

Nathan Crace's

# LIPQUTS™

## Just Gimme a Few Seconds...Please

By: Nathan Crace Date: March 20, 2005

I know professional athletes are under a lot of stress these days. There's scrutiny from the press, the fans, and the team owners. Fistfights have NBA players on Court TV, CNN provides live coverage of Major League Baseball's steroid testimony before Congress, and each year brings the story of an NFL player beating up his wife or girlfriend...or both. Professional golfers are under stress too. It's just that most of their stress is self-inflicted. Sure most of the marquee names are making more—much more—in endorsement deals than in official money, but unlike other pro sports, if you are a professional golfer and you don't play, you don't get paid. You cannot ride the pine and make the "league mandated" minimum for your time. Fortunately for golf fans, the stress of performing hasn't landed more than a handful of professional golfers in the headlines for nearly the brazen extracurricular activities other pro athletes partake of. But one change needs to be made—quickly.

Don't get me wrong. As far as professional sports go, the various professional golf tours are heads and shoulders above the rest of the other athletes as a whole in terms of class and their lack of anti-social behavior. Notwithstanding the majority percentage of golfers who like to enjoy a cold beverage or two (or three or eight) before, during, and/or after a round of golf, most participants are relatively mild-mannered compared to other sports. But the very essence of the game of golf is still one person against the elements. You versus the course. Your score against "old man par." And for all its divine sublimation, the same game that can bring a golfer all the joy in the world can also make the even the prudish among us spew profanities that would redden the cheeks of the most sea-worthy sailors.

Take a minute (it probably won't even take that long) to think of the number of golfers you personally know who have NEVER uttered an expletive during a round of golf. Told you it wouldn't take long. Take yourself into account as well. Now imagine that a worldwide television audience is peering over your shoulder when you pull-hook your approach into the lake on the 18<sup>th</sup> hole when you were about to finish off the best round of your life. Stressful, isn't it? Now add the pressure of the PGA Tour. This is your livelihood. And that swing just cost you \$400,000 and some change. Cover the children's ears, please.

A few years ago, Tiger Woods took a lot of heat for taking the Lord's name in vain when he was caught on television after an errant tee shot at Pebble Beach. People exclaimed that Tiger should not use such language because children look up to him. Maybe so. He knows he is (or was at the time) the World's Number One golfer and millions of children idolize him. So perhaps he should exercise more restraint when he knows he's on TV. After all, if Tiger's on the course, he has to know there's not going to be too much real estate between himself and the nearest camera. But then again, how would you react if a camera watched your every move at the office and just happened to be behind you when you lost that big account worth hundreds of thousands of dollars? Brings a little perspective, doesn't it?

So this past Friday, I'm sitting in a hotel room with my wife and two children waiting to ride to the airport for our flight home after a quick Spring Break getaway. Like any red-blooded American male, I have commandeered the remote and have begun channel surfing between the NCAA Basketball Tournament and the Bay Hill Invitational. During a commercial break for the former, I switched to the latter in time to catch Fred Couples assessing his situation before taking a drop from a cart path near the green. Sorry, but I don't know which hole it was. I do know that his drop landed in some very deep—very thick—rough a few paces from the green, leaving a less than enviable flop shot to maneuver.

I don't know if someone within earshot made a comment about the condition of the ball after the drop or if Fred was just upset and didn't notice the camera, but what I do know is that he dropped the grandfather of all expletives right there on live television for all the world to hear. "Nice \_\_\_\_\_ drop..." he uttered. There was no, "Did I just hear what I thought I heard?" It was plain as day and clear as a bell. And I'm sure that had he known the camera was there rolling, he would not have said it. Luckily for me, my kids were across the room by the window of our sixth floor hotel room more entertained by the planes taking off from the airport than by the exploits of the world's greatest golfers. Bear in mind that unlike most of us, Fred's "office" is televised on live TV each week. Yes I was disappointed that it happened and I'm sure he has had his share of phone calls about the incident by now.

All the announcers on USA Network could say was, "Sorry about that folks." But with one minor change, all of the sporting world could help to avoid such problems in the future—and it wouldn't cost a dime. Why not give all live sporting events—not just golf—a five second delay. It's not like a few seconds really matters when you're watching the event, but it gives the people in charge at the network time to hit the button before the language hits the airwaves and the you-know-what hits the proverbial fan. A delay of a few seconds does not cheapen the experience of your favorite event and in fact could enhance it given the above scenarios. The FCC makes the networks clean up movies for television viewing for far less abrasive language than what I heard on a Friday afternoon on the PGA Tour. My kids like the watch golf on TV and they have an interest in playing the game. But since I don't want to have to explain to an eight year-old girl what the word Freddie used on Friday means, just give me a few seconds...please.

*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](http://www.lipouts.com) and let him know. Copyright 2005.*