

All I Want for Christmas...2004*By: Nathan Crace Date: Nov. 15, 2004*

It's that time again and whether you celebrate Christmas or not, the inevitable season of gift giving (and gift buying) seems to come earlier and earlier with each passing year. As a general rule—and my own way of symbolically thumbing my nose at the increased commercialization of the season which finds plastic yard Santas on the shelves at Wal-Mart by the middle of October—I refuse to do any shopping before December 22nd...ask my wife. But just in case anyone out there was wondering what to give me for Christmas this year, here's my wish list for 2005 (golf-related only...world peace, etc. is a given):

1. **Ten Wins for Vijay.** I mean, come on. Who deserves it more than the hardest working guy in golf? Sure nine wins and \$10 million+ in official earnings is nice, but wouldn't a nice round two-digit number in the wins column be all the more heart warming come next year's Tour Championship.

2. **One Major Win for Tiger.** Not so much for Tiger and Elin as for me. It's become painfully apparent that there's no other way to make a growing number of my fellow golf writers/pundits/naysayers shut up about when Tiger will break out of his "slump."

3. **A Battle of the Sexes Match.** In case you forgot (or didn't know), Annika Sorenstam also had nine wins in 2004—the same as her arch nemesis Singh. Okay, so maybe arch is too strong of a term, but wouldn't it be fun to watch these two square off for 18 holes? Heck, I'd watch that for 54 holes. And if we throw in automatic two-down presses, sandies, and the like, maybe they could televise it on Bravo! after *"Celebrity Strip Poker."*

4. **A Five Second Delay for ABC's 2005 PGA TOUR Coverage.** Who knows why Curtis Strange actually left ABC, but I do know that the pairing of Azinger and Faldo on the small screen will be full of all the fun and camaraderie of the *"Nancy Pelosi Christmas Spectacular with special co-host Dick Cheney."* Am I the only one who remembers Faldo making fun of Azinger's unorthodox grip when Nick was at the top of his career? No wonder they haven't talked to each other for 11 years! I know the recent trend for generating ratings is developing reality TV shows which place people in peculiar and uncomfortable situations, but let's not turn golf on ABC into *"Who Wants to Kill my Co-Host."*

5. **Some Respect for the King.** Not Elvis. Why would the PGA TOUR consider rotating the Bay Hill Invitational's long-standing pre-Players Championship slot with the Honda Classic and Doral? The love of money is the root of all evil and making the man who made the modern-day TOUR what it is give up his beloved tournament's regular gig should be a "treasonous" crime punishable by death. As Arnold has already warned, "They better leave me alone."

6. **More Junior Golfers like Joe Gross.** In case you didn't know, Gross is a high school senior and two-time Maryland state 4A champion who has forgone a golf scholarship to be closer to home after his father, Joe, Sr., suffered a stroke. In a time when more and more junior golfers can't seem to remember to leave their cell phones in their convertibles before teeing it up at the local club and complaining about how every shot they hit is "off the toe" (no matter how pure the shot was), the extremely talented Joe, Jr. gave up golf and quit school to help his ailing father. I hope Santa sees fit that Joe, Jr.'s stocking runneth over this year.

Nathan Crace is a golf course architect whose freelance "Lipouts" column is based, at times, on topics submitted to the author by readers like you. If you have a topic you would like to see discussed or wish to read past columns from the archives, log on to www.lipouts.com and let him know. Copyright 2004.