

*The Collection is my favorite stories from all my books. Over the years I have had many memorable things happen working in the golf industry.*

## **The Collection**

By Chris Rowe

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# THE COLLECTION

*An anthology of his very best stories*

NATIONAL MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR

THREE-TIME HARVEY PENICK TEACHER OF THE YEAR

U.S. KIDS TOP 50 INSTRUCTOR IN UNITED STATES

CHRIS ROWE

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## 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 an exceptionally talented 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 various 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 extremely 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 when he beats his instructor out of a jacket. When you practice put something on the line before you leave the range or put green. You might bet yourself something like not having a cup of coffee for a week if you do not 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. 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!

## Hanging with an Aggie legend



One of the greatest parts about my job is all the great people you meet. Golf brings people together from all walks of life. It does not matter if you are a professional athlete, musician, or a political figure, they all are golfers when they come through the gates at Whispering Pines. Recently, RC Slocum asked me to play golf with his group at Traditions

Club, in College Station. Coach Slocum has been to Whispering Pines a few times and have had the pleasure to get to know him a little bit. Coach Slocum is the winningest Texas A&M football coach in the history of the program. I am an Oklahoma Sooner fan and will always root for Oklahoma but dating a girl who proudly wears her aggie ring and spending time with coach makes them my favorite other team.

We had a great day on the course with lots of wonderful stories about coaching and big games played at Kyle Field. When we finished the round, we had a coke and talked about golf swings and my teaching philosophies. Golfers are like fisherman and really perk up when they hear someone talking about how to perform better at their sport. Coach Slocum seemed intrigued as my swing theories were unveiled on the patio and later that week called and asked for a lesson.

A few months later, Coach Slocum, asked me and my girlfriend to meet he and his wife for the weekend in Carmel, California. My girlfriend was so excited, not only to go to Pebble Beach and get out of the Texas heat, but to spend time with the Head Football Coach when she attended A&M. My joke to her the entire week was you are hanging out with an A&M legend and cannot even arrange a dinner for me and Coach Switzer. Spending time with Coach Slocum was a wonderful opportunity to ask questions about all the things you ever wanted to know about college football. The number of stories he told on the golf course or at the house in the morning drinking coffee were all priceless.

It was a weekend where you wish you had a tape recorder to record every incredible story.

Our last day we were scheduled to play The Preserve Golf Club up in the mountains of Carmel Valley. When you arrive at the gate the clubhouse is still another 25 minutes along a winding road up the mountain. The question that was most intriguing to me was if there was ever a game where the coaching staff did not know how to counter what the other team was doing. Specifically, my question was related to OU playing A&M in the Cotton Bowl and OU getting dismantled by Johnny Manziel. Even though Coach Slocum wasn't the coach for that game I knew he would have insight. As we drove up the winding mountain road, he told me there was not a game that the team and coaches were not prepared for whatever they might face. Sometimes they might not execute well enough to win, but they were always prepared for any situation.

The typical golfer hits shots on the range from a perfect lie with the same club usually not aiming at a specific target. Short game practice is usually hitting a few chips from a perfect lie with the same club. What happens when you get on the course and your ball is in the rough or on a sidehill lie? If you only practice perfect situations, it would be the same a Coach Slocum practicing as if the defense would never tackle its offensive players and the safety would intercept every pass thrown in the game. This is not realistic in football and getting a perfect lie every time you reach your ball is not realistic either. When you get to the driving range

work on shots you will have during your round. Practice hitting shots from different lies and angles. When I am working with students, I will take them to a downslope off the side of the tee box and have them hit shots and then take them to a side slope and hit shots. The student can see how the ball reacts and adjust. When you work on your short game do not hit balls from the exact spot over and over. You are not getting better practicing like this! Create different lies around the green, hit bunker shots from buried lies, sidehill lies etc. When you practice with the expectation of something could go wrong you will be prepared when it happens.

Coach Slocum and his wife were the perfect hosts and we were honored to be able to spend time with them for the weekend. The stories Coach Slocum told could fill three books and they would all be best sellers. The knowledge he has is incredible, but more than that he is an unbelievable person. The integrity he has and the grace he has shown impressed me more than any big game won at Kyle Field. If he were still coaching for the aggies and my son wanted to play football my choice would be for my kid to play for him.

Prepare for everything that could happen in your next round of golf and you will not be surprised if your ball happens to find a not so perfect lie.

**GIG EM**

## The Golf Thermostat

The job of a thermostat is to regulate to the desired temperature. In our house, we keep the thermostat set on seventy-three in the summer and seventy in the winter months. Most people probably do the same within a degree or two. We all have temperatures we are comfortable with. When playing golf, we all have scores we are comfortable with as well. How many times have you gone out and shot much higher than normal on the front nine and then played much better on the back nine to shoot a score very close to your average round? The same happens in the opposite fashion, when you play incredibly on the front nine and then go shoot a higher than normal second nine to average out very close to your eighteen-hole average.

We all have thermostats built into our golf games. Each of us are comfortable with a score, and each of us tend to work our way back to the comfort-zone score, whether it be up or down. When we set our thermostat in the house at seventy-three and the temperature rises above the setting, the air-conditioner will kick on to bring the temperature back down.

So, what is your golf thermostat set on? We all have our numbers! My number is usually seventy-six, and the majority of the time when I play, I will score within a few shots of my comfortable setting. PGA Touring professionals have much lower numbers, but they still have their golf

thermostats. How many guys have you seen on television shoot an incredible front nine and the announcers start talking about fifty-nine? Usually, the player shoots a much higher score on the back nine and averages out within a few shots of his normal good round.

If we all have golf thermostats and we can set them to whatever temperatures we decide, why don't we all set them lower? One of my students won an event after getting off to his usual bad start. He digs himself a hole and then works his way out. His golf thermostat is set between sixty-eight and seventy-two, and this is the number he usually scores. He asked me how to fix this, and I told him to lower his thermostat and change his comfort level.

Whether you shoot in the nineties or the sixties, you can change your thermostat. Think about what your real golf thermostat setting is on. Be honest about your number and then decide to lower the temperature by five degrees. Change your thermostat, and your scores will start dropping like a cold front in January!

“Chris Rowe’s latest book on golf is filled with warm and delightful surprises. It’s an unusual mix of nostalgia, humor, old-fashioned storytelling, and simple help for your game. There’s no better way to while away a rainy afternoon.”

Guy Yocum.... Golf Digest Senior Writer

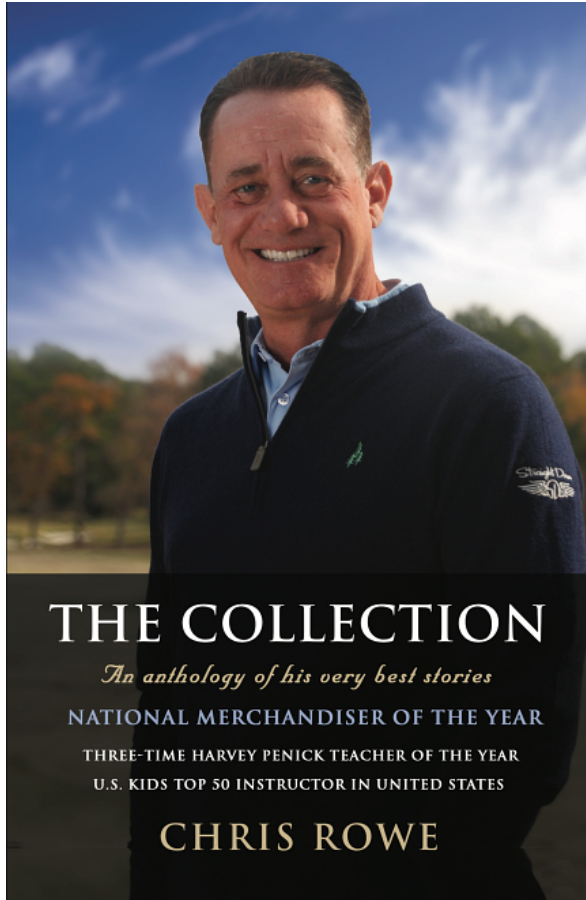
“Chris has been my golf instructor for the past twenty years and always finds simple ways to help me play better. His newest book is a great read with wonderful stories about life and golf!”

Bobby Patton.... Owner Los Angeles Dodgers

“My good friend and fellow author Chris Rowe is a beautiful storyteller. His wisdom and insights will encourage your heart, golf game, and life. Sip on each story slowly, like a fine wine and listen carefully. When you do you will find treasure for your journey.”

David L. Cook, Ph.D.

Author/Executive Producer: Seven Days in Utopia



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