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CBS golf analyst and Champions Tour winner



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by Gary McCord



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About the Author

“Life is full of ups and downs, and it wouldn’t be fun any other way.” Living by this optimistic philosophy, **Gary McCord** persisted through years of mediocrity before finding success. An outstanding player, television announcer, instructor, author, speaker, and even movie actor, he has become a golf celebrity.

McCord is well known for enduring 23 years and 422 tournaments on the PGA Tour without nabbing a single victory. A man of good humor, he sported a “NO WINS” license plate for years to poke fun at his less-than-glamorous work as a professional golfer.

“Trapped in the headlights of bankruptcy,” as he liked to put it, McCord pursued other avenues in golf and found himself launching a broadcasting career. He scored big when a CBS Sports executive tossed him a headset and asked him to do golf commentary — giving him only 15 minutes to prepare. McCord jumped in with no fear and impressed CBS with his performance. Twenty-five years later, he’s still providing color commentary for CBS golf events. Fans and critics praise him for his knowledgeable perspective, refreshing humor, and sometimes irreverent wit toward a game known for taking itself too seriously.

Broadcasting changed his perspective on golf. Realizing that a better understanding of the golf swing would help his TV work, McCord studied the swing for two years. He emerged with knowledge, confidence, and an improved golf game.

McCord’s own golf really came together as he began his career on the Champions Tour after his 50th birthday. In 1999, his first full season on that tour, he won two events — the Toshiba Senior Classic and the Ingersoll-Rand Senior Tour Championship — to finish 17th on the official money list with nearly \$1 million in prize money. Since then, he has often finished in the top 30 on the money list while playing a limited schedule of 10 to 15 events per year.

When he isn’t broadcasting or playing golf, McCord keeps busy with myriad other projects. He portrayed himself in and served as technical director for the golf movie *Tin Cup*, starring Kevin Costner, Rene Russo, and Don Johnson. He’s also a writer. In addition to writing *Golf For Dummies*, he’s the author of a collection of essays about his life on tour, *Just a Range Ball in a Box of Titleists*. His bestselling *Golf For Dummies* was released in DVD form in 2004.

McCord and his friend and CBS Sports colleague David Feherty became known to millions of golf fans and gamers as the voices of EA Sports’ Tiger Woods PGA Tour video games. McCord also instructs and consults with more than 20 PGA Tour players.

Gary brings a sense of fun to everything he does and never takes himself too seriously. He and his wife, Diane, share the “ups and downs” of a busy life together at their homes in Scottsdale and Denver.

Dedication

I dedicate this book to spike marks, the wind just came up from the other direction, bad bounces, wrong yardage, rising barometric pressure, solar storms, dirt got in my eyes, yin and yang, the big bang theory, Brownian motion, dark energy, escape velocity, entropy, Newton's laws of motion, and a bad caddie. All the things we golfers can blame our erratic play on instead of ourselves, providing peace of mind in the unstable environment of this maniacal endeavor.

Author's Acknowledgments

To the game itself, golf. It's a clever game worthy of perspective. I'm not astute enough to unravel it all, but if you can get a good author, bingo, the game is easy. Thanks Kevin Cook for the time and effort he put into this 4th edition.

To my wife Diane, my mom Ruth, my sister Karen and her late husband Chris, my daughter Krista and her husband Mike, and my four granddaughters Breanne, Kayla, Jenae, and Terra: See what you can do with spell check!

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Introduction

I can't believe this book is the 4th edition of *Golf For Dummies*! If it's the first golf book you've ever held in your hands, don't worry. I've read more of them than I can count, and this one's a particular favorite. To bring you this edition, I've gone back through everything I wrote in the first three, updating some material, writing a bunch more to keep up with this fast-changing game, and making everything even clearer and easier to follow.

Not to mention funnier!

Because golf, like life itself, can be hard but is ultimately enjoyable. Please remember that as you begin your adventure in the most maddening and wondrous game of all: Golf is fun. And the fun starts here.

About This Book

I've written this book for the rankest beginner, although I like to think that I have something to offer golfers at every level, even the pros. (Of course, my buddies on the professional tours will probably read this book just to see whether I can write a coherent sentence.) The guys I grew up with at San Luis Rey golf course in Southern California will check out *Golf For Dummies*, 4th Edition, to see whether I've used any of their funniest lines.

What you have here is no ordinary golf-instruction book. Most of the golf books you find in your local bookstore (or, increasingly, online) are written by professional players or teachers. As such, they focus solely on the golf swing. *Golf For Dummies*, 4th Edition, covers a lot more than the swing. This book ought to be the only one you need as you develop a golf dependency. (Feel free to consult a physician when you feel the first symptoms coming on — grinding your teeth, talking to yourself after missing a shot, punching the air after making one. These are the warning signs. But remember: This book is cheaper than a visit to the doctor.)

When I started out on the PGA Tour in 1974, I was full of fight and enthusiasm but lacked a basic knowledge of golf-swing mechanics. A warm panic would start to rise in me about ten minutes before I was due to tee off. My old friends Doubt and Dread would join me at the first tee. My brain would be

racing, trying to figure out what *swing thought* (that one aspect of the swing that you meditate on to keep focused) to use that day. Most of the time, I'd be left with a thought like, "Keep the left elbow toward magnetic north on the downswing." Usually, that action resulted in a silly-looking slice into uncharted territory.

I swung the club that way for most of my career. So I know what it's like to play without knowledge or a solid foundation. Believe me, I'm a lot happier — and having a lot more fun — now that I know what I'm doing.

The reason I'm qualified to help you is that I have made a serious effort to become a student of the game. When I started working on golf telecasts for CBS, I didn't know much about the inner workings of the swing. But my new job forced me to learn. My odyssey led me to seek advice from some of the world's greatest teachers.

One of them was Mac O'Grady, a golfer I grew up with in Southern California. O'Grady had researched his method with passion since 1983. The result was a swing model that worked. I was lucky to study under O'Grady, and I can't thank him enough. But I don't cover Mac's model in this book; it's for advanced golfers. No one has ever called me advanced, so I'm gonna stick to basics.

Golf For Dummies, 4th Edition, puts you on track to becoming not just someone who can hit a golf ball but rather a real golfer. You'll soon discover the big difference between the two.

Conventions Used in This Book

To make the text even more accessible, I've used some handy conventions throughout the book:

- ✓ New words or terms are formatted in *italics* and accompanied by a definition.
- ✓ **Bold** text denotes the specific steps of processes that I've spelled out. It also highlights keywords in bulleted lists.
- ✓ Web site URLs are in `monofont`. When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, rest assured that I haven't put in any extra characters (like hyphens) to indicate the break. When using one of these Web addresses, just type exactly what you see in this book, pretending that the line break doesn't exist.

What You're Not to Read

The publishers and I have put this book together with your convenience in mind. Nice, huh? For that reason, I'm pointing out the text you don't have to read:

- ✓ When you see the Technical Stuff icon (shown later in this Introduction), you can skip that text if you want. It's not essential to understanding the rest of the book.
- ✓ The same goes for sidebars, which are scattered through the book, printed on gray backgrounds. Sidebars are extra added attractions. I've tried to make them fun and informative, but they aren't crucial to the rest of the book. Feel free to skip over them; you won't hurt my feelings.

Foolish Assumptions

Because you picked up this book, I assume that you're interested in golf. I also assume that you're not already a great golfer, or else you'd be out there making millions on the PGA Tour. Beyond that, I'm going to figure that you're a little like I was when I became a professional golfer.

Having said that, I'm assuming that you've probably dabbled with golf and want to get better. In my experience, most people give golf a try before they seek instruction. It must be an ego thing, kind of like those people who don't like to ask for directions when they get lost because they feel that it's an admission of failure. If that's you, think of me as your personal GPS: your Golfer Positioning System.

How This Book Is Organized

Golf For Dummies, 4th Edition, leads you through the process of becoming a golfer. Beginners need many questions answered as they take on the game. I've organized this book so that you take those steps one at a time and can flip to them anytime for quick reference. May this journey be a pleasant one!

Part I: Welcome to a Mad Great Game

Where do I play, and what's the course record? Wait a minute! First you need to know what this game is about. You need clubs. You need to know how to swing those clubs. You may want to take a lesson to see whether you like

the game and then find golf clubs that fit you. In this part, I show you how to choose your clubs and give you some tips on the questions to ask before you make your purchase. Then I give you some ideas about what kind of golf courses to play. Picking up golf is a never-ending process of discovery, and it starts right here.

Part II: Getting Into the Swing

This part gets right to the point: I give you a close look at the workings of the golf swing and help with your mental preparation. You also get a good look at the short game, where most scoring takes place. I show you how to blast your way out of bunkers and how to develop a sound putting stroke.

Part III: Common Faults and Easy Fixes

In this part, I tackle the tough shots and help you deal with bad luck and bad weather. You'll develop many faults during your golfing life, and this part tells you how to fix most of them. You took a great first step by buying this book.

Part IV: Taking Your Game Public

In this part, you get the final touches of your education as a golfer. You discover how the rules were established, how to conduct yourself on the golf course, and the fine art of betting. You even get the do's and don'ts of golf-course etiquette. This part lets you walk onto any golf course and look like you know what you're doing. Because you *will* know what you're doing.

Part V: How to Be a Smart Golf Consumer

A sad fact of life is that you can't always be out on the course. In this part, I show you how to max out a day as a spectator and how to tap into the best of golf on TV, online, and in video games.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

This part contains the best-of, the most memorable, and some stuff that won't mean much to anybody except me. I just thought you'd enjoy knowing about it.

Part VII: Appendixes

Golfers have a language all their own. Appendix A lists the terms you want to add to your vocabulary. Appendix B lists some of the more popular golf organizations and resources, along with a select list of schools around the country.

Icons Used in This Book

As I guide you through this maze of golf wit and wisdom, I use several handy road signs. Look for these friendly icons; they point you toward valuable advice and hazards to watch out for.



This icon marks golf hazards to avoid or at least be aware of. Be careful!



This icon flags quick, easy ways to improve your game.



When you see this icon, be on the lookout for recommendations I swear by (follow them or I will never speak to you again) and important personal stories from my years of playing and covering golf.



This information may make your head spin; take two aspirin and get plenty of rest.



This icon flags information that's important enough to repeat.

Where to Go from Here

Feel free to flip through this book, picking your spots. It isn't designed to be read like a novel from cover to cover. If you're a complete novice, you may take a look at Appendix A first — get comfortable with the language. If you're a little more advanced and need help with a specific aspect of your game or swing, you can find that information in Chapters 6 through 10. The rest of the book helps you make that vital jump from “golf novice” to “real golfer.”

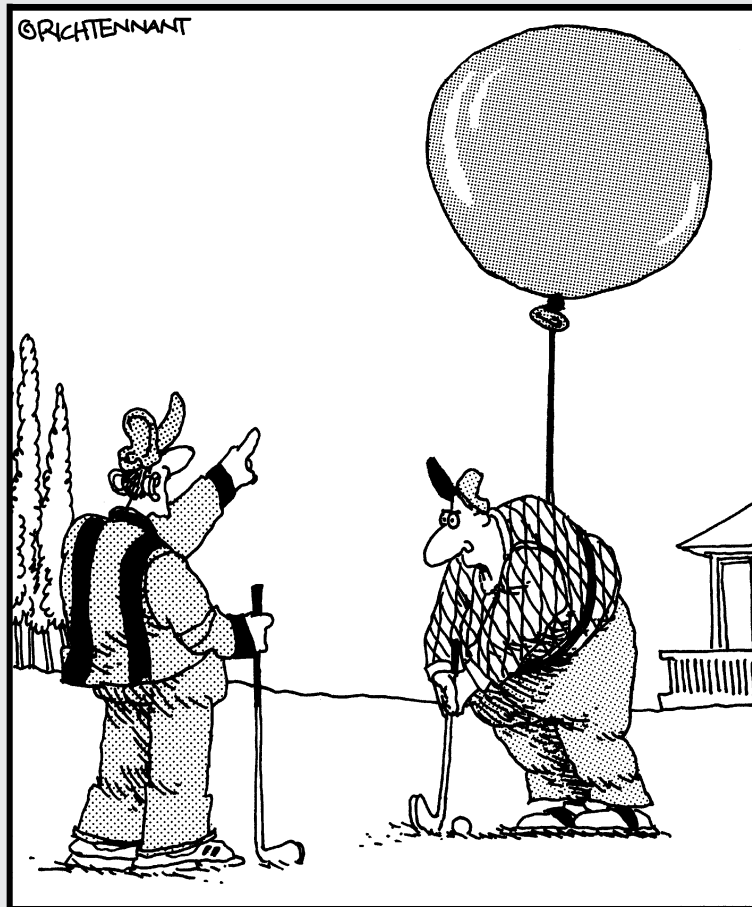
As Frank Chirkinian, my former boss at CBS, said, “Golf is not a game; it’s a way of life. If it was a game, someone would have figured it out by now.”

Frank was right. But you *can* figure out how to get started in golf the right way and enjoy the game. That’s what this book is for.

Part I

Welcome to a Mad Great Game

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant



"What? It helps me with my balance."

In this part . . .

This part explores the basics of golf: Why would anyone play such a crazy game? How did golf begin? What makes the sport special? In this part of the book, I describe a typical golf course. I also show you how to buy clubs and accessories that can help make you look like a pro. I discuss how to get into physical shape for good golf, where to take lessons, and how best to survive the lesson tee. In this part, you get a whirlwind tour, from the driving range all the way up to a full 18-hole course — including the penthouse of golf, the private country club.

Get ready; it's time to tee it up!

Chapter 1

Why Play Golf?

In This Chapter

- ▶ Uncovering golf's history
 - ▶ Answering the question “What makes golf special?”
 - ▶ Looking at a standard golf course
 - ▶ Understanding the benefits of smart play
 - ▶ Taking steps toward being a “real” golfer
-

Golf is simple. You've got clubs and a ball. You have to hit the ball into a series of holes laid out in the middle of a large, grassy field. After you finish the 18th hole, you may want to go to the clubhouse bar and tell lies about your on-course feats to anyone you didn't play with that day. But if you're like most golfers, you play the game for much more than the chance to impress gullible strangers. You play for relaxation, companionship, and a chance to enjoy the great outdoors. Of course, you also encounter some hazards out there. This game is anything but straightforward.

How It All Began: Discovering Golf's Origins

Golf dates back to medieval Scotland, on the gloomy, misty east coast of the kingdom of Fife, where Macbeth ruled in the 11th century. Some historians say golf began when Scottish shepherds used their long, wooden crooks to knock rocks at rabbit holes. Their hobby became so habit-forming that the Scots of later centuries played “gowf” instead of practicing their archery.

The first printed reference to golf came in 1457, when Scotland's King James II banned “gowf” so that his subjects could concentrate on their archery — the better to beat the hated English on the battlefield. Golf was outlawed until 1501. After that, James's descendants, including his great-great-granddaughter Mary, Queen of Scots, embraced the game. (The original golf widow, she scandalized Britain by playing golf in the days after her husband, Lord Darnley, was murdered.)

The wooden golf balls of Queen Mary's day gave way to *featheries* — leather pouches stuffed with goose feathers — and then *guttie balls* made from gutta-percha rubber imported to Scotland from Malaysia in the 1850s. In 1860 one of the best Scottish golfers, Tom Morris of St. Andrews, helped organize the first Open Championship, the tournament that launched modern professional golf. Scottish pros immigrated to the United States, introduced Americans to the game, and the rest is history. And frustration. And fun.

Examining Why Golf Is Unique

You've probably heard that business leaders are constantly making huge deals on the course, advancing their careers. Well, "constantly" may be an overstatement — business leaders, like other players, spend much of their time on the course looking for wayward golf balls. But it's true that golf can help you climb the corporate ladder. That's one reason to play.

And it's about the 167th most-important reason. More-important reasons include spending time with friends, staying in shape, and enjoying some of the most beautiful scenery you'll ever see. (All tennis courts are pretty much the same, but each golf course is different from every other, and many are designed to show off their gorgeous settings.) Golf is a physical *and* mental challenge — it tests your skill and your will.

It's also a game for a lifetime. Your friends may play football and basketball in high school, but how many are still returning kickoffs or grabbing rebounds when they're 30, 40, or 60 years old?

The most important reason to play, though, is that golf is magic. It's maddening, frustrating, crazy — and totally addictive. After it becomes part of your life, you can barely imagine life without it.

Golf is also famously difficult. If it were easy, everyone would play the game. As I see it, two main factors are responsible for that:

- ✔ The ball doesn't move on its own.
- ✔ You have, on average, about three minutes between shots.

In other words, you don't react to the ball as you do in most sports. A baseball gets thrown, hit, and spat on. A football gets passed, tossed, kicked, and run up and down the field. A basketball gets shot, rebounded, and dribbled all over the place. But a golf ball just sits there, daring you not to lose it.

In most sports, you have only an instant to react to the action — your natural athleticism takes over, and you move to the ball. In golf, you get far too long to think about what you're doing. Thinking too much can strangle the soul and warp the mind.