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Bad Airlines, Broken Buses, and a Trip to Scotland

by Chris Rowe

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BAD AIRLINES, BROKEN BUSES AND A TRIP TO SCOTLAND

CHRIS ROWE

TWO TIME HARVEY PENICK TEACHER OF THE YEAR IN TEXAS
US KIDS TOP 50 TEACHERS IN UNITED STATES
HARVEY PENICK TEACHER OF THE YEAR EASTERN CHAPTER TEXAS

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Patton at the Pines

A few weeks ago, I played in the Pro-Member at Castle Pines Golf Club just outside of Denver. If you have never played Castle Pines, it is one of the best run golf clubs in the country. The mountains provide a beautiful backdrop for the perfectly manicured golf course. The invitation to this prestigious tournament allows you to bring one of your members and team up with their members for two days of competition. Twenty prestigious clubs were represented, and my long-time friend Bobby Patton would be my teammate.

We arrived for our practice round to beautiful weather and excitement in the air to be out of the Texas heat. Castle Pines has made some major renovations to the course since the last time I played it, and

they made an exceptional course even better. We paired up with two other pros and a member and immediately produced a gambling wager which did not bode well for my wallet. If you ever have someone, ask you to play the bunker game as a side bet steer clear! The game is where anyone who hits a bunker must pay everyone in the group. It did not take long for me to get completely out of practice round mode and make guide swings on every shot to miss a bunker rather than focus hitting the green or fairway.

On the first day of the tournament round Bobby and I went through a complete practice session. We worked on pitching and chipping. We made our way down to the practice putting green where they were running 13.9 on the stimp meter. We finished on the driving range working through the bag before the shotgun start. As we were waiting in our cart to head to our starting hole I decided to go back to the range and hit just a few more shots. When I got back to the cart Bobby asked me why I went back to the range knowing I had already warmed up. I told him I wanted to hit a couple more shots with the club that would be used to tee off on our starting hole. I wanted to mimic the type of shot needed for the long downhill par three.

We did not have our best day for the opening round, but we had a wonderful time with lots of laughs and reminiscing about the good ole days in Fort Worth. After a great lunch we headed out to play in the shoot-out. I have run probably fifty shoot-outs in my life as a golf professional but have never actually played in one. It was fun to fill the pressure that my members and guests feel when they compete in our member guest tournaments at Whispering Pines. We did well but unfortunately fell one shot short of going into the finals.

The next morning, we went through the same warm up as the day before. We had plenty of time to work on all parts of our game and felt optimistic about the opportunity to shoot a good score. As we were

waiting for the shotgun start Bobby told me he had been working on his first tee shot of the day. He told me he liked the idea and seeing that we were starting on the sixteenth hole, which is a beautiful par three over water he put in a few extra swings with the iron he planned to use. The host professional made an announcement, and we were off to the sixteenth hole. When we arrived, we met our two Castle Pines members who we would be playing with. The normal pleasantries were said, and I proceeded to the tee box with a seven iron in hand. Hitting a solid shot to the middle of the green felt good for the start of my round. Bobby walked to his tee box with the iron he had practiced with just a few minutes earlier. The pin was in the back position just as it was for the BMW Championship a few weeks earlier. Bobby hit a towering iron shot with a slight draw. As the ball was struck there was no doubt he made perfect contact in the center of the club face. The ball landed like a butterfly with sore feet and then gravity took over. The ball started rolling closer and closer to the point we all thought could be a hole in one. The ball slid past the cup and came to rest two feet from the hole. Bobby drained the putt, and we were off to the races with a net one on our scorecard. The day continued to be great for both of us and we finished the day tied for third for that round.

The moral to this story is practicing with the club you plan to use for your first shot of the day. Most of the time the driver will be the club needed but sometimes it might be a hybrid or an iron shot for a par three. If it is a driver, then do not leave the range until you have hit the perfect shot shape for the hole you are about to play. If it is an iron, make sure you look at the yardage and pin placement for that day and do not leave the range until you have hit the shot called for. If you do this, you might hit one as close to the hole as Bobby Patton!



Pine Valley

Every spring it was tradition to take a member trip to the #1 course in the world Pine Valley. Steve Pyle has been a long-time member of Pine Valley and has been generous to allow me to take groups up to New Jersey for a few days and experience the greatest eighteen holes in golf. Steve is a bit of a pessimistic person and really gets down on himself when he hits bad shots. Part of my job on this trip is to take care of my members but the most important job is to tune Stevie P up before each round.

The driving range is a good distance away from the clubhouse and today's ride was extra special because we passed Arnold Palmer going

the opposite direction in his cart. It is not every day you get to see the King and especially seeing him at Pine Valley made it even more cool. Turns out Mr. Palmer is a member of the club and played two holes in front of us that day. This made the round difficult to concentrate on my own game as it was too tempting to not watch Mr. Palmer hitting shots when he was on adjacent fairways, but I am not complaining.

When we reached the range, I started my normal short warm-up and then proceeded to work with my members on their swings. Once all my guys were tuned up, I made my way over to work with Steve. True to form he was complaining about the way he was striking the ball. I made it a point to let him know how excited everyone was to be playing Pine Valley and how much we all appreciated him for hosting. After a few adjustments to his swing, he started flushing the ball, but the only problem was he could not see where the ball was going. Every shot was going directly at the practice green where he was aiming. He felt encouraged and told me he appreciated helping him get back on track before he went to the first tee.

The day was magnificent as always when you play a course like Pine Valley. I have been fortunate to play many of the best courses in the world but without question nothing compares to Pine Valley. Steve teed off behind my group with three of my members, one being Cam Monroe. Cam is one of the biggest pranksters on the planet. He has played more practical jokes on me over the years with the best one calling me one day and telling me we were going to play Augusta. He told me I could invite whoever I wanted to go with us, and it was an easy decision for me to tell him my dad. Cam said that is great but is your dad a member of Augusta? It was immediately evident that he had played a joke on me as my job was to invite someone who was a member of Augusta to go with us so we all could play. Needless to say, I hung up the phone on him and to this day it is a fun story to tell.

When we finished our round, we went into the clubhouse to have lunch before heading to the plane. Steve came off the course gleaming and told me he hit the ball better than he has hit it in years. He mentioned numerous holes where he hit great drives and told me on the twelfth hole, he hit it further than he has driven the ball in twenty years. I was so happy for him, and he was so encouraged by his golf game.

When we got on the plane Cam Monroe asked me if Steve had told me about how well he played. I told him he could not quit talking about how much fun he had and kept thanking me for the swing tip before the round. Cam grinned at me and told me their group told the caddies to throw his ball down the fairway after every tee shot. Cam then smiled sheepishly and told me the caddies threw his ball twice on the twelfth hole. I have never told Stevie P what happened that day at Pine Valley, and I guess the only way he is going to find out is to read this book!



The Jacket

One of my young junior players named Cash was taking a lesson last October. The weather had just turned cool enough to wear a jacket and we happened to just get a shipment of KJUS jackets in that week. I personally cannot stand the heat and always look forward to the first day of Fall when it is cool enough to wear a jacket on the course. Cash arrived for his lesson and immediately told me how much he liked my new jacket. Cash is a very good player and will play college golf without a doubt. He is extremely long off the tee and has a short game to match. We went through a session in the teaching facility getting his numbers on Trackman along with some video work to tighten up his mechanics. After working on full swing, we went out to the needler par three course to work on his wedge shots and putting. The needler is a magical place to work on all aspects of your game. A few years ago, Lee Trevino came to Whispering Pines and I was fortunate enough to play with him on the big course and then the needler to close out an unforgettable day. When Lee had played a few of the holes on the needler he stopped and told me he would join this course just to be able

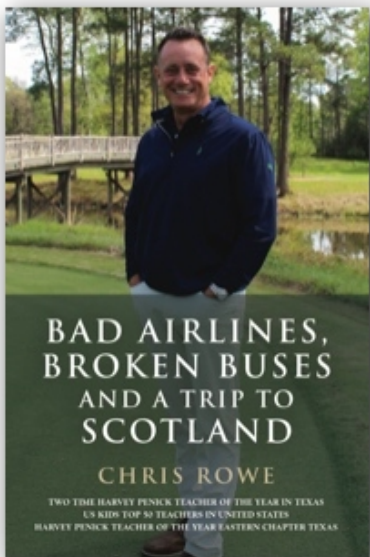
to practice on the needler. What a compliment from one of the legends of the game! I jokingly mentioned he could fill out a membership application and he would have no problem becoming a member. All this to say you can hit every shot imaginable on the needler and it is the best place to take students to work on different parts of their game.

Often, with my students, I will challenge them with a certain part of their game and attach a prize if they can perform the task. Sometimes the prize will be a discounted lesson or buying them a hat from the professional shop. Cash was preparing for an upcoming tournament, so the challenge was made that he had to hole a twenty-foot putt and the prize was a new KJUS jacket. When the challenge was made his eyes lit up a bit along with a big smile. He lined up the putt and confidently rolled it in and immediately told me I did not have to buy him a jacket. KJUS jackets are very expensive and even with my discount it cost me my hourly rate. Buying him the jacket made me just as happy as Cash making the putt to win it. Every time he wears that jacket, he knows he earned it. Every time he has a twenty-foot putt to win a tournament he can draw off that moment where he beat his instructor out of a jacket. When you practice put something on the line before you leave the range or putting green. You might bet yourself something like not having a cup of coffee for a week if you don't make the putt or reward yourself if there is something you have been wanting to purchase if you pull off the shot. When we challenge ourselves with a prize attached our intensity level goes up. If we practiced like there was a prize attached to the outcome we would perform better on the course. Most of us work on our chipping without thinking about holing the shot, but what if every shot hit was 100% committed to holing the shot. You might not hole any of the shots, but your proximity to the hole would be much closer if you tried to hole the shot rather than just get it close.

Cash might have made the putt without having a prize attached, but his intensity went up a level when he knew there would be a reward.

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Practice like you want to play and you will play like you practice! The moral to this story is never bet a kid with a name like CASH and think he is not going to win the money!



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