



LINKS PLAYERS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Links Players

A Classic Battle

So, Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. (Genesis 32:24-29)

One of the most intense final-round duels in major championship history was the 1977 Open at Turnberry, famously referred to as "The Duel in the Sun."

It was Tom Watson against Jack Nicklaus, with Watson's 65 edging out Jack's 66 by one stroke. Those two were so far ahead of the field that Hubert Green captured third place, ten strokes behind the Golden Bear.

A similar two-man battle occurred in the 2016 Open at Royal Troon. Henrik Stenson shot 63 on Sunday to win by three strokes over Phil Mickelson, who carded a final round of 65. Ironically, Phil had won the 2013 Open over Henrik by the same three-shot margin.

Stenson's victory was enabled by his white-hot putter that rolled in ten birdies and an incredible 147 feet of putts. Like the "Duel in the Sun," this pair left the rest of the field far behind, with third place going to J.B. Holmes, eleven strokes behind Mickelson.

So how good was this match? Sir Nick Faldo (6 majors) said, "That was links perfection. We will never see a greater pairing in a final group as long as we live."

Watson (8 majors), comparing this to his duel with Nicklaus, commented, "They (Stenson and Mickelson) played better." And Jack (18 majors) concurred: "Our final round at Turnberry was good. But this one was even better." High Noon at Troon was a classic head-to-head battle for the ages.

Genesis 32 reveals a very unusual two-man battle: Jacob wrestling against God. While this is difficult to comprehend, it was a struggle that carried on for several hours.

Finally, at daybreak, God requested Jacob to let him go, but Jacob refused until God blessed him. It culminated with God blessing Jacob and giving him a new name—Israel.

Many of us wrestle with God at times, not physically but spiritually. The reasons can vary. Maybe it's a personal tragedy that's difficult to comprehend. Perhaps it's repeated prayers that haven't been answered. Or it could be just feeling like God is distant. It's been said that these times feel like going through the wilderness.

Times of walking in the wilderness are not an oversight or a detour in God's plan; in fact, they often are an integral part of His plan for our spiritual growth, times when we can grow closer to Him.

We should always remember that God is faithful. Even if you can't see what's in the road ahead, check your rear-view mirror to remember His faithfulness in the past.

It comes down to trusting God. Nineteenth-century preacher Charles Spurgeon said it well: "God is too good to be unkind, and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart."

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we know that You are constantly shaping us for Your good purposes. When we go through challenging experiences, help us to remember Your past faithfulness and to always trust You going forward. Amen.

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