

SLICE OF LIFE



By Terry Moore

Let's call this my "bon voyage" column. You see, I'm heading out of town on a two week cruise (No, not down the Erie Canal, smart-aleck) and will be putting my clubs away. It's likely my golf game won't be there when I return but what the heck. Such are penances of thirty-three years of matrimony and wedded bliss. But before I finish my packing let me share a few departing thoughts.

The most inspirational and "feel good" story so far this year for me was Mike Reid's win at the Seniors PGA Championship at

Laurel Valley. Reid is the epitome of the plodding, straight-hitting, ever-grinding Tour player. I will always remember his heart-breaking loss at the PGA Championship at Kemper Lakes in 1989 when he held the lead in the final round only to lose it to Payne Stewart when Reid went three-over par on the last three holes. Afterwards, Reid broke down when speaking to the media about his devastating loss. Reid never won another Tour event and he remained on the fringes of the game until he re-emerged on the Champions Tour last year when he won \$187,000 and had one top-10 finish.

I wasn't at the PGA Seniors but I read the transcript of Reid's final post-round press conference and found it fascinating. There were several excerpts that struck me. The first is Reid talking about how he was struggling out

on the Champions Tour and the advice his wife finally gave him: "She said, 'You're just not playing your game.' And so I rededicated myself to just playing my game. And I think that part of it is keeping four woods in the bag and two wedges. Even though it's a dinosaur collection, it might look better in a wax museum, that's my game." Isn't that another enduring life and golf lesson: learning to play within yourself and not try to play like someone you're not? For Mike "Radar" Reid, that meant hitting it not long but straight and even using fairway woods to reach the long par-4s.

Also in the interview, Reid summed up his game and style of play: "I'm the turtle. There are a lot of hares out there, but if I were you, I wouldn't put any money on the turtles because they don't win most of the time. But once in a

while, I can't account for it....there are days like today..."

Mike Reid was in my thoughts the other day when I had a career round of golf. The round came on the heels of a dreaded front nine in northern Michigan when my game was so poor my playing partner threatened to call the "track vet" and put me out of my misery. But I settled down on the back nine and finished in respectable fashion. I woke up the next day feeling some acute lower back pain and wondering if I would make it through my last round of golf before the cruise. I even considered canceling the match. But with the help of stretching, ibuprofen and an extended warm-up session, I decided to play and make the best of it. I'm not going to bore you with any hole-by-hole exploits. Instead I just want to share a couple observations.

I play my best golf when

I'm walking; walking helps to slow down my quick tempo. I love it when it's sultry and hot. As Sam Snead once observed, the heat and humidity make me "feel oily." With a sore lower back, the rising heat index was a blessing in disguise.

But most importantly, my swing thoughts were reduced to a bare minimum while tempo became paramount. My playing partner, in contrast, was so exasperated after a poor shot early in the round that he yelled out, "Damn it, I've got 17,000 swing thoughts racing through my head!" When he said these words, what came to mind was a book by a noted psychiatrist I once read titled, "The Unquiet Mind." When you're playing well, the mind is quiet and not racing with numerous swing cues. As I came down the last few holes and with my playing partner graciously rooting me on, it was fun to keep the momentum going and not try to be too careful and too

score-conscious. Tour players know how to stay in the moment and not be afraid to "go low." We amateurs are prone to back off when we're in the midst of a great round. Golf has been a part of my life since I started caddying at the age of ten. It's an amazing game and an incredible journey to say you've recorded your low round of golf some 45 years later.

I've long identified with a player like Mike Reid. A bona fide senior player, I now have five metalwoods in my bag and four wedges. That doesn't leave too many irons in the bag but that's my game.

I'm just a turtle now on cruise control.

*A member of the Golf Writers Association of America and founding editor of Michigan Golfer, Terry Moore can be reached at tmoore@usxc.net. **MG***