



Links Players

The Big Upset

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. (1 Samuel 17:45, ESV)

There have been several golf tournaments over the years where an underdog has won. But you would be hard-pressed to name a more significant upset than what happened at the 1955 U.S. Open. After three rounds of play, the name at the top of the leaderboard was Ben Hogan. Others were giving chase, but this was Hogan, and he had extra incentive: a win would give him a record 5th U.S. Open title.

It was a 36-hole Saturday final in those days, so victory seemed inevitable when Ben finished his final 18 with a 70. NBC commentator, Gene Sarazen, was so sure of Hogan's victory that he congratulated him on the air. But still on the course was a relatively unknown golfer named Jack Fleck, who improbably rallied to catch Ben with two birdies on the final four holes, forcing an 18-hole playoff on Sunday.

Fleck had admirably come from behind to tie, but now he had to face "The Hawk" head-to-head. This would be a "David versus Goliath" match. On one side, Ben Hogan, owner of 63 PGA titles and nine majors, was looking to add that record 5th U.S. Open. And on the other side was Jack Fleck, head pro at a municipal golf course in Davenport, Iowa.

The smart money was on Hogan, but Fleck had other ideas. After opening with seven straight pars, he reeled off three consecutive birdies to take a lead that he never relinquished. When the playoff was over, the unknown pro from Iowa had a 3-shot victory by conquering one of the giants of golf. Let's move on to the Old Testament showdown that gave us the real David versus Goliath. The Philistines and Israelites were locked in a stalemate battle, camped on opposite sides, with neither army wanting to risk an attack. Goliath was the Philistine's fearsome warrior, a giant carrying massive weapons and protected by brass armor.

For 40 days, he paraded up and down the valley, taunting King Saul to send someone to fight him in a winner take all match. Saul was in a difficult position, needing someone to match the size and strength of Goliath. But the young shepherd boy David persuaded Saul to let him be the one to answer the challenge.

Saul initially suited David with armor and a sword to face Goliath. But David discarded the protection and put his trust in his sling, his stones, and most of all, his God. When Goliath saw his opponent, he mocked David and cursed him by his gods.

But David responded confidently, “I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty...the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hand.” And, of course, that is exactly what happened. When Goliath approached him, David used his sling and stone to strike Goliath’s forehead, killing him and leading to a route for Israel as they chased away the Philistines.

Sometimes our fears and challenges can seem like giants to us. David’s story reminds us to have faith, no matter the situation. Psalm 9:10, written by David himself, sums it up nicely: “Those who know your name trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.”

Heavenly Father, when we face life’s challenges, we give thanks that we can always trust you to provide us with strength, comfort, and peace.

—

John Bown

Copyright 2023 Links Players International

The Links Daily Devotional appears Monday-Friday at linksplayers.com.