



THE THONG ADJUSTER



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The unofficial online magazine of the Iron Thong Golf Gang

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A word from the editor

Welcome to the fourth issue of The Thong Adjuster. I hope all fellow Thongers are enjoying our online magazine. By the way, when you're talking to friends and acquaintances about possibly joining our group, don't forget to show them a copy of The Thong Adjuster. It's something that no other golf group like ours has to offer, I'll bet.

Kudos to John H. for all the work he's put in lately on our website. It's looking more and more professional all the time. If only our golf games looked as good!

At this time, there are still a couple of people who haven't paid their second half dues. Show me the money! We've had a few people join in the last month as well. A big welcome to Isaac, Anthony, Leon, Ricky and Gary. Oh, and to you, too, Paul. May you donate your funds weekly.

Speaking of funds, since we changed the way we pay out skins (no more carryovers), the kitty is expanding faster than ever before. We already have more than \$500 to pay out to winners this next tournament! And this time, you guys better watch out because, unlike T.O., my hamstring is just fine. That's a challenge to the "A" flighters (that means you, Ron).

John and Sam are still looking for nominees for officers for next year, so email one of the current officers and nominate your buddy. I'm sure you know someone who can do a better job than the current treasurer!

Let me know what you think about The Thong Adjuster.

Steve





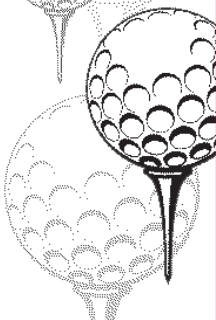
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Jokes of the Month

1 Dan just finished up a terrible round of golf and wasn't in a mood to visit the clubhouse after walking off the 18th green. So he headed straight out to the parking lot and started changing his shoes.

Just as he was closing the trunk of his car, a police officer spotted him. The policeman, stern-faced, walked over to Dan and asked, "Did you tee off on the sixteenth hole about 30 minutes ago?"

"Yes," Dan replied, "yes I did. Is something wrong, officer?"

"Did you happen to hook your tee shot?" the policeman asked.

"Yes, I did," replied Dan.

"Did your ball fly over the trees and off the course?" the policeman asked.

"Why, yes, it did," said Dan. "Why are you asking me these questions?"

The police officer replied in a very serious and stern manner: "Your ball, sir, flew out onto the highway and crashed through a driver's windshield. That driver's car went out of control and spun into a guard rail, where five other cars hit it. Then a fire truck, that was racing to a fire, smashed into the pileup!"

The policeman's voice was rising with consternation. "The fire truck couldn't make it to the fire, and the building burned down! All that because you hooked a tee shot!"

The policeman was red-faced, and he paused to catch his breath. "What do you think you should do about all this?" he finally asked Dan.

Dan was a sensitive man and an upstanding citizen. He thought it over for minute, then replied.

"Well," he said, "I think I'll try opening my stance a little."

2 Mike the golfer sets off on a round-the-world trip in his new boat, but he winds up veering off course and gets lost. He drifts onto a deserted island, where he is stranded, all alone.

Months go by and there's no sign of rescue, and not even a soccer ball to keep him company. Then one day Mike sees a beautiful mermaid coming out of the surf, heading straight toward him.

The mermaid stops two feet in front of Mike and asks him in sexy voice, "Would you like a drink?"

Mike doesn't have to think about his answer. "You bet!" he nearly shouts.

The mermaid opens the vest she's wearing, reaches in and pulls out an ice-cold beer.

Then she asks, "Would you like a cigar?" And Mike quickly answers, "You bet!"

The mermaid opens her vest even more and pulls out a Tatuaje Cigar, which Mike lights up immediately with the lighter the mermaid also gives him.

The mermaid bats her eyes, opens her vest even more, and coos to Mike, "And would you like to play around?"

"Wow!" Mike says, "You've got golf clubs in there, too?"



GOLF *tips* Repair that divot!

From Mel Sole, Ritson-Sole Golf Schools

Most good swings on well-struck iron shots produce a divot in the fairway (or tee box). The word “divot” actually refers to two different things: the top layer of turf that is sliced off and sent flying as your iron enters the ground; and the resulting scar, or patch of bare earth, that is left in the fairway.

Repairing divots is an important duty of golfers who create them. According to the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, a repaired divot can speed up the healing process (meaning: the grass will cover over the scar in the fairway) by a couple weeks, as opposed to an unrepaired divot.



No. 1: Yep, that’s a divot all right. The golfer’s iron has sliced off the top layer of turfgrass, exposing the sod underneath. (This happens because irons are designed to strike the ball on a descending path, meaning that they continue downward and into the ground after making contact with the ball.

Now that you’ve taken a divot, what’s your correct course of action? There are two ways of repairing, or “fixing,” divots. One is to fill the divot with sand or a sand-and-seed mixture; the other is to retrieve the turfgrass/sod patch that was sliced off and put it back in place.



No. 2: How do you know which is the proper course of action where you are playing? Check the golf cart. If the course wants you to use sand, they’ll provide it for you. The sand (or a mixture of sand and seed) will be in a carafe that sits in a what looks like a large cupholder. The cupholder is usually attached to the frame that holds up the roof of the cart.

No. 3: If you see this container of sand on the cart, the golf course is telling you to use sand. If you don’t see it, then you’ll put the turf back in place (which we’ll see a couple pages forward). On the cart above, we see that sand is provided, so ...take the container of sand and simply pour the sand, or sand/seed mix, into the divot. Pour enough to fill the divot. One you’ve filled the divot, use your foot to smooth over and tamp down the sand. And you’re done! Such a simple thing to do, yet it helps the golf course heal.



But what if no sand is provided on the golf cart? In that case, you’ll do something a little different ...

Continued on the next page.

About the Author

Mel Sole is a former South African Tour player with about 30 years of teaching experience in South Africa, Canada and the U.S.

He is the co-founder of Ritson-Sole Golf Schools, which is rated by “Golf” magazine one of the 25 best golf schools in the U.S. Mel’s home course is Pawleys Plantation in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Visit the Ritson-Sole Web site for many more tips from Mel.

GOLF tips

Repair that divot!

Continued from page 3

From Mel Sole, Ritson-Sole Golf Schools



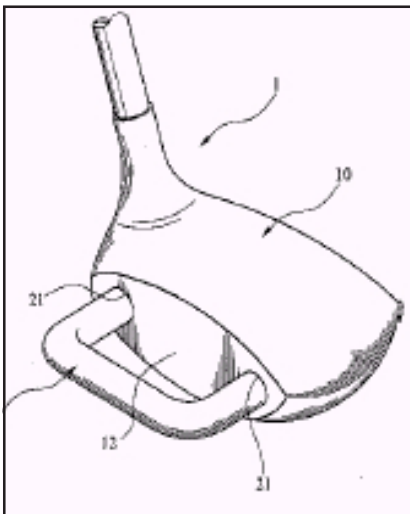
When no sand is provided, find the turf that was sliced off from the fairway. If you've taken a "clean divot," you'll find the turf still in one, neat piece. But sometimes, the turf will be in bits in pieces. Just retrieve it as best you can, and replace it in the ground.

If your divot is in one piece, then fit it back into the ground the same way it came out (as you would a puzzle piece). If it's in multiple pieces, just do the best job you can to make it fit neatly back into place. When the turf is back in the ground, tamp down with your foot, and you're done.



Repairing divots is not *always* a necessity; with certain types of turfgrasses, at certain times of the year, repairing the divot won't make any difference, good or bad, to the health of the golf course.

But unless you are certain that's the case where you play, and when you're playing, you should always repair your divots on the golf course.



What's new in golf technology?

Patented May 11, 2006 by Kuo Min-Hui

A golf club head includes a half-circle metal ring that extends outwards from the rear surface of the head. The weight of the half-circle metal ring is adjustable according to the weight of the head. The half-circle metal ring can be a solid ring or a hollow tube. By change in diameter of the cross section of the half-circle metal ring, the center of gravity moves back in the club head and the center-of-gravity angle as well as the depth of center-of-gravity are both increased so as to achieve greater hitting efficiency.

Golf rule of the Month

Q What is the ruling when a ball struck from off the green comes to rest pinned between the cup and the flagstick? You're playing a shot from off the green. Your ball rolls right at the cup. You just know it's going in. Then it hits the flagstick and ... just hangs there. Stuck. Pinned between the flagstick and the cup. Neither in nor out. What's the ruling?



A It's found in Rule 17-4. Carefully remove the flagstick. If you've been living right, the ball will drop into the cup and your previous shot is considered holed.

But if you've been a bad boy or girl and, somehow, some way, the ball fails to drop into the cup, you must place the ball on the lip of the cup and putt out.

(The answer to this question only applies to shots from off the green because it's a penalty to leave the flagstick in on shots from on the putting surface.)

Q What is the penalty for playing a wrong ball?



A In most cases, playing the wrong ball results in loss of hole in match play and a two-stroke penalty in stroke play.

In stroke play, the offender must go back and replay any shots with the correct ball.

Exceptions are wrong balls played out of hazards. In both match play and stroke play, no penalty is incurred for wrong balls played from hazards as long as the player goes back and plays with the right ball.

A player whose ball was incorrectly played by a competitor or partner should play a ball as close to the original spot as can be determined.

In stroke play, a competitor can be disqualified if the mistake of playing a wrong ball is not corrected.

In the rulebook, wrong ball situations are covered in Rule 15.

A Luke Samuel Goodyear Mystery by Steve VanWert

MURDER ON THE 13TH GREEN

Chapter Four – The match

The day of the championship match was hot and sunny, with highs projected in the mid-to-high 90s, with virtually no wind. The big event was scheduled for an 8 a.m. tee-time, but by 7:30 it was already nearly 80 degrees.

Nick and Horace arranged for electric carts full of cold water to be stationed at every third tee, for the players and the gallery. Since it was Sunday morning, and Griffon Lakes is a semi-private, not a private course, and subject to local “blue laws,” no beer could be served before noon. But as the twosome passed each water cart, that cart would head out to fill in the open holes on the back nine, so water would be just about everywhere.

Luke, Nick Adena and Eloise Chamberlain, Horace’s wife, along with Skipper Lodge, walked along together, rooting for Bruce. Eloise, Horace’s second wife, is 38, while Horace is 78, but he might be in better shape. She’s a tad “fluffy,” if you get my drift. Hartly had his followers, too. Most notably, the Cassenberg duo, Cash and Cassy, along with Putts O’Shea. The rest of the crowd, numbering a couple hundred, was split, most rooting for Bruce.

After Horace conducted the customary coin toss, Bruce teed off first. He hit a 3-wood that started down the right side and drew back to the center of the fairway, about 265. It left him in perfect shape, only 105 from the green. Hartly reached into his now-infamous black-and-green bag and pulled out a brand new driver. It was one of those graphite-shafted, oversized-headed, space-age technology-molded some kind of fancy Kevlar or something-headed nine degree driver. The shaft was at least 48 inches long. The damn thing weighted out at an E-7! Only Hartly and King Kong could swing it, but Kong can’t putt for shit, I hear.

Hartly stood at the tee, took a mighty swing, creating so much centrifugal force that it nearly sucked the dainty lace-and-taffeta Easter bonnet right off Cassy’s coiffured head! The ball took off low, skimming a few skinny bracken bushes on the edge of the right rough, drew back to the short grass, and ran down at least 310. Hartly shook his fist in the air.

Bruce was out, naturally. He studied the shot for a second, turned to Tyler Braddock, his caddie, and called for a wedge. After a quick practice stroke, he nonchalantly popped it on the green about six feet right of the pin. Hartly hit a sand wedge. It bounced once just over the pin, spun back, hit the pin and stopped inches away. They both made their birdie putts and the match was even.

After both players birdied the par three, number three hole, the match stood even, with both players shooting three under par.

Luke stood next to the number four tee as Bruce got his golf ball from Tyler. Bruce gave Luke a grin as he reached into his pocket for a tee. He loved competition but Hartly was really on top of his game. Bruce was going to have to show his true worth to repeat as champion.

Number four is a tricky hole, a par four, 420 yards from the blue tees, with out-of-bounds all the way down the left side. There’s a creek crossing the fairway about 310 out, a little closer on the left side than the right. Just to make things harder, there’s a huge palm tree guarding the green on the left side, with deep traps on either side.

Bruce drove first, and pulled his tee shot down the left side, into the rough, well short of the water. Hartly had a chance to take the advantage, but got over-enthusiastic and hooked his drive into the left rough, too, just past Bruce’s.

“Damn it!” Hartly yelled, and threw his new

driver down on the ground. Hard. He stomped off the tee, leaving his caddie to pick up the club.

"Hartly might win this match if he can keep his temper," Skipper said, walking beside Luke.

Luke nodded, not really concerned yet. Nick Adena was wearing a frown, though.

"What's bothering you, Nick?" Luke asked.

"I'm going to speak to Horace," he said. "I think Bruce has too many clubs in his bag. By the rules, he should be penalized, enough to lose all these holes they've played."

"But doesn't Hartly have to challenge him?" Luke asked. "There's got to be a mistake. Bruce is too experienced a golfer to carry more than 14 clubs."

Nick wasn't sure. "I'll ask Horace," he said. "After all, he is the tournament director."

They all got to where the balls lay in the left rough. Nick walked over to Horace, gestured to him and they moved away from the gallery. In the meantime, Bruce hit his approach shot to the green. But he didn't get it high enough and the ball hit dead into the top of the palm tree left of the green, and fell into the trap. Actually, he was lucky – lots of balls never come out of the palm tree. Hartly saw that Bruce's shot didn't carry, so he took an extra club, played it up in his stance, and stroked it clean. But, once again, he wasn't able to take advantage. The ball just ticked the top of the tree and fell short of the green by about two feet.

As the group headed to the green, Nick came over. "Horace says he's going to talk to both of them on the next tee. We'll just have to wait and see."

Meanwhile, the match was still going on. Bruce was in the sand and away, so he took his sand wedge, stepped into the bunker and dug his shoes in as far as he could. He then hit a great shot. The ball came flying out of the sand, landed just past the hole, spun once, and fell in. Bruce got a birdie out of nowhere.

After the applause died down, Hartly grabbed his bullseye, lined up the putt from the fringe, and calmly covered Bruce's birdie with one of his own. Two birdies. Match still tied.

Before the boys could hit, Horace called them together on the tee box. The look on Bruce's

face was one of pure shock. He ran over to Tyler and quickly counted the clubs in his bag. Suddenly, he pulled out an extra wedge and, glaring at his caddie, walked back to the tee.

"I'm afraid you're right, Horace," he admitted. "There are 15 clubs in the bag. I told Tyler before we teed off to remove this 60 degree, but I guess he forgot. It's my fault for not checking. What's the penalty?"

Horace opened his rule book. "It's loss of hole in match play, I think," he said. "That would put you four-down."

Bruce shook his head. "Hartly," he said, "you're much too good a golfer for me to catch after a lead like that. I'll just concede." He reached out his hand to Hartly.

To his credit, Hartly took a step back. "Wait a minute," he said, "I don't have to accept this concession, do I? I'm not spending the next year listening to Summitview talking about how I won the championship on a goddamn technicality. No fucking way." He looked Bruce dead in the eye. "I'm going to beat you, Benning, on the course!"

He grabbed the offending wedge from Bruce's hands and tossed it to Horace. "Here. I never saw this piece of shit in his bag. I know he didn't hit it. We're still dead even as far as I'm concerned. So let's play some golf."

Horace looked at Bruce. "Is that all right with you?" he asked.

Bruce nodded and looked at Hartly again, reaching out his hand. "That's a class move, Hartly," he said. "I respect you for it. Thanks."

Hartly actually smiled as he smothered Bruce's hand in his. "No shit," he said, "you'll respect me even more after I beat your ass."

The match continued. But a strange thing was happening along the edge of the gallery. There were two reactions to what had just occurred. Those close enough to the conversation to understand what had happened broke into spontaneous applause. Luke noticed that Cassy, Cash and Putts all looked like someone just defecated in their vichyssoise.

The par five, 552-yard, number one handicap hole on the course was next. This is the hole where Bruce drove over the water right, and

Luke got wet. This time both contestants played it conservatively and laid up short of the creek with their second shots, hit the green in regulation, and sank birdie putts. Five holes played, five under par, match even.

"Hey, Nick," Luke said, "what's the course record? They've gotta be on track to beat it."

"Um, 63, I think. And 31 on this side."

Both players parred number six, just for a change of pace. Number seven is a 235-yard par three. It's straight-away, with an enormous trap guarding the left side of the green, extending across at least half the front, with a grove of pine trees bordering the cart path. Just behind the trees, number eight tee box sits so close to a cinderblock rest station that you can tell if the group ahead of you had Mexican for lunch. The pin was tucked just behind the trap, only 10 feet or so on the putting surface.

Bruce still had the honors and hit a one-iron so sweet it dripped honey all the way down the fairway. It hit just over the trap, jumped a little left, and rolled to within 10 feet.

"Nice shot," Hartly acknowledged, to everyone's amazement. He reached into his bag, pulled out a three-iron and calmly hit one of the most famous shots in the history of Griffon Lakes. He hooded the clubface down, played it back in his stance, and hit a low hook that started right of the trap. It hit in front of the green, took the right-to-left spin, bounced on the bermuda, and rolled into the cup. An ace. What a way to go one up!

Hartly turned to Bruce and said, "Your putt's good, Benning." He then slapped his caddie on the back, almost caving in the poor son-of-a-bitch's shoulder, and began to stride down the fairway.

Even Bruce laughed. And started to clap his hands. The 200 Summitviewers surrounding the tee box joined in. Hartly got another round of applause at the green when he reached into the cup and pulled out his ball.

Bruce walked over close enough for Luke to talk to him. "Hell of a shot," he said.

"Yea, but you're one down," Luke reminded him.

"You know, Luke," Bruce said earnestly,

"Hartly's shown me a lot today. There's more to that big galute than mouth after all."

"Yea, but you're one down," Luke reminded him again.

Bruce winked at him. "Not for long," he said and walked to number eight tee.

Number eight at Griffon Lakes isn't particularly difficult; it just plays long. It's 436 yards, straight uphill all the way, and only a par four. A service road winds along the left side and the course driving range is off to the right, creating a unique situation: a hole with O-B on both sides. The green is a nightmare, sloped back to front, with a huge horseshoe trap around it, leaving only the front open. Palm trees border the outside of the trap, too, and a gigantic live oak spreads gnarled branches over the rear of the putting surface.

Hartly, now one up, took his graphite cannon and drove into the left rough about 280 yards. Bruce hit a slight fade down the right side, into the rough, about the same distance.

Hartly was so pumped that he slammed a seven-iron that hit in front of the green, bounced once on the short grass, spun, caught the slope, and rolled back off the front. But he could putt from there.

Bruce's line to the green was partially obstructed by a small pine tree on the edge of the rough. Seemingly unconcerned, Bruce took his often-used one-iron, opened his stance drastically, played the ball way back, and hit a low, running fade that started way left of the tree 10 feet in front of him, hit in the fairway about 80 yards short and ran like a rabbit toward the green. It rolled right past Hartly's ball, onto the green, past the pin and stopped all the way on the top of the putting surface, about 40 feet past the hole.

Bruce wasn't out of the hole, but Hartly's putt was a whole lot more makeable than his.

Hartly left the putt dead in, but short. He tapped in for par. Bruce and his caddie were on the other side of the ball, checking the line.

"It looks pretty straight to me, Mr. Benning," said Tyler, "just fast as lightning. It's down-grain, too."

"M-m-m-ph," remarked Bruce, holding his golf ball in his teeth.

He placed it on the green, picked up his marker and stood over the putt. "Pull the pin, will ya, Tyler?" he asked.

Tyler nodded. Bruce raised up, backed off and reached into his back pocket for his towel. He wiped the sweat off his forehead. "Somebody turn on the a/c," he said.

Everyone laughed. Bruce lined up his putt, brought the club back slowly, and barely touched the ball with the toe of his ping anser. It started rolling, picking up speed as it neared the hole. The ball rammed into the back, jumped into the air, and plopped in like a Shaquille O'Neal power slam. Birdie from hell. Match even.

Hartly slammed his putter into his bag, turned and headed to the next tee, not saying a word.

The infamous number nine, where Hartly's bag caused Skipper Lodge to chunk his way to oblivion, was next. They drove perfectly, almost next to each other in the center of the fairway. Bruce was just out, and hit an eight-iron to about 20 feet away. Hartly punched a nine to 40 feet short of the pin, but on the green. After eight holes of the most intense pressure, something had to crack. It was Hartly's putting stroke. He scuffed his approach putt and left it four feet short.

Bruce just rimmed his, missing it by inches on the left side, stopping two balls past. He tapped in. Hartly took at least a dozen practice strokes. He held the putter tight and tried to lock his knees to keep them from shaking. Just as he began his stroke, a bead of sweat dripped from his brow. It fell to earth almost in slow-motion, and splattered next to the ball. His eyes glanced at it for only a split second, but it was enough to make him lose his concentration.

The ball entered the hole on the left side, spun around the edge of the cup and came back out the front, looking right at him.

"Shit," he said to himself, "son-of-a-bitch."

Bruce won the hole with a par and led the match, one-up.

Horace had the card in his hand and was adding up the scores. "Hartly had a six-under 30 on the front," he announced, "and broke the front nine course record." He added some more. "Bruce had a seven-under 29," he said, shaking

his grey head in amazement, "and leads the match one-up."

Play is supposed to be continuous, but to give the gallery time to re-form, and since the day was so stinking hot, Horace announced a five minute delay before the start of the back nine. Nick, Skipper and Luke went to the VIP lounge, ordered Tom Collins' in tall glasses with plenty of ice. But no whiskey. It still wasn't noon. Outside, Cash and Cassy were having a heated discussion with Hartly. There was a lot of arm waving and gesturing, but Luke couldn't tell what was being said. The Cassenberg's weren't happy. Hartly was playing his heart out. He didn't need a hard time from the gruesome twosome, but like Luke's sainted papa used to say, "You play with pigs, you're gonna get covered with slop." He was a real philosopher, even if he never did break 100.

Putts O'Shea was nowhere around. Neither was Tyler Braddock, but Luke figured they were both probably taking a whiz, or filling up with H-two-O in the caddieshack.

After a few minutes, the gallery filled in around the number 10 tee box, and waited quietly for the two protagonists. They came out from the clubhouse to a genuinely warm round of applause. Bruce and Tyler were first, followed by Hartly and Skinny.

As Bruce walked up onto the tee, Luke noticed that Tyler had a blue and white plastic bucket, about six inches long, attached to one of the towel straps on Bruce's bag. The top was covered by what looked like foam rubber.

"Hey, Tyler," Luke said, "what's with the blue bucket?"

Tyler looked at him with a mixture of surprise and distrust. "What's it to ya?"

Luke held up both hands. "It's so cute, I want one for my very own."

"So make one yourself."

"What a great idea," Luke said. "What an asshole," he thought.

The match was about to resume. Number 10 is a long par five, but a birdie hole. It's 570 yards long with a big dogleg left.

Bruce teed off first and hit a nice draw around the fairway side of the dogleg. It turned the

corner like it had radar and ran to about 290. Hartly tried to cut the dogleg and shorten the hole for his second shot. He hit another low screamer with his nine degree driver, but left of the ridge. It ran all the way out to the hardpan where the grounds keeping equipment take a shortcut to the maintenance barn. By the time it stopped rolling, it was at least 310 to 320 yards out. It was one hell of a drive.

The only problem with cutting off so much of the dogleg is that the maintenance barn sits dead in line to the green.

Bruce was up first and smoked a three-wood that stopped about 30 feet short of the green. Hartly took his three-wood and addressed the ball. From where Luke was standing, he couldn't tell if Hartly had a good lie or not, but shots off the hardpan are always tricky. Hartly took a mighty swing, but hit the ball just a little chubby. It was high enough, but didn't have enough oomph. It landed on the far edge of the maintenance barn's metal roof with a bang, bounced high into the air, and fell into the parking lot beyond. Out of bounds.

Hartly took his three-wood by the grip and catapulted it toward the offending barn. It carried almost as far as his shot, but fell, spinning, to the ground, kicking up a cloud of dust.

"Goddamn hardpan lie," he muttered.

Everyone had to wait for Hartly's caddie to retrieve his club so he could drop a ball and re-hit. This time he played it safe to the right of the barn and short of the green. It didn't matter, though. Bruce calmly chipped to within gimme range and birdied the hole. He was now two up.

Bruce still had his golf ball in his mouth as he walked by Luke to number 11 tee. He handed it to Tyler, who dropped it into the blue bucket and left it there. As Bruce stepped onto the tee box, Tyler reached into the blue bucket, grabbed the ball, shook it to dry it and handed it to Bruce. Bruce promptly plopped it into his mouth, absentmindedly.

Number 11 is a challenging par three, to say the least. It's 220 yards long, with a lake between the tee box and the green, extending halfway across the fairway. The only safe route to the putting surface is on the right side, but

there are two big traps waiting to gobble up an off-line shot. The green slants front-to-back slightly, so the shot has to carry onto the bermuda, but not with too much mustard or it rolls off the back.

Bruce teed his ball, took his stance, but suddenly straightened, removed his lucky hat and rubbed his eyes. "Getting a little headache," he said. He put his hat back on, took his stance, and hit the worst shot of the day. It kinda floated up in the air, heading for the right traps, faded a little more, and landed with a splash into the nearest sand. He shook his head slowly. "Man," he muttered aloud, "what was that?"

Hartly promptly hit a one-iron, which anyone in the crowd could have told him was too much club. It hit on the front of the green, moving fast, bounced once and caught the overspin, rolled through the green and all the way back to a row of hedges bordering number 12 tee. Hartly stared at the ground for a long time, shook his head and followed the gallery.

Cash Cassenberg walked over to him and said something under his breath. Hartly stopped walking and just stared at Cash. He glanced down the fairway at where Bruce was just reaching the right trap. He turned back to Cash and shook his fist at him. Ninety-nine percent of the crowd were in front of him and didn't see it. But Luke did.

Bruce stumbled getting into the trap, but didn't ground his club. He caught himself with his right hand, straightened up and shrugged his shoulders. "I'm getting too old for this," he said to the people around him. They laughed, but he didn't. He dug in, swung his sand wedge, and exploded weakly to about 15 feet from the pin. He climbed out of the pit, gave his wedge to Tyler, and brushed off the loose sand.

It was obvious that he was feeling sick.

Horace walked over to him. "Are you all right, Bruce?"

Bruce removed his hat again and swiped at his brow with his arm. "Just a little nauseous all of a sudden, Horace. I'll be okay." He marked his ball on the green and handed it to Tyler, who once again plopped it into the bucket.

Tyler handed Bruce his putter, and reached

into the blue bucket for the ball. Luke noticed that Tyler was wearing a golf glove on his left hand and used his left to get the ball. He then grabbed a rake and began to rake out the trap.

Bruce promptly stuck the clean ball in his teeth and surveyed his putt. He took it out of his mouth, still glistening. Sighing, he stood over the putt, stroked it and left it a foot short. He looked up at Hartly.

"Mark it," Hartly said.

Bruce did so, weaving a bit as he straightened up.

Meanwhile, Hartly had played a nice little touch sand wedge of his own to about 10 feet. But he was lying three after a penalty drop.

Hartly steeled his nerves and ran his 10-footer into the heart. Bruce replaced his ball, tapped it, and watched it spin around the cup, balance on the lip, and stick. They halved the hole with bogeys.

Number 12 is another difficult driving hole. It's a sharp dogleg left, with O-B all the way around the right side. At the turn, there's a fairway trap to catch those poor souls who attempt to cut the dogleg and can't carry a drive 240 in the air. A cart path and a million little pine trees run down the left rough. The other end of the same lake fronting number 11 extends from about 60 yards short of the green almost to the putting surface on the left side. It's a hole that a good player can birdie with a great drive, if he has cast-iron gonads.

Bruce must have realized his strength was going, because he hit a three-wood down the middle of the fairway, right of the trap. It stopped about 235. Hartly figured it was now or never. He took out his big stick, took his big swing, and hit a boomer. It cleared the trap and the trees, landing softly in the middle of the fairway well over 300 yards from the tee. Once again, the crowd applauded. He deserved it.

By the time Bruce got to his ball, he was having trouble with his balance. He dragged his feet instead of picking them up. He hit his three-wood again, having never given it back to his caddie. He hit it high and weak, pulling it into the left rough, well short of the lake.

Hartly saw that he had a good lie in the fairway

and decided to hit his driver again. He hit it low, naturally, and it ran up onto the green, stopping only about six-feet short of the pin. It was another great shot. Bruce hit a weak wedge to the front of the green, marked his ball and gave it to Tyler. It went back into the bucket. After a minute, while Hartly was lining up his putt, Tyler gave Bruce his ball from the blue bucket and Bruce, out of habit, put it right in his mouth. It stayed there until number 13 tee, because Hartly promptly rammed in his eagle putt. Bruce was still one up, but fading fast.

The fatal number 13 hole is straight-away down hill to the green, with a fairway trap on the right side about 200 out. Hartly, now with the honors, hit his drive over the trap and down into the little valley in front of the green. Bruce tried to tee his ball, but almost fell over sideways. Dr. D. Walter Cook, one of the local M.D.'s from Summitview, rushed onto the tee and grabbed Bruce by the shoulders. He turned him slightly and laid him down on the grass. He felt his head, checked his pulse, looked into his eyes.

"I'm okay, Walt," mumbled Bruce. "This heat has just taken a lot out of me, that's all."

Dr. Cook chewed his rather full lower lip. He turned to Horace. "Well," he began, "he's not running a fever, but his pulse rate is way up. Can we call a delay for a minute and let him sit down?"

"Is that all right with you, Hartly?" asked Horace.

Hartly nodded, then glared at Cash standing to his right.

Skipper and Luke ran over and helped Horace pick Bruce up and carry him over to the bench next to the tee. They sat him up and gave him cool water to drink. He took some deep breaths, mopped his brow, and spit on the ground.

Luke noticed his lips were a funny color, kinda bluish on the inside. "Hey, buddy," he said, "this is no big deal. If you're sick, you're sick. There'll be another round, another day. Let's climb in a cart and head you to the hospital. Okay?"

Bruce smiled and patted the back of Luke's hand. The tips of his fingers were bluish, too. "Nah," he said, "Let's get this thing on the road."

Besides, Hartly deserves to win or lose on the course. I owe him that much.” He stood up and gestured to Tyler. “Give me my driver; I’ve rested enough.”

Bruce hit another weak pull down the left side that carried about 240. When the gallery all got down to his ball, Bruce winked at Luke and said, “Hey, Luke, watch me hole this sucker out.”

And he almost did. To this day, no one knows how he could have hit such a great golf shot in his condition, but he damn sure did. It was a punch seven-iron that hit just in front of the green, bounced into the pin and rolled about a foot left. He waved to the gallery.

But Hartly wasn’t about to cave in. He hit a little wedge to about six feet, studied the putt, saw that it was pretty much straight up the hill, and rolled it in the middle. It was the same atmosphere as the front nine, with each player hitting great shots, competing at a level the rest of us never experience.

The whole time Hartly stood over his putt, Bruce was kneeling just off the green, his ball in his cheek. He clapped as Hartly’s putt fell, stood

up and walked slowly to his ball. Hartly stopped him in mid-stride. “That putt’s good, Bruce,” he said.

Bruce smiled, removed the golf ball from his mouth and said, “Thanks.” He leaned over to pick up his marker, but never straightened up. He just folded onto the green, like an inflatable doll out of air. Doc Cook, Horace, Skipper and Luke rushed to him. Hartly had already turned him over and was holding on to him. “Bruce,” he begged, “don’t conk out on us now. Nobody wanted this to happen ...”

Doc Cook sorta pushed Hartly out of the way, a feat in itself. Bruce’s eyes were glazed. His chest didn’t move. His lips were almost black. After a minute, a shocked Doc Cook looked over at Horace and shook his head. “This man is dead,” he declared, “but I don’t know why.”

No one said a word. Luke looked around at the crowd, saw the men remove their hats, shake their heads in disbelief. And he noticed the stricken look on Hartly’s face and the inscrutable one on Cash’s.

Next month, Chapter 5 of “Murder on the 13th Green.”

Iron Thong member profile

Sam Pierce



Name: Sammy R. Pierce

Nickname: Sam

Handicap: 15

Clubs in the bag: Ping I 2 Black Dots. My favorite -- the 2 iron.

My History of playing Golf:

Started playing in the early 1970s. Having served 24 years in the Navy, I have had the opportunity to play golf in places like Siganelia, Sicily, Iceland at midnight, Japan, Spain and various other locations. The one constant I have found is the caliber of people I have had the opportunity to share good space with.

My Gratest Moment in golf:

My first hole in one at River Crossing, San Antonio. Also, a one week golfing trip with three very good friends while stationed in Masawa, Japan, in 1993. What a trip!

What I like about being an Iron Thonger:

Easy, the great space I share with some great people. Golf is a wonderful sport but, sharing good space with good frends is the Bomb. It just makes golf that much better.

The best and worst part of my golf game. Best part, my iron play. Worst part, my driver. The driver is like a woman; it starts out great but sooner or later it turns into a Bitch.

Although the game of golf is great, the best part is the space I share with frends like Big John, Jess, Hersh, Johnny and all the other fellow Thongers. There's just something about meeting once a week with good frends for a friendly round while leaving the corporate world well behind. The sitting around the table having a beer thiking about the putt, drive or approach shot that got away. The frendly competition that takes place from all direc-tions.

The good or the bad shots come and go. The good space with frends seam to stay the same. You got to love it. Fairways and Greens. Some times you get the Bear and sometimes the bear gets you.

