



# Links Players

## Stories Tales of Transformation

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
(Psalm 51:10-11, ESV)*

By any measure, Jack Nicklaus is the greatest of all time. You might say, “Wait a minute, what about Tiger?” Right!

A good friend, who happens to be skilled at deep dives into all things statistical, once convinced me that Tiger was the winner. Within a week, I saw another statistical comparison that had Jack running away with it. Most of the time, I teeter!

Besides considering all the historical data, combining the stats for Amateur and Professional careers, and allowing personal preference and sentiment to influence the debate, for me, Jack wins ‘by a nose.’

Hypotheticals often come up in discussions: What if Tiger makes another comeback? Here’s one to consider: What if ‘Fat Jack’ had kept gaining more weight? After losing 20-25 pounds, Jack stated, “I don’t feel I’d be here now if it weren’t for taking off that weight.”

At 5’10”, Jack dropped from 210 lbs. to 185 lbs. Historical records show that ‘Fat Jack’ used an early version of Weight Watchers and engaged in “speed golf”—running between shots with four or five clubs—to shed his excess weight and become a leaner version of himself.

ChatGPT reports, “Jack Nicklaus indeed underwent a remarkable transformation, shedding the ‘Fat Jack’ persona and emerging as the iconic ‘Golden Bear.’”

In 1969, during the Ryder Cup, Jack acknowledged “feeling fatigued” after playing 36 holes a day. Transformations like these are common. Many stories can be shared about major changes made by professional athletes who adopted rigorous routines to reach new heights.

In today’s interview, Matt Vogt, the dentist from Indiana, and one of fifteen amateurs who qualified for the 2025 U.S. Open, tells his story.

Fondly recalling how his mom took him to church as a kid, he, like many of us, drifted away from Christ during high school and college. However, after dental school, Matt reflects that being surrounded by men who gathered for fellowship and Bible study led to a significant transformation in his life.

Tales of personal transformations are, more often than not, truly inspiring! Watching someone reach the crossroads of life, pause to consider their

options, and then make the tough decision to choose “the road less traveled” makes for great storytelling.

But, here’s the deal, Lucille! Changing body types, though challenging, is possible. Abandoning vices, though tough, for moral reform is commendable. But changing one’s heart is not just unlikely; it is impossible!

Only the Resurrected Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, can transform our lives from within. Only Christ, the one who conquered the grave, can, in sovereign power, transform our hearts.

Outward moral reform is, indeed, possible! But creating new affections from our heart is impossible without Christ, for whom “all things are possible.”

King David, after making a mess of his life, prays, “Create in me a clean heart.” He uses the Hebrew word ‘bara,’ the same word used in Genesis, referring to God creating the world out of nothing.

Only God can create something out of nothing, whether it’s the external world we inhabit or the internal world of our hearts.

**Prayer: Jesus! Transform my heart!**

### READING: Psalm 51:1-13

1. Which part of your game needs the most focus? Bunker play? Putting? Driving?— figure out what is achievable and what isn’t.

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2. After reading Psalm 51, ponder and discuss the many components of David’s transformation.

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3. Application: What means has the Lord provided for the transformation of our lives?

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