

Subject: Michigan Man Newsletter

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MICHIGAN MAN NEWSLETTER

October 4, 2004

I must warn you about this month's Newsletter. Three things. First. It's about golf. Second. It's long. Third. It is loaded with name dropping. Proceed at your own risk.

Well, it's here. The most beautiful and bittersweet month of the year. The colors are changing and summer came just around Labor Day, stuck around for September and said 'adios,' leaving a cool October in its wake.

Anticipating the oncoming weather change, I played a quick nine with my Uncle Manny last night at Mulligan Hills, stretching the good weather out even as the sun was setting and the wind was picking up. The crap was on it's way.

We awoke to forty degrees and rain this morning but it did little to dampen our spirits as my wife and I drove to Bellaire, MI to watch our son compete in his confence match. He did well and the Bulldogs of Inland Lakes repeated as conference champions. Congratulations, boys.

I guess my summer was all about golf. I got my handicap down a few strokes, competed (not well) and enjoyed a summer with my son and his buddies as well as my league partner and good friend, 86 year old, Bill Bunce. It is a game for the ages. All ages.

From the sublime to the ridiculous, golf is a funny game.

Speaking of which, first joke....

Someone sent me a joke about GOLF standing for "Gentlemen Only, Ladies Forbidden."

I have it on good authority that the word "golf" came from the first Scotsman who ever hit a ball. Upon striking it and watching it's flight he uttered, "**G**o! **O**ver! **L**eft! **F**udge...!!!" Of course, he didn't say fudge. I hope you "see" the punch line. (Thanks to Mark K.)

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WORK

September was good month. It as tough getting back into the commuting routine but I am adjusting, once again. It's great to back at Four Green Fields. I understand they are going to name a bar stool after me when I reach twenty years of service. Hoops is going full swing and I am anxious to see the return of the WORLD CHAMPION DETROIT PISTONS!!!!" How great is that? Since the Pistons deconstructed the L.A. Lakers all the media has been talking about is Shaq and Kobe. But to me the bigger story will always be about how teamwork and an outstanding work ethic won a

title. It kinda puts America's perspective on celebrity a little more into focus.

I've made my return to Hoppies and I must say things are great there and I wish the new owner, Bob Babcock the best. Horn's on Mackinac Island still remains the hottest spot on The Rock. Maniac Island, as one wag put it. Too bad there is a curfew there. I'm sure it could be the New Orleans of the north. O'Toole's in Novi is shaping up to be a lot of fun. I see a lot of old friends who have migrated to the west side of Detroit. And I get to play a lot of music, something I don't get to do everywhere. Finally, the Perry Hotel has become a regular stop and I really enjoy it. It is one of the most cozy places to play in northern Michigan and they make a real commitment to entertainment.

But now, let's talk about Dick O'Dow's in Birmingham.

(The following article appeared this week in The Straitsland Resorter, our weekly paper here in Indian River. You can check out the Resorter on line at www.resorter.com.)

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CONFESSIONS OF AN ENVIOUS AMERICAN

Every pinnacle of success should have a defining moment. One that encompasses and includes it's participants as well as it's spectators. The culminating celebration Sunday night after the Europeans trounced the U.S. to retain (such an inadequate word) the Ryder Cup wasn't on the eighteenth green at Oakland Hills as the last of the matches ended and the cigars were lit and the champagne started flowing. It wasn't at the official closing ceremonies where each participating player's national anthem (including the American's) was played. It wasn't at the private post tournament meeting when the players met with captain Bernhard Langer sharing emotional hugs and congratulations. Party central for the European celebration was at Dick O'Dow's Irish Pub in downtown Birmingham just a few short miles from Oakland Hills.

The European fans had found the place earlier in the week and every night the nocturnal population with visiting accents grew. By the week's end it had become the public house, the beer hall, the neighborhood watering hole or simply the corner bar that each of the visitors could somehow find comfort as their own home away from home.

By seven p.m. on Sunday night it became evident this was going to be ground zero for the Irish, British, Welsh, Scotch, Spanish, Scandinavian, French, Germans and yes, even a few Americans.

Being one of the musicians Dick O'Dow's employs on a rotating basis I was faced with this daunting task of entertaining three hundred boisterous golf fans. I barely found a path to get my pa. system and guitar to the stage area and when I arrived I found several Irishmen resisting the management's suggestion to move off the stage as I set up. We quickly struck a compromise as I confessed I didn't need much room and they could stand behind me and even sing along when the mood struck them. Man, do the Irish love to sing.

For about two hours we sang Oasis, Van Morrison, The Proclaimers, the Beatles, Neil Diamond, John Denver and every

other song I could recall that had made it's rounds through the civilized world. Every second or third song an Irishman would step to the mic and lead a sing along,. Most were Irish pub songs that I, as one fan described as "a dry ass Englishman" did not know. Finally they struck a familiar chord when someone asked, "Do you know 'When the Saints Go Marching In?'" I began, ready to lead "Oh When the Saints..." but was abruptly cut off as the celebrant commandeered the microphone.

"We won the cup! We won the cup! We won the cup in your backyard. We won the cup in your backyard...We won the cup in your backyard!!"

It's hard to fake a gracious smile and bite your tongue at the same time. "Where's your Tiger? Where's your Tiger?" another gravely voiced imbibor began. I silently prayed my dear old veteran father and his comrades at the V.F.W. wouldn't get wind that I was tolerating all this. But I endured.

My first break came when the throng turned to the door and let out a loud cheer. Darren Clarke and Lee Westwood made their entry to choruses of the soccer chant "Ole', Ole', Ole ole, ole!!!!!!" Within minutes the two were standing on the bar talking to the hushed but excited crowd. "Shhh!" Westwood put his index finger to his lips like he was silencing a murmuring classroom full of excited fourth graders. Suddenly, everyone was riveted in rapt attention, Westwood, with a devilish grin said, "It's sooooo quiet. Sounds like the American fans this afternoon."

This was going to be a long night.

After a few minutes the duo disappeared but returned fifteen minutes later with much of the rest of the team, sans sport jackets and garbed in what could appropriately called, drinking clothes. Soon a good portion of the team, Westwood, Clarke, Sergio Garcia, Paul McGinley, Miguel Angel Jiminez', Ian Poulter, Luke Donald and Pdraig Harrington were all standing on the bar vainly trying to quiet the crowd. They would break from the effort, sign a

few autographs, smile for pictures, lead another chant of “Ole! Ole!” then once again try to quiet the crowd so they could speak. The crowd was too excited, too energized and these were their guys. After threats from the players that if things didn’t quiet down they would leave, threats from the bartender to stop serving, and threats from a few rugby players that could have started a United Nations incident, well, “quiet” just wasn’t going to happen. Ian Poulter, looking like Rod Stewart took the mic and shouted “Shote Ope!” That worked for about five seconds. Reluctantly, it seemed, the team moved to the stage.

Where there had been a dozen people standing, suddenly, with the team, there were thirty to forty people jammed onto the ten by ten foot stage.

I was pinned up against a wall and looked at the only other American on stage, Jim Tochet, who sits in and sings a few songs. We smiled. Something cool was happening. I looked over behind the bar. The owner, Mitch Black cocked his head and grinned. We both communicated an acceptance that the rule of order was rapidly disintegrating, shook our heads in an understanding that things were definitely going over the top but ... something cool was happening. Something people would talk about for a long time.

Sergio Garcia stood clapping as fans chanted his name. Darren Clarke couldn’t keep a smile off his face. Westwood, Poulter and Luke Donald stood clapping, pausing to sign autographs and pose for pictures. Paul McGinley, about a half a lob wedge from being a Munchkin took the mic and began singing “Sweet Molly Malone.” The crowd joined in as few more struggled to get closer to the team. Tochet and I were pinched and I, suddenly fighting off an anxiety attack, began worrying more about my guitar than anything else. Slogging through beer, broken glass, and intoxicated revelers I moved to the safety of the kitchen a few yards away where I stored my guitar. I leapt back into the maelstrom only find myself next to Pdraig Harrington’s American cousin, NFL quarterback

Joey Harrington who had just led the Detroit Lions to a 28-16 victory over the Houston Texans.

“I dunno, Joey,” I yelled. “The Ryder Cup is great but it’s really nothing compared to the Lions starting the season 2-0!”

He laughed then slapped me a high five with a gleeful, “Yeah!!”

I looked at the burgeoning stage as somehow more fans had made it up there and more sing alongs ensued. “You’ll Never Walk Alone!!!” The entire bar rose in crescendo as the song peaked. Lee Westwood took the microphone. and began the “Fields of Athenry.” The bar was booming in raucous and raw energy. Another fan wrestled the microphone away and began a funny bar room sing along, “Yogi Bear.” When that finally concluded one of the more well spoken and vocal fans grabbed the mic. “We’d like to thank the U.S. for their hospitality.” A loud cheer erupted and the entire bar began chanting, “USA!! USA!! USA!!.” I looked at Black again. Cool. Goose bump cool.

Like coalition forces storming over the bar, Guinness and Jack Daniels were flowing with one singular mission in mind. Celebrate. It was definitely a European victory party but as a golf fan, as a sports fan it seemed bigger. This is what sports are supposed to do to people. Unite them. Make them forget their troubles. Give them hope. Give them reason to celebrate.

I did a double take identifying an auxiliary bartender washing glasses and quickly refilling them with more drink. Brendan Shanahan from the Detroit Red Wings. Well, he may need a job this winter.

Back on stage the speakers and fans alike were wobbling and feedback ruled each song as players and fans passed the microphone, often right in front of the speakers eliciting a high pitched squelch that only I seemed to mind. Then back again to “Ole’ Ole”, “We won the Cup...” and “You’ll Never Beat the Irish...” Someone took the mic and led the bar in Cab Calloway’s classic, “Minnie the Moocher.” Whoever was leading the troops had done

this before. “HI-DEE-HI-DEE-HI-DEE-HO!!!” and the crowd would reply in kind. It was almost deafening.

From stem to stern, port to starboard, Dick O’Dow’s Irish Pub looked like a third world ferry boat, overstuffed with humanity and threatening to capsize. Bobbing heads and waving arms were the only discernible body parts. I looked again at Mitch Black. We both laughed and Black shouted, “Once in a lifetime!!” It went on for a solid hour.

For a moment I wondered, then doubted whether this could ever happen with the American team. For whatever reason it just seems improbable that even if our team had won they would be anywhere but on to the next corporate event, commercial shoot or paid public appearance. I love our guys but the cult of celebrity, the demands of corporate America and the mad and frantic pressure from the media have it’s collective talons so far into all our athletes that a simple walk through a crowded pub just wouldn’t happen. These Europeans still play much of their golf with their hometown friends and probably carpool to tournaments. They seem to know and honestly like one another. They are well known heroes in small countries that have about all the untouchables they need. Which is very few and golfers don’t seem to be among them. I suspected they would probably be here with the “lads” if they had lost. As Colin Montgomerie stated, “The U.S. plays for their country. We play for each other. That makes all the difference.”

At last the players moved from the stage and as the crowd thinned I was able to get back to the p.a. head and at the manager’s instruction gradually turned down the volume. Bobbing and weaving, a few of the singers would warble a few notes, look at the microphone for the on/off switch, sing again, tap the mic head. Nothing. Finally it dawned on them and they looked at me with a confused and quizzical “Huh?”

“They turned the power off. We’re all done.” I lied.

Everything on stage was soaked in some form of alcohol. My

amp, my guitar case, the strap, the adjoining cords. Every last thing was awash in stout Guinness ale and Jack Daniels. A successful evening.

With a mixture of envy and admiration I watched as the players wound their way through the crowd, still shaking hands and signing autographs. It was a once in a lifetime thing, seeing the victorious European team, sharing a stage and microphone with them, witnessing the electric synergy between the players and their supporters. And I envied the fans, not because “they won the cup” but because their boys found them and in true blue collar fashion reciprocated the support, the emotion, the victory. It was a shared experience. It was something beyond words but it was something people would talk about for a long, long time.

Before I paste my schedule let me add a couple of more things about that evening at Dick O’Dow’s. Darren Clarke, one of the mainstays of the European team took refuge from the crowd behind the bar. Tom Connors, the general manager of Dick’s pulled a pint of Guinness for him then congratulated and toasted the Irishman on his play and the European victory. Clarke deflected the praise graciously and toasted Connors.

“All week long we’ve been hearing about this place and about how you’ve been taking care of the lads. You’ve made their trip special as well and we’ll never forget this.”

It was very classy thing and in spite of the ribbing we took as American fans the European players and supporters were extremely gracious in victory. I have to give them that.

The other thing is that my digital camera was on the fritz and looking around very few Americans had cameras. One waitress had a disposable that she held over her head and snapped off a few pictures. The next day, The London Times, hearing about the party, flew someone in to meet with her and paid her a lot of money for her pictures of the party. Did I mention they paid her a “lot” of

money? We've all been sort of taking turns kicking each other in the ass since then but I'm sure we'll either get used to it or our legs will tire out.

Well, the schedule.

OCTOBER

Wednesdays

10/6 Daily Limit in Grand Lake 9-12

10/13 & 27 O'Toole's in Novi 9-1

Thursdays

10/7 & 21 The Noggin Room in the Perry Hotel
in Petoskey

10/14 & 28 Dick O'Dow's in Birmingham

Fridays

10/1 & 8 The Noggin Room in The Perry Hotel
in Petoskey

10/15,22, 28 at Four Green Fields in Royal Oak

Saturdays

10/2 Hoppies on Burt Lake 9-1

10/23 Hoops in Auburn Hills 9-1

10/30 Thunder Bay Resort in Hillman

NOVEMBER

Wednesdays

11/10 & 11/24 O'Tooles in Novi 9-1

11/17 Daily Limit in Grand Lake 9-12

Thursdays

11/4 & 11/18 The Noggin Room in the
Perry Hotel, Petoskey 7-11

11/11 Dick O'Dow's in Birmingham 9-1

Fridays

11/5 & 11/12 Four Green Fields Royal Oak
9-1

11/19 Noggin Room in the Perry Hotel
Petoskey. 7-11

Saturdays

11/6 & 11/13 Hoops in Auburn Hills 9-1

11/20 TNT in Rogers City 9-1

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As always, pass this along to your friends, let me know if this is an

inappropriate address or if you don't wish to receive it. I'll understand. Also, if your name isn't on the address it means that all I received from you is your email address. I really would like to know exactly who I'm sending this out to so please email me your name.

Until then...oops. One more joke.

A little boy was bathing while his mother sat and watched. He examined his "equipment" and asked, "Mom, are these my brains?"

His mother replied, "Not yet, son."

Til next time.

* * * * *

This issue brought to you by the ghosts of Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, and Bobby Jones. What a great game!!