

Bill Rea ? My golf game is wanting

It's that time of year again, when a young man's fancy turns toward the golf course.

I'm a not-so-young man, but the thought has been occurring to me a bit too. In fact, I have been told the driving range I sometimes patronize is open for business. I occasionally will stop on the way home from work and hit a bucket of balls. There are some days when I have that uncontrollable urge to just hit something that I know won't hit back. Ever have a day like that?

I won't even have to get my clubs out of their winter storage place because I never got around to putting them there in the fall. They are still in the front hall of the house, waiting to be transferred to the trunk of the car. I'm a little mystified that my wife didn't raise more of a fuss about me not putting away my toys.

There are people out there who could be classified as golf fanatics. I've encountered a few over the years. I was once interviewing a high school principal in his office. He was called away for a few minutes, and when he returned, I told him "I haven't budged from this chair, but while you were out of the room, I looked around and counted at least 15 items that would lead one to jump to the conclusion that you golf."

He gave me an incredulous look in response.

"Only 15?" he said.

My interest in the game doesn't quite reach that level, and my skill comes nowhere close.

To paraphrase Tom Lehrer, about my prowess with a golf club, I am justifiably modest. To be a bit more blunt, I suck. I really stink at the game.

There is a course in Muskoka Beth and I used to play. It's called an "academy course" consisting of nine par-3 holes. I can confidently break 80 on it, when I bother keeping score. More often than not, I stop fooling around with the score card as the round progresses. Beth, who holds a golf club as if it were a hockey stick, routinely beats me. Good thing I don't let my male ego get in the way. It's all part of an understanding I reached with myself many years ago "Some people were born to be athletes, and I'm not one of them."

Besides, I don't play golf to impress the world "I have other ways of doing that. Like I stated above, I do it because I like grasping a club and hitting things with it with impunity. Even nice guys like me have violent and aggressive urges with which they have to deal.

So I am looking forward to breaking out the clubs in the very near future and hitting things. In the meantime, I can rely on the TV for my golf fix.

So I spent a certain percentage of the weekend just ended watching the Masters.

I had no real cheering interest when it came to the tournament, although I was hoping for the best from Tiger Woods. I believe his fall from grace a couple of years ago was really his own fault, but who among us doesn't like to see a person who has been knocked on his can get back to his feet?

I'm a little confused about what happened Friday, but I gather he did something wrong and was assessed a two-stroke penalty. I watched the guys on TV try to explain it, and I ended up being more confused. I assumed the people running the show knew what they were doing.

I heard and read about some people who thought he got a break because he's Tiger Woods. I think the reality is if it had been anyone other than Woods, no one would have cared.

People like watching golf for a variety of reasons. My late grandmother, who probably wouldn't have been able to tell a putter from a driver, enjoyed watching golf on TV. I don't think she really understood why, but it was her call.

I think Beth likes watching it for the putts that are missed, because it makes her feel better about all the ones that she's blown over the years. Again, I think we all like to see the pros mess things up occasionally. I know Beth does. Actually, I feel for the guys when they miss. There were times over the weekend when Beth was out of the room and heard the unmistakable sound of me grunting in pain. Rather than calling 9-1-1 on the assumption I was having a heart attack, I think she just naturally assumed I had witnessed a very near miss. I have been robbed far too many times on the green not to be sympathetic.

As far as my attraction to watching the game is concerned, I think I just like the competition, so the tournament over the weekend carried with it a certain amount of satisfaction. It must have. I devoted valuable time watching it that should rightly have been devoted to my income tax "Who's more important, Stephen Harper or Tiger Woods?"

If it makes Steve feel any better, I was able to sneak in a couple of hours Sunday, between job-related stuff, messing about with the T1 General early in the day.

That enabled me to devote time to other important things, like doing laundry (I do most of the laundry in our household) and

watching Beth channel-hop between the Masters and the Blue Jays (I don't know what she would have done if the Leafs had been playing an afternoon tilt).

The Jays lost, by the way.

I was watching Woods as he seemed to falter, and then get it together (too little too late). And the play of Adam Scott caught my eye fairly early in the round too. I think he should have sued whoever it was who robbed him of that birdie on the 14th.

How much of what went on Sunday can be blamed on the rain? The wet greens definitely seemed to have an impact on Woods' putting, but it is a fact that the whole field had to play in the same conditions.

As things progressed, I found myself pulling for Scott, and Beth seemed to be aligning herself to my way of thinking.

?You can do it,? she said to the TV?screen as he executed his final putt. ?I have faith in you.?

He did better than I would have done. But then, so does Beth

