

Golf for the First Time

The other day I had the afternoon free, so I decided to take a couple of hours and master golf.

It's easy to see the appeal of golf—it's like lawn mowing you can win. You take a metal club and smack a ball with it and—here's the easy part—even if you miss the hole on your first try, you're allowed to take another shot or two.

To make the sport less boring, course designers have carefully built in a series of obstacles called "geese." The geese frequently perform a biological function necessary to the creation of baby geese, if you get my drift, which you'd think would remind the men that they could probably be doing something similar if they didn't spend every weekend on the golf course, but it never does.

I decided to take a lesson from a golf "pro"—a person paid by the country club to discredit the theory that a deep tan is bad for your health. His name was Jack and he was annoyingly fit despite the fact that he did nothing all day but play golf.

Jack suggested we start with the basics. "Oh, I think I can drive a golf cart," I scoffed.

Jack advised that there was more to golf than just riding around in carts breaking up geese dates. He taught me how to raise the club slowly behind me in a smooth, controlled motion designed to look good in Buick commercials. Then, uncoiling like a spring, the body twists and the club whips around blindingly fast to send the ball soaring with such speed it appears to vanish in the clouds.

"Wow," I breathed, awed at my prowess.

"That was great," Jack praised, impressed with my natural athleticism. "With just a little more concentration, you should be able to hit the ball."

Eventually I developed the following system for successfully hitting a bucket of balls at the driving range.

1. Swing club.
2. Swing club again.
3. Swing club again and again and again.
4. Kick ball.
5. Kick bucket of balls.
6. Hit bucket of balls with golf club.
7. Beg golf pro to come out of the club house, promising to restrain temper.

Eventually I convinced Jack that the problem was that the driving range was missing the essential element I needed to get my competitive juices flowing,

which was the cart serving margaritas. We went to the first hole, where I connected solidly, sending the ball in a straight line, slicing neither right nor left. A perfect shot.

"Excellent!" Jack beamed. He took four steps forward and stood where the ball had come to rest. "Now, just swing a little harder."

I had paid for just three hours of Jack's time and they flew by—he seemed reluctant to call the lesson to an end, probably because we were still on the first hole. But I had learned what I needed to learn: geese float, golf balls don't.

The rest is easy.