

Mr. 57
by
Jim Healey

It's been said that there are days on the course when everything goes right. The holes look as big as bushel baskets, the lines for the putt magically "appear" to you. You hit every drive where you're looking, and your irons are crisp and true. You're in the 'Zone'. You own the course. You don't want to leave. We've all had those days and for some of us, it meant we might shoot 90. For others an 80, and for some a 70. But for one golfer, it meant going lower than anyone had before. It was the ultimate 'Zone'.

His name is Auggie Navarro, former head professional at Sim Park GC in Wichita, and for a few weeks in August 1982 he put together a string of career rounds unlike what had been seen before. He had posted a 60 the prior week, and on the par-70 layout, that was quite respectable. In the weeks that followed his round, he carded rounds of 59 and 61. But those would pale in comparison to his historic round; the "one for the record books".

The memorable day began as most during the summers in Kansas. The sun rose and cast long shadows over the course in the early morning, shadows which grew shorter as the temperature rose. Just after lunch, Auggie headed to the first tee with two of his friends, John Parks and Jim Robinson. As a course, Sim Park would remind you of most municipal layouts, fairly open, a little rough, with large trees dotting the edge of the fairways. There is some water on the course but more for irrigation than as an irritant. Playing at 6,055 yards it would remind many St. Louisans of Forest Park, only without the hills!

Auggie hit a good drive at the first, was on the green in two, and calmly sank his first putt of the day. A good start for any round. The second, another par 4, recorded the same result; drive, approach, 1-putt. The third was a copy of the first two! Three holes, three-under! At the fourth, he had a four-footer for his fourth straight birdie, but the putt lipped out and his first par of the day was recorded. More birdies at the 5th and the 247-yard par-3 6th put him 5-under. He reached the par-5 seventh in two and knocked in the putt for eagle. A par-3 at the eighth and another birdie-3 at the ninth put him out in 27, with only 10 putts!

Surprisingly, Auggie wasn't really thinking that much about the score. He knew what he was doing, but he had been around long enough not to begin counting his score on the 10th tee. Besides, there was a little money riding on the round that day, something that tends to help you keep your focus. Quarter was the usual bet (front, back, and eighteen) and of course, there was a skins game! Winning ten bucks was a big deal. With his round going the way it was, he knew he probably had a few skins and maybe the front total. However, there would be more work to do on the back.

His four on the 10th matched par and a three on the 11th put him at 9-under. A birdie two on the 13th and a three on the 14th put him at 11-under for his round. On the par 70 layout, if he shot par the rest of the way, he would shoot a 59! He parred the 3-shot 15th before a birdie-3 on the par-4 16th. Another birdie on the par-5 17th put him at 13-under coming to the par-5 18th. Just short of the green in two, he chipped up, and it rolled just past the hole, barely missing an eagle! His birdie putt grazed the edge but stayed out. He would settle for par, posting a 30 on the back. But his total of 13-under, would be recorded as a 57. His playing partners were dumbfounded. As they sat around computing the various bets, it was obvious that his playing partners' wallets would be considerably lighter than when they started. His best recollection was that he won almost \$65 that day.

As pro, it fell upon him to call the paper to report the score. Feeling a bit embarrassed, he never contacted the papers. A day or two later, not seeing an article on the round, one of his friends called about the achievement. Some time later, another friend sent a recap of the round to the PGA and they ran a nice article about it in the PGA Journal.

Today, Auggie continues to play during the season from Tuesday through Saturday. Despite just turning 75, it hasn't slowed him a bit. His next goal is to shoot his age, something he expects to do shortly. However, after a 57, shooting your age would seem to be a bit anti-climatic!

Note: The lowest score recorded has been a pair of 55's, one by professional Alfred Edward Smith on January 1, 1936 over his home course at Woolacombe, England, a layout of a par-70 at 4,248 yards. A second 55 was recorded by Homero Blancas during his collegiate days at Houston over the 5,002 yard Premier GC in Longview, Texas. Though the round was played over a 9-hole course that was played twice, he shot 27 and 28, making 13 birdies and one eagle with just 20 putts. At least four scores have been posted with fifty-eight's on courses over 6,000, with Carlo Merlo having shot that mark on the 6,607 yard Vegas Municipal course in 1981, marking that as the lowest score on what is termed a 'long' course.

A.J. "Bill" Burke recorded a round of 57 on May 20, 1970 over the 6,389 yard Normandie GC in St. Louis, though the club professional, Frank Keller, refused to certify the 18-hole round. However, his back nine score of 25 remains the lowest 9-hole score according to the Guinness Book of Records. His round included 2 eagles (13 and 15), an ace on #16 and birdies on 4 holes (11, 14, 17, 18). He had 2 pars (10 and 12) other hole. 4-3-3-2-3-3-1-4-2 = 25. He played the round with a teacher named Jim Cassen.