

Twenty-Six and Counting



By Jack Parish

TWENTY SIX AND COUNTING

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CHAPTER ONE

It's a gloomy day in September and we are all in the waiting room at Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, New Jersey. This is not, how I wanted to be spending my Sunday afternoon. When we arrived at the emergency room parking area around 1:30 pm, Ernie was already here, thanks to the Pompton Plains Ambulance Corp. Let me back track a little, we were on the fifteenth hole at Sunset Valley Golf Course in Pompton Plains, NJ. The fifteenth hole is a par three, with a fast sloping green back to front, a deep bunker guards the front, with water left, but it's not really in play. Today it's playing one hundred and thirty yards, it's not a hard hole except you can't see the bottom of the flag. We won the fourteen hole, so we had honors. I took my seven wood and hooked it right into the pond. I decided to take an unplayable, but now I'm hitting three. This time I hit it short right in the deep bunker, I'm staring at a six, easily. In our group, the worst you can do is double the par. All in one motion, I whip around and proceed to throw my seven wood towards the golf cart. Everybody ducks and they all yell "WOOO". Tommy chimes up, and says to me, "I liked your follow through on your throw rather than your hit." "Fuck you Tommy." I yell back, everyone is laughing but me. We're playing two man teams and low score wins the hole. It's Ernie's turn to save us on this hole. He uses an eight iron and puts it hole high just off the green, very puttable. As he is walking back to our cart, he steps on my seven wood that was lying on the ground and takes a nasty fall. While falling backwards, he hit's his head on the ball washer, then lands right on his back on the cart path curbing. While lying on his back, his eyes roll to the back of his head and has obviously passed out. As I bend down to pick up my seven wood, I ask "Does anyone know CPR?" Tommy who use to worked on the volunteer ambulance corp in Ho-Ho-Kus, turns to me and says "Jack your an asshole." Tommy bends down next to Ernie and says "He's breathing, he doesn't need CPR." Tommy yanks two golf towels off our bags and places them on either side of his head, so it wouldn't move. He examines him further and sees that he has a nice three inch gash on the right side of his scalp where he hit the ball washer, it's now oozing blood. Tommy turns to the group and asked "Do any of you have a clean towel or shirt?" Billy gladly hands him a new golf shirt that his wife gave him for his birthday last month, he would never get to wear it. Tommy puts it directly on the cut to slow the bleeding. Billy takes out his cell phone and calls the pro shop and tells them what happened. The head pro gets on the phone and yells, so that we can all hear "WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T MOVE HIM, we'll send a maintenance cart, where are you?" and Billy tells where we are. Tommy then asks, "Does anybody have a jacket I have to cover him up, it's getting colder by the minute?" Now the wait begins. "Did anybody see what happened?" asks Tommy. I turn and say "I did, he slipped on the wet pavement, my golf club got twisted between his legs, he then fell and hit his head on the ball washer and the rest is history." Just then Ernie started to have a seizure,

Tommy tried to protect him from hitting anything. It was over in couple of minutes. Most of us had never seen anything like that before, I know it scared the shit out of me, I don't know about the rest of them.

CHAPTER TWO

The flat bed maintenance golf cart came ambling up the cart path with the head pro at the wheel. Today in New Jersey, all golf course superintendents and golf course pros have to have advanced first aid training. As he pulled up to the tee box area and assessed the situation he could see that Ernie was lying on the bare pavement with some sort of golf towels draped on either side of his head. The pros name is Phil Combs, likable guy, not much of a teacher, He asks "So what happened?" Tommy describes briefly what happened, but leaves out the part involving the seven wood, throwing thank you Tommy. Phil kneels down next to Ernie and says "Can you hear me?" Ernie's eyes open and faintly says "Yes". "Does anything hurt right now? he asks. "My ankle is killing me and my head hurts" replied Ernie. "How is your neck" asks Phil? "Okay" whispers Ernie. "Do you have neck or back problems?" asks Phil. A simple "No" comes back. "We're going to lift you into the maintenance cart, if anything hurts, let us know." he says. Phil turns to Tommy and says " Let me have two irons from your bag, take your shoe laces off, I need your laces to tie the two clubs on either side of his ankle to immobilize it. Two of you guys get on either side of Ernie, Tommy you get his ankles and I'll try and keep his head steady. We all lift on three, ready one, two, three." yells Phil. It was a little tricky for all of us to lift Ernie, who is no light weight. Phil brought plenty of blankets because the temperature was now only in the low forties. Phil drove, Tommy was in the back holding Ernie's head still and Billy and me follow the maintenance cart back to the pro shop. The Pompton Plains Ambulance was already in the parking lot, waiting for us. They transfered Ernie from the maintenance cart to a gurney and then into the ambulance. The driver asked "Where to Phil?" Tommy interrupts and says "Can you take him to Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, that's where he lives." "No problem" says the driver. Thirty minutes later we're pulling into the emergency room parking lot of the Valley Hospital. It's almost empty, the only other ambulance was from Wyckoff. The doctor and nurses are in charge now and we're ushered into the waiting room. "I'll call Vivian and let her know what's happened." said Billy. After about ten minutes later, the doctor comes out and says "Because he went unconscious, we're keeping him over night just as a precaution, it's standard procedure. His ankle is broken and we're putting on a soft cast. He needed only twelve stitches to close his head wound. We notified his wife and she'll be here any minute." "I already called her" said Billy. We all looked at each other and shrugged our shoulders. I felt really guilty so I suggested, "You guys can go, I'll wait

for Vivian. Billy says, "My oldest boy has a soccer game under the lights in Glen Rock, do you guys mine?" Tommy adds, "I'll stay with Jack, Vivian will need someone to help with the kids."

CHAPTER THREE

The four of us myself, Tommie, Anthony and Billy have been playing non-stop for the past twenty six years and counting. It all started in my TV room in the basement, we had just finished watching the Giants get their asses kicked by the Cowboys in an regular season game 20 to 13 on Sunday, September 18, 1983. Bill Parcells had just taken over from Ray Perkins and it could be a long season for the new head coach. As we're replaying the game, Tommy announces to the group that he is giving up his season tickets. "Good decision." says Billy. One winning season in the last ten years, that will kill anyones love for the game. "I think I'm going to take up fishing or maybe bowling, it's a lot less nerve racking." says Tommy. "Yeah and you won't yell at the wife as much or hit the kids every time your team loses a freaking game." says Anthony. "Screw you Anthony" yells Tommy. "I'm serious, it's no fun anymore. It's getting expensive, parking, food, beer prices and the fans are awful. Fights breakout at every game, I can't even take the kids anymore." "So what are you going to do, root for the Jets?" I ask. "Shea stadium is too far and Joe Walton and the Jets look worse than the hapless Giants right now, thanks, but no thanks. What do you guys do every Sunday, sit on your asses and watch me at the games." asked Tommy? Anthony says "Woo big guy, Jack and I play golf every Sunday, rain or shine. Billy joins us whenever his wife let's him." "Funny, Funny." protests Billy. Tommy what are you doing next Sunday?" I ask. Tommy reply's "I haven't picked up a club since my college days." "Sounds like an excuse to me, Tommy Boy." says Billy. "How much do you play for?" asks Tommy. "Chump change" I add. "Anthony or I will set a tee time for this coming Sunday. Billy, will Harriet let you play this coming Sunday?" I half heartily joked. "Screw you Jack, just because your marriage is on the rocks don't wave that flag at me!" retorts Billy. "That's one for you Billy, Debi and I are trying to work out a compromise around my golf addiction." I responded. "Tommy think it over, if your chicken... puck ...puck and can't make it, call me Wednesday night, I'll get one or two other clowns depending on what Harriet says." I said. A loud "FUCK YOU" was heard around the room, Billy was fuming. "Just for that, I'm going to kick your ass, twenty bucks on the line, put up or shut up, shit head." shouts Billy. At the conclusion of his outrage, he spills his drink all over himself, everyone laughs, poor Billy storms out of my house, slamming doors as he makes his exit. As he's leaving, he turns and shouts, "Just make the call funny man, we'll see whose laughing then." Tommy looks at the two of us and says. "Chump change... huh." We all laugh and then have another

drink. Anthony then asked Tommy if Coach Parcells is going to play his rookie quarterback, Phil Simms, next Sunday. Tommy responds, "I don't care, I should be on the back nine somewhere playing golf with you guys." I then give Tommy a high five and we all have one more for the road.

CHAPTER FOUR

On Wednesday night, the calls are made to Anthony, Billy (or is it Harriet) and Tommy. We're playing on an easy, flat golf course called, The Meadows in Lincoln Park. We have a ten am tee time, I'll pick you guys up around nine am. To get ready for his "grudge" match, Billy has hit the driving range three times this week, he is pumped. Tommy, the new guy, doesn't start looking for his set of Ping Golf Clubs, until Saturday night. He finally finds them behind a set of snow tires, he hasn't used in fifteen years. He takes an old oil rag and starts wiping off the dust. The last time he used them was in his senior year in college, trying out for the fraternity intramural golf team, which he didn't make. He'll wear his black officiating sneakers he uses during Bidy Basketball Season. He'll borrow balls and tees from either Anthony or myself, he's too afraid to ask Billy anything. It's Sunday morning and I'm the designated driver this week and you know I'm picking up Billy last, so he has to sit in the back seat. We pull into the parking lot around nine thirty am and some groups are already coming off the eighteenth green, they are finished for the day. It's an absolutely beautiful day to play a friendly game of golf. The ride over was a little cramped, four people, four bag and shoes and other golf stuff in my sedan. The weather inside the car was lot chiller than the outside temperature. Anthony, Billy and I all look at each other and we all thought the same thing, did he get dressed in a closet this morning? He looked like he was going to a pick-up touch football game. He had on an old beat up Giants hat, a shirt with the sleeves cut off and grass stained sweats with the name .Hooters' down one leg. We got a lot of stares by the other golfers from our short walk from the car to the pro shop. As we got closer to the door, I said, "Here's my extra golf shirt, go into the men's room and change, now!" Tommy shrugs his shoulders and disappears in the bathroom and comes out looking like a new man, well almost new. We approach the cashier whose been here since the course opened in 1969. He immediately apologizes and says the tees are backed up least fifteen minutes. We hand over \$41 dollars each, the extra buck is for the tee time. It's very reasonable for North Jersey, Sunday morning, ten am tee time, greens fees and cart. He places two keys on the counter, and Billy grabs one and I take the other. It's another awkward moment in the parking lot, deciding who is it going to team up with whom? The tension is quickly broken when Billy grabs onto Anthony's bag and puts it on his cart. "I guess that decided." I say to Tommy. Anthony quickly blurts out, "Let go hit some putts and warm-up. We all

agree and ride off to the practice putting green, which is right near the first tee box. After ten minutes of putting, Tommy finally asks "What else do I need to know before we start?" I begin to explain "We usually all chip in a buck, then pair off by teams. Low team score takes all the big money. Today, your teammate is your cart buddy." Anthony states "Whoever won the last hole outright last Sunday, makes up the game for the following week, no matter if you were there or not. We usually play "Winter Rules" all year long. This means you can move the ball in your own fairway, but not the rough or another holes fairway. If a ruling has to be made regarding the rules, the closest player from the opposing team is asked to make a decision. "NO DISCUSSION, NO ARGUING." A protest can be filed, but not until the end of the round. The group decides and it takes three votes to overturn the ruling. Since you won the seventeenth hole last week, what's the game for today?" "We'll only keep score on the par threes and the par fives only, low total score wins, any questions?" asks Anthony. "Does Tommy get any kind of a handicap in the scoring?" I ask. "What do you think is fair?" Anthony responds. "I think one stroke on the par fours and two strokes on the par fives." I said. Everyone shakes their head and we are off to the first tee.

CHAPTER FIVE

We all agreed that to speed up play, Tommy would be able to play the best drive of the four of us, after that, he was on his own. It would level the playing field and less intimidating for Tommy. It would be nice to have a steady foursome, instead of scrambling every Sunday to field a full group. The real tension is between Billy and I. Billy is a pretty good driver of the ball, but his achilles heal is his putting. My driving is questionable, but my short game is my strength from a one hundred yards in. Both Billy and I are carrying a sixteen handicap which puts us dead even ability wise. It all depends who has their "A" game today. On the front nine, Billy shot close to his handicap and I was five shots over mine. I came back on the second nine and he went into the toilet, we tied over all with eighty sevens. The tie breaker is the number of putts and I beat him by two putts overall, I won a total of five dollars on our side bet, which really pissed off Billy. Tommy played well on the front and ran out of gas on the back. Billy and Anthony won the team competition. A grand total of two dollars exchanged hands after 18 holes of spirited golf. After we put the golf clubs away, we headed to the bar for a round of drinks and settle up what we owe one another. It's important that we repair fences, so Billy and I can be friends again. Afterwards, Tommy said he had a lot more fun than he ever expected and reaffirmed that he is selling his season tickets to his brother-in-law. He is not particularly fond of him anyway, but now his sister will be the football widow. Billy confessed that he and his wife came up with a compromise

regarding his "Golfing Sundays". December, January, February and March absolutely no golfing, period. That means not going to the heated golf range and hit balls for two hours. No off season golf lesson or putting on the living room rug. All his outside chores have to be done, before he can play and lastly the kids have to come first for six of the seven days. On that wondrous afternoon, September 25, 1983 at The Meadows Golf Course, they came up with four people who were committed to playing every Sunday. The official start of the "Ridgewood Golf Group" began on that auspicious Sunday. We decided to make up some ground rules that they would all adhere to. We would meet at a neutral site and have dinner while they drew up the formal contract. We all met on a Thursday night, September 29th at Kinchley's Tavern in Ramsey. It took almost four large pies and five pitchers of beer to hammer out all the finer points of the "golfer's contract".

10 BASIC RULES OF THE GOLFER'S CONTRACT - 9/29/83

1. We are committed to playing every Sunday, unless there is an emergency. *
2. We will have four major players and two alternates. If you can't make any particular Sunday, it's totally up to you, to call the alternate.
3.
Every Sunday, we'll rotate Captains for that week and he has all the responsibilities of getting the tee times and driving the other players to the golf course. The tee time should be arranged no later than Tuesday night and he has to call everyone who is playing by Wednesday night.
4. Whoever won the last hole the previous week, will determine the type of betting game we are going to play. No player is responsible for more than one dollar on Sunday's match.
5. The Captain might have to call out of state to find a course. Maximum range to the course is three hours or two hundred miles.
6. We'll primarily play public and semi-private courses. As inflation rises the greens fees will rise, but for the first three a cap of fifty dollars seems reasonable.
7. The season begins on April first and ends on Nov. thirtieth.
8. We will play winter rules all season long.
9.
As discrepancies on the course will be handled by the nearest opponent and rulings are final. *
10. Any changes to these rules has to be decided by the original members and majority rules.

* rules committee:

Jack Stroud

Anthony Pozzillo

Billy Turner

Tommy Lester

CHAPTER SIX

The first couple of years were the toughest, because we tried to plan too far in advance. The following Wednesday we met at Matthews Diner in Waldwick with our calendars for the remainder of nineteen eighty three and nineteen eighty four. We tried to find in advance, where each Sunday fell in regards to holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and vacations. A couple of times we had some real adventures, here are a few of them.

It was in the Summertime of 1984, we ran into a little problem with Billy Turner when he blew out his knee playing a pick-up game of touch football with the guys at work. He was out for most of the month of July and August. Tommy had an appendicitis attack and he almost died of the infection, he was out the entire month of August. That was the summer we enacted the "Substitute Rule". It went something like this, we would have a minimum of two active subs to fill in with little notice. We would actually pay for their first round of golf for a show of good faith. The first sub would actually get a title of "permanent" sub and the second sub would be called the "alternate" sub. The subs have to stay connected with each other in case of emergency that they couldn't play. Plan B was instituted the following month that a member of the rules committee was responsible for recruiting someone who would sub that carried a fifteen to a sixteen handicap and could get along with other golfers. Sometimes we would call both subs and play two threesomes. You can see how serious we were getting about keeping the Sunday Group going. The first five years, we would play, low score wins all the money. We usually had side bets going with one another regarding, putts, driving distance, sand trap saves, eagles, birdies and closest to the pin. Around the sixth year we all noticed we weren't getting any better and our handicaps hardly ever changed. We had a unofficial vote and said that we could play some bizarre money games and who ever won the last hole the previous week would be responsible for the game that Sunday. Some of the games we liked and would play those for several Sunday's in a row, others we hated and we never played again. Here is one we really liked and played it six or seven times. On the 1st tee, each player had to choose three clubs he would use for the entire round. And you guessed it, each of us chose different clubs based on our strengths and weaknesses. It was funny watching some players putt with their drivers and chip with their putter.

We had an interesting situation come up in 1992, when Billy Turner

was getting married (third time) and we were all invited to the wedding. In fact, I was Billy's best man. The service was Friday night and they were honeymooning in Bermuda. They were going from Saturday to Saturday and staying at the Elbow Beach Resort. We could have easily called in the subs, but we decided what the hell, let's go for it. We booked our stay at the Southampton Princess and got a great golf package, called "Stay Three and Play Two". It cost us four hundred and fifty dollars per person, we had deluxe accommodations with a three bedroom suite with our own balcony for three nights and we could play any two golf courses on the island. We really angst over the two courses that we would play. It was finally decided that Port Royal was our overwhelming first choice and the Ocean View Golf Course our second. Billy and Harriet's honeymoon was far better than any of our own. We talked about that trip for five straight years, until people got tired of hearing about it.

During the twenty six years, we had a total of four holes-in-one, two by the major players and two by the subs. After the first hole in one we decided to reward the player with a free seven day vacation for two anywhere in the U.S. In nineteen ninety five, some of us started taking out hole-in-one insurance, the premium was seventy eight dollars per person per year, cheap insurance. The prize varied year to year, when Anthony had his, he and his wife went to Pebble Beach Resort for the weekend and two rounds of golf. Joanne didn't play, but she drove the cart and caddied for her husband, they had a ball, no pun intended.

We've had a couple of rounds in the sixties, and dozens in the seventies. Some year's, people would go on win streaks. My best year was 2002, where I won two straight months. The guys used to rib me, that I was moving the ball, the old "oxford wedge" trick. Ernie was our best sand player, by far. Tommy was our longest drive champ, in two thousand and six he averaged two hundred and forty five yards per drive. Tommy was also our statistician and our official score keeper. He actually made every one get Ghin numbers and we all had our own USGA Handicaps that were certified. In the late nineties we experimented with entering weekend team tournaments. After a dozen or so tournaments, the wives got together and put a nix to the whole idea. It wasn't fair to them or the kids. They could put up with Sundays, but not two day tournaments in such places as Myrtle Beach and Atlantic City.

CHAPTER SEVEN

We had some very interesting Sundays, I'll share a couple with you and maybe you can relate. The first one was on September twelfth, nineteen ninety three, when we drove to the Stony Ford Golf Course in the township of Montgomery, NY. It's a beautiful, challenging, bucolic course set in the Tanconic Mountains of New York. The fall colors were just starting

to change. It's Anthony turn to drive and his alarm clock fails to go off and he is forty five minutes late picking us up, for the seventy five minute ride to the course. He wasn't paying attention and misses the turnoff on NY seventeen to the course. We have to travel an extra ten miles out of our way and we get lost in the back country of Goshen, NY. We finally stop at a farm house out in "nowheresville" and ask directions. They have never heard of Stony Ford Golf Course and we waste another fifteen minutes with that fiasco. We just start driving and we come upon a Mom & Pop's Convenience Store. We all need to make a pit stop and while there we decide to get coffee and donuts to go. The men's room is not working, so we decide to use the women's room instead. As long as you have a lookout, it's a great alternative. As the last guy goes in and is ready to make waste, the lookout gets distracted (Anthony) and walks away. We hear some screams from the back of the store and a lady is yelling "PERVERT, PERVERT." The owner comes from around the counter, with shotgun and heads to the back to investigate the noise. Just then, Tommy comes out of the ladies room, zipping up his pants. The shotgun is placed against his temple and Tommy then starts babbling that it is all a big mistake and nothing happened. To make a long story short, Tommy is arrested by the locals, taken to the Goshen City Jail. It a beautiful building, right in the center of town. By one o'clock he goes before the judge and is asked to pay a fine for indecent exposure, lewd and lascivious behavior, each count is four hundred and fifty dollars, plus court cost. The total amount was nine hundred and eighty three dollars and fifty cents. Because it was Sunday and the banks weren't open, it was cash only, no checks or credit cards. Between the four of us we had a grand total of five hundred and sixty seven dollars. While we are trying to scrounge up the rest of the money, Tommy is sent back to jail, to wait it out. He was booked, photographed and finger printed. He was put into the county lockup and made to wear an orange jump suit. He is now registered as a sex offender in Orange County, New York. Anthony volunteers to find an ATM and rescue Tommy out of jail. Approximately forty five minutes later, he returns with enough money to pay the fine and have Tommy released to his own recognizance. He is released on one condition that he has to do fifty hours of community service cleaning the Orange County Courthouse bathrooms. We finally pullout of the Goshen County Court House parking lot around 2:30 pm and what do we see, a sign pointing to the direction of Stony Ford Golf Course. It would be at least five years before we would ever play Stony Ford again. If we did, Tommy would always call in sick on that Sunday. He got mail from New York State Sex Offenders Office for years afterwards. Thank goodness this happened before Megan's Law was passed. He is only considered a pervert in the eyes of Orange County residence.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The best Sunday golf by far occurred on May sixteenth, nineteen ninety nine. We were playing at White Tail Golf Course in Bath, Pennsylvania. Anthony, Tommy, Jake (alternate) and myself. When we come out this far to play golf, we usually play thirty six holes. White Tail is a nice test of your game, the slope rating is one hundred and twenty five, scoring is sixty nine point three, six thousand and seventy yards from the white tees. The first eighteen holes we played "alternate shots". It's Tommy and Jake against Anthony and myself. We teed off around nine forty five am, the weather is perfect, a little overcast, but no wind to speak of and seventy five degrees. Jake is another big hitter, but has hands of stone, Tommy has really improved his short game. The first nine holes were amazing, they birdied one, three, five and fine and posted a score of thirty two for nine holes, four under par. We only birdied holes three and nine and were two under par for a score of thirty four. The back nine is a little tougher, especially the fourteenth hole, it's a par five and has very narrow landing areas. The finishing hole is four hundred yards, all up hill and plays more like four hundred and seventy yards, par four. Jake and Tommie shoot lights out with only thirteen putts on the back nine and finish with a thirty-four for a score of sixty-six. We also played well and came home with a thirty-six for a seventy. We were all on cloud nine and we kept rechecking the scores. None of us had never come close to shooting in the sixties or seeing anyone else in our foursome do something like this. After we finished a couple of pints of Yuengling, we headed back out for the second loop. Because he played alternate shots, this score doesn't go towards our handicap at all.

On the second eighteen holes we'll each hit our own ball and score accordingly. We were all excited to see if the "bloom was off the rose". We all had a consensus, that this might be "the" day that everything comes together. Most days, all parts of your game are not working at the same time. It's not uncommon for our drives are working but nothing else or visa versa. Your putting and short game couldn't be better, but with your tee shots you couldn't hit the ocean while standing on the beach. We decided to keep the teams the same, don't mess with the chemistry. Jake and Tommy won the last hole, so they tee off first. Hole Number # One is a par four, three hundred and twelve yards, but all down hill, you can reach the green in one. Jake drives the ball two hundred and eighty yards and bounces in the green side bunker, pin high. Tommy hits his drives two hundred and ninety yards and rolls thru the green and his ball stops on the fringe. They are playing like nothing has changed from the morning round. Anthony and I hit our drives around two hundred and seventy yards, but with the roll. Anthony and I easily chip on. Jake holes out his wedge shot and starts with an eagle. Tommy rolls his putt to within six inches of the cup and starts off his round with a birdie. Anthony and I two putted and started off with pars. The good golf continued for another eight holes for both teams. Jake and Tommy turned in thirty-three and thirty-five respectively and Anthony and I

hit a pair of thirty-sixes, the tension is starting to build. As we started the second nine, we stopped kidding around, there was very little talking amongst teams or teammates. The tenth hole is a reachable par five of four hundred and ninety yards. Both Tommy and Jake reach in two and Anthony and I reach in three. We all two putted, Tommy and Jake started off with two birdies and we have matching pars. We did not utter another word to each other for the remainder of the final eight holes. We all had problems with the troublesome fourteenth hole and we all had sixes. Tommy and Jake birdied eleven, twelve and sixteen and seventeen and Anthony and birdied eleven, fifteen and sixteen. Tommy and Jake both shot thirty two, while Anthony shot thirty-three and I shot a thirty-four. We emptied the clubs in the car and changed shoes and then went into the restaurant to recount the scores. Tommy the statistician, counted and recounted the scores, while we all ordered food. After much deliberation he began, Jake shot sixty-five, Anthony shot sixty-seven, Tommy shot sixty-nine and I shot a seventy. A sigh of relief was heard from around the table. And then it started "Are you sure?" "Goddam, I don't believe it." "I knew I was playing well, but this." Anthony said "Don't be shitting me Tommy, I just beat my best score ever by seven shots" Similar protest were heard around the table, but Tommy held his ground. "I checked and rechecked my addition, it's right. As a foursome we shot sixty-five, sixty-seven, sixty-nine and seventy, unbelievable. The ride home was nonstop chatter about putts made and missed. The drives and sand saves and all the fairway woods that hit the green in two. It took us an hour and thirty five minutes to drive to the golf course and only thirty minutes to drive home, or that's how it seemed. The next day, everyone ever connected to the Ridgewood Sunday Group was now privy to our scores. We still talk about May 16th, 1999 as the greatest day of golf in the groups history. We have since played White Tail two dozen times and haven't even come close to those record breaking scores. We were all given a framed color copy of the score cards and a brief commentary of our round of golf by each player. Probably the best comments were made my Jake. "These were the best rounds of golf I have ever played or will play in my lifetime. We hear about the zone in sports and are not sure what to think, but not after that day. I will carry those memories with me the rest of my life. I want to thank Jack for inviting me to sub that day. I would also like to acknowledge Tommie and Anthony for sharing with me the memory of a life time, thank you guys." Signed Jake R. Booker.

CHAPTER NINE

Something did happen about two years ago that threatened the existence of the the Ridgewood Sunday Group. It happened between Billy and Anthony. Billy is a stock broker and works on Wall Street. For the last ten years or so, Billy had been handling Anthony's portfolio. When the economy

went south, especially last year Anthony portfolio lost over half of it's worth. Anthony got real scared and after talking it over with some his financial friends, pulled everything from Billy's firm. They both got into a heated argument, which almost came to blows over who was at blame. They both threatened to never again play with each other on the "Sunday Group". We had to have a sit down with Tommy and myself and the two subs, to patch things up and let cooler heads prevail. Both parties decided to take a brief three month hiatus from the group to let their fragile egos heal a little. Of course our four active remaining players had to find acceptable recruits to take their place. As you can see, we survived the mini crisis and we are still going strong. Special thanks go out to Jake, Ernie, Taylor and Ben.

CHAPTER TEN

This is a good time to tell the readers a little background of the "Four Amigos". Dr. Anthony Pozzillo has an interesting past, he is originally from Baddeck, Nova Scotia, not far from the Alexander Graham Bell Historic Site. He attended Princeton University and majored in Asian Studies. He is the Dean of International Studies at Columbia University. He still teaches two days a week at the graduate level and loves it. He tries to publish at least once a year to keep his juices flowing. He took up golf to relieve some of his stress at work. His wife teaches undergraduates at Montclair State University and she was the one who taught him how to play. She carries a ten handicap, but doesn't play as often as she would like. She can out hit Anthony off the tee by ten to fifteen yards. She is an avid runner and has competed in the Ironman Triathlon in Hawaii, twice and finished both times. Once a year she organizes a outing for the golf widows of the Ridgewood Sunday Group. She has a very good friend on the Ridgewood Country Club Board of Directors and they host the event every year in September. Until this year the men have never played at Ridgewood which is very private and a very exclusive club. All their wives never let the men forget it either. They all really appreciate the work that goes in this event every year, Thank You, Dr. Catherine Pozzilli". She is already preparing for this years New York City Marathon, this will be her tenth appearance. If you get up early enough, you can see Anthony and Catherine putting in their six miles, down Glen Avenue at 5:30 am, six mornings a week. Anthony is by far the most mellow golfer I have every played with. I have never heard him swear, or even raise his voice. I think I heard him utter the word damn once, about that was thirteen years ago, under his breath. He is a lot of fun to play with, he's also very affirming and he is always telling you, how good your last shot was. He rarely has any time to practice and still carries a 16 handicap. If he every took lessons and practiced on any kind of regular basis, he would be too good for our group.

This is why his out burst with Billy is so out of character. When I first heard the news that he and Billy almost came to blows, I was totally blown away. I wouldn't of believed it, except Harriet was the one who had to separate them from each other in their den. It was so loud, that the next door neighbors called the police, thinking it was a case of domestic violence. When Officer Van Goor came to the door, he couldn't believe it himself, but cooler heads prevailed and no charges were filled.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Billy Turner is a character all to himself. He was born and raised in Newark, NJ. When he was fourteen, his parents were killed in a car accident at the intersection of Routes three and forty-six. They were coming home from Great Eastern Outlet Store after doing some Christmas shopping when a drunk driver plowed into them. Billy was the lone survivor, despite not wearing his seat belt. With no known relatives to step up, he was sent to the Newark Orphan Asylum on High Street in Newark. He aged out at eighteen and immediately enlisted in the Army. They found out he had an aptitude for numbers and he wound up in the payroll department in Fort Dix, NJ. He served two tours in Vietnam crunching numbers. After serving his country, he came back to NJ and enrolled in a local community college and majored in finance. He was able to get a GI loan and started his own business buying and selling stock, within five years he was on Wall Street. In ten short years, he built his company up, to be worth over two million dollars. He married his secretary, which was a big mistake, because she swindled most of the money, before he divorced her. Fortunately for him, they had no kids, but unfortunately he was left with only his house and car. Having worked in the financial market for the seven years, he realized the housing market was very soft. He started buying and selling properties on spec., especially in the Maplewood, South Orange. By nineteen seventy nine, he had a nice business going again, worth over one million. He married for the second time, to his real estate agent, she was the one who helped him buy and flip houses. That marriage lasted less than his first one, but not before he had one child, Jamie. No alimony this time, thank God because she is still working, but child support payment comes to eight hundred per month, plus medical and dental, it all adds up. He met his third wife, Harriet at one of those divorce seminars, she had just outed her husband when she found out his was stepping out behind her back. It seems he struck gold on the third try, she is one tough women and doesn't take any shit from Billy. Harriet definitely wears the pants in the family and makes most of the big decision with the exception of Sundays, thank goodness. We all love Harriet, because she realized very early in the relationship that Billy needed an outlet and the Ridgewood Sunday Group is it.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Tommy has had his ups and downs. He grew up in South Jersey somewhere. He comes from a large family, I think he said he has eight siblings four brothers and four sisters. His father was a farmer. Tommy never talks about his past, ever, but we think his father was very strict. Most of the information I'm getting is from his wife and six kids. Tommy attended Immaculata Parochial High School, in Sommerville, NJ where he lettered in football all four years and it earned a full scholarship to Penn State University. He was an Academic All-American quarterback for two straight years. After college he entered the Peace Corp and served two years in North Africa. His stint in Africa had a profound influence on him. His next endeavor was Villanova Law School in Washington D.C. where he graduated with honors. He opened a small law practice in Hackensack, in which at least half of his cases, were pro bono. The law firm has grown considerably from the early days, but he still expects his partners to honor his request to help the unfortunate. He is not at all wealthy, but I would use the word "comfortable." All his brothers and sisters are professionals, teachers, doctors, dentists, engineers and architects. Tommy works hard when he works, but he would much rather be out in the yard, showing his kids drop back pass or the art of knot tying. His oldest son Donald, has just earned the rank of Eagle Scout in Troop Seven and he is so proud of him. Lola his wife is a kick, she's on the Board of Directors of Eva's Kitchen in Paterson that helps shelter and feed the homeless. Her speciality is fund raising and yes, the Ridgewood Sunday Group actually has a fund raiser each year. We have corporate sponsors for making, pars, birdies, and eagles and we raise about fifteen hundred dollars each year.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

My wife and I were both born and raised in Ridgewood, she's Greek and I'm Irish, we're both stubborn as hell and we both have bad tempers. We both like to throw things when we're mad. She throws, dishes, glassware, shoes and anything else that's lying around. I on the other hand throw primarily golf clubs. I usually break a minimum of one a year, it's those damn graphite shafts, they break so easily. Regarding my club throwing, it got me kicked off just two courses, the old Pascack Valley Golf Course, now it's called Valley Brook in River Vale. I wonder if I can play there now that's it's part of the Bergen County System; the other course is Knoll East in Parsippany. I can understand Knoll East because when I threw my club I tore up a sizable divot on the eighteenth green. But with Pascack Valley, all I did was break my club against a tree, plus a slew of

swear words. It certainly didn't hurt anyone, unless you count the damage to the tree. It just so happened that the head pro was playing in the foursome behind us. He was so adamant, he followed me out of the parking lot in his golf cart, to make sure I left the premises.

We have twin girls, Kelly and Christina. They are the apple in their old man's eye and I spoil them rotten. Their Mom is really tough on them, which probably happens in most families. Debra was a practical nurse before we were married, she worked at St. Joseph's Hospital in the emergency room. She loved the intensity, but when the twins came along, she had to slow down and stay home for a while. The problem with most nursing jobs, are the hours and the pay sucked. Her boss has called a couple of times asking her to come back. Maybe now that the girls are both in college, she is seriously thinking about going back work. I'm a professional free lance writer for five or six different trade magazines. I also have a part ownership in a bookstore called Book Ends in downtown Ridgewood. Because of how I work, I don't have a steady income, which doesn't bother me, but it irritates the hell out of my wife. We've had to borrow from both our parents especially sending our girls off to college. Kelly attends Montclair State University and is majoring in Music Education. Christina goes to Ramapo College and studying in Elementary Education. The both want to be teachers, working in the urban setting. They commute, which saves us a bundle of money on room and board. We mostly fight over two things, money and golf. If she goes back to work, that would take some pressure off our marriage. I know I have an obsession and over the years it's definitely hurt our marriage. I told Debra that I would cut back in the off season on the golf and no more trips to Ocean City or Myrtle Beach. She said "You have promised this before and I'll wait and see if it happens." A couple of years ago, we went for couple counseling and it worked for a while until I slipped and I was back to my old ways. We are church going, God fearing family and attend Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church on Saturday nights, religiously. I do use Lords name in vain a lot when I'm playing golf, but I'm not sure that counts. Debra teaches Sunday School while I'm playing golf. She is really a great mother and wife for putting up with my golf obsession.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Beginning in September, we start to make plans for the Year Ending Playoffs. The main purpose of the playoffs was to add a little juice to the end of the season and to put some closure on the season. It usually starts on the 1st Sunday in October. Eligible to play is anyone who has played more than once during the year. We all chip in fifty dollars and winner takes all. The person with the lowest handicap for the year gets to choose from the following list of courses below. Everyone has their favorite courses, while others have courses they absolutely hate to play. Huge advantage here.

NEW JERSEY COURSES
CRANBURY, West Windsor
GREEN KNOLL, Bridgewater
FRANCIS BYRNE, West Orange
HIGH POINT, Montague
KNOLL EAST, Parsippany
MINE BROOK, Hackettstown
PARAMUS, Paramus
QUAIL BROOK, Bridgewater
RUTGERS, Piscataway
SPOOKY BROOK, Somerset
SPRING MEADOWS,
Wall
SUNSET VALLEY, Pompton Pl.
WARRENBROOK, Warren
WEEQUAHIC PARK, Newark
PENNSYLVANIA COURSES

CHAPEL HILL, Reading
FOXCHASE,, Stevens
GLEN BROOK, Stroudsburg
SOUTHMOORE, Bath

CHERRY VALLEY, Stroudsburg
GALEN HALL, Wernersville
HAWK VALLEY, Denver
WHITETAIL, Bath

NEW YORK COURSES

CENTRAL VALLEY, Central Valley
STONY FORD, Montgomery
WALLKILL, Middletown
BLUE HILL, Pearl River

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The purpose of being able to name your favorite course is to reward good play. If there is a tie regarding handicaps, then we use lowest scoring average for the season, with a minimum of ten rounds played. Tommy, our statistician used the USGA formula for figuring out the handicaps. For two thousand nine, the handicaps as of September thirtieth were: Jake fourteen, Tommy fifteen, Ben fifteen point five, Billy sixteen, Jack and Anthony

sixteen point five, Ernie seventeen, Taylor and Ron didn't qualify for a handicap, under the rules. This years winning prize money was four hundred dollars. After each round, the highest score will be eliminated from the competition. We sent out invitations to the following players on September First and they indicated their willingness to play over the next six to seven weeks. The playoff dates were October Fourth, Eleventh, Eighteenth, Twenty Fifth, November. First, Eighth, Fifteenth and, Twenty Second. Not everyone can commit to playing eight Sundays in a row, especially the substitutes. The following people responded by the deadline: Jake, Tommy, Ben, Billy, Jack, Anthony, Ernie and Taylor. Ron was going away on a cruise to the Caribbean with his entire extended family and decided not to enter. The only other change in the rules are, we actually hire a referee, he is the ex-head pro at Ridgewood Country Club, David Reasoner. He subs once in a while during the season, but he is way too good for our group. He carries a two handicap, which means he is really, really good golfer. He has been to the Q-School three times, but never made it any further. We don't want the playoffs to be decided on an incorrect ruling. It also takes the pressure off of a player, who is trying to play his own game. The foursomes were determined by a draw: First Group: Jake, myself, Taylor and Billy Second Group: Tommy, Ben, Ernie and Anthony. Jake had the lowest handicap and he wanted to play of all courses, Stony Ford. Do you think he's trying to throw Tommy (the sex offender) off his game? Our last official meeting took place at my house with all eight players and Reasoner. He wanted to go over last minute rule clarifications for the group. We talked about the tee times and who would tee off first, that was decided by drawing numbers from the Anthony's famous hat.

All the players checked in at the pro shop by nine am, It was only forty degrees when the first group teed off. The first hole is a par five, elevated tee, four hundred and seventy eight yards, dogleg right around a lake, out of bounds up near the green left. I drew number one and I would hit one of the best drives of the day, two hundred and seventy five yards with a slight fade, perfect. I would go on to birdie the hole and the rest of the foursome all parred. Stony Ford has some of the most majestic views of any course in the tri-state area. A golfer could easily get distracted if he didn't keep his eye on the ball, instead of the landscape. At the turn the score read: Billy forty-two, Taylor forty-three, Jake and I at forty-fives. The second foursome came in at: Tommy thirty-nine, Ben forty-one, Ernie forty-four and Anthony forty-five. For some reason the second foursome came in with substantially better scores than the first foursome. The second nine is a little tougher then the first and the scores proved that out. As we all staggered up the short eighteenth fairway, it was all over but the shouting. Billy eighty-six, Taylor eighty-seven, Jake and I tied at ninety-ones. The scores on the second foursome were Tommy and Ernie eighty-two, Ben eighty- three and Anthony eighty-four. This is not uncommon when we have eight players vying for seven spots, that we have a playoff to determine who plays next week and who doesn't. David Reasoner declares

that the sudden death playoffs between Jake and myself, will start with holes one, two, seven and if needed will continue up eighteen. David flips a coin and Jake calls "heads" and wins and tees off first. He hit a beautiful drive over two hundred yards, it takes a bad hop and it comes to rest just a foot from water edge. He can easily reach the green in two, but he will have to navigate the last one hundred and seventy yards over water. I tee off and hit my usual two hundred yard drive, but into the left rough. I have to layup in front of the green, one hundred and twenty yards out. Jake takes out his trusty five wood and hits it on the green, but thirty five feet from the hole. I put my eight iron about fifteen feet from the hole, not a bad shot under pressure. Jake takes his time and lines up his putt for an eagle. His putt is heading directly for the hole, it rims the hole and skips past a good three feet. This is it, I'm sure he's going to make his short birdie putt, so all the pressure on me, I have to make my par putt. I decided to let fate take over. I hit the putt way too hard, it hits the back of the cup, flies up in the air a good four inches and settles back down into the cup for a birdie. Jake is besides himself, his palms start to sweat and he finally starts to shake. He almost yipes the putt and, it rolls around the cup at least twice before settling down, we halved the hole with fours. The second hole is a short three hundred and thirty eight yards, but with a hard dogleg left to a well protected green, with bunkers front and right. Most golfers use a four or five iron off the tee which leaves them a one hundred and seventy yards to the green. Jake decides to gamble and tries to hit a draw around a group of trees about one hundred and thirty yards out. If he pulls it off he'll be chipping to the small pear shaped green. But, Jake's five wood doesn't draw, it goes straight as an arrow, into the heavy rough. I decide to play it safe and hit my five iron and it lands in the middle of the fairway, one hundred and sixty eight yards into the green. I hit first and with my six iron, it lands on the fringe about twenty feet from the hole. Jake takes a seven iron, the grass catches the hosel of the club and it comes up way short in the front bunker. Jake is not known for his bunker play, but he pulls off a great shot and lands ten feet past the hole, but with back spin and winds up just five feet from the pin. I putt mine about five inches from the cup and and he concedes my putt for par. He stands over his putt and starts shaking again, he jabs at the ball and it flies way past the cup. Jake is crushed and now he has the long walk up the eighteenth fairway and back to the pro shop. It was dark when we finally pushed away from the parking lot. Tommie ask me to take the long way to NY 17, so as to avoid the dreaded Court House in downtown Goshen. It took all of three hours to get home because we caught the usual Sunday traffic on the NY Thruway. It was nine pm before we rolled into town, a very long day for everybody, especially Jake. Tommie turns to me and says, "Jake didn't know that Stony Ford is one of my favorite courses to play, all he knew was all the rumors surrounding the arrest in Goshen. The previous five times I played there, I always shot in the low eighties and being a sub he wouldn't know that", we just smiled at each other. Lola was at the door patiently waiting for him, I

could faintly hear her asking "So Tommy boy, how did you do?"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I got a call Thursday night, from Ernie saying that his father-in-law just passed away and Vivian and he had to fly to California. The viewing is on Friday and Saturday and the Funeral is on Sunday, October 18th. We are now down to six players, but this is not unprecedented, something like this has happened on six or seven other playoffs. Before we left the Stony Ford Golf Course, Billy having had the lowest score of the day, chose Rutgers Golf Course in Piscataway. The golf course is right on the campus of the University. Monday morning, I called Rutgers and the earliest tee times I could get were twelve thirty and twelve forty five in the afternoon. Sunset for that time of the year is approximately five fifty in the afternoon, we would be cutting it close to finish. I called Billy back and told him of the situation and he said to me "bring your flash lights". Everyone arrived at eleven thirty am in the Rutgers Golf Course parking lot and we drew names for the threesomes that day. Everyone had heard what happened to Ernie's father-in-law, so no one was surprised. The Rutgers layout is a very flat, easy walking course, with only a couple of tricky holes, number seven and nine. If you can get by those two tough long holes, you have three par threes on the back nine. We play from the black tees and measures just over six thousand yards with a slope rating of one hundred and twenty three. This is a nice test of our ability level and the cream will rise to the top again today. Tommy shot eighty, Billy eighty-one, Anthony eighty-two and I scratched and clawed to an eighty-nine, Ron ninety and Ben ninety-one. We're down to five. Tommy next pick for the course selection was Galen Hall in Wernersville, Pennsylvania. It is my all time favorite public course. If you haven't ever played it, go you will not be disappointed. It will take all of three hours to get there and I know for a fact, that Ron has never played there before. To get there on time we have to leave Ridgewood my five thirty in the morning. All the regular members knew what to expect, poor Ron was in for a beating. We got to pro shop around nine o'clock and had plenty of time to warm up. Before we teed off, David Reasoner asked the head pro Blake Scheider, if we could play as a "five some". He said it was unusual, but from the courtesy of one pro to another, he said "Fine, go ahead." We picked numbers from the hat again to see the order of play. Galen Hall is a A.W. Tillinghast design golf course. He designed some other courses you might have heard of, Winged Foot, Pine Valley, Baltusrol and many more. The course is very hilly, with lots of elevation changes, from the whites it's measures just under fifty nine hundred yards with a slope rating of one hundred and seventeen, which is very deceiving. It also hosts the first true "island hole" in the United States, number fifteen also known at the Moat Hole. After five hours of play the scores were at

follows: Anthony eighty-six, Billy eighty-eighty, Tommy ninety-two, I hit ninety-four and Ron one hundred and twelve. This was a little unfair, Ron was humiliated on a couple of holes and almost quit. He vowed never to come back to this venue. We had a nice leisurely dinner, except Ron and talked about the difficulty of the course. We headed back to NJ around five in the afternoon, we hit no traffic and pulled into Ridgewood around eight that evening, another long day.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Anthony had the lowest score at Galen Hall and picked Minebrook in Hackesttown. I called and was able to get a ten fifteen tee time, which is perfect for our group. David Reasoner has a previous engagement and won't be able to make our Sunday's playoffs. We all met in the Minebrook parking lot and picked for positions for the first tee. We all like Minebrook, you can score or you can hit some big numbers. Minebrook is very deceiving, it's only five fifty eight hundred yards but plays closer to sixty five hundred yards. The slope rating is one hundred and twenty six par seventy, which will test our handicaps. The first seven holes aren't that bad, then comes number eight and nine to ruin your score. The tough eighth hole stares us in the face, it's only three hundred and eighty yards, but it's a hard dogleg right with a narrow green and a deep green side bunker that protects the front. Two of us bogey and the other two get seven and eight. The ninth hole is a par four, four hundred and forty five yards. You have to hit a big drive or you have to lay up in front of the water guarding the green. Tommy and Billy will have no trouble with the tee shots, but most likely Anthony and I will lay up. Anthony and I consider it a par five and play it accordingly. Tommy and Billy blasted it out over two hundred and fifty yards, but both wound up in the thick rough. Anthony and I do as expected and hit our drives down the middle, out about two hundred and fifteen yards. Anthony and I both lay up in front of the water hazard. This is Tommy's chance to pick up one or more strokes. He lashes at the ball and the it never moves, He can't believe his eyes. He takes another vicious swing at the ball and hits it into the pond fronting the green. Billy's turn and he hits a line drive and plugs it in the bank on the far side of the water hazard. Anthony and I both take out our eight irons and put them on the green. Where is David Reasoner when you need him, he had given us his cell phone if we needed him to make a ruling? After talking it over on my cell phone, his ruling is, one stroke to remove the plugged ball, he can clean the ball, but then must place it in the water hazard no closer to the green, one club length from the pitch mark. Billy is fuming now and takes his wedge and flies the green, cart path and almost puts it thru the fence, out of bounds. Tommy plays a wedge and puts it on the front of the green. Billy now tries to use his sixty degree lob wedge and lands it just short on the green. Billy

is steaming mad and using curse words I haven't heard since college. He proceeds to three putt the green and walks off with an eight. Tommy's putt comes up way short and needs two more putts to get home and he also scores an eight. Anthony and I both two putt for boogie fives. Our scores on the front nine: Tommy forty-four, Billy forty-five, Anthony forty-six and myself forty-eight. At the turn, we stopped at the hot dog cart, on our way to the 10th tee box. The cheeseburgers and hot dogs are free, but the soft drinks and beers are extra. Tommie and Billy each get two beers a piece and storm off to start the back nine. They are trying to wash the bad taste in their mouths from how they ended the front nine. As we wait for the foursome ahead of us to clear, we munch down lunch, but for some of us it tastes better than others. Tommy and Billy both chug down their beers before we tee off. The tenth hole is a par four, three hundred and eighty five yards with OB right and very little bunkering near the green. The green is very tricky because it's a two tiered green, which runs down the middle from front to back. Anthony still has control of the tee box and hits a very controlled fade down the center of the fairway out two hundred and twenty yards. I'm next and I hit mine exactly the same distance, but ten yards just to the left of his ball. Tommy is stoked and hits a big drive two hundred and seventy five yards, down the middle. Not to be outdone, Billy hit the longest drive of the day, two hundred and ninety five yards just left of center. Anthony hit his five iron ten feet short of the green, I hit my seven wood on the upper tier and of course the pin is on the lower tier today. Tommy takes his sand wedge and hits it over the green, just short of the hazard. Billy takes a lob wedge and puts it two inches from the cup, tap-in birdie. Tommy has one foot in the hazard, as he starts to swing, his ball moves. We are too far away to see anything, but being a true sportsman he calls it on himself, one stroke penalty. He replaces the ball, hits a beautiful sand wedge into the cup for a par four. Anthony and I look at each other and shake our heads and we proceed to three putt for a pair of fives. The one good thing about the back nine, is it has three par threes, the bad news it also has two of the longest and toughest par fives on the entire course. As we approach the fifteenth, four hundred and seventy five yards, narrow fairway, dogleg left, out of bounds right off the tee and then it's a steep up hill the last one hundred yards. It leaves you with a blind shot, with deep bunkers protecting the front of the green. I've seen grown men cry on this hole and once a playing partner of mine, quit golf altogether after getting a fourteen on this hole. But, this is also a bombers paradise, if you can hit it between two hundred and seventy five and three hundred yards down the middle, it's an easy scoring hole. Tommy tees off and hits in over three hundred yards, but into the woods on the right. We have our own rules here, you can either hit again from the tee box or take it where it went out of bounds, one shot penalty with each. This rule helps speed up play. Our biggest complaint of other golfer's are they play way too S-L-O-W. Tommy decides on the latter. Billy goes next and stripes it down the middle two hundred and fifty five yards, we all yell "Nice Shot". Not much

bantering amongst ourselves today, we usually are needling each other endlessly throughout the entire round. Anthony hit his tee shot a good two hundred and thirty yards, but on the wrong fairway, he'll have tree trouble on his next shot. I hit my drive down the middle, but a little short. When we all finally arrive on the green, we each lie four and now it's an old fashion putting contest. Billy is walking very exceptionally slow and holding his back. We all hold our collective breath, because we all knew about his last three back surgeries, He one putts from thirty feet for a nice five, but he has trouble bending down just to pick up his ball out of the hole. We all yell "Great shot", but he ain't smiling. I two putt for a six, Tommie and Anthony three putt for sevens and despite our scores, we are all happy to be walking to sixteenth tee.

The next two holes are uneventful, but eighteenth is one heck of a finishing hole. It plays all of five hundred and seventy five yards, slight dogleg right, out-of-bounds right all the way to the green, with a couple of nuisance bunkers up near the green. Billy's really hurting now and hits a weak drive, out a one hundred and eighty five yards, no one says anything. Tommy strokes one two hundred and eighty five yards down the middle with a little fade, nice shot. Anthony and I hit our predictable drives two hundred and twenty yards down the middle, we are just two feet from one another. Billy uses his driver off the fairway, which is very unusual and it flies one hundred and seventy five yards down the middle, smart play. Anthony dubs his next shot and it dribbles about twenty five feet and into the rough. I pound my three wood one hundred and ninety five yards, but off to the left, on the other side of the cart path. Anthony redeems himself and hits his best shot of the day with a three wood two hundred and ten yards down the middle. Billy hits his driver again, but just one and fifty yards this time, he wedges to within twenty three feet of the cup and two putts for a six and limps off to sit in the golf cart. Tommy hits another great shot two hundred and thirty five yards, he's just sixty five yards away. This next shot will be talked about in our Sunday Group, for years. He holes a wedge for an eagle three. With my next shot I hit the green twenty seven feet away and two putt for a five. Anthony wedges his next shot onto the green and two putts for a six. We finished this hole with an eagle, par and two bogies, not bad. In the club house, Tommy adds up the scores, Anthony ninety-two, myself and Bill ninety-three and Tommy ninety-four. We decide to skip any drinks, Billy needs to get home and nurse his sore back. Tommy congratulates everyone and wishes us all good luck next Sunday. It wasn't till the ride home, that we realized that if Billy hadn't eagled the last hole, he not Tommy, would be shaking hands and wishing everyone good luck.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

As we are halfway home it dawns on me that we might have a problem.

If Billy can't play next Sunday, who then would be eliminated? We're putting the horse before the cart, let's wait and see how Billy's back is, before we jump to conclusions. Billy has the choice of golf courses as a result of his winning the last hole. He's not sure what course he wants to play, he'll call tonight and let us know.

Billy makes the calls and has chosen Weequahic Park in Newark as his choice. In November, we couldn't call for a tee time, we have to go down and wait in line. On Tuesday, Billy calls from the doctors office and says he out for the rest of the season. He's going to need surgery in the off season. This is going to be a nightmare in the making. Tommy calls and asked if he is still in the playoffs because of Billy's medical withdrawal. I said, I didn't know, that the Committee would have to meet and decide what to do. I suggested we all meet Wednesday night at the Town and Country Restaurant in town. Anthony suggested we call David Reasoner, since we hired him to officiate the playoffs. I called Billy and Tommy back and they both okayed the suggestion. We all met up at eight pm, we shook hands and ordered coffee and the meeting was called to order. David asked the group, "Was there any precedences to go by in the past." Tommy, our statistician said "To the best of my knowledge, nothing like this has ever happened before." "Since we have nothing to go by, what would be fair too everyone concerned " said David. "I move we take a secret ballot of the rules committee to decide the dilemma" says Tommy. David collected all the paper ballots and it reads out the results, two two. "What do we do now?" asks Anthony. I said, "We could ask the subs that participated in the playoffs to break the tie." David responded and said, "That's a great idea." We all verbally agreed to the suggestion. I immediately called on my cell Ben, Ron, Jake and Ernie and I put the question to all of them over the phone. I asked them to call me back in five minutes and leave a voice mail. We waited a good 10 minutes and I checked my voice mail and the subs voted two two. "Now what do we do?" asked David. Tommy immediately stood up and stated "If I'm not in the playoffs, I will quit the Sunday Group for good." He turned and stormed out of the restaurant. We all sat there and looked at each other and shrugged our shoulders. David was first to break the silence "What do we do now?" I look at Anthony and Billy and say "I don't know." I asked the group "What are our options: 1. Drop Tommy from the playoffs and hope he'll rejoin the Sunday Group in the Spring. 2. Tommy would take Billy's place in the playoffs. 3. Suspend the playoffs until Billy is healthy enough to resume playing. 4. Suspend the playoffs for the year 2009. 5. Pray that weather is so lousy on Sunday that golf would have to be cancelled that day and somehow Billy could resume playing the following Sunday. 6. We could ask Tommy to reconsider his position, in light of the unusual nature of the situation. 7. Replay the Oct. 19th match without Billy, which would include: Tommy, Anthony Ron and myself. If no one had any other ideas, that we adjourn the meeting and agree to meet back here on Thursday, to see if anything has changed, ie Tommy's position or the weather.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

As planned, the three of us were back at the Town and Country on Thursday, to see if they couldn't come up with solution to our problem. Nothing had changed much, no new ideas, except one. We invite Tommy to the meeting and lay out the seven options we discussed at our last meeting. When Tommy arrived, he wasn't smiling, his head was down, like he lost his best friends. He greeted us all with a handshake and thanked us for inviting him back. He said this morning someone from the Ridgewood News, called and started asking him questions about our "Sunday Golf Group" and our dilemma, that the group might be breaking up after twenty six years. Ridgewood News ran a small piece on our group about five years ago on our Twentieth Anniversary, concerning our members and other information their readers might find interesting. We got at least twenty five phones from all over Bergen and Rockland Counties asking to join our group or how can they start their own. It was very flattering to all of us in the group. But then on the following Sunday, a similar article appeared in the Better Living section of the Bergen Record, that article elicited over two hundred phone calls. We made a decision, not to talk to anymore reporters concerning our group. As we agreed last year, I refused to talk to the reporter about our situation or the group in general. Just before she hung up, would I call her back if I ever change my mind and I agreed. We all sat in stunned silence. We all turned to each other and acknowledged that they had not contacted the newspaper. Tommy then stood up and said, "After I had hung up with the reporter, I realized how important this group was to me. I had taken a lot for granted, that we would play every Sunday, regardless of our personal situation." He said that he had talked it over with Lola and asked her for some guidance. She asked him, "What is more important the Sunday Group or the playoffs." She also helped me see the bigger picture, that me being a lawyer, "ethics" were very important to me. She helped me with a possible solution to our problem. The "playoffs" were never part of the "TEN BASIC RULES OF THE GOLFER'S CONTRACT" dated September, 23rd, 1983. We all turned to one another and agreed that Tommy had a point. Were the playoffs that important that we would jeopardize the groups existence, the answer was unanimous "NO". So we had a solution, no playoffs this year and we would look at it again next year. The crisis had been averted, we all stood up and started to hug one another. All the people in the surrounding tables started clapping. We never did find out how the whole restaurant knew about our golfing dilemma, but someone must have told them.

In the parking lot of the Town & Country Restaurant, I asked Anthony "Do you want an unofficial champion for two thousand nine?" "We'll meet on the first Sunday in December" he replied. David who happened to over

hear part of our discussion said, "Your welcome to use Ridgewood Country as my guest." We all smiled and shook hands. It's really unimportant to know who won on that cold and windy day, we are all sworn to secrecy.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Vivian comes rushing into the waiting room of Valley Hospital and says, "Okay guys, what did you do to my husband?" I recant the story of what happened at Sunset Valley Golf Course. Tommy states "It's not that serious, he has a broken ankle and his head wound couldn't be that serious, the doctors looked inside and didn't find anything". Vivian cracks up and starts laughing hysterically, "I guess this means he is out of the playoffs this year." We all look at each other and smile.

THE END