

Golf

If you watch a game it's fun. If you play it, it's recreation. If you work at it, it's golf.

Bob Hope

I can remember hearing that golf is like taking a walk in the park – with a purpose. Just what that purpose is escapes me now a day after dragging my bag of battered clubs, along with my bruised ego, around the Arrowsmith golf course here in Qualicum Bay.

Living in one of the premier golfing communities in the country, I try to get out on the links at least once a year; it's a humbling experience and one that reminds me that I might be better suited to less traumatizing hobbies.

First off, if you've never been there, Arrowsmith is one of the most beautiful courses in the area, offering expansive views of the Central Island's most prominent peak and the pastoral setting beneath her massive shoulders. In this atmosphere of utmost tranquility and serenity, I was able to boil my blood and wound my pride on the very first hole.

Witnessed by a crowd of Japanese tourists wearing garish Hawaiian print shirts and sporting decisively provocative grins, I teed off the first hole with a tremendous drive – right into a tree. In the next instant, and with a wonderfully solid clunk, the tree returned my ball not ten feet from the tee I had just launched it from. I absorbed this mess with feigned amusement, as if such a catastrophe had never happened before (it has) and glanced sidelong to my Asian gallery, who were chuckling politely and shaking their visored heads.

About an hour later, the Japanese group must have lagged behind, for a pair of young boys had played through and now gathered behind me on the sixth hole, a lazy par three. Unwilling to endure the possibly cruel scrutiny of my newest spectators, I allowed the boys through with a magnanimous air. The first lad, perhaps 10 or 11 years old at most, swaggered silently up and placed his tee as far back as possible. Pausing momentarily to arrange his thoughts, he then swung his club through the warm air and delivered a wallop that sent his ball in a marvelous arc to the centre of the green. Effortlessly, he birdied. His companion, as serious and skillful as the first boy, practically mirrored the same play.

As for me, my approach narrowly missed killing a dozing Canada goose, the ball eventually bouncing out of bounds and rolling down a hill to the potato fields. In all, I believe I lost about a half a dozen balls, one disappearing into the woods at what I believed to be a physically impossible right angle from the point of departure off my three-iron.

By the end of the day, I strolled into the clubhouse a hearty 40-over par 101, the same number as my blood temperature and about one-third of the number of days that will pass before I again muster the nerve to find a purpose for taking a walk.