



## *In Bounds: 'Piece' of Mind*

By JOHN "JACK" MACKENZIE, CGCS  
*North Oaks Golf Club*

A few years back I had on my team a young man by the name of Jimmy, Jimmy Chitwood. Great kid, friendly, dedicated and born to work. However, Jimmy had been born with a speech impediment, a physical deformity that prevented him from speech until the year prior to coming to work at North Oaks.

Just twelve months before we met, Jimmy had had major surgery to split his palate and unlock a fused jaw. Imagine after 16 years of muteness, having to learn to speak. With slurs and guttural enunciations he made himself understood to those who listened carefully. Yes, he did drool on occasion as he physically adjusted to a new jaw. And yes, I had to listen intently to catch every word when we talked. But it was possible, and Jimmy was a true joy to have on the staff as he always gave 200 percent of himself each and every day.

Imagine my surprise that summer when approached by a member/friend of mine on the golf course...

"Jack", Mr. Thompson said with concern in his voice, "I think I hit one of your employees in the melon with my drive off the first tee. He was weed whipping by the pond and couldn't have heard my cries of "FORE", so wasn't aware of my close shot. I did see him jump in surprise when the ball landed next to him, but I swear to God I beaned him in the head."

With nervous apprehension I waited for him to continue.

"I drove down up to him as fast as I could and asked if he was okay. His response was 'I o ay. OO eh unt it ne. Ont ell ack, I uposed oo ee on ole histeen.' My gosh Jack, he was drooling and I could tell that I had hit him in the mouth just by the way he was speaking. And he kept saying 'I o ay, I o ay'. Shouldn't your guys be wearing hard hats or something? Holy smokes, I could have killed him."

After a brief explanation of the challenges my key employee had been over-

coming, Mr. Thompson and I parted ways each counting our blessings and laughing at his misperception. He continued his round. I on the other hand sighed again with relief and went back to the shop to order some hard hats, two dozen in fact, one for everyone.

That was a while ago and the hats have seen their off and on wear and tear. Typically dependent upon the assertive-

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ness of the particular year's annual Green Committee or an adamant member. I could always explain away the use of hard hats as imaginary protection that only gave confidence to players to "hit away". Indeed OSHA suggests that hardhat use is dependent upon the environment in which they are worn. Does this mean that everyone including players would need to wear them on a course where the potential is always present for injury from any direction?

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I am not going to name names, or the course, as it is not relevant, but believe me, it did happen. As I understand it the hitee, I'll call him Kenny Jay Sodbuster to protect the innocent, was just finishing up

a bit of irrigation repair work upon the driving range at the Happy Knoll Golf Club. Although well aware of the club's suggested hard hat policy and in possession of a fine hard hat, which was unfortunately hanging in his locker, Kenny thought it critical to complete his fix even though the range had just opened and practice had begun.

Almost everyone warming up that day appreciated that there was a lad roughly 175 yards from the tee doing something very important and were hitting pitching wedges and other short irons. Everyone that is except for one individual who felt he should try a shot with his new Sasquatch driver by Nike. ('After all, I'm sure he thought, 'my shot will go way, way, way beyond 175 yards and anyhow, what are the chances of hitting a kid out there?')

I don't have to tell you what happened, the poorly hit line drive blasted Kenny smack in the back of his head. And I don't have to tell you what came first, the concussion or the egg. It is also my understanding that after he got up several minutes later he complained of a splitting headache. Go figure!

Kenny was rushed to the Rapid Care Center just down the road where, after a brief observation,

he was sent to the emergency hospital for an MRI and CT Scan because the doctors couldn't locate the skull bone under Kenny's new disfiguration. At the time everyone involved was very concerned, everyone except Kenny that is, he was flying high on a new medication meant to suppress his awareness about the predicament.

To make a long story short, Kenny is okay. Insurance covered his time off and the emergency room visit. And the club he works at has implemented a new, stricter hard hat policy. I have followed suit.

My team now sports either a sombrero bump cap or a baseball bump cap insert. I appreciate that a ball rarely hits an individual's head, much less an individual at all, but better safe than sorry. Both my son and daughter work with me daily and I can only imagine the lifelong guilt I would bear if either were hit in the head by an errant shot.

Perhaps it is time for you to review your policy, too. - JM