



Links Players

Proximate and Ultimate Heroes

Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV)

The Open is returning to Royal Troon this summer. I am excited, and if you stay with me, I'll tell you why!

When our kids were young, my wife decorated a jar and filled it up with dozens of random questions to create conversation over the dinner table.

The jar was filled with the usual questions:

"What's your favorite food? "What's your favorite color?" or the best one, "What do you like most about your parents?"

My favorite icebreaker questions were, "If you could have dinner with one person, or if you had one round of golf to play, who would you play with?" Mine would include one Byron Nelson. He's one of my heroes.

There are many reasons to choose Mr. Nelson-his 18-win season and eleven straight victories are remarkable. Hall of Famer. Fifty-five straight top-10 finishes. His swing and tempo. His demeanor! His character! His kindness! As a younger man, I was privileged to have enough time with him to verify the above characteristics.

The year was 1989, and the Open was played at Royal Troon. I walked with my father, Jim, and fellow wanna-be-missionary to Scotland, Tim Philpot.

When we peeked into the clubhouse, Byron Nelson was there alone to the left. For those who know my father, what happened next is not surprising.

After a friendly hello, Byron explained that he was there to support Tom Watson, who was out on the course practicing. Then, he kindly invited us to sit with him. Over the next two hours, I listened as Dad interviewed Mr. Nelson for a future story in an early Links Letter.

What a privilege it was to hear some of the many great stories of his life: his golfing friends, victories and losses, marriage and family, early tour life, his spiritual upbringing, and how these and more shaped him.

But what stood out to me was his dogged determination to stay on track with his goal of providing for his family by saving enough to buy a ranch and settle down.

Fame did not change him. Major's victories did not alter his purposes and goals. Money was just a means.

In short, despite his amazing golf records, wins, and money, Byron Nelson maintained his integrity and purpose.

I can read about his records and hear the stories, but when I met him, spoke with him, listened to him, and got to know him personally, he became one of my heroes.

The same can be said about another infinitely greater hero of mine, Jesus. I used to admire Jesus from afar by hearing His stories and reading about Him, which is all good. I knew all sorts of things about Him, but I did not know Him on a personal level.

Once I began a relationship with Him, listening to and hearing from Him and letting Him speak to me, He became my ultimate hero. In short, I got to know Him and His heart for me, us, and the world.

Heroes are worth imitating. They inspire. They show courage, compassion, integrity, and justice, and their example inspires us in how we should live. But the heroes that most affect us are the ones we know personally.

Meeting Mr Nelson at Royal Troon in 1989 changed the way I see and play golf. Meeting Jesus and getting to know Him has changed my marriage, family, vocation, and eternity.

Prayer: Lord, please reveal your love to those who only know about you but do not know you!

—

Pete Hiskey

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