

Gary Player Interview:

First let me say that of all the tournaments we play the Boone Valley Classic is the best run, the best organized year after year. I have very special memories of St. Louis and not a day goes by that I don't think about this town and what it's meant to me and my career.

What memories do you have of the Open? Of your caddie?

Bodie Mark kept a jar of honey with him. Gary kept asking him for some of that honey.

Had you thought much about this Open as your opportunity for the career Grand Slam?

Yes, I had thought that this would allow me to complete the career grand slam. Not a day goes by that I don't think about the Open and how fortunate I was. That week was very special. The members at Bellerive treated me terrific. I was only 29 at the time and was in great condition. In fact that week was the strongest I have ever been. I was about twenty pounds heavier than I am today and I was so strong. But that week was special. Every day I went to church. I remember it was a catholic church, and I'm not catholic, and I listened to the services and prayed for patience. That week I was so patient and it all paid off. It was a very special week. I wore my black shirt that week. Now, I'm not very superstitious, but I washed that shirt every night and ironed it myself, my wife was not with me that week, and every day I felt so good and strong and I kept telling myself to have patience. When it was over I gave Bellerive that shirt.

What parts of your game are better today than years ago?

None. Nothing is better today than it was.

What part of your game do you wish you could recapture?

My strength.

How has your game changed as you've matured?

You have a unique putting style, a "popping" method. How did you come to acquire that? Did you copy someone else, or did you learn that as a junior?
No that was the only way we could putt. The greens weren't like they are today. They were bumpy and had bermuda sticking up at different places. Nobody putted with "stiff wrists" in those days, you couldn't get the ball to the hole. I was very fortunate to have played a lot when I was younger with Bobby Locke, the man I consider as the greatest putter of all time, and I watched his style and that's the way almost all of us putted. And I still putt that way today.

You were considered the premier bunker player of your era; did you emulate anyone as you learned it? Who do you think is the finest today? Given the different bunker types

today, but with similar consistencies, do today's players have to be as good as you were?

I didn't copy any bunker players. I just worked very hard on my own. I think if you look up my record, especially in the majors, that you won't find anyone performed better out of the bunkers than I did.

How do you divide your time today between play and design? Tapawingo??

I'll play about 25 tournaments this year and we're doing 12 courses throughout the world.

What is your impression of the Regular Tour today?

I think that the money these guys are earning is just terrific. I wish we had had the same opportunities, but the times are different and I think it's just great. My fear is that it might ruin the game. Look at other sports, look how the money has changed the game, and not for the better. Players change when the money increases. I think that when I won the Open the purse was something like \$25,000. Today we play for 1.5 million each week. What do you get for winning the Open today, something like \$700,000. It just incredible how it's grown.

This man, Tiger, is the finest young man for his age I have ever seen. Right now he's the best player in the world. That being said, it's almost like the other players are conceding wins to him. I just don't see anyone out there who is really challenging him, really going after him week after week. Oh, there will be different ones each week, Justin Leonard, a great young player, and Davis Love and Duval. I really thought Els might create a rivalry with Tiger, but it just hasn't happened. When Jack and Arnold and I were going head to head, there wasn't any intimidation. Oh you might try some, but we just didn't let it happen. You had to win tournaments, we weren't going to give them to you just for showing up.

Your remarks at the GWAA dinner before the Masters were very enlightening? Also your comments about Lee Elder and his role in opening up the Tour. Why is it that we haven't heard much about that before?

We use the term shotmakers to describe players in days past, though Tiger, Sergio and others pull off some terrific shots from difficult situations. Some will state that the clubs make it easier, while others say they make it more difficult to "work" the ball. How do you look at today's players as shotmakers?

Tom Weiskopf and recently Raymond Floyd both made recent remarks on the "unhappy Senior Tour"; how do you react to his comments.

Let me say this, all the players I've met out here are really having a lot of enjoyment. I haven't met any who don't seem to be thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Wednesday at the Memorial you called the Senior Tour a "Mulligan"; do you think not enough players look at it that way?

Was the 1965 Masters the greatest tournament?

That's where I finished second with Arnold to Jack, right. Well, to me any tournament that I didn't win can't be the greatest tournament for me.

Where does the Skins game rank in terms of Wins?

Winning the skins game was very special, especially at my age.

With fewer spots on the Senior Tour, my reaction is that it is actually MORE competitive than the regular tour.

Definitely, it is more competitive than the regular tour. Not that we can play the same as we did, but the level of desire to win, may be greater on the Senior Tour than on the Regular Tour.

Should they change the money list criteria to more accurately reflect wins or Top 10's, especially in light of the purses today?

To use money as the criteria is wrong. They should take the money list and scrap it. I think Jack, the greatest player of all time, ranks somewhere around 30 all time now. Where does Snead rank? The basis for ranking players should be wins; tour wins, Majors, career worldwide wins. That's why we really play. We don't play for the money, we play to win, for the titles.

Are you as amazed at Tiger as the rest of us are?

Yes.

The day will most likely come when you, Arnold and Jack will be the three who are the honorary starters at the Masters, following in the steps of Nelson, Sarazen and Snead. Does that excite you or make you a bit sad that your competitive days would be over?

No that day won't make me happy. I don't know if I'll be around golf when that happens. When I can't be competitive, I don't think I'll be out here. I have other interests, my ranch's and my horses. I've also got my foundations and other charities, and I have my design business.

The Big 3 golf series, which ran in the 60's, were very successful. It help popularize golf, it gave each of you tremendous exposure. With the year-round events today, and the "silly Season" as profitable as it is, do you think we'll ever see events like that again, especially in light of the Duvall-Woods event last year?

You Breed thoroughbred race horses; farming; physical fitness; The Gary Player Foundation benefiting rural education in South Africa through the Blair Atholl

Schools; Gary Player Group including Gary Player Enterprises, Gary Player Design, Gary Player Golf Academy and Gary Player Equipment. It appears that you've kept a fairly low profile, compared to Arnie and Jack in their outside business ventures?

Course Design Philosophy...has it changed as you've seen the changes in golf? What was your first course? How many have you done? How many projects do you begin each year?

Ghost architecture today. Does this bother you or do you accept it as a natural course of doing business.

Shoot Age...win in six decades. Is it achievable?

That is very important for me, though I really haven't been close this year. I've been sick for the past three weeks with Lyme disease and I just don't have any strength. I can't go to the gym and work out and I'm falling behind. I need to get my strength back.

Tommy Bolt was the type of player who was angry every day. He would throw clubs and just had a terrible temper on the course. Then one day he went and saw a minister and he told Tommy that he needed to get into a routine to curb his temper. He taught him to say Serenity whenever he felt he was going to be upset.

The British Open is my favorite tournament. It's the best tournament because it requires you to play so many different type of shots. If it's windy you have to play a low shot, if it's sunny you can play your normal game, but the conditions from the rain to temperature all dictate how you must play if you're going to win. But I also like it because of the history it represents, something that I care about very deeply, and the tradition that it embodies. Next would come the Masters. Then the US Open and finally the PGA. At the Masters this year Jack and Arnold and I played together for the first two days. For all 36 holes at every tee and every green we all got standing ovations. It's never happened like that before. The fans there are simply amazing.

In 1958 at my first major where I contended I played my last two rounds with Tommy Bolt, but I played my first two rounds with Ben Hogan. Hogan would say two things to you during the round; hello, and then nice round.

Is there any award or recognition that has escaped your trophy case?

Hall of Fame 1974

R&A 1994

Grand Slam

Grand Slam Senior

162 Worldwide wins

21 Tour Wins

22 Senior Wins

9 Majors

British 3 (1959, 1968, 1974)

Masters 3 (1961, 1974, 1978)

PGA 2 (1962 [Goalby 2nd], 1972 Oakland Hills)

Open 1 (1965)

PGA Senior 3 ()

USGA Senior Opens 2 ()

Seconds 1958 Open (Bolt), 1979 (Irwin), PGA 1969 (Floyd), 1984 (Trevino); Masters

1962 (Arnie [playoff]); 1965 (Nicklaus) tied with Arnie -BIG THREE

1961 Money Title

Gary Player

Profile & History:

One of the greatest golfers of all time, this South African is the proud winner of more than 75 tournaments worldwide. He has nine major titles, including three Masters Tournaments, three British Opens, two PGA Championships and one U.S. Open. Player is one of only four professional golfers to win all four major tournaments (the others are Jack Nicklaus, Gene Sarazen and Ben Hogan).

Player was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1974. In 1994, he was inducted into the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews. Player has traveled more miles than any athlete in history.

Birthday: 11/01/35

Height: 5'7

Residence: Alaquá, FL

One of the most successful international golfers of all-time, he has probably traveled more miles than any athlete in history, eclipsing ten million miles ... One of only four players to win golf's Grand Slam joining Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan and Jack Nicklaus in the feat ... Completed Grand Slam at age 29 in 1965 ... Only player in the 20th century to win the British Open in three different decades ... Last won Masters in 1978 when he started seven strokes behind the leaders entering the final round and won by one shot with birdies at seven of the last 10 holes for a back nine 30 and a final round 64 ... One week later came from seven strokes back in the final round to win the Tournament of Champions ... The last player to win three tournaments in a row on the PGA Tour when he captured the Houston Open the week following the Tournament of Champions in 1978.

Height : 5 ' 7 "

Weight : 150lbs / 68kg

Birthplace : Johannesburg, South Africa

Residence : Palm Beach, Florida

Family : Wife - Vivienne; Children - Jennifer, Marc, Wayne, Michelle, Theresa and Amanda. Nine grandchildren

Special Interests : Breeding thoroughbred race horses; farming; physical fitness; The Gary Player Foundation benefiting rural education in South Africa through the Blair Atholl Schools; Gary Player Group including Gary Player Enterprises, Gary Player Design, Gary Player Golf Academy and Gary Player Equipment.

Turned Professional : 1953

Joined PGA Tour : 1957

Joined Senior Tour : 1985

Career Championships : 163

Worldwide Career Earnings : Over \$9 million

MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Total = 9)

Three Masters - 1961, 1974, 1978

Three British Opens - 1959, 1968, 1974

Two PGA Championships - 1962, 1972

One U.S. Open - 1965

SENIOR MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Total = 9)

Three PGA Seniors - 1986, 1988, 1990

Two US Senior Opens - 1987, 1988

Three British Senior Opens - 1988, 1990, 1997

One Senior Players Championship - 1987

US PGA TOUR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Total = 21)

Kentucky Derby Open - 1958
Lucky Strike International Open - 1961
San Diego Open - 1962
PGA Championship - 1962
"500" Festival, Pensacola Open - 1964
US Open - 1965
Tournament of Champions - 1969
Greater Greensboro Open - 1970
Greater Jacksonville Open, National Airlines Open - 1971
New Orleans Open, PGA Championship - 1972
Southern Open - 1973
Masters, Danny Thomas-Memphis Classic - 1974
Masters, Tournament of Champions, Houston Open - 1978

OTHER CHAMPIONSHIPS

British Opens - 1959, 1968, 1974
Winner of South African Open 13 times between 1956 - 1983
Seven-time winner of the Australian Open
Five-time World Match Play Championship
Individual titleist in 1965 and 1977 World Cup of Golf
Winner of World Series of Golf in 1965, 1968 and 1972
Australian PGA Championship - 1957
Brazilian Open - 1972 and 1974
South African Dunlop Masters - 1976
Chile Open - 1980
Johnnie Walker Tournament (Spain) - 1984
Skills Challenge - 1994

US SENIOR PGA TOUR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Total = 18)

Quadel Seniors Classic - 1985
General Foods PGA Seniors Championship, United Hospital Classic, Denver Post Champions - 1986
Mazda Senior TPC, US Senior Open, Paine Webber World Seniors Invitational - 1987
General Foods PGA Seniors Championship, Aetna Challenge, Southwestern Bell Classic, US Senior Open, GTE North Classic - 1988
GTE North Classic, RJR Championship - 1989
PGA Seniors Championship - 1990
Royal Caribbean Classic - 1991
Bank One Senior Classic - 1993, 1995

OTHER SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Total = 13)

British Senior Open - 1988, 1990, 1997
Nissan Senior Skins - 1986, 1988, 1991
Northville Invitational, Long Island, NY, German PGA Team Championship, Captain, Chrysler Cup - 1987
Irish Senior Master - 1993
Dai-ichi Seimei Cup (Japan), Shell Wentworth Senior Masters, Surrey, England - 1997
Northville Invitational, Long Island - 1998

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

Leading money winner on the PGA Tour in 1961
Inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1974
South African Sportsman of the Century award in 1990
Over \$8 million in combined worldwide earnings

Celebrated his 40th anniversary as a professional in 1993
Named Honorary Member of the R&A in 1994
Player horse Broadway Flyer competed in the 1994 British Derby
Entered his 40th consecutive British Open in 1994
Received Honorary Doctorate of Law Degree from St. Andrews in 1995
Hilton Hotel Lifetime Achievement Award in 1995
Received Honorary Doctor of Science from University of Ulster, Ireland in 1997
In gusty winds at the 1998 Masters became the oldest golfer to ever make the cut, breaking the 25 year old record set by Sam Snead
Became the second oldest winner on the Senior Tour by shooting three consecutive rounds of 68 to capture 1998 Northville Long Island Classic.

GARY PLAYER

The Black Knight

UNPARALLELED CAREER OF ACHIEVEMENT

Winner of Golf's Grand Slam (one of four golfers ever)
Winner of nine major championships (third on all-time list)
Only winner of Grand Slam on Regular and Senior Tour
Won 162 professional tournaments world-wide over 5 decades
Only player to win British Open in 3 different decades
Most traveled athlete in history (traveled 9 million air miles)
Last player to win three consecutive PGA tournaments (1978)
One of two golfers ever to be bestowed with Honorary Doctorate of Law from St. Andrews University
Captained Southern Africa team to victory in inaugural Alfred Dunhill Challenge over Australia in 1995
Won his native country's South African Open a record 13 times
Known as the greatest bunker player in golf
Winner of 7 Australian Opens (most ever)
Five time winner of World Match Play Championship (most ever)
Shot 59, lowest score ever in professional golf, in 1974 Brazilian Open
Won two individual World Cup titles
Three time winner of World Series of Golf
Placed in top ten in thirty-five majors, including 17 top three finishes
Victories in 27 consecutive years, ten years more than second best
Honorary Member of Royal & Ancient (one of only ten golfers)
Seventeen holes-in-one during official tournaments
Known as the "Black Knight" and "International Ambassador of Golf"
South African Sportsman of the Century
One of original inductees into Golf Hall of Fame
Winner of 9 majors on Senior Tour
Oldest player ever to make cut in British Open (aged 59 in 1995)
Oldest player ever to make cut in the Masters (aged 62 in 1998)
Winner of 21 tournaments on Regular US PGA Tour and 22 tournaments on US Senior Tour, playing only part-time

“THE INDIVIDUAL”

Gary Player is a legend in his own time. Arguably the most successful international golfer of his generation, Player has achieved the kind of international stardom reserved for only a handful of sporting greats. He is, quite simply, world class.

Gary Player is one of only four players ever to have won golf's "Grand Slam," which he achieved over a mere six years, before the age of 30. His nine major titles include three Masters, three British Opens, two PGA Championships and the US Open. Player holds the distinction of being the only man this century to win the British Open over three decades, having won it in 1959, 1968 and 1974. He is also the last player to have won three tournaments in a row on the PGA Tour including The Masters, accomplishing this feat in 1978. Player's 21 PGA Regular Tour victories are all the more remarkable when one considers that he maintained a full international playing schedule during his years on the Tour.

Player is reputed to have logged more traveling miles than any other athlete in history; the result is over 150 tournament wins around the globe, earning him the title "The International Ambassador of Golf." Competing on the PGA Senior Tour since 1986, Player has enjoyed equally remarkable success. With 21 Senior Tour titles in his first five years on the Tour, including three PGA Senior Championships and two USGA Senior Opens, he remains one of the most successful and popular figures in professional golf. In winning the Senior British Open in 1988, Player became the first man to complete the "Grand Slam of Senior Golf".

Gary Player is renowned as much for his dedication to the principles of excellence as he is for his golf accomplishments. He is recognized throughout the world as an uncompromising perfectionist who settles for nothing but the best. His impeccable set of values, stringent regimen of health and fitness, and insistence on quality have earned him admiration the world over.

Gary Player

Born: Nov. 1, 1936

South African golfer

3-time winner of Masters and British Open; only player in 20th century to win British Open in three different decades (1959,68,74); one of only four players to win all four Grand Slam titles (others are Hogan, Nicklaus and Sarazen); has also won 2 PGAs, a U.S. Open and 2 U.S. Senior Opens; owner of 21 wins on PGA Tour and 17 more on Senior Tour.

Gary Player: A Player Invades America

A native of Johannesburg, South Africa, Gary Player was the first player from overseas to make a major mark on the American golf tour, eventually elevating himself to the rarified level of [Jack Nicklaus](#) and [Arnold Palmer](#). That trio dominated the sport to such an extent in the 1960s that they became known as "The Big Three," an uninspired but apt nickname. Player took the final step onto that plateau in 1961, when he won the Masters tournament on the final hole by a stroke over Palmer, who was then at the peak of his career. It was the first Masters victory ever by an overseas player; in 1965 he became the first foreigner to win the US Open since 1920.

Player was small and wiry -- "Jack Nicklaus was my size when he was 12," he would often joke -- but his golf game was precise and tactically sound. He won tournaments in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and won all four major tournaments at least once, one of only four players in history to do so. Player made his big breakthrough in 1959, when he came back from eight strokes down on the final day to win the British Open, the first of his three victories there. He traveled the world over in his career, winning the Australian Open seven times and the South African Open 13 times.

Player's emergence presaged the end of American dominance in the international golf arena. Nowhere had that dominance been more telling than in the Ryder Cup competition, the bi-annual match between golfers from America and Britain (later expanded to include all of Europe). From 1935 through 1983, the Americans lost the Ryder Cup just once, in 1957. But the rise of such European stars as Seve Ballesteros, Bernhard Langer, Nick Faldo and Ian Woosnam led to American defeats in 1985 and 1987, and a tie in 1989. The Americans finally won back the Ryder Cup in 1991, edging Europe by a point.

