

One of my “kids” called recently to ask for a favor, and I was delighted to help. The “kid” was Joe Livingston, one of the dozens of young people who received GCSAA scholarships during my tenure managing the old version of the national’s foundation in Lawrence, Kan.

Joe’s now the certified superintendent at River Crest Country Club in Forth Worth, Texas, a marvelous old club with an exclusive membership that includes a Who’s Who of the rich and powerful in the area. His request was simple: Would I speak at his North Texas chapter’s March meeting? I immediately accepted knowing that Texas might be a wee bit warmer than Cleveland in early spring.

As most readers know, these monthly chapter meetings usually follow a predictable schedule: education, lunch and golf. The North Texas GCSA event to which Joe invited me followed that standard schedule, but it threw in a couple of twists I think other chapters would do well to consider.

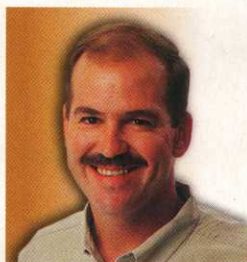
When I received the agenda, I learned there would be another speaker: a meteorologist from one of the local TV stations. I thought this was brilliant. Learn about a relevant weather-related topic — in this case, lightning safety — and get some media exposure at the same time.

So we showed up bright and early at the club hosting the meeting, and I began my presentation. I had them enthralled with my pithy remarks about “Successful Communication with Golfers.” I was 45 minutes into the speech, and all 120 or so attendees were paying rapt attention. Then, like a herd of deer spooked by a noise, all 120 heads swiveled hard and looked toward the entrance where the TV meteorologist had just walked in. Did I mention the meteorologist was female ... and about 6-foot-one ... and really, really *not* unattractive?

Needless to say, I could have been Tiger Woods sharing my top-secret keys to great golf and not one of these guys would have heard a word I said. In card game terms, I was trumped. So I wrapped up quickly, helped the weather lady set up her computer, and

Chapter Meeting Has a Few Twists

BY PAT JONES



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skulked away quietly. (Actually, she gave a great presentation. And despite the trumping, the guys seemed to enjoy my humble efforts as well.)

Then came golf at the beautiful Ridglea Country Club in Forth Worth. This too was a bit different. Rather than the usual stroke gross and net play, it was a modified Ryder Cup format. Participants were divided into teams (East vs. West, or, essentially, Fort Worth vs. Dallas) and paired off for nine holes of match play. After nine, you switched to play the other member of your foursome from the opposing team. Each nine-hole match counted for a point. A two-man best-ball score was also kept for a team match for another point. It was a truly fun format that inspired fierce individual and team competition.

What struck me though was that, unlike any chapter event I played in before, there was no prize money at stake. The winning team (which turned out to be the East) laid claim to “Bully & the Bone,” a rather unfortunate piece of sculpture featuring a concrete bulldog and an actual bone which had been found by one of the local superintendents during the event years ago.

It reminded me of the epiphany moment from “The Grinch Who Stole Christmas” when the Grinch realizes that presents do not make the holiday. Sometimes the prize is in the fun and the competition, not the purse. That’s just one more thing that made this meeting a little more special than most.

The bottom line is that at a time when chapter meeting attendance is declining in many areas, these guys have gotten creative and are trying some different things. That’s a great lesson for all chapters to ponder.

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