



Links Players

Why Not?

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24, ESV)

The last time I remember a golf "cult hero" being born virtually overnight was John Daly. Daly, however, already had his PGA Tour card and got into the tournament as an alternate when Nick Price pulled out.

I'll never forget where I was when he won. I was sitting with friends in the mountains of Austria, just outside Salzburg. I firmly declared that John Daly "...had no chance."

I was convinced he would feel the heat of a major championship on the weekend, and the bombs he had been hitting off the tee would soon find all kinds of unkind resting places - like people's backyards and swimming pools. I was dead wrong. John became a cult hero overnight.

Something similar happened this last weekend. Another cult hero was born, and his name is Michael Block. But this time, the storyline is even more gripping. Michael is 46 years of age and a club professional in Southern California.

Michael had never made a cut in a major, though he had played in 6 before this last week at Oak Hill Country Club. Michael was not a tour player who broke through.

Michael was a club professional who broke through every stereotype most avid golfers hold of club professionals—they are "wanna-be tour players" who couldn't make it out there with the big boys. That may be true in some respects - but not last weekend in Rochester, New York!

An interesting sidebar to this story is personal to me. I knew John Daly, if only from a distance. We played in the same conference together in college. He played at Arkansas. I played at Rice, both part of the old Southwest Conference.

I had been paired with John Daly at the All-American in Houston and remembered him being a long hitter but not the longest in our conference. I also know Michael Block. For 30 years, I have watched him become somewhat of a Southern California legend. He has dominated our section for a decade now.

The only reason guys like me could squeeze in before is that it took him quite a few years to decide to get his credentials as a PGA professional. I thanked him a few years ago and will do it again now. Thanks, Michael!

Now here is the point. I had the privilege of playing in a PGA Championship the year Tiger Woods won at Medinah in 2006. I was a club professional. I was in my 40's. Why didn't I make the cut?

Apart from Michael's playing career being well above my own, one phrase stands out this week. That phrase was printed on every one of his golf balls. The phrase was, "Why not?" Why wouldn't I play my best golf and rise to the occasion? Why wouldn't it be me who competes on this grand stage? Why not?

I wish I could have mustered that kind of positive self-talk. In the glare of the spotlight, most of us tend to wilt. We only envision the potential embarrassment of failure. Not Michael. His "Why not?" mantra ran deep. He had come to believe.

It increasingly hit me as I mulled over that simple declaration this weekend. Why not fulfill the calling God has on our lives? Why not? Maybe you haven't been to seminary. Maybe you aren't part of the fraternity of "professional tour ministers."

Didn't God use donkeys, tax collectors, and people like Gideon, who certainly didn't recognize themselves as valiant warriors? Look, friends, God often calls the unqualified, then qualifies them. He does this through a long steady, unrelenting plan to conform us to his Son's image.

Not many hang in there long enough to see his hand at work. They recede into the stands to watch and cheer others on. Michael wasn't content to sit in the stands. He wanted to be in the arena. He knew the odds were long, but he kept pressing forward. How about you?

Are you pressing toward the prize? Are you aware that our activities here on earth "...echo in eternity" to quote Maximus in the movie Gladiator? Why not? Why not start studying the Word yourself - TODAY? Why not become an active part of a missional community - TODAY? Why not? Why not start that Links Fellowship? Thanks for that, Michael. Why not?

Prayer: Jesus! Teach us to believe!

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Jeffrey Cranford

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