



RELAXATION AT SPYGLASS

By Rob Schultz

Pebble Beach was full of weekend hackers who were playing the course of their dreams. Poppy Hills was full of weekend hackers who couldn't get on Pebble Beach. The folks in both pro shops laughed at me when I requested a tee time at any golf course located on the idyllic peninsula called Monterrey.

I had just spent two days stumbling through the earthquake-ravaged Nimitz Freeway wreckage in Oakland and the strangely twisted homes in the Marina District in San Francisco and writing about my observations and interview, for my paper. I had one day off until the Green Bay Packers played the 49ers in what would be the Packers' turning point of the season.

I needed to relax. I needed a golf course. And despite making the two-hour drive north on Highway 1 that included the most beautiful views of the ocean and mountains that I've ever seen, it looked like I would fall short of my objective.

I made one last stop. Spyglass Hill. Hmm. Maybe.

"You can tee off in 10 minutes. Can you get ready?"

I wanted to hug the assistant pro behind the counter in the Spyglass pro shop. After I concluded my round, I wanted to buy him dinner for giving me the opportunity to play a course that gave me chills every step of the way.

Spyglass Hill is the sometimes forgotten cousin of the Big Three courses of Monterrey. Pebble Beach and ultra-private Cypress Point draw all the attention.

But Spyglass is a treasure all its own. And it can be equally as difficult.

The course begins so majestically as it extends itself out to the sea. The picturesque setting is displayed well on the foreword pages of Geoffrey Cornish's book *The Golf Course*. But you can't truly appreciate it unless you've been there.

As I walked the first few holes on a beautiful autumn afternoon, the sound of the waves pounding on the shore was broken only by the constant barking from hundreds of seals who were

resting on rocks just a few yards away from those crashing waves.

At times I forgot that I was there to golf. If I wasn't spending time cherishing the Robert Trent Jones layout that is so similar to those found in Scotland, I watched the deer, the birds, or those crazy seals. They were all in incredible abundance.

When I did remember to golf, I got this incredible surge of adrenaline. One shot that sticks in my memory was at the tee of the first par-3. It was an elevated tee and the green was located 150 yards out with the ocean as a backdrop. I was so pumped up I drilled a perfect 9-iron. It sailed against a deep blue sky right at the flag stick, then dropped about two feet from the cup.

Making a good shot against such natural beauty is the ultimate for me. It's my Super Bowl, my U.S. Open. Give me just a few of those shots every 10 years and I'm happy.

Spyglass gracefully moves from the sea inward through tall timber and rolling hills. In its own way, the course remains equally beautiful.

On the seventh fairway, I was about to hit an 8-iron shot when I was interrupted by the presence of a fawn. Its mother had scurried across the fairway moments earlier, but the fawn hesitated and now nervously awaited its chance to rejoin its family.

Crazy as it seems, but the fawn, like a member of some gallery, waited for me to hit my shot before it crossed the fairway.

It stood just five feet away from me as I backed off to take a practice swing. Its eyes remained fixed on me as I stood over the ball. I backed off and tried to persuade the young deer to take a hike. It moved a few feet further away, but otherwise it didn't budge.

Finally, I hit my 8-iron, began my walk to the green and kept an eye on that fawn. Slowly it began its walk toward its mother, completely unafraid of the skinny golfer who had just hit that fat 8-iron shot.

I could swear that fawn was laughing.

No round of golf is ever perfect. In

this case I was paired with a buffoon who spent every minute of the round trying to diminish all the wonders that the rest of the group was enjoying.

He failed miserably. But he did have his moments.

On the second tee we divulged what we did for a living. Billy Bob Buffoon was a Monterrey lifer living off the cash left to him by his parents. He was a 365-days-a-year golfer who had a 25 handicap and cheated like a banshee.

Anyway, when I admitted that I was a sportswriter, Billy Bob whipped his driver at me from point-blank range. I ducked as the driver whizzed by my head.

"I HATE SPORTSWRITERS. I HATE YOU!" he screamed.

It seems he once had a run-in with a sportswriter. Or maybe he dreamed about a sportswriter once. I don't know. But I spent the rest of the round ignoring him.

It wasn't hard considering my surroundings. I still relaxed. I still had the time of my life.

When I returned home from the west coast everybody wanted to talk to me about the earthquake damage or the Packers' exciting victory. I wanted to talk about Spyglass, those seals, those first few holes, that 9-iron shot, that near chip-in from a difficult sand trap at the 9th hole.

As I thought about the 1980s and all the wonderful golf courses I played, I rate Spyglass as the best.

I have a deep appreciation for courses around Wisconsin like Lawsonia, Oneida, North Shore and Maple Bluff.

And Hazeltine Country Club was a blast, so were the TPC at Sawgrass and the courses at Hilton Head Island and Palm Springs.

But none of the state courses had a setting that compared to Spyglass. And courses like the TPC at Sawgrass and PGA West are so artificial compared to Spyglass.

In fact, after walking off of PGA West last March I vowed to never empty my wallet on a course that wasn't at least 50 years old. Spyglass doesn't fit that requirement, but its natural setting makes it appear that way.

I was upset that I couldn't play Pebble Beach that beautiful day in November. It truly is a national treasure. But as I drove away from Spyglass I wasn't thinking about Pebble.

I was too relaxed. I was too comfortable. I fulfilled my mission at Spyglass. For that I'll forever be grateful.