victory.

LEADERS

WORLD RANKINGS	
1. Tiger Woods	22.09
2. Phil Mickelson	8.73
3. Jim Furyk	8.67
4. Vijay Singh	6.99
5. Adam Scott	6.56
6. Retief Goosen	6.16
7. Ernie Els	5.99
8. Luke Donald	5.57
9. Sergio Garcia	5.56
10. Geoff Ogilvy	5.38
11. Henrik Stenson	4.77
12. T. Immelman	4.47
13. David Howell	4.42
14. C. Montgomerie	4.38
15. David Toms	4.23

MONEY LEADERS	
PGA TOUR	
Player	Money
1. Tiger Woods	\$8,641,563
2. Jim Furyk	\$6,084,016
3. Phil Mickelson	\$4,256,505
4. Geoff Ogilvy	\$4,228,869
5. Vijay Singh	\$4,125,341
6. T. Immelman	\$3,329,746
7. Adam Scott	\$3,198,858
8. Stuart Appleby	\$3,013,631
9. David Toms	\$2,722,267
10. Luke Donald	\$2,694,742

LPGA TOUR	
Player	Money
1. Lorena Ochoa	\$1,974,122
2. Karrie Webb	\$1,873,753
3. A. Sorenstam	\$1,769,408
4. Cristie Kerr	\$1,472,112
5. Mi Hyun Kim	\$1,263,680

CHAMPIONS TOUR	
Player	Money
1. Loren Roberis	\$1,945,739
2. Jay Haas	\$1,892,027
3. Brad Bryant	\$1,547,200
4. Gil Morgan	\$1,385,765
5. Tom Kite	\$1,320,935