



# Links Players

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## Turn On Your Love Light

*But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:44-45 NIV)*

In the 2005 Booz Allen Classic, Rory Sabbatini and Ben Crane were paired in the first two rounds. With Rory being one of the fastest players on tour and Ben being one of the slowest, I'm sure it was a tense couple of days.

Sabbatini had to watch Crane's deliberate pace while playing in the group behind him on Saturday. With the two paired together yet again for Sunday's final round, you probably know where this is going.

I'm not sure if there was much conversation that last day, but it's clear there was much consternation, at least on Rory's part. After the group was put on the clock twice during the round, Sabbatini finally lost his cool on the 17th.

Rather than waiting for Ben, who was still in the fairway, Rory chipped up, putted out, and teed off on the 18th before Crane even made it to the 17th green. Despite the toasty June temps, it was unusually chilly in this pairing.

PGA Tour players have no control over their playing partners, but because they play for millions of dollars weekly, they have ample motivation to play nice.

For those of us who pay to play golf, our default (or at least mine) is to be comfortable with the challenge of spending 18 holes with someone. After all, why would we intentionally subject ourselves to time with those we'd rather avoid?

Jesus would answer my rhetorical question with some questions of his own. "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?" (Matthew 5:46-47).

These questions come from the Sermon on the Mount and directly follow Jesus's admonition in today's featured verse. This could go in several directions, so let's focus on the golf course since we at Links Players consider it our mission field.

Years ago, I was paired with a gentleman at my club who left a shot in the fairway bunker. After imploring the golf gods to do something to themselves, he pounded sand with his iron. Mind you, this was the second hole!

Rather than loving this man and trying to understand why a failed shot would stir such anger, I'm ashamed to admit I avoided him the rest of the round and have not played with him since. That's not loving my enemy. That's not praying for those who persecute me.

I will take Jesus' words to heart and leave my comfort zone in 2024. Though those at my club may not be against me per se, I am doing nothing more than others by sticking to my circle of comfort.

By grace, I will intentionally seek out those at my club with whom I think I have nothing in common and invite them to play golf so I can figure out how to love them best. Who's with me?

As we begin a new year, let's do more than the tax collectors and pagans. Let's be the light of the world. Let's be that town built on a hill (Matthew 5:14).

**Prayer: Jesus, you want us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Help us recognize those opportunities to learn to love like you've called us.**

—

Drew Hamilton

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