



THE THONG ADJUSTER



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The Putter speaks

A word from the editor

Have you made your New Year's resolutions yet? I mean the golf kind. Here are a few I ran across that you might consider for 2007:

1. For at least one round, move up one set of tees and concentrate on making shots instead of booming it.
2. For another round, move back one set of tees and think your way out of a distance jam.
3. Get fitted for a set of clubs or at least a set of wedges. Find out from a pro what your proper loft and lie, sole grind and swingweight should be.
4. Go to a tour event and either camp out under a tree and watch the groups go by, or follow one group throughout the entire round.
5. Take a kid to play golf. Ignore your own game and make him or her feed good about himself or herself.
6. Call a penalty on yourself. Don't expect applause.
7. Practice the driver less and chipping more.
8. Regrip your clubs. You'll be amazed.
9. Go to a golf collectibles show and buy a playable hickory club. Take it home. Reflect that you couldn't take batting practice with one of Ted Williams's bats, but you can hold golf history in your hand.
10. When you practice, have fun. When you play, have fun. When you talk about the game, have fun. Notice a pattern here?

Here's to the Iron Thong Golf Gang of San Antonio, heading out on its second year of existence! Howdy, 2007!

FORE!
Steve





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Go to <http://www.IronThongGolf.com> to view the current issue.

Articles, including for sale items, can be submitted at any time. Send them to the editor at stevevanwert@hughes.net.

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Jokes of the Month



1 Several members of the Iron Thong are in the locker room of a local San Antonio golf club, having a cold one after divying up the funds.. A cell phone on the bench rings. Big John Hernandez engages the speakerphone and begins talking. The other guys listen.

BIG JOHN Hello.

WOMAN: Honey it's me. Are you at the club?

BIG JOHN: Yes.

WOMAN: I'm at the mall now, and found this beautiful leather coat. It's only \$1000... Is it OK if I buy it?

BIG JOHN: Sure, go ahead if you like it that much.

WOMAN: I also stopped by the Mercedes dealership and saw the new 2006 models. I saw one I really liked.

BIG JOHN: How much?

WOMAN: \$90,000.

BIG JOHN: For that price I want it with all the options!

WOMAN: Great! And one more thing...the house I wanted last year is back on the market. They're asking \$950,000!

BIG JOHN: Well then go ahead and give them an offer for \$900,000.

WOMAN: OK, I'll see later! I love you so much!

BIG JOHN: Bye. I love you too.

Big John hangs up. The other Iron Thongers are staring at him in astonishment, mouths agape.

He smiles, and says, "Anyone know whose phone this is?"

2 Big Dan meets a beautiful woman in the Quarry lounge . They talk, they connect, and they end up leaving together.

They get back to his place, and as he shows her around his apartment, she notices that his bedroom is completely packed with sweet cuddly teddy bears.

Hundreds of cute small bears on a shelf all the way along the floor, cuddly medium-sized ones on a shelf a little higher, and huge enormous bears on the top shelf along the wall.

The woman is surprised that Dan would have a collection of teddy bears, especially one that's so extensive, but she decides not to mention this to him, and actually is quite impressed by his sensitive side.

She turns to him... they kiss... and then they rip each other's clothes off. After an intense night of hot sweaty sex with this sensitive guy, the woman rolls over and asks, smiling, "Well, how was it?"

Dan says: "Help yourself to any prize from the bottom shelf."

Golf rules of the Month

Q If a club breaks during a round, can it be replaced?

A Depends on how it was broken.

If the club was broken in anger - for example, as a result of being slammed into a tree or thrown down the fairway - it may not be replaced. If the club was broken because it was used as a walking aid, it may not be replaced. In other words, if you were doing something with it unrelated to your playing of the course, you're out of luck.

If, however, the damage occurs in the course of play - e.g., the clubhead snaps off a driver, or an iron is bent when trying to play from under a tree branch - there are options for replacement (see Rule 4-3).

The first option: Keep playing with the damaged club (not much of an option, eh?).

The second option: If it can be done without unduly delaying play, you can repair the club yourself, or try to have it repaired.

The third option: If the club is unfit for play, you can replace it in your bag with any other club, as long as play is not unduly delayed.

The replacement may not be borrowed from any other player. But you can get it anywhere else - from the trunk of your car, from your locker back in the clubhouse, from the pro shop, from your Uncle Harry who always carries an extra club for you just in case.

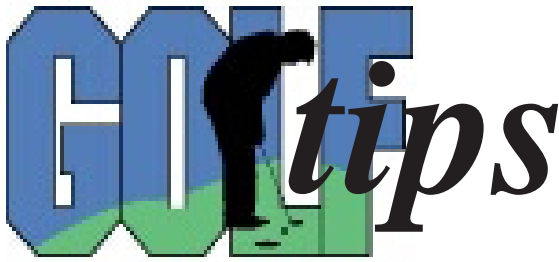
Q Do I get to drop out of a bunker that's filled with water?

A Only if you're willing to take a one stroke penalty.

If your ball comes to rest in casual water within a bunker, you may drop without penalty at the nearest point of relief within the bunker, no nearer the hole. That applies no matter what the condition is of the rest of the bunker.

If the rest of the bunker is dry, great. But even if the entire bunker contains water, the same rule applies. According to the USGA Web site, "the player may drop the ball in the bunker at a point that provides maximum available relief (i.e., in 1 inch of water rather than 5 inches)." Alternatively, the player may take a one stroke penalty and drop outside the bunker.

In the rulebook, see Rule 25-1.



Diagnosing, Fixing a hook

From Roger Gunn

The Impact

Let's first make sure you're clear on the different impacts that cause different shots. When the ball is hooking to the left, that means it's curving in a right-to-left motion across the sky. For the ball to do this, it must be spinning in a counter-clockwise direction.

Imagine that the ball is on a peg, and that all it can do is spin one way or another. To spin the ball counter-clockwise, the club has to swing more to the right with the clubface pointing slightly to the left.

In a golf shot, this is exactly what happens to make the ball curve across the sky in a hook flight. This can often be confirmed by looking at the direction of your divot. On the course, the divot will often be pointing right, with the ball ending up well left of the divot's direction. This is a classic hook.

Our discussion of the grip, stance, and swing will revolve around the different elements that can cause this type of impact.

The Grip

The grip has little to do with the direction of the swing, but everything to do with where the clubface looks at impact.

Grips can be very individualized. A grip that produces a perfectly straight shot for one player can cause a huge hook or a slice for another. But you can make certain generalizations about the grip

regarding hooking.

If your hands are turned too far to the right on the club, it's much more likely to return with the clubface looking to the left at impact.

Here's the guideline: In your stance, with the clubface square to the target, you should be able to look down and see no more than two knuckles on your left hand. If you see three or four, that could be contributing to your hook. Another guideline is to look at the "V's" formed between the knuckle and thumb on both hands. These should point somewhere near your right shoulder and right ear, no more to the right.

The Stance

It certainly seems logical that if a golfer is missing often to the left, then before too long he or she would aim more to the right to compensate. With golfers who hook the ball, this is usually the case. But aiming to the right will cause the swing's circle to be too far to the right, exacerbating the hooking motion.

Doublecheck that your aim is not too far to the right, especially with your shoulders. You can lay a club on the ground, parallel to your target line, to check your aim. Or have a friend check your alignment. Just make sure that your feet, knees, hips and shoulders are parallel to that club on the ground, and therefore, to your target line.

Checking your stance and grip

can often eradicate any hook without changing the hitting motion at all. Let the ball's flight be your guide. If the ball is curving less to the left, then you're on the right track. If it's flying straight or curving right, then your hook is cured.

The Backswing

There are numerous backswing issues that can affect your impact. For hooking, the two basic flaws are a backswing that is going too much in or around, or a counter-clockwise twist of the shaft, or both.

If your backswing is too much to the inside and not enough up, then the club is going to approach the ball on an angle that is too shallow and too much on the inside. In other words, too much along the ground. This swing direction will be a big part of spinning the ball counter-clockwise.

To fix this issue, take a look at your backswing at the top. Make sure the shaft is over your shoulder at the top, not too much behind you. To achieve this position, you may have to feel like the club is swinging a bit more up.

You should also feel like your head is steady in the backstroke. No moving off the ball to the right! This will also make that backswing too flat and too much to the inside.

The next important element of the backswing is the clubface position. One of the biggest mistakes made by golfers who hook the ball is to turn the club



Fixing a hook

Continued from page 4

counter-clockwise to begin the backswing. Unfortunately, this closing of the club simply creates a closed face at impact. The clubface should “open” on the backswing, relative to the targetline. However, this natural opening is done with the turning of the shoulders and torso, not because of a twist in the hands.

When you are making your backstroke, just hold on to the club. No effort to twist or hinge the wrists should be made. When you get to the top, you can check for the proper position by looking at your left wrist. You should be able to lay a ruler underneath the face of your wristwatch and have it touch both your arm, and the back of your hand. In other words, the back of your left wrist should be straight.

The Downswing

With a good grip and stance, as well as a good backswing position, I’d be surprised if your hook is still here. If these first few areas check out, you’re 90-percent of the way to curing your hook.

To begin the downswing, make sure you start down with a weight shift to the front foot and a turn of your body. While you are moving in this fashion, make sure you are tension-free in your hands and arms. This movement will virtually guarantee that the club is coming from the right direction.

If the ball still has a tail to the left, you can add this sensation: Try to get the feeling that the club

is closing a bit too late. Feel as though the club is dragging across the ball with an open clubface. This should be done through softness in the wrists, with a feeling of letting the club swing. Some practice should give you the feeling.

Final words

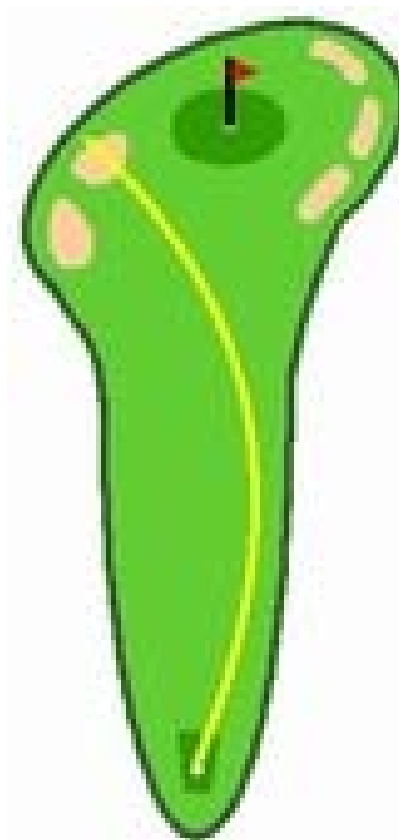
The good news about working on this, or any other problem for that matter, is that you already have the best teacher in the world with you: namely, the ball. The way the ball flies gives you objective feedback about your swing.

You’ll want to remember that you are improving if your 30-yard hook is now a 15-yard hook. No matter how strange a new move feels, always listen to what the ball tells you. You may be sure that the clubhead is staying open longer, but if the ball is still turning left, then you’ll have to feel the club close later still. Not until you curve the ball to the right have you closed the club too late! The feel can trick you, but the ball won’t.

About the author

Roger Gunn was an all-conference golfer in college at UCLA. He’s played in the U.S. Amateur and the U.S. Open, on the European Tour and Nike Tour. He turned to teaching in the early 1990s.

He was named Southern California’s PGA Teacher of the Year in 2001 and 2006, and has taught touring pros including Tom Lehman and Steve Pate.



The hook ball flight from the point of view of a right-handed golfer. Illustration by William Glessner

A Luke Samuel Goodyear Mystery by Steve VanWert**MURDER ON THE 13TH GREEN****Chapter Seven -- Monday morning**

Oh-bright-thirty on Monday morning found Luke on the front steps of the Summitview National Bank, waiting for Rudy to show up for work. Luke had the manila envelope tucked into his shirt, but he'd removed the safe deposit box key and had it in his front pants pocket.

Rudy pulled up in his Volvo station wagon. "Hey, Luke," he waved, as he stepped down from his car.

"Hey, Rudy," Luke replied, "does that Japanese box-on-wheels have four-wheel drive? You've got enough ground clearance to stick a caboose on that ugly son-of-a-bitch and head down the tracks toward New Orleans!"

Rudy laughed, knowing that Luke was jazzing him. "It's Scandinavian, Luke," he said, "like in Sweden, home of snow bunnies and ski lodges."

Luke made a big show out of shivering. "Br-r-r," he said, "don't talk about cold weather. I'm a transplanted Delawarian, you know."

Rudy unlocked the bank's front door and stepped aside to allow Luke to enter. He then re-locked it, since it wasn't opening time yet and the tellers and other workers hadn't arrived. They went past the empty counters and entered his plush office. Luke sat down in a chair so over-stuffed that it felt like he was being swallowed alive. Rudy sat behind his desk.

"What's the big mystery, Luke," he asked, "that warrants me coming in to work an hour early?"

It was time to get serious. "I'm calling a two-man meeting of the Griffon Lake Irregulars, Rudy," Luke said.

"Really?" What about?"

"I need to pick your brain about Bruce Benning and any relationship he might have had with Conandria Development Company."

Rudy seemed surprised. "Any information about Conandria is confidential between this bank and Cash, er, I mean, the owner of the company. I can't divulge anything about finances, or anything like that without permission. Why do you ask?"

Luke sat up on the end of the chair, trying to appear earnest while maintaining his balance. "Look, Rudy, I found some information about a possible real estate transaction between an unknown owner and Conandria that was being handled by Bruce way last year. Apparently the deal fell through, but I think it might have something to do with Bruce's murder yesterday."

Rudy sat back in his chair. He took his hands and made a triangle out of them in front of his face. "You're sure it's murder?"

"The autopsy results haven't been released yet, but Doc Cook is sure it was poison. And I can't believe that Bruce was murdered just to make Hartly Haroldson club champ. I don't know who, and I don't know why, but this Summit Airport deal is the only clue I've got."

Rudy looked surprised. Luke could see his eyebrows rising up above his fingers. "Summit Airport, huh?" Rudy smiled. "I'm sure that Summit Airport hasn't got anything to do with the murder, but..."

"What about Summit Airport?"

Rudy thought for a moment. Finally, he lowered his hands and looked Luke straight in the eye. "Bruce was a friend of mine, too, Luke," he

said. "Anything I tell you is in strictest confidence. If you need to prove what I say at a later date, I've got some documents, but I can't give them to you now. Any answers I give you, well, you didn't hear from me, do you understand?"

Luke nodded. "Gotcha," he said. "Now, tell me about Summit Airport and Conandria Development."

Rudy glanced around, as if someone might overhear. "As you probably know, Cash Cassenberg has been buying up land around the outskirts of Summitview for years. But nothing much has been built on any of his lots. Cash, under the umbrella of the Conandria Development Company, does all his local banking here. We hold the note on most of his mortgaged property.

"A little over a year ago, Cash came to me and told me to make a rather outrageous offer on the 10 acres at the old Summit Airport."

"Like \$150,000 dollars worth of outrageous?" Luke asked.

Rudy nodded. "Exactly. The property had just come on the market, and Benning Realty had the listing contract. We held a rather small note that we were considering foreclosure on, but, to tell you the truth, it wasn't worth the paperwork to do it. Especially since the owner was out-of-state."

"About \$1,100, right?"

"Right again. You already know a lot of this, don't you? Anyway, I fully expected the owner to jump at the chance to sell, but Bruce got suspicious as to why Cash would offer so much for so little, and stone-walled the deal for a while, saying that he was having trouble reaching the owner to give her the offer. Cash was getting antsy and began to pressure Bruce by, well, by bugging the shit out of him. He called Bruce four, five times a day. He called me just as many, wanting me to call Bruce. Finally, Bruce contacted me and we had a talk just like you and I are, before office hours and in this very room."

"Okay, so what was it about?"

Rudy took a deep breath. "This is between us, right?"

"Right. Absolutely."

"Okay. Bruce had done some digging, and had found evidence that the federal government was planning to okay the construction of an international airport to take the pressure off Pensacola and the old Walton County airport down by Sandimar. The site planners had tentatively decided on the Summit Airport site as the one most desirable to build on. Do you have any idea how an international airport would affect the revenue of this sleepy little town of ours?"

Luke whistled.

"New highways would have to be built to accommodate increased traffic to and from the airport, as well as new housing areas to house all the airline personnel. New industry would spring up like mushrooms all around the perimeter of the airport proper. We're talking multi-millions here."

"And all for a measly \$150,000," Luke said. "Cash would clean up."

"Not only that," said Rudy, "but look at this."

He got up and walked over to one of the mahogany filing cabinets behind him. He opened the first drawer, shuffled through folders, and pulled out a thick one. He brought it back to his desk, opened it and pulled out an accordion map. He spread it out in front of Luke.

"Look at this," he said and pointed to the area around the clearly identified Summit Airport. "You see all these lots surrounding the Summit Airport property on both sides of the road?"

"Yea."

"All owned by Conandria Development Company."

"The only parcel he doesn't own is the airport

itself?"

"Right."

Luke whistled again. "But what happened to the sale?"

"Well, after Bruce found out about the possible construction, the asking price for the property suddenly jumped to \$10 million."

"Wow. Cash wouldn't pay? It seems to me that even \$10 mill is a good investment."

Rudy agreed. "Problem is, Cash doesn't have it."

Luke was surprised by that one. "He can't put his hands on that much? Wouldn't you finance it for him? The bank would make a profit, too."

Rudy folded up the map and put the file back into the cabinet. "Yes, we probably would," he agreed. "But you must remember that it is all still speculative. The government could change their mind. Even if they don't, the development could possibly require a referendum. So we asked for a 10 percent down payment to finance it for Cash."

"One million?"

"On the nose."

"And he couldn't come up with it?"

"Not yet."

Luke leaned back in the chair. The wheels were turning, although still squeaking a little. "So nothing has happened since?"

Rudy smiled broadly. "Oh, something happened all right. It seems the actual owner of the property decided she didn't care what happened to it, possible international airport or not. She instructed Bruce to forget about the whole thing; she was too busy to worry about it, and really didn't care if the property sold or not. And besides, she didn't need the bucks herself and had her own reasons for not wanting Cash to

get it so cheap. So she took the property off the market completely."

"What did Cash do when he found out?"

"This is the good part, and one of the reasons this whole conversation is confidential. The day after the listing contract expired, and long before Cash found out about her change-of-heart, we foreclosed on our note. After all, no payment had been made in more than three years. The next day, Benning Realty purchased Summit Airport himself for the amount of the outstanding note, approximately \$1,100 dollars."

"Is that legal?" Luke asked.

"Barely," said Rudy, "but legal."

"Bruce bought it himself?" Luke Samuel began to chuckle. "Why that conniving, wonderful son-of-a-bitch! Cash must have had the shits for a month once he found out! I wish I'd have been there to see it."

Rudy nodded. "Once Bruce bought the property, he let it be known through me that he could be persuaded to sell, but the \$10 million purchase price was firm, plus a percentage of any development profit."

"I had no idea that my good buddy was on the verge of being a multi-millionaire," Luke said, "with your help. It couldn't have happened to a nicer guy. That sure gives Cash a motive for Bruce's murder." But then Luke frowned. "Did Suzi know about the property? Even if Cash made an offer to her, what would make him think he could get the property on better terms? And he'd still have to come up with the down-payment, right?"

"That's right. But I doubt if Suzi would be as assertive as Bruce. Cash could certainly get the property cheaper. Even if he didn't get a better price, he would certainly get it without the future strings attached. If you suddenly became a widow, and found out that your husband left you a property worth millions, would you want to do anything more complicated than just sell? And,

to answer your first question, I don't think Suzi knows about the property anyway. I don't think Bruce wanted her to get involved. She does have a tendency to spend money, you know."

Luke tried to get his thoughts together. He realized Rudy was right. Suzi would be more than happy to sell. Probably for much less than the \$10 mill. Unless she had proof of the upcoming airport construction.

"Wait a minute," Luke said, "is there anything in writing that proves that this expansion is going to happen?"

Rudy shook his head. "Nothing that I've seen. I certainly don't have anything."

Luke reached into his pants pocket and pulled out the safe deposit key. "This is one of yours, right?"

Rudy took it from Luke and looked carefully at it.

"Yes, it is."

Luke stood up. "Bruce left this for me to find. Let's see what's inside. Confidentially, of course."

A few moments later, Rudy and Luke had the box in their hands. Rudy inserted a duplicate key in one lock, and Luke did the same in the other. They both turned, and the lid came loose. With shaking hands, Luke opened it. Inside was another manila envelope, this time filled with certified copies of correspondence between the FAA, Summit County, the state of Florida, various congressmen, and even a hand-written note on White House stationery, that said, "This looks like a 'go' to me."

I don't need to tell you whose signature was on the bottom.

"Bingo," Luke said.

They put it all back, including the envelope that Bruce had taped to Old Gruesome. Luke pocketed the key. A stray thought suddenly

popped into his semi-porous brain. "You said that the actual owner of the property had her own reasons for not wanting Cash to get the property cheap?"

Rudy smiled, and nodded. "I was wondering if you'd picked up on that," he said.

Luke looked Rudy in the eye and nodded. "Well? Who? Why?"

"The property belonged to one Annabelle Anjoulou, previously known as Mrs. Annabelle Cassenberg."

Luke was stunned. "Cash's ex? Cassy's step-mother?"

Rudy's smile appeared to connect one ear to the other. "The property was part of the rather megalopian divorce settlement, just thrown in at the last moment, seemingly worthless."

"You mean Cass actually owned it at one time? Damn, if he'd have just kept it, none of this would have happened. But why didn't Anabelle just offer it to Cash for \$10 mill herself?"

Rudy shrugged. "Damn if I know. The divorce settlement was so complicated maybe she was afraid he'd get the property by some under-handed means, once he found out she owned it."

"Cash didn't know he gave the Summit Airport property to her?"

"Nope. Clean forgot. Or never knew in the first place. And never tried to find out, as far as I know. Sometimes these smart guys aren't all that sharp after all."

"Why would Annabelle want to make Bruce rich at her expense?"

Rudy looked surprised. "You know, I never thought about it that way. I-I don't have the slightest idea."

Luke ruminated on that one for a moment, then reached out his hand and shook Rudy's

vigorously. "Thanks for the help, Rudy," he said. "Now that we've got part of the motive, all we need is opportunity and means, and we're almost there."

Luke left Summitview National Bank feeling pretty damn proud of himself. It was still barely 8:00 in the morning, so he stopped at Mom's Donuts, picked up a big cup of caffeine and two crullers to go, and headed for his downtown office. He wanted to sit and start making some notes. Luke had found that when it comes to remembering things, he's got the facility of a below-average Newfoundland. If he needs to reference something that happened yesterday, it better be on paper ... except rounds of golf. Luke can remember every good shot he ever hit and on which hole and at which course, and what the weather was like ... well, you get the idea.

As he walked up to the door, he found it was already open. At this point, all those big-time, big-money, big-adventure, mucho macho, get-the-girl-and-solve-the-case-before-station break private eyes you see on TV would draw their .44s, storm into the office (who pays for Magnum P.I.'s broken doors, anyway?), engage in staccato gunfire, throw off a few wise cracks, and come out unscathed, holding the perpetrator by the scruff of his dirty raincoat.

Not Luke. For one thing, this is Florida in August. It's hot. Luke wears golf shirts and poplin slacks. Besides, he doesn't carry a gun; I mean, he don't pack heat. So instead, Luke pushed the door open slowly and asked, "Anybody in there?"

There was no immediate answer, so he pushed it open a little farther.

His new buddy, Inspector Devlin, was sitting on the front desk. "Only us chickens," the inspector said.

"Shit," Luke said, regaining his composure, "what the hell do you want?"

Before Devlin could answer, Luke closed the

door and side-stepped past him into his office. He sat down at his desk as Devlin followed. "What?" Luke asked again.

Devlin stood, his beady little eyes focused on Luke's. Not Luke's beady little eyes, just his. I mean, they looked at each other in mutual distrust. Devlin flipped open his omnipresent little notebook and transferred his gaze to one of the scribbled pages. "I understand you were at the Benning Realty office last night," he said.

"Yea," Luke replied, "I gave Suzi Benning a ride home from the hospital. So what?"

"So, what did you find?"

Luke wasn't about to cooperate with this undersized, overbearing, Napoleon-complexed twerp. "Find where?"

"In the realty office."

"When?"

"Last night. Are you deaf, or just stupid?"

"Huh?"

Devlin almost smiled. I mean, Luke almost saw teeth.

"Look, Goodyear, do you know what obstructing justice means?"

"Hiring you to investigate a murder?"

There was no smile now.

"I know you and your, uh, secretary, were in Benning's office last night looking for something. What did you find?"

Luke stood up and pointed to the top of his filing cabinet, at the photograph. "Just this, Gabe ol' buddy. A memento from a dead friend. No clues, no documents, no written threats, no taped confessions. Bruce was as clean a citizen as he could be. No secrets. I wouldn't even have gone in there if his wife hadn't told me that Bruce wanted me to have his golf trophies."

Devlin stared at him again. "Mrs. Benning says she didn't want you in there, but you insisted on seeing the office, to search for a will."

Luke let a frown crease his already overheated forehead. That wasn't quite the way he remembered the conversation going, but maybe Suzi really did resent his being so forceful. He made a mental note to apologize to her. "I was just trying to help."

"I seem to remember telling you at the golf course to keep your nose out of this investigation. I meant it."

Luke's coffee was getting cold. And the crullers were getting warm. So was he. "Look, Devlin, I've been officially hired by the Griffon Lakes Golf Course to investigate the apparent murder of one of our members. I'm afraid you're gonna be running into my nose quite a bit."

Devlin softened his tone. "That's fine. But let me give you some friendly advice, without

malice. You're in way over your little Summitview head. Back off. Let the professionals take care of something you can't begin to understand."

"Is that why the DEA is in charge of a simple poisoning?"

Devlin pounded his fist on the desk.

"You're damn lucky you didn't spill my coffee, you pip-squeak little mamma's boy," Luke said.

Devlin leaned over until they were eye to eye. "Stay the hell out of the way! If you interfere with a federal investigation, I'll have you thrown in the county lock-up. Benning's murderer'll get out long before you do!"

He pounded the desk top again, turned heel, and stormed out the door. Luke would have laughed at him, if Devlin hadn't finally managed to spill Luke's coffee.

Next month, chapter eight, "The Caddieshack."

Steve VanWert

Iron Thong member profile



Average handicap – either long irons or short putts. Oh, you mean a number? Anywhere from 10 to 20, depending on how many long irons I have to hit and short putts I have to make.

Average drive length – 260, about 30 yards less than it used to be. Right.

In the bag – I carry about 112 clubs in my bag, including a Wilson Staff Dd5 driver, Ping Zing irons (1 through SW, including a LW), , and a Golfsmith LongShot 45 inch putter.

I first started playing golf when I was 12 . My father, who was a member of the local golf club, enrolled me in lessons during the summer. I had to learn the grip, the swing, the putting stance, and etiquette, before they'd let me on the course. I learned all the dirty words later.

Luckily, I seemed to have some aptitude for the game early in life. I won one of the flights in the Delaware State Junior Open Golf Championship when I was 13. By that time, I was hooked, and have been ever since.

As we all know, golf isn't easy. At least, most of the time. Every now and then, though, we'll hit a ball square on the club face, dead solid perfect, and the feeling is indescribable. There's a tremor that runs up the club shaft, through your hands and sails up your arms like a shiver. That shiver is perfection. How many other times in life can we experience perfection?

Which brings me to a golf truism – golf ain't fair. You can hit a chip short and watch it land on a sprinkler head, bounce straight up in the air, roll on the green and into the cup. Or you can hit the same ball six inches to the left and it'll suddenly decide to take the spin, corkscrew off to the left and against the lip of a bunker. Golf ain't fair.

You can "pure" a driver 300 yards down the short grass and, when you get there, it's sitting in a divot. Or you can block it out, hit a tree and the ball will be standing up proudly in the middle of the fairway. Golf ain't fair.

You can roll the most solid putt you've ever hit right at the hole and stare in disbelief when it dives in – and spins out the side. It's especially maddening when it spins all the way around and ends up in front of the hole, and laughs at you. But every now and then, you'll push a putt off line and it'll hit a ball mark and jump back into the cup. Golf ain't fair.