

"IT'S all very simple, just hit the ball with the right technique at the right speed and away it will fly high and mighty..." said my friend and Guru for the day as he hit the Golf ball with an all mighty heave right into the mini lake in the middle of the course. Never one to be bothered by minor things like practicing what he preached, the 'keen-one' swung his stick one more time, with more or less, similar results.

As to what that otherwise lovely lake was doing, sitting in the middle of an otherwise beautiful green course, don't ask; it's quite funny, isn't it, the way they place these beautiful water bodies in golf courses around the world, and then expect hapless novices to avoid hitting into them. A cynic once told me this was an acceptable way for Golf Clubs to make profit on the side as the balls that find their way in the water are confiscated and then funnily enough, sold back to the very players who lost them there!

"Never let your eyes wander..." said the Guru after a few blissful moments of solitude and I let it pass, without asking him to explain whether he was talking about the game of golf alone. Meanwhile, he had been making good progress and the patch of earth in front of his feet by now resembled, a well dug-up garden, with all his heaves and swings. In contrast, I had the cleanest blade you ever saw on a Driving Range (for the uninitiated, that's the practice area where you go and hit those little white balls till the authorities think you are good enough to be let loose in the playing arena) what with misses galore and hardly any hits to write home about!

By now, the 'Wise One' was losing all patience with me. "In this game, you play only against yourself..." he said firmly as yet another of my, by now desperate swings, failed in its attempt to make the ball air-borne. It was clear that I was turning out to be a greater golfing embarrassment than he had ever imagined. People at the driving range, who were all novices and learners themselves, were asking him visibly uncomfortable questions about his latest 'find'! Golfers are all gentlemen (ladies are gentle anyway), and so while they did their best to hide the sniggers, the general sense of bonhomie, good cheer and smiles floating around the course on that day cannot be explained by the unusually nice weather alone.

It's been almost a month since the Guru disowned me and left me to fend for myself in this big bad world. In the interim, to tell you the truth, there have been several occasions when I have wondered aloud as to how I allowed myself to be conned into this game. Having always believed

Teeing off...!

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that Golf was the last refuge of those who could not withstand the rigours of other, more game-like games, I now find myself in the esteemed company of people who need other people to carry their sticks, their umbrellas and the like. That's not to say I'm not enjoying this attention myself. Trust me, the moment I land at a Golf course these days, I come into my elements, handing the golf kit to one and my water bottle to another as I wait for the coach to set up the ball for me to hit. And I make a pretty picture, or so my loyal ball boy and coach tell me in unison after most shots. Even on occasions when my Golf stick swings all over the ball missing it completely, the coach still has a word or two to say about the near perfection of the swing!

For someone who once many-many moons ago had pretences of becoming a cricketer like every other male child born in the sub-continent, this is a game that holds many charms. For one, unlike most other games that require you to do one hundred push-ups and two and a half thousand chin-ups to attain a level of physical fitness conducive to excelling in the game, Golf is a very sporting sport. It remains one of those rare games that transcend the gender and age barrier seamlessly. Men and women whether fat or thin, old or young, wearing wigs or sporting their baldness as a fashion state-

ment, can all aspire to strut around the greens and the meadows looking like pros, with their faithful caddies in toe!

Also, unlike most other games where you first learn the game and then decide whether or not you ought to play the game in public, the norms of Golf require that you step onto the field only once all the externalities and accessories have been adequately taken care of.

Friends I have been conned, cheated and duped into buying a Golf set. And now that I have bought myself a fairly expensive kit, quitting the game is alas, no longer an option my 'family' is willing to let me take. My single point agenda these days therefore, is to find a willing (read gullible) person who I can palm off my set to. Believe me, the set is like new, untouched and without a dent.

To those who like me, go weak in the knees and suffer from uncontrollable twitching of various muscle groups the moment they sight a golfing arena, I can do no better than quote our sage-in-waiting, who while talking lovingly of the game, never tired of saying (till he met me), that it was "...all very simple", advising all the faithful to "hit the ball with the right technique at the right speed..." Sane advice, that didn't work for me. Maybe it will, for you!

Game Anyone? ■