



Links Players

Humbly Stepping Aside

He must become greater; I must become less. (John 3:30, NIV)

Ben Hogan and Sam Snead will certainly be included when you see a ranking of the Top Ten golfers of all time. A name usually below them, and sometimes not even on the list, is their contemporary Byron Nelson.

Byron humbly said they deserved more attention because they both won more tournaments than him. For the record, Snead won 82, Hogan won 60, and Byron had 52. But a closer look argues that Byron is very underrated regarding his golf achievements.

He won five major championships, all between 1937 and 1945; Hogan and Snead didn't win their first major until 1946. Byron's overall record in 1945 still staggers the imagination. He won 11 titles in a row and 18 of the 30 tournaments he entered for the year.

Some say that the competition was weak because of World War II, but Snead played in 27 tournaments that year and Hogan 18, so let's dismiss the invalid competition theory.

From 1944 through 1946, Byron won 35 of the 76 tournaments he entered. And then he retired at age 34. Why? Because his boyhood dream was to own a ranch.

By the end of 1946, his winnings enabled him to buy a ranch in Roanoke, TX, that eventually grew to a 500-acre spread. Byron could have continued to play and added to his impressive numbers, but he chose to step out of the spotlight.

The Bible tells a story about another man who willingly stepped away from the spotlight - John the Baptist. Like his cousin Jesus, John was also the product of a miracle birth. His parents were childless, but an angel informed his father, Zechariah, that he would be granted a son. When John was born, Zechariah declared to his son, "You will go before the Lord to prepare his ways."

John began fulfilling his purpose as an adult, baptizing many in the Jordan River. His message was straightforward: "The Messiah is coming; repent of your sins." John accumulated a group of followers, including Andrew and John, future disciples of Jesus. He baptized Jesus, but not before declaring that Jesus should be the one baptizing him.

And the next day, as the Lord walked by, John proclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" which prompted his followers, Andrew and John, to leave and immediately begin following Jesus.

Throughout his ministry, John declared he was not the Messiah; he was pointing the way to the one that was. John went so far as to humbly claim he needed to become less so that Jesus could become greater.

Even though their personalities were very different, in both the golfer and the prophet, you see the themes of humility and purpose. Arnold Palmer described Byron as “the definition of a gentleman, the greatest ambassador that golf ever had.”

Byron was a great golfer, but he saw his true purpose in life as owning that ranch. John the Baptist was chosen to “prepare the way of the Lord,” which is exactly what he did.

And when John’s ministry and fame were at their peak, he humbly stepped aside to make way for Jesus. Humility and purpose – are two things that every follower of Jesus should keep at the top of their mind.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to live a life of humility that Jesus modeled. And like John the Baptist, let our main purpose in life be to point others to you. Amen

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