

All I Want for Christmas 2007

By: Nathan Crace Date: November 26, 2007

As hard as it is to believe, it's that time of year once again. The time when college football is wrapping up the regular season and bowl picks are being considered, Holiday parties are being planned, Thanksgiving leftovers are being consumed as sandwiches, casseroles and whatever else can be made of them, and—of course—the most exciting read in sports: my Christmas wish list for golf. What started a few years ago as a way to meet a deadline on the day before Thanksgiving has become a regular piece now and so, without further hesitation, herewith is this year's list. As always, whether or not you celebrate Christmas, this list is primarily golf-centered (world peace, etc. is a given each year), so relax and enjoy:

6. A Challenger for Tiger Woods. Don't misunderstand. I like Tiger and I think he has done a lot for the greater interest of the game (not to mention the pocketbooks of the Tour guys). But wouldn't it be fun to see some classic matches like the Palmer vs. Nicklaus days when they went head to head and shot for shot and no one really knew who was going to win? When you can say with relative certainty that Tiger will win because he never blows a third round lead, why watch on Sunday other than to see some great shots now and then?

5. A Ryder Cup Win for the United States. Like most golfers on this side of the pond, I'm tired of our guys getting pistol whipped in the Ryder Cup. We won the President's Cup (again) in 2007, but I would like to see some Ryder Cup hardware too. In the spirit of full disclosure, I am somewhat biased as an American and considering I grew up just across the Ohio River from where the 2008 Ryder Cup will be held at Valhalla in LOO-A-VUHL, Kentucky. Only those who are not from there pronounce it differently. And now you know...

4. Another Successful Year for the FedEx Cup. Wait. Did we miss something? Have they had it already? Who won? To shamefully paraphrase William Shakespeare, it seemed "much ado about nothing" to me. Was it enough to get people to watch golf instead of football? Was it as exciting as the NASCAR race for the cup? Was it really something Stuart Appleby would have been fantacizing about on the putting green like in the commercial? For my time, I would take any of the four majors (and most of the other tournaments) over the Race for the FedEx Cup any day. It was a good try by the boys in Palm Beach Gardens, but I'll be surprised to see it last beyond 2008 without a major overhaul. Most of the best players still take off the end of the season. Know why? Maybe because they are resting up to try and knock off Tiger next year (see #6 above). The real reason? They don't want to miss the football games!

3. Another Major (or Two) for Morgan Pressel. In last year's list, my #5 wish was for Morgan (who I think is one of the most talented underachievers on the LPGA Tour) to win a Major and squash her detractors who thought she was second (or third) fiddle to Michelle Wie. Well, well, well. Pressel now has a Kraft Nabisco trophy on her mantle. Not that I wish anything bad for Wie (she just has way too much pressure put on her by those around her and in the media), but it was gratifying to see Pressel notch the big win first.

2. Ten More Years of Success for the First Tee. Hard to believe it's been ten years already, but for all the flack the Tour took over the FedEx Cup, those who were behind the First Tee should receive equally congratulatory kudos for their work to get more and more kids playing the game. At facilities across the country, children who may have never picked up the game now have a reason to get outside and enjoy themselves—and even parlay the sport into college scholarships for some of them.

1. Continued Support from You the Readers. My better half thinks that I should not wait until the final hour before a deadline (like right now for example) to start writing a column because it leaves me relying on less than my best output for column fodder each month. But that would take all of the fun out of it! Besides, I must admit it's like an addiction to have a bully pulpit and write about anything I wish and I sincerely appreciate all of the emails from you—even the mean ones (and you know who you are) because that lets me know someone is reading. Merry Christmas!

Nathan Crace is a golf course architect and member of the Golf Writers Assoc. of America 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 his archives, log on to www.lipouts.com and let him know. Copyright 2007.