

Belligerence 2012

What Is A Winner?

Every day, we all hear about what it takes to be a winner. Seems like everywhere you look these days, there is yet a new description for a new kind of winner. “He’s a winner.” “She’s a winner.” According to a lot of folks, we’re ALL winners. But that’s impossible. Or is it? I’ll leave that up to you to decide, for in large part, we are allowed to make our own personal assessments about who wins and who doesn’t. However, there are some instances in which a winner is clearly defined – either by having the best score at a given contest, or by casting a shadow so massive that there can be no other conclusion. The relationship between those two types could very well be the most intriguing, and is the very relationship we found at that mystical little golf tournament hidden away in the countryside of west Tennessee.

As we all know, every golf tournament has a winner. A golf tournament is not over until a winner has been decided. Even the infamous Belligerence Golf Classic was decided in a putt – off in 2005 when a well known 3 time champion won his second consecutive Belligerence by knocking a pressure packed 30 footer a mere 9 feet from the cup. No such contest was needed this year, however. A winner was clearly declared, but it was the game within a game that was far more fascinating than a just a tally of strokes and handicaps. For this tournament ended up pitting two contrasting and unlikely foes – a laid back, easy-come-easy-go tournament veteran who some thought just might be due for a win – against the fiercest competitor the game of golf or possibly any other sport has ever seen. The very man who had mowed down the field two years previous much the same way a man might step out on his front porch with an AK-47 and rip through an horde of terrorists advancing up his street. Yes, the Magnate was back and this time he was back to win. Doug Moffet – DoMo – may have looked at times like the hunter, but it soon became apparent that the contrary was actually the case. Make no mistake - the game was on.

With any golf tournament, it is almost impossible to predict the winner until the second half is well underway. The Belligerence being a 9 hole event – the emotional stress makes it impossible to be more – the order of the competition usually starts to become clear after the par five 6th hole. The pressure crescendos mightily from that point forward. The par three 7th – and closest to the pin contest. The par four 8th – including the long drive contest. And then, of course, the knee buckling 9th and final hole. On the 7th tee, it was made known by the official scorer that the battle for the coveted Belligerence trophy was between the two aforementioned players, and the Magnate immediately raised to the level of intimidation known to only a few select warriors in the history of sport. The official scorer being yours truly, I positioned myself in the only spot I considered to be safe – right next to the hole. As the shots were hit, the closest to the pin winner was clear – it was the only ball on the green. The Magnate proceeded to swagger up and inquire if he should collect his prize money right there or on the next tee. It didn’t matter that the ball in question was not his (he had rolled off the back of the green). He then demanded to know how I knew that he was not the winner. Again, it didn’t matter

that I was only 25 feet away; it was just the total disbelief that he had not thoroughly bushwhacked his opponents.

Well, that just made things worse. To locate myself correctly to judge the long drive contest, I positioned my cart facing the tee box about 320 yards away. The Magnate, now possessed by the competitive fury that only he is known for, crushed both his drive and the field with one mighty swing. With that same bravado as was evident on the previous hole, he drove up and suspiciously demanded to know if his ball had struck my cart, therefore implying that my cart may have prohibited his drive from possibly going 350 yards or more. The fact was, his drive, while impressive, came to rest a good 50 yards short of my cart. It is that aggressive, ruthless fire that I believe only a champion under 5'10" may be able to possess. The relentless firing and re-firing of a spirit that, coupled with nearly triple digit heat, continued to leave the field withering in his wake.

On this day, however, fate had different plans. DoMo's fine playing, coupled with a relatively astronomical handicap, enabled him to manufacture an unbeatable score. But as the field slowly rolled up the final fairway, I was once again wondering – who is the real victor here today? As golfers, we know that quite often it is the course itself that claims the victory. And as we all know, every contest designed to have a winner will have one by the designed rules of that contest. Sometimes though, we have to look a little deeper. Did this distinct group of golfers playing in this unique tournament once again have a little bit of their individual and collective fire snatched away by the one man who stands alone as a competitive bulldozer? Another devious plan that few mortals have the intellectual stamina to comprehend? That evening, as DoMo humbly accepted the finest trophy in sports, the focus still may have been elsewhere. The shadow once again had been cast. The fickle Gods of Golf seemed to be whispering, "Wait 'til next year."