

What, Me Worry?

There may not be that many readers who remember the famous words of Alfred E. Newman, the spokesperson and mascot of Mad Magazine, but he was a personal favorite of mine whose memory is kept alive by the fading tattoo on the arm of my assistant, Bobby Thigpen. Alfred's philosophy on life was @#%& it.

Oh, to be like Alfred! But alas, kids in college, car payments, insurance, mortgage, (thank God I don't have one of those) utilities, cell phone, gasoline, ailing parents, oy. The bills keep coming, so we've got to keep working.

It's getting so I can hardly watch the game I love so much on TV because of the idiot commentators working the broadcast. The line that gets me most is: "This putt Bobby Bigbucks has for birdie on 18 is worth \$220,000. That's the difference between finishing alone in second place or tying for second with Johnny Gotrocks and Bill Cashappy. Yea, that putt is worth \$22,000 a foot. What pressure?"

What pressure indeed. I'm absolutely devastated for these touring pros

AS IT LIES



Jim Walker

and all their pressure. Thirty of them made \$2 million-plus last year. The top 70 made over a million, and Nicky Price — who is a true gentleman of the game — finished 125th with \$650,000. The very top players are living like kings, traveling in private jets or custom motor homes with their swing coach, sports psychologist, management guru, and financial adviser.

There is no doubt these guys are playing at a level far higher than 30 or 40 years ago, but give them back their wooden drivers, steel shafts, marsh-mallow balata balls, cut the first-place check to \$100,000 and see if the Tour would have to require them to spend time signing autographs. If the leading money winner made less than a million, and the guy finishing 125th made \$100,000 they would be back in their cars, staying at Holiday Inns, eating at Applebee's, and damn grateful they could play a game to make a living.

I don't want to pick on golfers alone. The NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB can also get on the bandwagon. These guys are the best and most talented players in their sports, but they are just playing a game for their enjoyment and ours. They aren't finding a cure for cancer, heart disease, or aids. Real pressure isn't catching a game-winning touchdown or hitting a game-winning home run. It isn't hitting a 3-pointer at the buzzer to win the championship.

Pressure is the middle class guys (and now in a lot of cases, gals as well) who get up every morning no matter how rotten they feel and get their kids off to school, go to work and do a good job, then take those same kids to soccer practice, music class, ballet school or to buy a new pair of sneakers at the mall so they can have the same kind their friends are wearing. They take their kids to Disney for vacation instead of leaving them with grandma and taking their wives to a tropical resort or to Tahiti where the women don't wear tops. Island life is AOK — party all night and surf all day.

Pressure is being a great parent to your children, a good and loving mate to your spouse, and making this world a better place when you check out than it

was when you got here.

Pressure is keeping a public golf course in good shape all the time without enough help, equipment, or cultural-practice supplies, while hosting 60,000 rounds a year.

Pressure is keeping a top private course in great shape all the time with the Greens Committee breathing down your neck to keep the greens stimping 10-plus, the fairways cut at 3/8 inch, all the bunkers perfect, all the trees trimmed, and all the flowers blooming so their wives aren't chirping about the course not being pretty enough when they play nine holes on Sunday afternoon.

Honey, we put some pretty blue flowers at the 14th tee. Did you see them? They match yours and your three playing partners' hair perfectly.

Pressure is being boss, friend, psychologist, big brother, father and all around good role model to your crew members. Making them take pride in not only what they do at the golf course but in themselves.

Is that pressure? Tell me the truth! You can't handle the truth!! Yea, that's pressure. Playing a game is not pressure. Lee Trevino said: "Winning on the Tour isn't pressure. Playing a \$50 Nassau with \$10 in your pocket is pressure."

Now for the ultimate pressure — retirement. Two and a half years away for me. For you young guys, who knows what shape Social Security will be in by the time you reach the finish line? Plan now! I don't want to be the guy on a soapbox crying wolf, but Father Time creeps up on you at stealth level 5.

Get your ducks in a row. Talk to a financial planner and work out a game plan. You are never too young to plan for your future. Last year, I was 20. Six months ago I turned 50. Then a few months ago I became 61. Gee ain't it funny how time slips away.

I just read an article in the financial section of the paper this morning that said most baby boomers will retire \$165,000 in debt. Now that's pressure.

What, Me Worry? You bloody well better! Alfred E. Newman was just a cartoon.