**How To Not Play Golf**

You are supposed to break 90.

A famous comedian once said that golf is a terrible way to ruin a perfectly nice stroll in the meadow/forest/sand. Another said that going around trying to hit a small ball with implements poorly suited for the task was a waste of time. Another said that you get so excited when you make a par that all the other bad holes are forgotten. To me, golf looked like a good way to waste the too much time that I had when I got laid off from Arete Associates, and my friend needed a golf partner. Unlike other sports, golf can be played while in your stocking feet since all you have to do is ride in a cart and go out and hit the ball. Besides how different from baseball could the swing be? I insisted upon orange balls.

My friend and I shared a bag of clubs and went out to the nearest course in Van Nuys after applying for unemployment. Louis was at the tee giving a mighty swing; I missed; several tries later the ball went skidding down the grass. I immediately decided that all strokes where the ball did not go more than six feet did not count. A few hits later, my ball was in a sand trip near the green. That seemed easy. You are supposed to hit the sand right behind the ball and lift it up and onto the green grass. Lots of sand left the trap, but not the ball. Then I remembered some advice from my dark past: grab the ball with your hand and throw it towards the pin when the other guy is not looking. However, I still had to waste 5 minutes re-raking all the craters in the sand so the next person was not disadvantaged. Putting was not that much of a problem; years of miniature golf play made that exercise more feasible. I could usually get the ball from a green into the hole in four shots. I thought I had some hope in the sport. I was also criticized for hitting the ball as soon as I got there without waiting or looking for anyone else.

Little did I know that my golf score from the first day would never get any lower. Several people explained to me the correct way of keeping score. I was surprised when some people were downright hostile about scoring correctly and vowed to never play golf with me again. I took my 13 year old daughter (who had not played golf before) with me to Westlake Golf Course. She said: “Dad, why are you shooting over there? The hole flag is in the other direction! She kept score for both of us and her score was far lower than mine. I only had a respectable total since the rule was invoked that the maximum score on any hole was double par. Later, we went to Los Robles Golf Course in Thousand Oaks. There was a pond on the second hole. I insisted that I could get the ball over the pond! Six shots later, I had run out of balls and decided to move on to the next hole. Fortunately, I picked up some range balls along the way that were hit outside the driving area.

A few years later, I was invited to play some golf with the people that I worked with at TRW. We went on a nice sunny Saturday to the Lakewood Country Club. The group was playing “scramble” which is a form of golf were everyone on the 4-person team takes a shot and then the team uses the best location as the spot for everyone to shoot the next shot. That style was much more fun until I got to the last hole. Then they explained to me that everyone on the team had to contribute one drive, so they all stood around and watched me. My drive did not even make it to the women’s tee area. They shrugged, and then hit it from there towards the flag. That was my only shot contributed to our score!

I then discovered Elkins Ranch Golf Course in Fillmore, CA. Several of the 18 holes overlook the Santa Clara River valley and the orange grove. The restaurant and roving snack person serve good drinks and hot dogs. Afternoon golf is cheap as is the cart. The trick is to finish before dark. They do not care if you run around the course in your socks and there is plenty of water to keep your feet wet. I have learned how to play the course: where to cut corners by hitting the ball over the restraint fence, where to go down another fairway to get to the green, which fence to aim for so the ball will drop onto the green, never go into a sand trap or the rough to play the ball, just use the rake to get it and toss it onto the green, completely skip certain long holes and take the 10 score, and frequently just play two balls on a hole and take the better. I have given up playing with respectable golfers since I am useless. If you want to play with me, be prepared for fun. You can’t have fun unless you break the rules.