

Under the Influence

By

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Golf is like a drug and you can get hooked on it. You have heard me talk before about the power that the game can have over us. How it can dominate your thoughts, cause you to be in a bad mood or a good mood. It affects the way we as golfers think sometimes, obsessing on this shot or that shot, or I could have done this better or that, or if I just hadn't missed that putt, if I could have just kept it in bounds. There are a multitude of different ways that golf can affect your life in both positive and negative ways. It can build you up and tear you down. It can save your life or it can ruin your marriage.

But that is not the influence that I am talking about. You see golf gave me a life and a career. To this day, I love to play and I hope I will be able to play all the way up until the time I die. So why did I begin this walk with golf? What, or who, influenced me to play the game, compete competitively and turn it into a career and a life? Well, many things and many people, I suppose. First and foremost, my Dad. My Dad essentially taught me the game. He inspired me to play and to get better. He always told me that I could be as good as I wanted to be. My local PGA Professionals had a major influence on my game and my life as well. Often acting as second fathers. I called them my golf Dads. They helped shape my game but, more importantly, they taught me the Business of Golf. Everything from selling range balls to teaching Juniors to working with customers to dealing with Boards of Directors. You name it -- they taught me everything!

How about the influencers that I didn't know personally? The players that I watched on TV? These are my Golf Heroes. My favorite players through time have truly helped shaped my game and I aspired to be like them. First is Payne Stewart. Arguably, the best player of his time. He was original, down to earth and generally a great person. I had met him and know some of this from personal experience. When he died tragically, it affected me for a long time. Next is Fred Couples. Never met him but the way he played the game was amazing. One of the best and smoothest swings I have ever seen. Tiger Woods, I know what you are thinking, but you cannot argue with what he has done for the game of golf. Hey, we all stumble. I attribute a lot of the success that I have had in running successful facilities to Tiger's influence on the game. I am now, and always will be, a Tiger fan.

Oddly enough, ok -- not so odd. But I always admired Arnold Palmer. I never had the pleasure of meeting him either but I know people who have met him and know him. From what they have told me, and what I have seen on my own, I can only thank him for being a pioneer for the sport and making it cool. RIP Arnie and thank you.

All of these people and players and many more have been my influencers. My drug pushers. Because I love the game and am grateful for what the game has afforded me and my career I appreciate them. Who are your influencers?