

Operation Mountain Lake

By Joel Jackson, CGCS

This is Joel Jackson aboard a beer-laden Club Car reporting live from Lake Wales. I am imbedded with the Ridge

Green Side Up



Runners detachment of the Ridge Chapter Coalition as they make their way up Alt. 17 to occupy the Mountain Lake Golf Course. I was asked to fill in for Geraldo Rivera who was forced to leave

Polk County after revealing how many cases of beer had been purchased for the Ridge golf outing.

This first-ever media eyewitness report on the actual implementation of the notorious and infamous "Ridge Rules" in action is not recommended reading for dues-paying members of the USGA or their staff members. In fact, USGA Green Section Agronomist Todd Lowe left immediately after lunch before the first tee shot was struck. When I inquired why he was leaving in such haste, "Don't ask. Don't tell," he shouted as he ran to his car.

To give you a sense of the clear and present danger of a Ridge Runner golf outing, the game being played that day was "Best Two Net Scores" of each foursome. Our foursome contained five people, a fact that seemed to escape team captain Bobby "RPG" Ellis. The RPG stands for "Ridge Putt Gimme." The other members of our "foursome" were in order of rank: Alan "MOAS" Puckett - MOAS means "Mother of All Slices"; Tom "Bunker Buster" Barnett; Billy "Stealth Bomber" Card and me, "Three Putt" Jackson.

Captain Ellis gave early indications of how the Ridge Rules are used to alter the normally accept-



Ridge sand wedge. Photo by Joel Jackson

ed Geneva Convention Rules of Civilized Golf when he hit two or three tee shots on the first hole until he kept one in play. When I asked about the fairly obvious violation, he merely said he was invoking the "Multiple Mulligan" section of the Ridge Rules. Since both Ellis and Puckett are past presidents of the Ridge GCSA, I learned they are entitled to "Double Secret" rule bending.

On the second hole, when Ellis hooked his ball out of bounds, I asked if he wanted to reload. He said, "That ball is playable. Ridge Rules define out-of-bounds as a ball hit out of Polk County." Another rule he invoked often, which led to his nickname, was the "RPG" or Ridge Putt Gimme. RPGs ranged from 6 inches to 6 feet depending on his score needed on a particular hole. He never scored less than net par on a hole.

"MOAS" Puckett was devastating on the tee box. He would take dead aim left and a big divot (read crater) after firing his 580mm TaylorMade Cannon on a trajectory that looked a lot like a drunken Australian throwing a boomerang. Only once did the ball and his divots fail to make it to the fairway and that was on our last hole. Puckett proceeded to demolish two 80-year-old oak trees and two fairway bunkers with four mighty whacks plus his tee shot enroute to the front approach of the green and promptly got up and down with a three-putt for a Ridge Five. You do the math.

One of the most prodigious displays of high-tech ordinance came from my cart partner "Bunker Buster" Barnett. Using a laser-guided driver and fully automatic 7-wood, Barnett displayed the uncanny accuracy of his clubs by hitting a fairway and greenside bunker on every hole. Even though the bunkers had recently been fortified by architect Brian

Silva, he destroyed them easily. Captain Ellis showed me how to conquer them by using the patented Ridge Sand Wedge. See the accompanying photo. This club makes Peter Kessler's Perfect Club obsolete.

Billy "Stealth Bomber" Card had the most accurate artillery and constantly bracketed the middle of the fairways 300 yards down-range. If the other players chlidipped a drive or hit it so far off line that it would require too much time and effort to get back in play, we simply played scramble format and dropped within in club length of Card's ball. Ellis assured me this was entirely legal since it kept up the pace of play, which was vitally important to our coalition's timetable, since happy hour was going to be on an abbreviated timeline.

Puckett and Ellis also employed various diversionary tactics like dialing up each others cell phones to ring in the middle of a competitor's backswing. When it was impossible to get the timing down on the phones, they would simply talk, tell jokes and laugh just loud enough to be heard. Another effective tactic was to place numerous empty beer bottles in the dash compartments of the golf cart and swerve down the fairway at high speeds to creating distracting clanking sounds.

At the end of the day, after all that effort to shape and manage the rub of the green in our favor, we each ended up paying five bucks to the real golfers - "Wolfman" Hopkins and Scooter Scamehorn and another golfer whose name is classified (he does the Ridge wet work - code name, Water Hazard). Their "foursome" only had three people. Hey, Ridge Rules.

This is Joel Jackson reporting for Florida Green News from somewhere near Lake Wales.

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