

"I asked what was next on the agenda for his birthday. He didn't know, but he knew what he wanted to do for his 13th birthday: 'Come back here.'"

SETH JONES, Editor-in-Chief

Happy birthday, Nathaniel

n the past four weeks I've been on both Augusta National and Pinehurst No. 2. But it was two miles from my front door, at a driving range/pitch and putt, where I saw something I don't get to see often.

But I'm guessing you do. It's 9 a.m. on a Monday. Jeff Burey, a former pro at both Pinehurst and Prairie Dunes, and I are standing there chatting when in walks Bill and Nathaniel Huffman. Nathaniel is celebrating his 12th birthday, and the one thing he asked for was that his dad take him to the driving range so they could smack some range balls.

Jeff's eyes lit up when he heard he had a first-timer in his pro shop. Nathaniel's head was on a swivel, soaking it all in. Bill, a twice-a-month golfer, smiled, recognizing he had brought his son to a friendly place for beginners.

As Jeff sent the Huffmans out with the jumbo bucket

of balls (\$12.50), he stopped Nathaniel one more time to hand him a junior sized 6-iron. "This is for you," he said. "Your own golf club, for your birthday." Nathaniel smiled in awe.

As I finished up my lesson, I walked over to see what Nathaniel thought of his first golf experience.

"It was fun, I liked it a lot

— I think I hit it pretty far,"
he told me. I asked him what
was next on the agenda for
his 12th birthday. He didn't
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birthday. "Come back here,"
he said.

I get to see a lot of maintenance shops around the country, get to interview a lot of really great superintendents, sometimes equipment manufacturers even trust me to operate their machinery. But seeing Bill and Nathaniel out there, father and son, enjoying a moment like that? For just a little bit it took my mind off the business side of the game, and reminded me about the pure enjoyment of the game.

It's something I hope you get to see often, because for me, it gave me a little extra focus. It was a nice reminder that this game is great for reasons beyond making a buck, or beautiful fairways, or the well struck 5-iron. Moments like Nathaniel's 12th birthday, which he'll probably remember for the rest of his life, make it especially great.

Happy birthday, Nathaniel. I hope you find many fairways in your golfing days. **Update:** The question I've been asked by readers most often recently is a fun one: did I ever sell my Z28 Camaro I wrote about a few issues ago?

It's bittersweet to report that yes, after reposting my 2002 Camaro on Craigslist this spring, it quickly sold.

It went on two test drives: A father and son who were looking to buy it as a replacement car for the Mustang that the 17-year-old had just totaled (both the Camaro and I trembled at the thought of this kid driving my car) and a guy about my age who had owned a few other Camaros and was looking to get back into one.

With the guy my age, he asked me if I minded him romping on it as we entered the interstate. I told him to go for it, this wasn't a minivan.

So he gave it everything, pushing both of our eyeballs a little deeper into our heads than God ever intended. *Sold*. A few minutes later this guy's dad showed up with an envelope full of cash.

A handshake later he's asking me if I'd like a ride home. There was a steakhouse nearby. I had him drop me off there.

Buddy, let me tell you, that was the most bittersweet steak of my life.

But good news: I've since put my 1964 Impala in a friend's garage to get some work done. My days of driving a badass car aren't dead... yet.

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