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SETH JONES, *Editor-in-Chief*

The embedded journalist

I saw a headline recently about how dangerous the job of being an embedded journalist is. ¶ I chuckled at the thought. Well, sure, it’s dangerous. But those guys chose those jobs. Just like my friend Will, whom I wrote about a few issues ago. He knows the danger of the places he visits, just to take a photo. ¶ And then I think of my job. We’re related, you know — the embedded journalist and the editor-in-chief of *Golfdom*? We might not be brothers, but we’re cousins, twice removed.

I’ve even had to do my own kind of embedded journalism, and I’ve been doing it a lot lately. Except I don’t go to Afghanistan, I go to Augusta. I even traveled internationally last month. I know it’s a tough job, but luckily, England has a lot of pubs.

Some of you may think that I risked life and limb doing this month’s cover story on the Billy Casper Golf Annual Meeting. But the only thing I risked was a sunburn, and maybe alienating some staunch anti-management company readers.

The seeds of this story were first planted over the 4th of July weekend in 2011.

I was at the John Deere Classic, playing in a golf scramble. My cart partner was Bryan Stromme, BCG’s director of agronomy for the Midwest region (and that day, the only player from my cart to keep a drive in the fairway.)

We started talking about the travel we had done through the year, and that was when Stromme mentioned to me the BCG Annual Meeting. I wasn’t familiar with it, so I asked him for details. The more I learned, the more impressed I was with what he was describing.

By the end of the round, I asked Bryan if he could get me

on the invitation list for the meeting. “I’ll look into it,” he told me.

It took a year-and-a-half, but this February, two weeks after the Golf Industry Show in San Diego, I found myself at the BCG meeting in Tampa, Fla.

Once again, I was an embedded journalist. This time I was deep in management company territory. I knew the dangers. But hey, this is my job.

There was some hand-wringing when the idea of me coming to the meeting was proposed to the upper brass at BCG. What did I want to write about? What was I looking to find out? Could I be trusted?

I told them I was on a fact-finding mission. I wanted to learn about the company and specifically about this meeting that was hosting some 150 superintendents from around the country every year, yet I had never heard a thing about it.

Did I get to open every closed door at Billy Casper Golf? Of course not. This is a business, after all, and they have their methods they want to keep private.

Was every source completely forthcoming with me? I’ll tell you that it seemed that everyone answered my questions. Especially Bryan Bielecki, vice president of agronomy for Billy Casper Golf. I asked him some tough questions, and he shot me straight. I think that’s why he’s in the position he’s in today. I could see working for that guy. He’s a leader, and he’s not afraid to make hard decisions.

So I made it out of the BCG Annual Meeting in one piece. No blood was spilled. I even got a putting lesson from Billy Casper himself (World Golf Hall of Fame, class of 1978.) My putter has been hot ever since.

There’s no telling how many courses Billy Casper Golf, and management companies in general, will add to their portfolios in the next few years. But if you find yourself at BCG’s Annual meeting, from what I could see? It’s not such a dangerous job.

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