

## An Open Letter to David Duval

By: Nathan Crace    Date: June 18, 2003

Dear Mr. Duval:

Those of us who enjoy watching the game of golf played by the best players in the world have banded together to collectively ask one simple question: "What gives?" To say you have been conspicuously absent from the PGA Tour on the weekends this year would be an understatement at best. Your 145 total after the first two rounds at this year's Memorial served to bring your string of seven—yes seven—straight missed cuts to an end. Although a pair of 78's on the weekend put the brakes on your "comeback." Not too long ago, finding your name on the first page of the leader board was as easy as finding someone with a liberal arts degree serving up a double mocha cappuccino at Starbucks. So again we ask, "What gives?"

I understand that a number of pundits have been quick to explain the demise of your game over the last two years. Tumbling from the number one player in the world to a guy who would have lost his Tour card if not for the exemption that is part and parcel of your 2001 British Open victory. Some say it's your breakup with your long-time fiancée, others say a lack of commitment. Some even say that you need to decide between snowboarding and golf—a strange decision to have to make. But for those of us who enjoyed watching the seemingly difficult to understand player behind the wraparound shades play the game, we just want to see you back in action.

We breathed a collective sigh of relief following your second round 62 during the FBR Capital Open this year, hoping it was the beginning of the end of the slump. Your one-under-par finish was good enough for a tie for 28<sup>th</sup> place come Sunday afternoon (your best of the year) and seemed to have you poised for a strong finish at the US Open. I guess I don't have to tell you that +10 didn't make the cut at Olympia Fields. Then again, I also don't have to tell you that you have only managed to make 4 cuts in 14 events this year either.

So it comes to this: what can you do to regain the magic that we remember you best for? To be honest, we miss you. You were the man who dethroned Tiger. The player who would give him a run for his money each week. This generation's Arnie versus Jack. We understand that a bad back can be more than just an aggravation and make an action as unnatural as a golf swing about as comfortable as bamboo shoots under your fingernails. So taking a closer look at your statistics, here is my humble opinion. You rank in the top 115 in only one major statistical category: putting average (where you rank 29<sup>th</sup>). Don't worry about putting—you have many, many more important areas to work on. Namely, driving the ball. Out of 475 possible fairways, you've only found the short grass on 224 through the US Open—ranking 183<sup>rd</sup> on Tour. Strangely, you also rank 183<sup>rd</sup> in greens in regulation. So the driver needs tuning, the irons are off, yet the putter is working well. Why is this? A certain left-handed fellow Tour player may believe that the demise of your game is not so coincidentally tied to your switch to "inferior equipment." But we'll leave that up to someone else to ponder.

So David—can I call you David? Do your fans a favor and yourself an even bigger favor. Pick up the pieces, drop in for some range ball time with David Leadbetter, and stop listening to the talking heads who now pontificate your fate and the reason for it because their games are washed up and they have nothing better to do with their time. The last thing I want to see is the complete disappearance of David Duval from the game, only to re-surface twenty years from now as a television commentator/Champions Tour comeback player after your professional snowboarding career has come and gone. We'll be watching. And waiting. A few more rounds like that Friday at the TPC at Avenel and maybe we'll see you on the leader board (if not the winner's circle) by, say, The International? Keep up the comeback, forget the pundits and most importantly, buy a new driver and get the ball in the hole.

*Nathan Crace is a golf course architect and a 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 the archives, log on to [www.lipouts.com](http://www.lipouts.com) and let him know. Copyright 2003.*