

## As It Lies Who is Number One?

By Jim Walker

Being number one in a lot of things in this world is very important: Number-one-ranked player in the world, World Series champs, Super Bowl champs, NBA champs, NCAA



champs in football and basketball — all can have life-changing ramifications. The list goes on and on.

There are exceptions, however, to being number one. It is not cool to be the first one to arrive at a party, or the first one to leave. It is not polite to be the first one finished with a meal at the dinner table, an act which can draw looks and whispers from others dining with you. There may be more delicate situations in which a man might not want to finish first, but I digress.

All of this leads me to a discussion of being the number-one person to tee off each morning at my golf course. I know many people like early tee times so they can finish and have a good deal of the day remaining

for other activities like having a nap on the sofa accompanied by the soft murmur of the television. I also like to get out early on a golf course if it is going to be a crowded, slow-moving affair. My wife on the other hand thinks an early tee time is anything prior to 10 a.m.

My golf course has a long-standing tradition that the first 10 tee times are given to the first 10 people who arrive at the course each morning. No one knows how long this policy has been in effect. Not one player or employee knows when it started or why.

When I arrived five years ago, I discussed the concept of doing away with this goofy situation with my assistant and many of the greyhounds who comprised this group. My idea was to let people reserve these times in a more civilized manner like on the phone or in person. It was not something I considered long because the hangman's noose was quickly thrown over a large limb of an oak tree adjacent to the putting green. Being a perceptive person and having gone further in school than Jethro Bodine, I knew that the rope was for me and the tradition was not to be trifled with.

Having been dealt a hand of lemons, I decided to make lemonade. Since I failed in my attempt to change tradition, I paid very close attention to the ins and outs, whys and wherefores, and studied the psychological profiles of the greyhounds. Keeping score for these people seems to be measured in how fast they play,

not how well they played.

But, let me begin at the beginning of the day, which for these people begins at 4:30 a.m. That's correct. I know because I am at the course before 4:30 a.m. each day because we host 70,000 rounds a year, and every piece of equipment with wheels on it also is equipped with lights. Mowing greens, tees, fairways, roughs, slopes, and even spraying projects are done "under the lights." My crew reports between 4 and 5 a.m. each day, and everybody hits the ground running.

If we don't stay ahead of the first group, we'll get buried in players and not be able to mow anything.

And there's another phenomenon at Greynolds Park: early bird joggers and cyclists. People run and bike in the dark. They also wear very dark clothes so they are difficult to see and that keeps you on your toes as you enter the park each morning before your first wake-up cup of coffee.

The other day I arrived at 4:10 a.m. and Tin Cup Jr. "aka" Sneaky Pete was already in the parking lot. How the heck he got in is a mystery because I use the back gate, and the security guard doesn't open the front gate until 4:30 a.m. When I inquired, the early bird said he left his car there overnight and entered through one of the pedestrian gates which are never locked.

Half of these people are millionaires who should be members at one of several nice private clubs in

the area and could have civilized tee times. We have a former owner of a trash-hauling company in New York, a nice Italian gentleman. In the winter we have the largest importer and exporter of chocolate in Canada, yes, all of Canada. There's a retired hairdresser and owner of several upscale salons in Connecticut, and a retired jockey and thoroughbred trainer from Saratoga, who retired before age 50. I could go on and on, but I think you get the picture.

These people are in the parking lot before the milk is delivered and last call is made at the local watering holes. What in the name of God do they do for the rest of the day? I'm telling you, shouting matches have occurred over who was first, third or sixth on any particular day, since this is all done on the honor system.

Evidently none of the previous managers felt this Greek drama in three acts was worth monitoring. Can you imagine? What do you do at work? Well, I monitor the first ten cars in the parking lot so they don't kill each other. Keeping track of who is number one at Greynolds Park is a dirty job, but somebody has to do it.

In my 30 plus years of running golf courses, this is the most bizarre behavior I have ever seen. Maybe you have some goofy goings-on at your course too. If so, I would like to hear from you. Just remember, all the guys I'm talking about are retired, so they don't have anything else to do each day except go home.

## GREEN SIDE UP



Joel Jackson, CGCS

# Rules of the Game

By Joel Jackson, CGCS

I'm not talking about knowing the USGA Rules of Golf verbatim, like Rule 36 — immovable hazards. Although knowing that rule did allow Tiger Woods to have the gallery move a

boulder for him in the Phoenix Open a few years ago. I'm talking about some common-sense rules to avoid obstacles in our career path.

### The Human Condition

Tirades, tantrums and termi-

nations are not substitutes for training, coaching, discipline and self control. Treat others as you would have them treat you — including suppliers — and do it with respect.

One rotten apple spoils the whole barrel, and we're all in the barrel.

Always give credit to others: the crew for doing the work, a peer for providing problem-solving information, the green chairman for spearheading the approval for a project, a supplier for