

A Matter of Degrees

By Lane Osborne

For the diehard few, the golf season never ends. There's a season for basketball which culminates with March Madness in college and the NBA Finals in June for the pros. The baseball season overlaps basketball in the spring and early summer and runs through the fall when it overlaps with football which is a fall and winter sport. But golf is a sport played all year long among professionals on various tours, not to mention the weekend golfers around the globe that tee it up irrespective of weather.

Another notable difference between sports are the different arenas on which they're played. Basketball is almost always played indoors, baseball games are mostly outdoors, but are often called off due to the slightest bit of inclement weather. Football may occasionally be played in rain or cold weather, but even that's a rare sight since concepts like the frozen tundra of Lambeau Field have recently given way to climate controlled arenas like Cowboys Stadium which has a retractable roof that can be closed at a moments notice if the forecast calls for the drizzles or a few snow flurries. However, golf, by contrast, is played in the great outdoors under all conditions. So, beyond golfers being tested versus themselves or their fellow man, they are also thoroughly tested against nature.

Golfers are like the postal workers of athletics. As though the U.S. Postal Service's creed inscribed on the James Farley Post Office in New York City: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds" is tattooed in the hearts and minds of golfers across the planet, because they never seem kept from their "appointed rounds" either.

For example, on the PGA Tour the extreme heat and humidity of June often makes the U.S. Open as much a test of physical and mental endurance as it does golf skill. A few years back, Carnoustie hosted the British Open and was dubbed "Carnasty" due in large part to extreme weather conditions that compounded an already difficult course set-up. Battling the elements is so commonplace among golfers that it can sometimes even lead to stupidity. During the 1975 Western Open, Lee Trevino, Bobby Nichols, and Jerry Heard decided to wait out a rain delay underneath a tree. All three men were struck by lightning, but fortunate enough to live to tell about it and caution against seeking shelter under trees during cases of electrical storms.

While most of us are not required to play in the most extreme conditions, many of us often choose to brave the elements nevertheless. The winds of March, pollen of April, and extreme heat of summer are all soon to come, but for now it's the colder days that are here that we have to contend with first. For those north of us, it may require switching from white balls to orange or yellow ones when snow blankets the fairways. For those of us in the South, switching to a lower compression golf ball and a couple hand warmers may do the trick. Because, while cold is relative and craziness is a matter of degrees, there are always those appointed rounds to be played.

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