



ENDURANCE

WINNING LIFE'S MAJORS
THE PHIL MICKELSON WAY

David Magee

Endurance

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For my brother

I always believed I was going to win eventually.

—*Phil Mickelson*

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Introduction

As one of the five clubs that founded the United States Golf Association and with the first and oldest clubhouse in the United States (opened in 1892), Shinnecock Hills in Southampton, New York, is America's version of St. Andrews, a links course bathed in beauty and rock-hard difficulty colored most brilliantly by its rich history. Rugged, with its nearly treeless layout and windswept proximity to the nearby Atlantic Ocean and Peconic Bay, Shinnecock Hills stands as a quiet but strong monument of days gone by.

In 2004, however, Shinnecock Hills was a catalyst in canonizing a hero of modern golf. It began the moment Phil Mickelson stepped to the first tee on Thursday for the 104th U.S. Open, receiving a raucous applause from fans in the New York crowd of almost thirty-five thousand, and did not end until the moment he reached the clubhouse after finishing the 18th hole on Sunday.

With each hole played during the four-day event, the

fans' support of Mickelson escalated. By late in the second round, when he surged to the top of the leader board en route to shooting a 4-under-par 66, repeated calls of "PHIL!" and outward passion from the gallery directed toward the left-handed, smiling player reached a frenzied pitch. So boisterous was the crowd with Mickelson that one sportswriter later wrote that he "heard one roar Sunday and figured they had just announced Jonas Salk on the tee." It became obvious to most spectators, television viewers, and leading analysts that something new and interesting in the game of golf was afoot.

Phil Mickelson would finish second to Retief Goosen at the U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills. Despite his valiant play and the adrenaline provided by thousands of screaming and encouraging fans, Mickelson walked off the course of a major for the forty-seventh time in forty-eight tries without the winner's trophy. But the New York tournament was far from a loss for Lefty. Two months before, Mickelson had proven he could win a major with a thrilling victory at the Masters, ending more than a decade of despair in big tournaments. Second place was not so bad this time because it was only a difficult loss, not a continuation of something much larger than the event.

In defeat, his career reached a plateau attained in previous generations only by such golf greats as Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus. Arnie developed an army of followers through his likable ways and is the major reason golf became the game it is today. Nicklaus kept them coming back for more. Sure, Tiger Woods charged up crowds at unseen levels during his major run. Mickelson, even, had experienced

years of growing, unusually vocal fan support as he emerged as one of the game's top young stars, fighting for more than a decade to win a major tournament.

But no golfer of this era had experienced the mass level of support and passion shown to Mickelson in 2004 at America's championship of golf at Shinnecock Hills. The old club crowned a contemporary favorite of the game, and nobody was more gracious and pleased than Phil Mickelson, who smiled, waved, signed autographs, and exalted in the royal treatment, even as Goosen tightly held the winning cup.

Few athletes come along in a lifetime with an ability to capture the spirit and embrace of the majority of sports fans as has Phil Mickelson, for the simple reason that the combination of attributes needed to appeal to most is so rare.

It takes talent, which Mickelson obviously has. As an amateur, he had the best career since Jack Nicklaus, winning youth, collegiate, and amateur tournaments at the highest levels. Mickelson was named to the collegiate All-America team in his first season at Arizona State University, and by the time he turned professional in 1992 he had won such events as the coveted U.S. Amateur. Including a PGA Tour win as an amateur, Mickelson had won twenty-three times on the world's most difficult professional circuit by the end of 2004 and had claimed almost \$30 million in prize money. When fellow players and golf analysts talk about Mickelson's abilities, most are quick to point out that few players in the game possess the skills he has, blending power with finesse and creativity. He can easily drive the ball 300-plus yards or hit a backwards flop shot over his head onto the green if necessary.

Perhaps the best example of Mickelson's talent came during his final event of 2004. Playing in the PGA Grand Slam of Golf, a two-day tournament for champions of the season's majors held annually in Hawaii, he carded his lowest round ever as a professional, posting a 59 to easily win the tournament. Because the event was not officially part of the PGA Tour, it did not count in the record books, but in equaling the lowest-ever competitive rounds of 59 by Al Geiberger, Chip Beck, and David Duval, Mickelson showed he is one of the best players in golf, with an ability to make birdies by the bunches at any given time.

There are other talented players on the PGA Tour fighting to win every week out, however, including the likes of Vijay Singh, Tiger Woods, and Ernie Els. Nobody questions the talent these men possess, yet one has to wonder what gives Mickelson a decided advantage over them with fans when it comes to on-course popularity.

A reasonable assumption is that it takes personality in addition to talent. Mickelson has always got that smile, a wave for the fans, and a willingness to sign autographs. But there are countless players on tour vying for our attention each week who are likable and approachable enough.

No, the athlete who occasionally breaks from the pack as has Mickelson and defines a new era has something more than talent and personality. Those are vital characteristics, but alone they are not enough. To become the most popular player of an era, an athlete must have qualities and style in his or her game that people relate to in their everyday lives, making them feel as if their own struggles are on the line when they are pulling for their favorite.

For Mickelson, his endurance of the game through difficult times and his ongoing battle for so many years to win the big one have uniquely endeared him to fans. People pull for Mickelson because they relate to him. He's fighting the same battles on the course that they are fighting in their lives, every day. Or, as one sportswriter stated, Phil Mickelson is "everybody's brother, son or father."

He's got a little paunch, and usually a goofy grin on his face, but he's got fierce game, and he's always competing, trying to find a way to get on top. The total package makes him the everyman to American sports fans, elevating Mickelson to what golf analyst Johnny Miller said while witnessing the head-turning affection showered on the golfer at Shinnecock Hills is status as the most popular golfer of modern times. How Phil Mickelson reached this pinnacle and what the journey teaches his fans are the cornerstone of this book, the lessons learned from his game and his career that can benefit all in their daily and ongoing struggles to win life's majors.

1



Following Dreams (and Talent)

B Breaking from conventional wisdom with those we teach, work with, and guide in our daily lives is not always the easiest task. It is certainly easier, and seemingly much safer, to play the odds and lead by expecting and demanding that tasks be done as they've always been done. But Phil Mickelson and perhaps, more importantly, his father are testaments that the courage to give natural talent, headstrong commitment, or both a chance to succeed can yield great results.

Less than 5 percent of the golfers in the world play from the left side of the ball despite a left-handed population that is three times that number, and until the success of Mike Weir and most recently Phil Mickelson in the majors, the world's biggest professional golf tournaments were almost never won by lefties. It was an act of faith in talent, then, that Phil Mickelson's father followed his instincts and let his young son swing the golf club from the "wrong" side of the

ball, because the world's most famous left-handed athlete isn't actually left-handed at all. He just plays golf that way.

Born on June 16, 1970, in San Diego, California, Philip Alfred Mickelson writes right-handed, throws a ball right-handed, and eats right-handed. Yet he's one of just seven left-handed players to ever win on the PGA Tour (he owns twenty-three of the thirty-nine wins) and is well known by fans with the nickname "Lefty." How Phil Mickelson began playing as a left-hander dates back to the earliest months of his life.

Mickelson's parents both loved sports. His mother, Mary, was a good basketball player as a young lady at Our Lady of Peace High School in San Diego and is noted by friends and family for her competitive spirit. His father, Phil Mickelson Sr., was a navy and commercial pilot with a single-digit handicap and a ferocious hunger for golf. The Mickelsons already had a child, one-year-old daughter Tina, when Mary Mickelson was pregnant again in 1970. Due to the family's impending growth, Phil and Mary Mickelson went in search of a house to buy. In a new subdivision in San Diego, they found a modest house that had one characteristic that intrigued the couple: the lot was oddly shaped and abnormally larger than others in the neighborhood. They could have found a bigger house, but none for the price had the benefit of such a big yard. With one child already and another on the way, Phil and Mary Mickelson made a calculated bet that a big yard was more important than a house with greater style. The decision would play a significant role in the family's future.

When their first son was born, Phil and Mary sent out

birth announcements to friends and family that stated “the Mickelson *foursome* was now complete” and included a picture of the baby being posed on the nose of an airplane. When Mickelson was three months old, he got his first golf club, as a gift. The idea of giving such a tiny baby a golf club goes against the natural tendencies of many parents. It might be fitting, perhaps, for Peyton Manning to lay a football in the crib beside a newborn son, but Phil Mickelson Sr., pilot, giving his infant child a golf club?

Learning Is Observing

Whatever he was thinking, it worked. Just more than a year later, an eighteen-month-old Mickelson would join his father in the big yard of the family’s San Diego home for a little practice time. Just call it an apprenticeship in the extreme degree: father swinging, child watching, child imitating. All the lessons from professionals given years down the road could never duplicate or replace what occurred in Mickelson’s oddly shaped backyard with father teaching eager-to-learn son.

For a good view and also for safety reasons, Mickelson would stand adjacent to his father, carefully watching his smooth, right-handed swing. Mickelson began to grip his own club and take it back and swing, just as his father did. Mirroring his father made Mickelson’s swing left-handed, however.

“He would stand in front of me,” Phil Mickelson Sr. said, “and draw back the club, like a left-hander, and hit it with the back of the club. He hit the ball awfully good.”

Since Mickelson's club was right-handed and the child appeared to be right-handed in everything else he did, his father tried setting him up in his footsteps, on the right side of the ball, so he could strike it properly. But just before swinging, the toddler would turn around, regrip the club, and take a big swing from the left side of the ball. Mickelson's club was a homemade, cut-down junior 3-wood.

"He was watching me swing right-handed," Mickelson's father recalls. "He was hitting the way he saw me hit it. It was a right-handed club, so I kept turning him around, and he kept turning back to left-handed."

It's long been known that children learn from their parents both good and bad by observing their actions, but it often does not hit home with full clarity. Nobody illustrates this clearer than Mickelson and his father, though, serving as a powerful reminder that even the smallest of children are acutely aware of what their parents do and how they do it. By emulating his father, Mickelson created his own swing, albeit backward. It was just like his father, but in mirror image reverse. When his father tried showing him the "right" way to swing the club, it appeared wrong and the young Mickelson would have nothing of it.

Left Is Right for Some

This is the point in an unconventional situation when many parents, coaches, or business managers would throw in the towel and demand a switch to the more conventional side of getting things done. The clubhead was taking a beating as the youngster continually smacked the ball on the back of the

face. Why let the child ruin his club when he could just force him to hit from the same side of the ball used by almost everyone else in the world? His father, though, shaped the clubhead so his son could continue playing left-handed and never again tried to turn him into a right-handed golfer.

“Remarkably,” Phil Mickelson Sr. said, “he seemed comfortable and he wasn’t swinging that badly, so I decided I’d just change the golf club rather than the swing.”

Letting his son swing left-handed, when the vast majority of golfers in the world are right-handed and his son was naturally right-handed as well, was a fortuitous decision for the elder Mickelson. By allowing him to follow his natural instinct, Phil Mickelson Sr. unleashed a passion for the game of golf in his young son.

With a toddler’s blond hair and smiling disposition, Mickelson carried his patchwork club, held together with electrical tape, around with him just like other children his age carry around a favorite toy or a security blanket. And he used it at every opportunity. Mickelson’s father placed a golf cup in a hole in the ground in the family’s large backyard and cut the grass around it down short so it resembled a green. He made a tee box so his children could hit balls to the target. The toddler followed his father around with his golf club constantly, so much so that the grass was worn to the dirt. As Mickelson’s motor skills developed, his golf swing evolved at the same time, resulting in a natural and balanced stroke for the youngster.

The father’s passion for the game rubbed off on his son at an age when most children his age had not moved beyond blankets, blocks, and large, soft round balls. When pictured

in a family photo at age two, Mickelson is dressed up in knee socks, black shorts, and a double-buttoned, candy-striped white sweater, but in his left hand is a golf ball and in his right hand is his favorite golf club.

“That club,” Phil Mickelson Sr. said, “went with him everywhere he went. It was like his teddy bear. As long as it was next to him, he was ready to go to sleep.”

Mickelson’s father not only gave in to his son’s left-handed golf tendency, but he also fueled his desire by providing him tools to practice his favorite trade. By the time Phil Jr. was three, his father had handcrafted him a small set of sawed-off left-handed golf clubs. With his own bag, the youngster was eager to go where his father went on the weekends, beyond the small thirty-five-yard hole in his yard to a real golf course with full-size holes. When told no, he and a friend ran away from home, in search of a golf course. Mickelson had his favorite club in hand.

“He’d ask the neighbors for directions,” his father said, “and they kept directing him to turn right. He kept following their directions, and, of course, he ended up back in front of the house.”

Instead of getting mad and punishing his wandering way, Mickelson’s father realized his son had an unusual hunger for golf and that it was his passion and likely his talent. He was trying to push outside his boundaries because it was his natural desire. It was not a matter of escaping boundaries as much as it was an innate desire to explore new and natural ones.

His young son’s point was made, and his father realized that the three-year-old was serious about getting onto a golf

course. Among his first exposures was a round at a par-3 course, San Diego's Presidio Hills. Mickelson's father kept his son's score on a scorecard the family still has. The score was 144. It was obvious, even at age three, that Mickelson had an unusual talent. His father saw that his hand-eye coordination allowed him to strike the ball better than many beginning adults. The fact that he addressed the ball from the left side only meant that, for him, he was playing the right way.

His father supported his son's desire to play the game at every opportunity. Because his father retired as a navy pilot due to a back injury and served as a commercial pilot during his son's childhood, he worked the typical pilot schedule of a couple of days on, several days off, allowing him more time to spend on the course with his son.

"The greatest thing about my father's job," Mickelson said, "was that, if he was home for three or four days, it was for the entire three or four days. The most enjoyable times I've had playing golf have been those hours we spent together. He'd pick me up right after school. We used to go to a local municipal course, Balboa. After about fourteen, fifteen holes, it would be too dark to play. In pitch black sometimes, we'd have to walk all the way from the far end of the course through the canyons to the car. Those walks are my fondest memories in the game."

Where You Want to Be Is Where You Belong

Most fathers are not eager to take a toddler along as one of an afternoon foursome of weekend golf, but at age three and

a half, Phil Mickelson was taken along as part of a foursome to a full-length public course in San Diego. Including his father, his grandfather, and a family friend, the group had a tee time for the 18-hole course at San Diego's Balboa Park, which also has a 9-hole course. When the foursome reached the starter before teeing off, he gave them a puzzled look. Apparently, the starter was not sure that a three-year-old belonged on the 18-hole course. In most cases he would probably be right. What he did not know is that the boy's father had been resisting, assuming the very same thing. When the child showed through his actions that he was ready, though, there was nothing else to do but let the boy on the course.

The starter strongly suggested the foursome try the shorter, 9-hole course. The three men and one small boy pleaded. The starter relented, sending Phil Mickelson and his bag of sawed-off golf clubs on his way to his first full round of golf.

"He was at that age when he could walk well," his father recalled, "but he was running awkwardly. He'd hit the ball and then run after it and hit it again. He didn't slow us down at all."

Several hours after beginning the round, the foursome reached the 18th hole. Looking uphill at the finishing hole, Mickelson asked the others if it was their last to play. Assuming he was tired and not wanting to walk up the hill, the men assured Mickelson it was their last. Instead, the youngster cried, not because of the difficult walk ahead, but because he did not want his real round of golf to end.

Not one to tire from activity, Mickelson was said to be so

rambunctious as a child that his parents made him “wear a football helmet around the house because he kept running into the edges of the furniture.”

“I remember wearing it and somebody asked my mom, ‘Why is he wearing that?’” Mickelson said. “I come running around the corner, bang, right into the corner, fall down. He said, ‘Oh, I get it.’”

The golf success was only the beginning for Mickelson, though, as he began playing during every free moment he had. His home was near Presidio Hills, a “pitch and putt” par-3 layout that is the second-oldest course in the San Diego area. In “old town” and with a historical adobe building as its clubhouse, the course, built in 1928, became a “home away from home” for Phil Mickelson. It was at Presidio Hills that Mickelson claimed his first-ever golf victory, winning the Harry McCarthy Putting Contest at age five. The other golfers he beat were as old as thirteen, but Mickelson was not intimidated by the competition.

Also at age five, Mickelson and his six-year-old sister, Tina, won second-place trophies in their age groups in a Pee Wee International event. Already telling his family he wanted to be a golfer when he grew up and never considering the remote odds of making it as a professional, Mickelson played Presidio Hills so aggressively that by the time he was seven, his first score, 144, had been cut in half. To keep the par-3 course interesting, Mickelson would “redesign” the course when nobody was around. For instance, he would hit from the fourth tee to the seventh green or put himself behind a tree or in a bunker to simulate difficult conditions.

Already a fan of professional golf, Mickelson would watch

Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus on television, then pretend at Presidio Hills he was playing in big tournaments against the best in the world. Approaching the 18th green, for example, he might imagine he was paired with Nicklaus, who already had a shot close to the pin. Mickelson knew he had to get inside of Nicklaus to win. He would take dead aim at the pin, often enough getting inside of Nicklaus's imaginary ball. At other times he just played the course trying to better his previous best effort. In 1977, seven-year-old Mickelson made his first birdie (on the Presidio Hills 18th) and broke 70 for the first time.

"My parents used to drop me off there every day around eight in the morning and pick me up around six or seven that night," Mickelson said. "I loved it, I just loved it."

Simply being on the golf course was as natural for pre-teen Mickelson as playing cowboys and Indians or doll house was for other boys and girls. He was as close to being born with a club in his hand as is possible, and he could see it was a game that his father loved. His backyard was a golf hole, and his life, even at a young age, was becoming centered on golf. Mickelson obviously felt a kinship with his clubs and golf courses, and the appeal of the game came naturally to him.

The Benefits of Closeness

American corporations rarely refer to their workers as family anymore, because the term is far too endearing and attachable. The father figure is out; the colder, more professional mentor is in. People, however, learn better and

faster when advice and instruction are coming from someone they deeply respect, if not love. For Phil Mickelson, it was certainly a difference-maker, learning his first lessons in golf from his father and practicing and playing the game with his entire family.

With three children, including Tina, Phil, and younger brother Tim, the Mickelsons were a typical 1970s American family, living in the suburbs in a middle-class home. Phil Sr. had a military background, but his long, bushy hair was relative to the times, as was his mod dress. Five-foot-seven Mary was active in her children's lives, taking a hands-on role in school and sports. The family was tightly knit and active in many areas, both individually and together.

Today, for example, Phil Sr. claims to have retired "two or three times," including stints as a navy and commercial pilot. Currently, he is promoting a periscope product through the Mickelson Group that helps fans in golf galleries keep an eye on the action. Mary Mickelson, sixty-two, began playing in a San Diego women's basketball league ten years ago, and her team, the San Diego Stars, has won two gold medals in the Senior Olympics. She has a personal trainer and walks thirty-five miles a week to stay in competitive shape. Older sister Tina, known to be fiercely defensive of Phil in public, is a Class A PGA golf pro and an analyst for the Golf Channel, while younger brother Tim is the golf coach at the University of San Diego.

The entire family has always loved golf, but none more than Phil. Growing up, he did not limit his sports to the links, however. Mickelson played multiple sports through his middle school years (football, basketball, baseball, and

soccer) and was an all-star in youth baseball. Mickelson was a right-handed pitcher known for his accuracy, but standing at the plate, he clutched his bat just as he clutches his golf clubs, from the left.

Golf, though, suited Mickelson best because the result is based solely on him, not a team, and he continued to focus most of his free time on competing, practicing, and improving his game. After entering his first tournament at age six, Mickelson played in more than fifty events by the time he was nine, but did not win any. San Diego, with its year-round golf weather, was developing a strong group of junior players. The junior competition was stiff, probably more than anywhere else in the country. Even though he was not winning, Mickelson continued to work on his game and play competitively.

As a nine-year-old, he got a job working at a San Diego course named Navajo Canyon. Mickelson's duties included odd jobs such as picking up trash and cleaning the parking lot, but the perk was unlimited range balls and no greens fees. Mickelson's father came home from a trip when Mickelson was ten and joined him at Navajo Canyon for a round of golf. Mickelson shot 73, his father shot 81. It was the first time Phil Sr. had ever lost to his son. At home that evening, when the conversation had not turned to the day's golf events, Mickelson hinted to his father to share the breaking news.

"Aren't you going to tell her?" Mickelson said to his father.

He was not the type of person to brag about besting his father, but he wanted to share his enthusiasm for doing so with his mom. The family enjoyed competition among

each other, using it as a means of spending quality time together. But they also enjoyed winning, and besting his father was a milestone. It would be the first of many to come in the next year.

The Thrill of Competition

The mark of exceptional athletes or business leaders is that they truly enjoy the act of competition. They seek to turn any activity into a game of winners and losers and work hard to try to put themselves on top. For Phil Mickelson, it became apparent in his youth that competing was a passion, not just in golf, but in just about anything he did. He found gratification in competing against his father and friends on the course, but he also found gratification in competing against others, even his sister, in any activity that could be turned into a contest.

Mickelson and his sister would hit tennis balls against a garage door, keeping track of who had more returns, or race around an obstacle course set up in their yard by their father. They would play video games at home, and the young Mickelson would keep track of everyone in the family's score on a pad near the television, announcing to all who had the highest average. They would see who could do the most calisthenics in a given time.

"Anything physical like push-ups or sit-ups or diving contests at the neighborhood pool, I'd win," Tina Mickelson said. "Phil didn't like that, but he wasn't a sore loser. He just wouldn't leave until he'd mastered something or was champion of the house."

Golf, of course, is one contest that is impossible to master, so it is easy to see why the game held such allure for Mickelson, even at a very early age. You can beat opponents but still feel as though you've lost to the game. Or you can play the course by yourself and get different results every time out. The one thing you can never do is master it to the point that it no longer has interest.

It can be the most difficult game in the world, and that, no doubt, is why young Phil Mickelson kept going back for more. Beating his father was gratifying, but it did not mean mastery of the game; far from it, in fact. That was one round on one day on one course, and even at that he had left probably five, eight, maybe ten strokes on the course that could have been eliminated. Focusing more attention on another sport when so much potential competition existed in golf just did not make sense for Mickelson.

Practice Makes Perfect

A trademark of Phil Mickelson's professional golf game is the finesse and creativity he displays around some of the toughest greens in the world. How his short game got so good is not by accident, nor is it related purely to talent given at birth. Mickelson's short game first developed in his backyard, following hundreds and hundreds of hours of practice to perfect the most difficult elements of an almost impossible game.

His dad had retired from commercial flying in 1980, citing health reasons, and with extra time spent more time practicing and playing golf with his son. He also had time to make the family's makeshift, backyard practice green into

something more permanent. It took more than two years to perfect, but Phil Mickelson Sr. built a green to professional specifications, complete with a sand trap. The true green gave young Mickelson a place to continually practice his short game, and the work quickly paid off.

As an eleven-year-old, the left-handed Mickelson played on the 1981 San Diego Junior Golf Circuit and was a force. He won four events and had runner-up finishes in seven others, establishing himself as one of the top young golfers in Southern California. Even though he still played other sports, Mickelson was consumed by golf in middle school. San Diego's year-round, playable weather allowed Mickelson to work on his game 365 days a year. If friends wanted to find him outside of school, they knew to look at his favorite golf courses. If he was at home, he was likely in the backyard, working on his short game on the family golf green. Even in the classroom, the golf geek did not move far away from his passion. The only way his parents could get his attention was to banish him from the golf course for a day.

When doing a sixth-grade science project, he chose for his subject a test designed to determine which compression of golf balls worked best for junior golfers. Compression is designed to match the feel of the ball to the golfer's preference. Compression ratings are usually 80, 90, or 100. The higher the compression, the harder the ball feels at impact. Compression, however, does not determine distance. In his science experiment, Mickelson enlisted the help of some sixth-grade friends and wrote a letter to Titleist, which donated balls with compression ratings of 80, 90, and 100 for study. The project earned Mickelson a second-place award.

Recognizing their son's talent and his desire to improve his play, Phil Mickelson's parents gave the fourteen-year-old for his eighth-grade graduation present a week at a *Golf Digest* school held in the San Diego area. One of the instructors was a former professional golfer named Dean Reinmuth. Originally from Naperville, Illinois, Reinmuth grew up with golf. He was first a caddie at Naperville Country Club but worked his way up from the grounds crew to the bag room before reaching the pro shop as an assistant pro. After a successful college golf career, Reinmuth toured professionally in different areas of the world for eight years, but settled in San Diego in 1981 when he opened the Dean Reinmuth School of Golf at Carlton Oaks Country Club.

Reinmuth had immediate success as an instructor, working with a couple of top-ranked junior players in the San Diego area. When he met Mickelson and saw him play at the *Golf Digest* school, Reinmuth convinced him to join his growing list of students. Their working relationship would last for thirteen years, but the work Reinmuth did with Mickelson in his early years helped him launch an amateur career that would be the best the American golfing world had seen since Jack Nicklaus.

Commitment Equals Success

It is easy to get annoyed with people who can't quit doing or talking about the one thing they love the most. Even if it is your children or your star employee, you get sick of it and wish they'd find a few more things to worry about. But when their obsession links to true talent, Phil Mickelson is

proof that letting one develop his or her strengths and passion to the fullest extent is often quite productive.

His parents certainly worried that their child was out of touch with reality in terms of making it as a professional golfer, but when the teenager said with confidence that he wanted to play for a living, they gave him support in return, albeit with an occasional lesson that life does not always work out as we plan, particularly in the world of professional sports.

To foster the dream, the Mickelsons wanted to get their son as much national exposure as possible on the junior circuit. His mother, Mary, took an extra job, working at a nearby retirement center, so they could afford to send their son to top tournaments. Mickelson was appreciative, saying publicly at every opportunity how much he appreciated her commitment. For high school, Mickelson attended a respected, coed San Diego Catholic school. Founded in 1957 and known in the area as simply “Uni,” the University of San Diego High School overlooks San Diego Bay to the west and Mission Valley to the south. Mickelson is remembered as a personable student who had a positive disposition and desire to excel.

Mickelson’s high school class picture reveals a smiling, pretty-boy face, a short haircut, and a gold chain around his neck. Not known for stylish dress, Mickelson was clean-cut, and not a high school partier type, since he did not drink or smoke, focusing his excess time instead on improving his golf game. So obsessed with golf was Mickelson in high school that his mom suggested he take a music appreciation class to “become more well-rounded than just all focused on golf.” He took the class, but she recalls one night helping

him with a music appreciation class quiz and “realized he was memorizing great composers by comparing their music tempo to the tempo of the golf swing for different clubs” and that he “associated every classic artist with a golf club.

“I would give him a composer,” Mary Mickelson said, “say, Mozart, Chopin, or Beethoven and he would then come back and say that was like a punch 9-iron—all depending on the tempo of the classical music.”

Mickelson was so committed to golf that he gave up playing other sports, despite his love for them. He spent little time chasing girls and was not known for mischief, unless it involved golf. Once, he was sent to his room for not doing a chore ordered by his parents. When they later went to his room, he was not there. But they knew where to find him—playing at a nearby course. It’s all Mickelson wanted to do.

After school, he would walk to the San Diego course Stardust, playing and practicing until his mother picked him up at dark. He played all the good San Diego area courses, including Torrey Pines in La Jolla, where his high school team frequently held matches, taking advantage of the region’s diversified golf offerings but leaving little time for much else. On the course, he would imagine himself playing against the great professionals of the game just as he had done as a preteen, challenging them shot by shot, hole by hole. Even as a budding young prep star, it was not classmates or area studs Mickelson envisioned himself beating. Instead, he envisioned dueling down the stretch against the likes of Palmer and Nicklaus.

Stardust was transformed in his mind into Augusta and Pebble Beach, and rounds played on weekdays as darkness

neared might as well have been a Sunday in the U.S. Open with the afternoon sun still burning bright as he charged down the final holes seeking birdies that would lead to a come-from-behind victory.

“We were so worried about Philip’s direction,” his mother said, “that we looked into taking a Dobbins class on his behavior.”

Eventually, they figured out that Mickelson was simply unique. It may have been unusual for a youngster to have such a focused and lofty goal, but Mickelson clearly did, and even as a young man, he was committed wholeheartedly to making his aspirations come true.

The Difference-Maker: Confidence

Having all the talent in the world means little if you don’t have the confidence to believe you can perform above the level of your competitors. Whether on playing fields, on the first day of a new job, or in boardrooms, an ultimate secret to success when you have the talent and you’ve worked hard to prepare is believing you are better than those around you.

For Phil Mickelson, it was the ingredient that helped his junior golf career take off. With a flipped-up shirt collar, a supremely confident air, and a talkative, disarming demeanor, Mickelson drew attention to himself and his game on the junior circuit. He liked to play with flair, enjoying a crowd and eager to display an ability to pull off unique and difficult shots. Often he charged at the green from behind a tree. At other times he made seemingly miraculous shots around the green in the heat of competition. In one major junior

tournament, for instance, Mickelson seemed out of contention on the last hole because he was a shot out of the lead for a playoff and had missed the green. His shot looked impossible, but Mickelson had lots of practice around the green, particularly in his backyard. He hit what has become a patented flop shot that landed short of the hole before trickling down into the cup. Mickelson, displaying a sheepish smile, walked up to the green as 150 or so players and fans cheered.

His reputation for displaying his “aw-shucks” grin when making head-turning shots was already well established, as was a reputation for playing the game like his hero Arnold Palmer, with an attacking, all-out style. On the course, Mickelson was confident, with more than a hint of cockiness. Off the course, he countered with outspoken appreciation of others. Mickelson became well known on the junior circuit for famous victory speeches in which he would ramble on and on, giving thanks to his mother for taking a second job so he could play and to everyone from groundskeepers to concession operators to fellow players.

Robert Hartman wrote in “Masters of the Millennium” that a Mickelson speech would often develop like a mosaic of thoughts: I want to thank the greens superintendent for having the course in great shape. I want to thank my mom for getting a second job and allowing me the opportunity to play in more tournaments. I want to thank Mr. Gray for giving me a ride to the course all week. Thanks to the tournament staff, everything went smooth, tee times . . . Mr. Batten for the beautiful scoreboard. Oh, and I want to thank the waitress at Confetti’s for giving me an extra scoop of choco-

late mint. Thanks to Horseshoe Bend for the nice range balls. To Mr. Rick Bannerot at Rolex, thanks for sponsoring a great event. Chris Haack, thanks for the advice. Mickelson was so nice to fellow players, in fact, that many wondered during similar statements directed toward them what game Mickelson was playing, thanking everyone and smiling all while beating them into the ground with behind-the-tree pars and big-drive birdies.

Mickelson's on-course results as a junior golfer were staggering. His first American Junior Golf Association Tournament win came at age fourteen in the Lake Tahoe Memorial (by five strokes) and he would win eleven other AJGA events, a record that still stands. Mickelson also won sixteen San Diego junior events, shot a 9-hole course record at Balboa Country Club, and qualified as a high school junior for the San Diego and Los Angeles Opens. So prominent was Mickelson that he was chosen three consecutive years as Rolex National Player of the Year, a record that still stands.

During Mickelson's senior year in high school, the University of San Diego High School golf team was ranked sixth in the area and scheduled to compete in the California Interscholastic Federation–San Diego Section team championships. Unfortunately, the sectional play was scheduled the same day as U.S. Open local qualifying. Mickelson did not want to abandon his team, but he also believed he had a chance of qualifying for the U.S. Open. He did not want to make the decision, putting it to his teammates instead. They voted that the U.S. Open qualifying event was more important for Mickelson's budding golf career. Mickelson played the qualifying event and was replaced on the school team

by a Uni freshman golfer—Scott Peterson (of Laci Peterson notoriety).

Despite saying in his younger years that he wanted to play golf instead of going to college, Mickelson pronounced to his mother as a teenager that he did want to attend college after all to study business. The idea was that if he was going to make a lot of money playing golf, he needed to be smart enough to know what to do with it. As the nation's top recruit, Mickelson could have chosen to attend college and play golf at any university in America with a golf program during his senior year. The top program in the nation at the time, however, was Arizona State University. Located in the metropolitan Phoenix area that, like San Diego, is laden with golf courses, ASU had the coach many considered to be one of the best in the college game and was located in a golf-centered region.

Steve Loy coached golf at Scottsdale (Arizona) Community College and the University of Arkansas before going to Arizona State, where he had one of the top programs in golf before the arrival of Phil Mickelson. Loy coached future PGA professional Billy Mayfair, and Mayfair developed a friendship with Mickelson, making it clear that Loy and ASU were the right choices for a collegiate career. Mayfair was the best college player in the nation at the time, and the genuine interest he showed in Mickelson made a difference. At Arizona State, Mickelson could follow in Mayfair's footsteps, benefit from weather that, like San Diego, was nearly perfect for golf, and be tutored by a proven coach. Mickelson's parents liked Loy and ASU as well, and Mickelson signed with the Sun Devils, beginning college in 1988.

“Steve,” Mary Mickelson told the coach, “Philip will really do anything you want him to do; it just depends on how you ask him.”

On to Arizona State Mickelson went, taking along talent, commitment, and the confidence to win big at the collegiate level.

TAKEAWAYS



1 Conventional wisdom is not always best. When unusual talent and desire exist, playing the odds does not always make the most sense. Be open-minded about letting others do things differently.

2 People learn best from those they trust and respect. Finding someone to teach is easy; finding the right person to teach is not. Those who are most effective command the trust and respect of pupils.

3 Practice makes perfect. Perfection in life, as in golf, is impossible, but it's the aspiration and ethic of continual improvement that create separation from others in the same field.

4 Confidence is a competitive edge. In all aspects of life, talented people are fighting to win. The ultimate edge is believing you can beat them all.

2



Beating the Pros

Being the person whom everyone relies on and expects to deliver big has its perks, but the territory also comes with a pressure that can be crippling to some people. The best way to deal with the pressure when you've got the talent, the work ethic, and the confidence to succeed is to face the reality that there are always areas to improve.

When Phil Mickelson first arrived at Arizona State, he had arguably the best golf game of any eighteen-year-old in America. But he was a teenager. Not only did his golf game have room to grow, but also his life outside of golf was really just beginning. As a student at Arizona State beginning in 1988, Phil Mickelson was not the picture of a street-savvy college lad off the golf course. His life during his first eighteen years had been structured around golf, from his first swings with a homemade club as a toddler to the thousands of hours spent on courses as a high school senior. His game was golf, and largely, his life was golf.

Mickelson was not a rich, country club-bred, golf club-swinging Pac-10 frat brat. A gangly young man driving around a tiny Honda CVC hatchback, he arrived on the Tempe campus wearing what one former teammate characterized as green polyester pants with his shirt collar turned up and was a guy who “really did not know how to dress.”

“Golf was his whole deal,” said former ASU teammate Jim Strickland of Seattle. “As far as fashion sense, he didn’t have any. He slowly learned if he was going to get any attention from the girls at Arizona State, he couldn’t wear green polyester.”

Besides the dress factor, ASU was the right match for Mickelson from the start, particularly when it came to golf. Steve Loy was experienced with talented golfers, having coached All-American Billy Mayfair, who completed his collegiate eligibility the year before Mickelson arrived. But it likely did not take Loy long to recognize that Mickelson was a talent with even more potential. For Mickelson, the Phoenix area was just like San Diego, if not better. A paradise with dozens of top-notch courses in the area and more being built by the month, metropolitan Phoenix was upscale golf before the game’s national boom in the 1990s.

One of the newer Phoenix area courses was the Pete Dye–designed Karsten Course at Arizona State University in Tempe. A top architect of golf courses, Dye agreed to design the course for ASU during Mickelson’s recruitment, and it no doubt was a luring and intriguing factor, the concept of having a superior course located literally in the shadows of Sun Devil Stadium.

The 7,026-yard Scottish links course, which opened in

1989, is a tight layout dotted with “the usual Dye trappings . . . modern mounding, water hazards with railroad tie bulkheads and pot bunkers galore.” Perfect for challenging a developing star with its shot-making requirements, the course was a regular hangout for Mickelson and just the right setting for one always seeking the thrill of a challenge.

Reach for New Heights

As the number one junior player in the country who had worked hard for years to attain that status, Phil Mickelson understandably could have arrived at Arizona State University and headed straight for a beer, or twenty. He had achieved enough, earning a full college scholarship and a house full of trophies, that resting on his golf laurels while focusing more time on the wilder side of college could have made sense. Isn't that what many college students do? Take advantage of pure freedom for the first time and expand their experience repertoire by moving farther away from areas they've committed to and worked in during high school?

This is one way Mickelson was different from the rest of the pack. If anything, he had pushed the limits already in high school, dropping interests in other areas to get more time on the links. He pushed like a rebellious child for more time on the course until his parents gave in, realizing it was a true passion of his life. When other high school students pushed the limits in seeing how much they could drink or how late they could stay out, Mickelson was trying to see how many holes of golf he could get away with playing in a week.

By the time Mickelson went to Arizona State, he was not looking for an outlet away from the hard work. He approached his first months in college as if all his previous work had only been a precursor to the job that really mattered.

As it is for many, college was a defining period for Phil Mickelson, but for him, the learning curve on the course was unusually short compared to what others experience because his goals were so lofty. The pressure on the top national recruit could have doomed his career, as it does for so many blue-chip athletes who arrive on college campuses to play a sport, only to disintegrate into mediocrity with no interests and habits. If anything, though, Mickelson's landing in the perfect situation and his desire to excel at only the highest level allowed his game to rapidly escalate to never-before-seen levels in the collegiate game.

As a nondrinking, nonsmoking college student who never experimented with recreational drugs, Mickelson poured his free time into practicing and playing golf, just as he had in high school. "I have never in my life tried or even seen a recreational drug, as people call them," Mickelson said, "because I know what it does physically to your brain and body and how it affects you in both the short-term and long-term. I've made a choice based on the knowledge I've been given not to do them, because I don't want to do that to myself."

Like other college students, what Mickelson lacked in youthful savvy developed slowly but naturally as he matured in the large-university experience. Boasting the leading golf program in the nation at the time, Arizona State was a

natural fit for Mickelson. As a junior golfer, he could not have been nicer to fellow players and had a reputation as a decent guy, but outside of San Diego, he had this “California kid” image that no matter how nice he was, others could be at times leery. At ASU, however, the unequaled talent, the California coolness, and the easy smile blended well with the attitude and expectations of a championship program in the heart of a discerning golf and sports community. Also, with sports teams such as the NBA’s Suns, the NFL’s Cardinals, and a PGA Tour stop in the Phoenix area, sports fanatic Mickelson found a cozy feel with a big-time atmosphere that suited his tastes.

Majoring in psychology, not business, Mickelson took full class loads in the fall and spring semesters despite a heavy competition load all over the country. (He never attended summer school and still managed to graduate in four years.) In psychology classes Mickelson was outspoken, regularly sharing personal philosophies of how the mind works in golf with fellow class members. It was the perfect major for him, considering his mind is always exploring, seeking to gain an edge with information or insight. The best golfers, he knew, did not always win, just as the smartest people did not always get ahead in life. The psychology of matters had as much to do with success and fate of people as did talent and commitment. In class, he explored an angle of this, talking openly about the mental advantages people can gain through their perception, often relating it to his golf game.

On the course, Mickelson showed that the pressure of following in the footsteps of Mayfair at the top program as the number one recruit was a nonfactor. If anything, the

pressure was a direct reflection of what he had worked so hard to achieve as a young boy practicing at all hours.

Nicknamed the “Roman” by college teammates (his mother is of Italian descent), Mickelson had long been committed to being one of the game’s best players, and the attention given him at ASU was merely validation that he had been working in the right direction. All Mickelson needed was a stage. After eighteen years of practice, he was ready to perform and never believed he was to do anything but win.

As a six-foot-two lanky freshman who preferred to play the course with no hat and hair combed back, Phil Mickelson earned a top five finish in his very first collegiate tournament, the Louisiana State Invitational, held in Baton Rouge in September 1988—just one month after the eighteen-year-old arrived on campus to begin class. He was not thrilled, however.

“Our first tournament was against LSU and Phil, in his first college event, finished third,” Strickland recalled. “I went up and congratulated him. I thought he would have been happy he was third. You could see he was very disappointed. That was his mentality. He wasn’t there to fit in, to finish in the top five. He was always about winning. It’s always been that way.”

In all, Mickelson entered fourteen events during his freshman year, finishing in the top ten in all but four and winning three, including, most notably, the NCAA individual championship. Played at Oak Tree Golf Club in Edmond, Oklahoma, the NCAA championship was the moment Lefty showed the golf world his unique commitment to the game

as well as his flair for winning and competing with unusual style. He was the P. T. Barnum of amateur golf, part business, part entertainment—both intended to deliver big results.

While he was practicing on the range before the start of the tournament, heavy rain began to fall. The collegiate players headed for cover—all except Mickelson. As the steady rain fell, Mickelson proceeded to hit shot after shot, playing an entire round on the Oak Tree course in his mind. When a passerby inquired what in the world Mickelson thought he was doing, getting soaked in the rain before such a big tournament, he matter-of-factly proclaimed, “I just made the turn, and I’m three under.”

Mickelson had won two times during his freshman year, claiming the Fresno State Classic and the Forest Hills Invitational in back-to-back fashion near the end of the campaign. But in the season’s ending events, the Pac-10 championship and the NCAA West Regional, he had finished fourteenth and seventh, respectively. For a freshman competing at the highest level of collegiate golf, these were impressive finishes. For the ultracompetitive Mickelson, however, they were not what he wished for, and the NCAA championship was an opportunity to end in grand style. So when it rained, he merely did what he had done since the earliest months of his life: practice.

With a four-day total of 7-under-par 281, Mickelson became on the Oklahoma course one of just five players to ever win the NCAA championship as a freshman, joining a prestigious list that included Curtis Strange (Wake Forest, 1974) and Ben Crenshaw (Texas, 1971).

The win helped lead Arizona State and Steve Loy to a

first-ever team NCAA golf championship. It also earned Mickelson a spot on the collegiate golf All-American team in 1989 and a position on the Walker Cup amateur squad. The years of hard work were paying off, allowing Mickelson to quickly achieve the loftiest of goals early in his career.

The Heat of Competition Leaves Friends Out in the Cold

A lesson that everyone must learn at one time or another is that the more serious the competition and the stakes, the less that friendship and friendly courtesy come into play. If you are playing to win and those around you know it, you must always remember that nobody is going to cut you any slack, not even your best friends, but you have to remain professional.

The first time Phil Mickelson learned the hard way that as a top competitor on the golf course, what he said and did, even in jest, could always be held against him, was during the 1989 Walker Cup. A spirited, historical match between the best amateur players in the United States against the best amateur players from Great Britain and Ireland, the Walker Cup was held in Ireland the year Mickelson played. In his first international experience, the wisecracking Mickelson dropped an unflattering sexist joke during his round that caused a brief stir in the European press. After his round, Mickelson was shown by a TV reporter a replay of him hitting his ball into the rough. In response, he cracked the joke.

“That’s not the place I want to be. The Irish women are not that attractive,” Mickelson said.

The backlash, although brief, was painful for Mickelson and a valuable learning lesson about opening his mouth with unflattering remarks with fans and the media. In response, he would later take actual media training, learning how to be a gracious golf star in the tradition of hero Arnold Palmer.

The remark did not, however, damage a spectacular first year of college golf for Mickelson. Reaching what for many would be a lifetime pinnacle as a freshman in college could have caused Mickelson to drift into the pitied sophomore slump, but he actually worked harder, taking his game to an even higher level in his second season at Arizona State. Winning his first tournament of the season, the U.S./Japan Intercollegiate, Mickelson put together an incredible campaign, averaging 70.82 strokes per round in fourteen appearances. As the season came to a close, he won the Pac-10 championship this time, and repeated as NCAA champion, becoming at the time only the second player since Ben Crenshaw to repeat after winning as a freshman.

But that was only the beginning for twenty-year-old Phil Mickelson. Given a sponsor's exemption to play without qualifying in the PGA Tucson Open, Mickelson finished nineteenth. His highlight, though, came late in the summer of 1990. World history saw Nelson Mandela freed from prison and U.S. troops deployed to the Middle East for the first time when Iraq abruptly invaded Kuwait. Golf history was made when Phil Mickelson became only the second player since Jack Nicklaus to win both the NCAA championship and the U.S. Amateur in the same year.

"After Jack Nicklaus, Phil had the greatest amateur career until Tiger [Woods]," said former Mickelson golf instructor

Dean Reinmuth, who continued coaching the young star after his arrival at Arizona State.

Played at Cherry Hills Country Club in Denver, Colorado, the U.S. Amateur is considered the most prestigious non-professional tournament in America. Fields of the best amateur players of all ages from around the country advance from qualifying rounds through match play to square off in the coveted championship. Long one who studied history books and respected the game's lore and its greatest players, Mickelson knew what was at stake entering the 1990 tournament. Nicklaus was a childhood hero, and the chance to enter the record along with him was opportunity in the highest degree.

After qualifying with an opening round of 71, Mickelson turned heads at the U.S. Amateur with a second-day record score of 64. But the hot hand in golf rarely duplicates on following days, and Mickelson was extended to the 18th hole or beyond three times during match play. Despite the 64, his ability to make the finals looked shakiest in his second match, when Lefty was taken to the 20th hole by a golfer named Jeff Thomas, the New Jersey State amateur champion. Mickelson survived, defeating thirty-eight-year-old David Eger in his semifinal match 4 and 3.

The U.S. Amateur championship match for Mickelson was held at a Colorado golf course, but it might as well have been held in his backyard. Mickelson's twenty-year-old final-round opponent, Manny Zerman, was a former high school teammate, a best friend, and a prom double-date partner. Zerman left San Diego's Uni High to play golf at Arizona State's vaunted rival, the University of Arizona. The two

golfers would cross paths frequently on the links, in events ranging from invitational tournaments to the Pac-10 championship. Squaring off in the finals of a U.S. Amateur, though, was different, and it was not something Phil Mickelson planned on losing.

Zerman was competitive in the early going, closing to within a hole in the afternoon round of 18, but Mickelson, giving his friend only his highest competitive attention, regained a comfortable advantage by winning holes 10 and 11. Sensing victory and regaining the form from his second day in the tournament, Mickelson attacked pins with a hot hand and birdied 5 of the last 12 holes.

Mickelson played the 32 holes of the match in 5 under par, defeating his former high school teammate 5 and 4. Zerman was a close friend, to be sure. In fact, Mickelson once got in trouble at home with his parents for doing a much-needed favor for Zerman (picking him up late at night south of the border). But when it came to competition, be it in friendly rounds or in the U.S. Amateur, it was all about winning.

Respect Those Who've Actually Done It

Golf has long been a game where young stars, if they are smart, pay homage to those who have succeeded before them, but few have approached it with such vigor as Phil Mickelson. In his youngest days, he dreamed he was playing against the game's best, beating Palmer or Nicklaus in his backyard and on his neighborhood courses. But he also

respected all the golfers who competed professionally, since probably from as far back as he can remember his father gently reminded him the odds against making it as a regular on the PGA Tour. So when he got the opportunity as an amateur to play with the pros, Mickelson respectfully savored the moments rather than stand in awe.

By Mickelson's junior year in college, he was not only rewriting the record books but also forging ground not covered before by a collegiate golfer. Instead of folding under the pressure of success, he kept pushing the bar higher and higher. His collegiate tournament scoring average during the 1990–1991 season dropped to 70.8 as the golfer had a top-ten finish in all eleven events he played in. So extraordinary was Mickelson's year that for a twelve-month run, the success has likely never been repeated at the amateur level, even by a golfer who would follow with his own record success in the amateur ranks named Tiger Woods.

Even though 1991 was the only year in college that Mickelson did not win the NCAA championship (he finished in a tie for fourth), it was the year he established his game as worthy of being on the course with the game's best players in the world—including those from the professional ranks. In his first Masters tournament by virtue of winning the 1990 U.S. Amateur, Mickelson sought out a practice round with his childhood hero Arnold Palmer. Mickelson was already patterning his aggressive, shot-making game and his accessible, smiling public persona around Palmer's. The chance to play with him at Augusta was a dream come true.

"When I was an amateur," Mickelson said, "and everyone that I know of when they get in the field, the first call they

make is to his representatives trying to get a practice round with [Palmer]. What I remember about that was we had a little competition with our two playing partners. One of them was against Lanny [Wadkins] and Tom Watson. And boy, on 8 and 9, Arnie made birdies. He made about a 15-footer on 8 and he had about a 15-footer on 9, and he made that thing. He gave it the Arnie fist pump, gave that grin to the crowd, and people loved it. Of course I loved it; he was my partner. I think that was a glimpse in his eye of the competitive Arnold Palmer when he used to make the charge and win. It was an awesome site to behold.”

Mickelson made the cut in the Masters that year, and would go on to make the cut in the U.S. Open at Hazeltine, Minnesota (Reinmuth was his caddy; the event was won by Payne Stewart), and the British Open. Included in the Masters and the British Open were rounds in the 60s and the distinction of posting the lowest total score by an amateur. The vaulting event of his career, however, came in Tucson in the Northern Telecom Open. Playing in the PGA Tour event as an amateur on a sponsor’s exemption, Mickelson showed steely poise against a solid field of professionals.

He knew the Tucson course well, and after winning the U.S. Amateur and posting amateur low scores in the Masters and the U.S. Open, Mickelson believed his talent was as good as, if not better than, that possessed by the older professionals in the field. When in the lead going into the tournament’s final day and his family in the gallery that included hundreds of ASU fans, the young Mickelson used some lessons learned from his psychology classes. He did not look at the leader board, hoping to avoid intimidation by bigger

names beneath his. Mickelson knew he could beat them and determined just to play the game, instead of reminding himself that amateurs are not supposed to win professional golf events accompanied with six-figure paychecks.

In the lead, he goofed on the 14th hole with a one-shot lead, and it appeared the amateur had choked in the heat of battle against the pros and given away the tournament. Facing the 506-yard par-5, Mickelson hit his tee shot out of bounds and his second shot out of bounds to suffer two penalty shots. He made a triple bogey 8, slipping two shots behind Bob Tway with just four holes to play.

Relying solely on his talent and focus and with the support of college coach Steve Loy on his bag, Mickelson made birdies on the 17th and 18th holes to become just the second amateur to win a PGA Tour event and the only one to do it since 1991. Mickelson's final birdie putt on the 18th remains, in his mind, one of the best shots he's ever made.

"The most memorable shot is the eight-foot putt I made to win at Tucson as an amateur," Mickelson said, "just because winning as an amateur is such an oddity. Scott Verplank had won the Western Open six years earlier, but it's been done only twice, and it's very difficult to do. Very unexpected."

The paycheck for winning the tournament was significant, particularly to a junior in college driving a subcompact sedan and still having to pinch pennies. If he accepted the six-figure winner's check, Mickelson would have had to turn pro immediately, sacrificing his career at Arizona State. As a top young golfer, Mickelson figured more opportunities to win were just around the corner.

“You’d have to go back to Nicklaus to find an amateur like Phil,” said Tom Purtzer, who finished in a two-way tie for second in the Tucson tournament.

He turned the big check down and maintained his amateur status for his senior year at ASU. The PGA Tour win was a turning point in his budding career, however, because even though he could not accept the money, he was allowed to accept the PGA’s standard two-year tour exemption status granted to its winners. That meant Mickelson would not have to battle the grueling process of qualifying school, known to stump even the most talented golfers who have a bad day at the wrong time.

“My parents ingrained in me that an education was important,” Mickelson said. “And I thought the money I might make in a year and a half would be nominal over the course of a 20- to 30-year career, so I stayed in school.”

Mickelson would also win the Western Amateur championship in 1991 before receiving the coveted Haskins Award and the Nicklaus Award. All the pieces were in place for a senior slump following his incredible twelve-month run as a junior, but once again Mickelson came back as strong as ever before, despite having to deal with the celebrity coming his way. The telephone would ring and it would be Phoenix Suns star forward Charles Barkley wanting to play a round of golf. In the Western Amateur, Mickelson was paired with basketball superstar Michael Jordan. Despite the attention, Phil’s scoring average on the college circuit improved his senior year to an all-time low of 69.95 in twelve tournaments.

The highlight was in his last appearance at the NCAA championships, where Mickelson posted a blazing 17-under,

four-day total of 271 to win his third collegiate crown at The Championship Course in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Becoming only the second player at the time to win three NCAA championships, Mickelson's career ended with him being named to the collegiate All-American team a fourth consecutive year.

With a psychology degree in hand and the pride of achieving the most remarkable career by an amateur since Nicklaus, Phil Mickelson turned professional in 1992 and went in search of major championships at the highest level of golf. Hailed by golf enthusiasts and members of the media as "the next Nicklaus," Mickelson was respectful of the next level and certainly honored to even be considered in the same breath as his childhood hero, who with eighteen victories in major tournaments in a professional career that began in 1962 had long since proven his greatness.

TAKEAWAYS



1 Success means you've got to continually raise the bar. Whether it involves quarterly reports or a lower score on the golf course, to find enduring success you've got to eagerly reach for higher goals.

2 Friendships must be put aside in the heat of competition. Everyone is looking for their angle to win when the game is on, from news reporters to high school classmates. Don't let your guard down; resume friendships after the competition.

3 No matter how good you are, always respect your seniors. Even though the players in the game or the office continually change, there is much to be learned from those who've successfully done it before. They often know what you don't and have valuable lessons to teach.

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Managing High Expectations

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The pressure of arriving in college as a top recruit is one thing. Joining the PGA Tour as a twenty-two-year-old phenomenon who has already done the near-impossible and won top events as an amateur is another. It's not pressure to exceed but the general expectation that you will succeed at the highest level that defines every appearance and every shot you make. How you manage the daily and ongoing expectations determines not only your chance at sustained success but also your ability to live happily and fulfilled.

When Phil Mickelson turned professional in the summer of 1992, he was clearly a marked man on the golf course. Most compared him to one he idolized, Jack Nicklaus. Having won three NCAA championships, the U.S. Amateur, and a PGA event as a college student, the general assumption when Phil joined the tour more than halfway through the season was that he would make an immediate impact, primarily by winning major championships.

Mickelson's expectations were certainly high as well. Since recognizing as a nine- and ten-year-old that his skills with a golf club were better than most and that playing on the PGA Tour was his calling, Mickelson has assumed he would be a winner. The chance to finally play as a regular on tour was merely part of his natural, maturing progression, and it had its perks. For the first time in his life, he had the opportunity to get paid for doing what he loved most. He also had the added benefit of coming to the tour with less pressure than most young players, considering he had a full two-year exemption due to his win in the PGA Northern Telecom Open.

Mickelson did not have to grind it out at qualifying school or wait week by week hoping for sponsor exemptions, and he began his career with significant money in his pocket due to corporate sponsorships resulting from his college stardom. Phil Mickelson was a full-fledged PGA Tour player the moment he stepped to the tee in his first professional event, which just happened to be the biggest and most important golf tournament in America each year, the U.S. Open.

On the PGA Tour, 1992 was the year of Freddy Couples. At a career peak, Couples opened the season by winning the Masters tournament and would ultimately lead the tour in stroke average (69.38) and earnings (\$1.3 million). Also in 1992, Raymond Floyd, at age forty-nine, was still able to win an event, some twenty-nine years after his first, and Tom Kite and Greg Norman were players to beat. So was Phil Mickelson, even though the U.S. Open, held at Pebble Beach, was just his first PGA event as a professional. Members of the

media familiar with Mickelson's flair for the dramatic and his sterling amateur record made him an immediate pre-tournament contender.

In his third U.S. Open appearance (he played in two as an amateur), Mickelson made an impressive debut on the difficult course built along the California coastline, moving to the very top of the first-round leader board with an impressive 4-under-par 68. His name was splashed across sports section headlines nationwide, and golf fans considered the reasonability that the storybook career of the likable young lefty was about to get another interesting chapter—Mickelson kicking off his professional career with a major victory.

You Can't Win Them All

It's one of the oldest of our clichés, the idea that winning, over time, can't be dominated by one person, one team, or one company, but it is also one of the more truthful and important to learn. For as long as competitions have been held on fields and courses and in the business world, dynasty has been almost nonexistent, and even “domination” is a fleeting, descriptive word. What appears a lock one moment is gone the next, and nothing illustrates this better than the most difficult game of golf, which has a unique way of bringing the euphoric back to reality.

Mickelson, the winner-take-all college star, soared to the top of the U.S. Open leader board, apparently making a run at a historic victory, only to be sent packing twenty-four hours later after he went out on day two of the tournament

with reversed fortunes, posting a gaudy 9-over-par 81—and missing the tournament cut. His official record in major tournaments as a professional: 0 for 1.

It was a glimpse into the future, perhaps, that his first professional experience was in a major tournament that seemed so promising, only to end in disappointing defeat. Always the confident optimist, though, Mickelson saw it a different way.

“I gained a lot of knowledge and experience from that second round,” Mickelson said. “As I look back I can identify where I was impatient, where I tried to force birdies on a U.S. Open course, which you cannot do.”

Within weeks, though, Mickelson was back into his competitive form, making an impact on the tour and winning his first-ever paychecks for playing the game he so loved. Relegated to many lesser-name tour events due to his new status as a PGA player and his late start in the season, Mickelson took advantage of enough opportunities during his four months as a professional to earn \$171,714 in eleven events. His best finish was a second-place check in his third event, the New England Classic, but he also had a top-ten finish at the Southern Open.

Surround Yourself with People You Like and Trust

A golfer, standing on the green alone, looking over a putt he must make, would seem to defy Donne’s notion that no man is an island. But even at such critical moments, when destiny would seem to rest entirely in his own hands, there are those who have helped him to that moment, those who will

be there for him once he's left the green, those who are, as a result, staring down the putter shaft with him.

Along with Mickelson for his professional venture in golf was his college coach, Steve Loy, who abruptly quit his job at Arizona State in 1992, leaving the program in the hands of an interim coach. The Sun Devils, after all, had won three national championships with Mickelson. His graduation most certainly meant the end of ASU's on-course domination, since the odds of another player like Phil Mickelson coming to campus and successfully following in his giant footsteps were not good.

Another person who joined Mickelson on the professional tour was a seasoned caddie named Jim "Bones" Mackay. As the caddie for tour player Scott Simpson in 1991, Mackay had the opportunity to see Mickelson play in the 1991 U.S. Open at Hazeltine. In 1992, as Mickelson neared his professional debut, Mackay sent him a letter saying he would be interested in caddying for him. Mickelson agreed, and the two formed a partnership that still exists and is one of the more respected golfer-caddie relationships. More than a bag carrier, Mackay is a playing partner of sorts for Mickelson because when the duo plays courses in Florida that have Bermuda greens, Lefty can't read them. He grew up playing in areas that did not have Bermuda and admits to having trouble reading the greens. On the East Coast, Mackay often takes over and makes the call for the suspected direction the ball will break.

In the early days of 1993, Mickelson's first full year on the PGA Tour, his life would take a decided turn in the direction toward the Phil Mickelson whom golf fans know today. A

former song leader at Hillcrest High in Salt Lake City, Amy McBride was living in the same Phoenix-area apartment complex as Mickelson, and the two began dating almost immediately. A University of Utah student and a dancer for the Phoenix Suns, the blond McBride was perhaps the first besides the game of golf to get Mickelson's ongoing, undivided attention.

The first month of 1993 was also good for Mickelson because it was the beginning of his initial full year on the PGA Tour. Starting halfway through anything is never easy, and even though Mickelson's record after eleven events in 1992 was respectable, he planned on accomplishing much more. A fresh start and a full schedule would be good for anyone, but for Mickelson, 1993 held even more promise, since one of the first tournaments of the season was the Buick Invitational at Torrey Pines. The San Diego-area public course where Mickelson used to play high school golf matches and where he first got to watch the professionals as a young boy was the 18-hole layout that he knew perhaps better than any. It is the course where his dreams began, after watching the pros shoot lights-out low scores and practicing his own thrilling shots to be used in the future.

After a first-round score of 75, Mickelson was five shots off the lead in the Buick Invitational, but he honed in on the grounds as the weekend progressed and his pitching wedge and putting came alive. Behind back-to-back rounds of 69, Mickelson closed to within a stroke of the lead after the third round. Still trailing by a shot on Sunday, he suggested to his caddie, Bones Mackay, that they walk a little slow to "enjoy the day."

A hot-handed Mickelson knocked down a handful of birdies on the back nine to shoot 65 and handily claim his first-ever PGA Tour win as a professional. The \$180,000 check was one he got to keep, and the experience of getting into the winner's circle was a breakthrough moment in his career.

With Mackay on the bag, Loy managing his affairs, and the continued support of his family, Mickelson had the pieces of a team he knew and trusted in place early in his career, and it would prove to be a valuable backbone years down the road.

Someone Will Always Find Fault with You, So Just Be Yourself

Mickelson is known to be unable to sit in one place too long or focus on one thought or idea for long. His mind races, and he's got insight and strong opinions on many subjects, from sports to life's philosophies to aeronautics and theories of science. Details of the moment often get lost in the shuffle. This characteristic has rubbed some people the wrong way.

"When I put business in front of him," said manager Steve Loy, "it has to be very specific and very precise or his mind will already be going on to something else before I can complete the mission. Phil always has a lot of things going on internally. He's always thinking."

One example is when Mickelson is around fellow tour players on the circuit. He's known, when outside of a conversation, to pipe in strong-willed opinions on every

conceivable subject, from projecting the winner of an impending NFL game to theories on aeronautics and life. If others don't agree when he gives his spiel, Mickelson might assume they just don't have all the facts or else they would certainly agree with him. Even off the tour, Mickelson often races from subject to subject, spewing seemingly obscure facts and thoughts. Flying is one of his passions. His father is a pilot and taught his first son a love of aeronautics, just as he taught him a love of golf (Mickelson would get his flying license in the mid-1990s). Get him on the subject and it can take you anywhere. When asked about it in one interview, for instance, he leaped into a rambling dialogue about quantum gravity, which unites quantum mechanics with Einstein's theory of relativity.

"It's basically a discussion of how the space-time continuum is affected by gravity," Mickelson said, "and how, theoretically, it's possible even though improbable to skip into different elements of time, whether it's going through a black hole . . .

"That's improbable because of how strong the gravitational pull is. If the Earth was to be engulfed by a black hole, it would come out three-quarters of an inch around. It's more probable to go forward in time given that light is bent by gravity. If we can travel faster than the speed of light, we might be able to intersect different intervals of time.

"I'm thinking big picture," he says. "Way past my lifetime."

It's not just the subjects of flying and gravity that get Mickelson going into passionate, intellectual-sounding raves. If the subject motivates him and he's not about to tee off in

a competitive round, friends and acquaintances suggest holding on: the great, smart one might give you an earful. Wrote longtime *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* columnist Furman Bisher: “When Phil Mickelson speaks, sometimes you listen and sometimes you brush it off, like dandruff.”

When being interviewed for a story once and asked about his desire to enter politics when his golf career fades—he would “love” to be in politics, to get things done—Mickelson delved into a story that comes across as part genius, part hot-air filibuster.

“Our world population is multiplying at 1.9 percent per year,” Mickelson said, “which means it doubles every 40 years, which means that in the year 2600 we are going to have to find another place to live, because we will be standing shoulder to shoulder on this planet. We have other solar systems that are about 35 light-years away that have the same approximate atmospheric conditions. Because the aging process would slow down by a 50-to-1 ratio while traveling at the speed of light, we would age only nine or ten months. But what is really interesting is that we as human beings are not conducive to space travel. The problem is that osteoporosis would kick in, and our bones deteriorate at a 1.5 percent-per-month ratio. So to survive travel to other galaxies, we will have to evolve physically.”

What he most frequently talks about, according to Davis Love III, are his biggest hobbies, following and picking NFL football and cards, down to the virtues of splitting eights. “Phil is more of a competitor than a lot of other guys,” said Love. “Maybe part of that comes from being a gambler and always looking for an edge. If you catch him at lunch or away

from the course, he'll talk your head off about the NFL or splitting 8s or whatever, and he's one of the friendliest top players to people in general—but not to other players before the round or right after the round or walking to the ball.”

In fairness, Mickelson said once he did not realize people called him a “know-it-all” and does not like the label. “Just because I happen to be knowledgeable in the area of quantum gravity and talk about light travel and time travel and speed of light and so forth does not mean I know everything,” he said. “I learn from other people, and I don’t mind sharing that knowledge with people. I am sorry if it is coming across in a know-it-all way. Maybe I need to re-evaluate my message or how I am speaking.”

It was a learning lesson that even though he is personable and considered likable by most people, some will always find fault. With friends, like games, you can’t win them all.

Regeneration Now, Rewards Later

Victories, big or small, are typically the most redeeming rewards of hard work, but often they result in a downward slide on the backside. After all the hard work and the celebration, exhaustion sets in with the realization that there’s not enough energy left to make another run. To reach the same high level of success and experience victory again, the only thing one can do is step away, to do and think about other things.

After winning at Torrey Pines, Mickelson continued a busy schedule on the tour. It was early in the year and he had

planned for a long and full season. The results, however, were not what he had planned. His first tournament after the Buick Invitational was the Nissan Open, where he finished nineteenth. After that, however, he missed the cut in eight of thirteen events and finished no higher than twenty-second. For months his rounds of golf were consistently in the 70s, and in one month-long stretch he missed all four cuts and did not shoot a single round in the 60s.

After playing such an aggressive schedule in college and quickly transitioning to the professional tour, Mickelson was admittedly exhausted and for perhaps the first time in his life not feeling the challenge and passion that drive him on the course. In response, he did the only thing he could do. He took a break, walked away, and did anything and everything that had nothing to do with golf. A lead in a story from *Golf World* magazine said it best: “A month ago, no one was calling Phil Mickelson the Next Nicklaus, unless they meant Gary. Sick of practice and tired of missing cuts, Mickelson’s smile-mask hid the truth. He was a dude with a ‘tude.”

Complacency, or a momentary lack of burning desire, can and often does hit anyone in any job. Golf is no different. Burnout typically occurs when the press to excel has gone on for so long that hard effort begins to feel routine, making it difficult to improve. In the office, the only cure may be an extended vacation, leaving behind voice mails, emails, and to-do lists. But if you are a professional golfer in the midst of a long season, the only thing to do is walk away. It sounds a touch insane, leaving the chase of seven-figure purses to others. You can’t earn if you are not in the game, after all. But when the pressure comes from simply doing

the job itself, not from the ambition of high goals, taking a clear and distinctive break can be the only cure to what ails.

For Phil Mickelson, it was his first break from the game in several years. The passion of playing and the pursuit of excellence as a teenager had driven him to play at every available opportunity on the junior circuit and he never took so much as a few days off from practice during the summer before enrolling at Arizona State. That's why he was able to get off to such a strong start in college, winning a national championship as a freshman, but it is also why the game momentarily became a bit of a burden deep into his first full season as a professional. Away from competition for the first time, he put down his clubs and spent time in the summer with different activities and hobbies that were fun, but also challenging to his personality.

When his batteries were recharged, he got back with his swing coach, Dean Reinmuth, and worked his game back into shape with renewed enthusiasm. His first tournament back was the PGA championship, a major he hoped to claim. It was not victory, but Mickelson posted two rounds in the 60s to go along with a Sunday round of 70 to finish in sixth place, showing the world of golf he was a tour force to be reckoned with again.

The next week, the recharged Mickelson played the International in Colorado, where he posted his second win of the 1993 season with a record-setting performance in a modified scoring system. Had a traditional scoring system been used, Mickelson's score would have translated to a 19-under-par, while the next closest competitor was 11-under.

With a \$234,000 check in hand, he qualified for the

season-ending Tour Championship and established himself with two wins as the professional player many expected when he graduated from college. Mickelson also learned that by having the courage to momentarily step away from the game he loved, he had put himself back into the winner's circle.

You Can Find Light in the Shadow of Greatness

When you achieve a high level of success in any field, comparisons to your most successful predecessors are a given. It's the ultimate form of flattery, but it also can be a curse of sorts, creating the illusion that you will deliver more than you are physically capable. How you handle and interpret the comparisons is often the difference in your success.

Sports scribes and analysts began comparing Phil Mickelson to Jack Nicklaus on a large scale during the 1990 U.S. Amateur, when it became apparent that Phil would win, becoming, like Nicklaus, a dual NCAA and amateur champion in the same year. If you are the rare one to duplicate feats of one of the greatest golfers of modern golf, the comparisons come quite naturally.

On tour, the comparisons followed and grew, particularly each moment during his first two years that he teed it up, particularly in the majors. Mickelson never minded, considering it flattery. But despite his youth, the comparisons made him a contender for every major because of his Nicklaus-like qualities. The comparisons reached an all-time high after the first PGA Tour event of 1994, when Lefty stormed

out of the gate at La Costa Resort and Spa in California to win the Mercedes championship in a thrilling playoff over Freddy Couples. With the win came a brand-new Mercedes, which the twenty-three-year-old Mickelson promptly gave to his mother, Mary. Also with the win came more comparisons to Nicklaus. It was Mickelson's fourth PGA Tour win before his twenty-fourth birthday, a feat that only Nicklaus had accomplished before.

With such a sterling start, the assumptions, naturally, were that it was only a matter of time before Mickelson, like Nicklaus, began claiming a series of major tournament wins as his own. It was a long, heavy shadow, but one Phil humbly embraced. There are worse things in life, after all, than being compared to Jack Nicklaus.

Thrill

Let's face it: people appreciate watching talent, but they also appreciate watching people perform with flair and an attacking style. Good and conservative may deliver wins, but good and aggressive get the fans. Donald Trump, for example, would barely be known outside of New York and finance circles if he was a mousy and quiet billionaire. Or where would Deion Sanders have been without the glitz?

Golf for its purists is a thrilling game, with its chesslike strategies, but for many, the hushed tones and lay-up nature of the game make for boring television. But after quickly earning the tour nickname "Phil the Thrill," Mickelson was one of the first young players of a new generation of golf to inject a go-for-broke, try-to-win-at-all-costs strategy that fans

loved. Not only was he an odds-on-favorite in majors as a competitor, but he was also an odds-on-favorite of the fans.

They loved how Mickelson gambled on shot after shot, seeking the big reward. In a Tucson tournament, fans gasped when he successfully bounced a golf ball off the water near the pin placed on the back of a green. They cheered when on the short, lay-up par-5 holes, Mickelson reached for his 3-wood instead of his 8-iron. And they sympathized with him in major tournaments when gambles went awry and he slumped off the leader board. But he always gets back up for more, always believing he will win the next time. Even in golf games with college friends, Mickelson is typically the one calling the bet and the terms and he's fighting hard, pushing for birdies and going for broke in efforts to take their money and momentary pride.

Off the course, Mickelson lived life in thrilling approach as well. With his go-go personality that is always seeking another challenge, Mickelson would charge down the ski slopes with more vigor than his friends; bet aggressively on professional sports like football; and become, like his father (and Nicklaus), a pilot, ultimately purchasing and flying around to tournaments in a Gulfstream II. He is still not a drinker or a smoker, and his recognized vice off the course became the gamble, the push-to-the-limits, I-can-beat-the-odds mentality of seeking the thrill.

"There's nothing he thinks he can't do," said Seattle native Jim Strickland, a former Arizona State teammate of Mickelson's. "He thinks he could go out there and play quarterback for the Chargers."

It cost him in 1994 during the early stages of the PGA Tour

season when Mickelson tried racing a friend downhill while skiing in Colorado. He fell and broke his leg, missing the Masters and months on the tour. With little to do and uneasy being cooped up, Mickelson taught himself card tricks.

When he returned to the game, he did not win again that season, finishing in just forty-seventh place in the U.S. Open, but he did notch his best major finish with a third-place showing at the PGA championship. The tournament belonged to champion Nick Price from start to finish. Price, who had just won the British Open, claimed a six-stroke victory over Corey Pavin at Southern Hills at Tulsa, Oklahoma, but just behind him in third place was Mickelson. With four solid rounds Lefty remained close to the top of the board throughout the event, showing that fatigue from his broken leg was gone and that he would once again be a force on the PGA Tour. Healthy again and back on his game, the strong showing was notice that it was only a matter of time before the talented Mickelson aggressively and successfully attacked the pins and claimed his first major victory.

TAKEAWAYS



1 Even the best in the game lose. Performing at a high level does not mean always winning. The aspiration to win should be there, but the acceptance that losing is part of the game is a must.

2 When you get tired and weary, take a break. Regeneration is the key to sustainable success. Nobody can constantly perform at ever-increasing levels.

3 Playing against the odds draws attention. In a crowded field, separation can be a good thing. Taking risks is usually rewarded by the gallery, but always be prepared for the outcome.

4



Facing a Lurking Tiger

Every rising star has faced an unnerving time when another has arrived on the scene to grab all the attention and garner the glory, be it in the office, on the playing field, or on the golf course. No matter how good you are, there is always, eventually, somebody coming along said to be as good or better. When you've been the star, and become accustomed to seeing the world revolve around you, it can be a drastic and unnerving change that takes some getting used to. How you handle the change will determine your success in the future, and, perhaps more importantly, will determine the perception of others about you.

When Phil Mickelson began the 1995 season on the PGA Tour, he was still being called the next Nicklaus, and the golf world was waiting for him to have a strong season following his injury-interrupted 1994, including his first major victories. Anyone who, like Nicklaus, could win four times on the most difficult professional circuit in the world

was certainly destined to take one or more of the world's top tournaments.

Mickelson began the year, like most, in strong fashion, winning the second tournament of the year, the Northern Telecom Open in Tucson, with a two-shot victory over Bob Tway. It was a tournament that Mickelson almost did not make. Just a week away from receiving his pilot's license, the 24-year-old was flying from his home in Scottsdale, Arizona, to Tucson, Arizona, the site of the tournament. During his flight in the single-engine Cessna 172 with no de-icing capabilities, Mickelson encountered a brewing winter storm with thick clouds that limited visibility. When he could not see, he landed in another town, eventually flying back to the Phoenix area and driving to Tucson for the tournament.

Vying to become the first player ever to win the same tournament as an amateur and a professional, Mickelson jumped out to a first-round lead over Tom Purtzer and Howard Twitty with a 65. A second 66 left him clinging to a one-shot lead over Jim Gallagher Jr. His lead continued through the third round, but he was joined atop the leader board by Brett Ogle and Gallagher. With his favorite professional football team, the San Diego Chargers, preparing to play in the Super Bowl later in the day, Mickelson wore a lightning bolt on his shirt during final-round play. A streaking Gallagher stole the lead briefly on the final day, but a birdie by Mickelson on the 15th hole tied for the lead as Gallagher reached the 18th hole.

After hitting the fairway, Gallagher badly miss-hit his approach shot to the 18th, leaving a sixty-foot putt that included numerous breaks, making par a question. With

Mickelson watching from the fairway, Gallagher three-putted for bogey on the hole, opening the door for Mickelson to claim his first win as a professional in the Tucson tournament. Mickelson attacked the pin on his approach to the 18th and was left with a twenty-footer, uphill. On his birdie effort, Mickelson charged at the hole, missing it by two feet long but leaving an easy par tap-in for the win. The Chargers went on to lose the Super Bowl later that day to the San Francisco 49ers, but Mickelson earned a \$224,000 first-place check, gladly accepting this time after turning down the winner's share as an amateur in 1991.

After the impressive win, most in golf thought it would be Mickelson's year, as his play both off the tee and around the green was spectacular, already in late-season form, and it was just January.

"When you do as well as Phil has that young, there are a lot of expectations," Tway said after the tournament. "People think you can keep doing that all the time, but I'm here to tell you it's hard. There are a lot of great players out there."

Earning the title with some pundits as "Mr. January" for his decided fast starts each year, Mickelson would perform admirably through his second full season on tour, but he would not win a major, running his career professional record in the top events to 0 for 9. It was the first time he had the chance as a professional to play in all four majors. He did notch a seventh-place finish in the Masters and a fourth-place finish in the U.S. Open, but once again, it was close, but not enough for Mickelson in the majors. Still, by playing hard and effectively in twenty-four events and

finishing among the top tour money winners, Mickelson was considered a heavy favorite to take a major title the next season.

While Mickelson was fighting to win among professionals in 1995, a newcomer to the collegiate ranks was raking in trophies, turning heads, and actually beginning to be called the same thing they'd said about Mickelson, the next Jack Nicklaus. As a freshman at Stanford, Tiger Woods had already won the U.S. Amateur as an eighteen-year-old (the youngest ever to win) and was on his way to rewriting record books. In his first-ever major championship appearance, Woods made the cut, finishing forty-first. Like Mickelson, he was a freshman All-American and destined for greatness on the golf course.

As a sophomore in 1996, Woods had the best year ever by a collegian, topping Mickelson by winning the Pac-10 championship behind a course-record 61 round, the NCAA championship, and his third U.S. Amateur at Pumpkin Ridge (becoming the only golfer ever to win three consecutive titles).

Focus Pays Dividends

If Phil Mickelson was paying any attention to the fact that Tiger Woods was fast becoming known as the best amateur to play the game of golf, eclipsing memories and accomplishments of Lefty, you would not have known it by results on the course. He was certainly not looking over his shoulder at what was to come. Instead, he set his sights on having a breakout season and showing the world that he, in fact,

was the second coming of Jack Nicklaus and capable of playing the game as one of the very best.

In the off-season before the 1996 tour, Mickelson worked hard with swing coach Dean Reinmuth, getting his rhythm down so he could use booming tee shots to create more opportunity around the greens with his inspiring short game. Still living in Scottsdale and engaged to be married to girlfriend Amy McBride at the end of the year (they married in late 1996 in Maui, Hawaii), Mickelson confided to friends and members of the media that he was confident all the pieces were in place for major success. Mr. January wasted little time. In just his second event of the season, Mickelson trailed on Sunday by two shots in the Nortel Open (previously the Tucson Northern Telecom Open), played in his home state of Arizona.

Confident after his off-season work, Mickelson attacked in grand style down the stretch, gaining the lead on the 17th. On the final hole, all he needed was par to defeat Bob Tway, who was in the clubhouse, a shot back. Mickelson just missed the par-3 18th green, but instead of playing it safe on his chip and leaving an easy putt for the win, he charged straight at the hole in dramatic fashion, sinking his birdie chip shot and claiming a two-shot victory. He could have played the odds, of course, sending two defensive shots toward the cup and hoping for the win. But Mickelson was focused after his off-season work and confident he could win playing the aggressor.

“You’ve just got to pipeline it,” Mickelson said. “That’s what makes it so fun.”

The next PGA Tour stop after Mickelson’s win was in his

adopted hometown. The Phoenix Open was a tournament he badly wanted for obvious reasons. He still lived in the area, and after starring for three years at Arizona State, he was a household name with friends and fans in most every corner of the state.

In the final round of play at the TPC Scottsdale, Mickelson was two shots off the lead, trailing playing partner Justin Leonard. A former University of Texas standout, Leonard had played with Mickelson before and knew what to expect. In college, the two were paired together in a tournament in Dallas.

As they made the turn for the back nine, Mickelson wondered aloud to Leonard if anyone had ever birdied all of the holes on the back nine of the course. Despite only being one or two under for the entire tournament, Mickelson proceeded to rip off seven consecutive birdies, causing Leonard and his caddie to shake their heads in marvel.

As professionals playing in the Phoenix Open, golf fans watching around the country would have the same reaction to the play of Mickelson and Leonard. The last nine holes of play were a “riveting” battle that gave images of major competition. The crowd, decidedly in the hometown player’s corner, was loud and boisterous, pushing for Leonard to fail as the two charged down the fairways.

Phil had a one-shot lead going into the short, par-4 17th. The hole played just 285 yards and could easily be driven, setting up an eagle putt. The preferred, or safe play, is a lay-up off the tee with an iron. If you go for broke, water surrounds the hole at the rear, setting up the ultimate risk/reward scenario.

If you did not catch the tournament on television, it does not matter. You already know what gambling Phil Mickelson did. He pulled a driver out of his bag, going for the green in one. Unfortunately, his swing was too aggressive and he pulled the ball, promptly hitting it into the water. Fortunately, all those days of short-game practice in his backyard paid off yet again, and Mickelson chipped close on a third shot before putting in for par. Leonard, however, made a birdie on 17, creating a tie. Each scrambled on 18 for par, going to a playoff, which Mickelson won with a birdie on the third hole. Mickelson double-pumped his fist in the air, and the hometown crowd, which jeered Leonard and cheered its favorite, went wild.

“Over the last three holes, the crowd was distracting,” said Leonard, who was upset that the gallery sided with Mickelson. “That’s about as nice as I can put it. I think it was like being the foreign team at the Ryder Cup.”

Mickelson was anything but distracted in 1996, en route to his best year ever on the tour and gaining fan support each time out. With such a fast start, the Masters in April seemed like the major Mickelson could take. The course at Augusta suited his game better than other courses used for the major venues, with room off the tee and tricky but true greens, rewarding long hitters with a deft touch. Entering the final round, however, the tournament appeared to belong only to Greg Norman.

Seeking his first Masters win, Norman shot a 1-under-par 71 in the third round to claim a seemingly insurmountable six-shot lead over Nick Faldo. The only way Norman could lose the tournament, one sportswriter noted, would

be to “have a total collapse.” Faldo was seemingly out of contention, as was Mickelson, who was in third place at seven shots back.

After a par on the 8th hole in the final round, Norman proceeded to have the greatest collapse in the history of the Masters. He bogeyed the 9th hole, bogeyed the 10th after two-putting from within eight feet, three-putted for a bogey on the 11th, hit his tee shot on No. 12 into Rae’s Creek before making a double bogey, and hit into the water on the 16th for yet another bogey en route to a 76. Faldo shot a 67 to steal a five-shot win, while Mickelson had a final round of even par, good enough for a solid third-place finish.

“I’m disappointed. I’m upset, I’m upset inside. I’m sad. I’m going to regret this,” said Norman. “But I’m not going to run around like Dennis Rodman and head-butt an official. It’s not the end of my life. I lost this tournament, but I’m not a loser. I’m still going to win golf tournaments. I’m not going to fall off the face of the earth.”

Norman’s collapse was a lesson for Mickelson, who admitted surprise after the round that a six-shot leader had come back so far and realized that a more aggressive approach to his round could have yielded great reward. He was just one shot behind Faldo at the beginning of the day, and a few birdies would have gone a long way toward putting him into serious contention for his first green jacket. Regardless, the third-place finish at one of the world’s best tournaments firmly established that Mickelson was one of the best young players in the game and intent on competing at the highest level in the biggest tournaments.

A Pinnacle Is Still a Pinnacle

Mickelson may have failed to win yet another major tournament in his close finish at the Masters, but he did not pack in his game in frustration during his best season thus far. He figured the only way to show that he was the best young player in the game was to keep attacking pins and confidently expecting wins.

A month after the Masters, Mickelson was on a break from the game, trying to reinvigorate following a busy schedule to open the season, but a call from golf legend Byron Nelson persuaded him to enter the GTE Byron Nelson Classic held in Irving, Texas. With four straight rounds in the 60s, Mickelson would post a score of 15-under-par in one of his most impressive tee-to-green, 72-hole performances as a professional. For the twenty-five-year-old Mickelson, the win made him the first left-handed player to win three tournaments in a season on tour and sent him to the top of the PGA money list with what at the time was a staggering \$1.072 million in earnings for the year. It was also Mickelson's first tour win outside of Arizona, California, or Colorado.

"I'm creeping a little bit east," he said. "I'm about ready to make that jump over the Mississippi."

Disappointing finishes later in the season in the U.S. Open (tied for ninety-fourth), the British Open (tied for forty-first), and the PGA championship (tied for eighth) dropped Mickelson's record in the majors as a professional to 0 for 13. He did not, however, let those frustrating results dampen his best season ever. In the NEC World Series of Golf, featuring the champions of PGA events over the

previous year, Mickelson birdied the 16th and 17th holes on the final day to claim a three-stroke win, his fourth of the season. His most memorable highlight of the tournament, though, was on the par-4 4th hole, when he pulled one of the more difficult shots out of his bag.

“I was in the bunker on the right and had 205 yards up the hill,” he recalled. “But I had two trees in my way and I had to split the trees with just a four- or five-foot gap between them. I took out a 3-iron and ripped it right through the gap. It barely cleared the bunker and trickled onto the green about eight feet from the hole.”

Becoming the first player since 1994 to win four times on the PGA Tour with the NEC crown, Mickelson staked a momentary claim that he was the hottest young golfer in the professional game. The win at Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio, earned him a long-term tour exemption as well as a victory on a legitimate, championship-caliber course. It was the closest he’d ever come to winning a big tournament as a professional.

“It was very difficult to sleep last night because I kept thinking about all the things that playing well could accomplish—getting four wins for the year, going up in the race for the money title, and, most importantly, that 10-year exemption,” he said. “Those things were very important to me. Also, the fact that this golf course is a major championship golf course and for me to perform well on this style of course is a big step in my career and for my performance in future majors.”

It was not a major, but the win was clearly a career peak for Mickelson and one he savored. Since childhood, his goal

was to play professional golf, and he worked for years to make it happen. The NEC win gave him something most professionals never get, a long-term ticket to play with the game's best.

Perception Is Not Always Reality

The moment we think we've turned the corner, reached new heights, and set into forward motion in a new direction where there is no turning back, life has a way of reminding us that the future is not something we can easily forecast or control.

Seemingly, Phil Mickelson had achieved a technical breakout in winning the NEC at Firestone and was finally on his way to actually being the next Jack Nicklaus. But on the same day Mickelson was hoisting his World Series of Golf trophy and celebrating his first \$1.5 million plateau in one-year earnings, the young upstart Tiger Woods was rewriting the record books himself while claiming his third consecutive U.S. Amateur at Oregon's Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club.

The next day he would declare himself a professional, leaving collegiate golf after just two seasons, and accept his first PGA appearance through a sponsor's exemption at the Greater Milwaukee Open. With just seven events left in the PGA Tour season, Woods needed an unprecedented start to his rookie season if he hoped to avoid having to go in the winter to qualifying school. If he could take advantage of sponsors' exemptions in tournaments such as the Greater Milwaukee and earn enough money to finish among the top money winners, he would be exempt the next season.

Phil Mickelson was scheduled to play in the Greater Milwaukee Open as well but backed out at the last minute, citing a need to rest after victory. Fans could live without the young star, however. It had another. In one of the most dramatic and shifting moments of golf, twenty-year-old Tiger Woods teed off in his first professional golf tournament and instantaneously took the limelight from every other player on the tour, including Mickelson. Woods shot an impressive first-round 67, and was still five shots off the lead, but it did not matter. He would not win, but even out of the lead, television cameras followed his every move, and the gallery showered unprecedented affection, especially when he aced the 188-yard, par-3 14th hole on Sunday.

“Once you start playing for a living, everything changes,” Woods said. “I thought the media would have died down, but it didn’t. The fan support was outstanding.”

The next PGA tournament Mickelson played in following his NEC win was the Las Vegas Invitational at the TPC at Summerlin. Also playing in the field was Tiger Woods. One preview story for the tournament listed Woods’s name in the lead, along with defending champion Jim Furyk, as the player to watch in the tournament, despite the fact that he’d never won as a professional and had just four previous starts. Near the end of the story, an “oh, by the way” mention was made that the year’s tour money leader and four-time winner Phil Mickelson was in the field. You would have expected Mickelson to lash out, particularly at the media, which were getting carried away with Tiger Woods mania. Privately, many players grumbled and certainly Mickelson

was not thrilled to be slighted, but he did not say anything publicly to challenge the issue.

Woods, of course, won the Las Vegas Invitational, beating Davis Love on the first hole of a playoff, becoming the youngest player to win on the tour since Phil Mickelson claimed the 1991 Northern Telecom Open as an amateur. With all the hype Woods had joined the tour with two months earlier, some skeptics wondered if he could actually be that good. They had heard hype before. In Las Vegas, Woods got their attention. Wrote golf analyst John Marvel for GolfWeb the day after the tournament: "There were skeptics. But when you examine Woods's career at age 20, there shouldn't have been. Maybe we just weren't ready to believe he could actually be this good already. Maybe we had seen more than our share of those anointed with the 'Next Nicklaus' knighthood and were proceeding with caution this time."

Two weeks after the Las Vegas win, Tiger Woods played in the final regular tournament of the PGA season, winning the Walt Disney World/Oldsmobile Classic to become the second rookie to win two tournaments in a season since Robert Gamez did it in 1990. Woods, though, needed only six appearances. The two wins earned him a four-year exemption on the tour and an invitation to the season-ending Tour Championship, for the top thirty players in the game.

They also catapulted him to unprecedented territory as a respected and revered player by golf fans around the world. Seasoned and hardened golf analysts were proclaiming "Tigermania" as the young Woods signed million-dollar

book deals (two with Random House) and multimillion-dollar sponsorship deals (namely with Nike). Making matters worse in the clubhouse among PGA players was the fact that Woods stated publicly that the best was yet to come, because he was winning while not on his “A” game.

At the season-ending Tour Championship at Southern Hills in Tulsa, Woods again got top billing in all the media, while Mickelson, who seemed a virtual lock for player of the year honors after winning four times in twenty starts in his best year ever, was left defending his game and having to prove that he was the best player under age thirty. Instead of lashing out, though, Mickelson scratched his head in his typical “aw, shucks” style, nicely questioning out loud why whatever he does is not enough.

“In my mind, it has taken me a while to really prove myself on this level,” Mickelson said. “And it seems to me whether it’s me or whether it’s Tiger or whether it’s any other player, it’s a constant proving process, that if I have a so-so couple of months, I feel like I need to reprove myself.”

Tom Lehman won the 1996 Tour Championship, not Tiger Woods. But an eighth place finish by Mickelson let his lead in earnings get away, along with player of the year honors, which went to Lehman. Mickelson posted his best season results yet, but he did not win a major tournament. For many, his accomplishments were still not enough, especially considering that Tiger Woods, the next Jack Nicklaus, was now in the game.

“Even though I’ve had a good year this year,” Mickelson said, “next year I still need to prove that I can continue

playing at this level. It's going to be a difficult challenge having an equal or better year than I did this year."

In other words, Mickelson had given his best effort and taken his golf to its highest level yet. Duplicating the success would be difficult, and there was nothing he could do about the arrival of Tiger Woods. His only choice was to focus on his own game and keep trying to prove and reprove himself on the course.

TAKEAWAYS



1 There is always a Tiger in the shadows. Young stars are fleeting, because there is always someone coming along who has talents that you do not. Never assume you are irreplaceable, and work hard to score big in your peak times.

2 Increased focus creates a competitive edge. Distractions in life are abundant, and there's never enough time to work at perfecting the job or the game. But working on the fundamentals with specific goals in mind often leads to winning.

3 All you can worry about is your own game. Succeeding at the highest level is hard enough without worrying about others. Focus on your abilities and not the play and expectations of others.

5



Dealing with Defeat

S Success has an interesting way of redefining failure in our lives. Once we've won big and all that remains is reaching the very top of a game or a career, events and finishes that would normally seem extraordinarily good can be viewed as crushing defeats by others, and even ourselves. How we handle this new measurement of performance largely determines our ability to stay in the heat of competition.

For Phil Mickelson, this fact of life became quite clear beginning in 1997, when after his best professional season ever, more attention turned to what he had *not* won—a major—than to what he had won. He was just twenty-six years old and newly married when the season began, but the label of “best player to never win a major” began to stick among fellow pros and members of the media. Phil Mickelson either had to prove them wrong or graciously deal with the label as fact and speak to it wherever he went. In an attempt to solve the growing problem, he went in both directions.

The beginning of the 1997 season started just as it ended, with Tiger Woods winning. Instead of Mr. January getting fast out of the gate, it was Woods who won the season-opening Mercedes Championships at La Costa Resort and Spa in Carlsbad, California. It was not until March that Mickelson got his game in winning form. He had already played in six events, and even though he had made the cut in all and earned more than \$120,000 on the most difficult professional golf tour in the world, whispers were already being heard questioning whether he was past his prime and not prepared to deal with a hard-charging Tiger Woods.

But charging himself on the back nine back at the Bay Hill Club in Orlando, Florida, with a 6-under-par 30, Mickelson overcame a three-shot deficit to win Arnold Palmer's tournament, the Bay Hill Invitational. The crowds had followed Tiger Woods heavily; despite the fact that he was never in the lead, eight security guards and a handful of tournament officials had to follow him around the course to keep aggressive fans at bay. Mickelson, though, garnered plenty of attention by winning and finishing so strongly at the end.

Sure, it was unusual for Mickelson to notch his first win three months into a season, but doing it so close to the Masters in a tournament field laden with talent gave hope to many that he might be ready, finally, to win his first major. From *Golf World* magazine after Mickelson's Bay Hill win:

"The timing couldn't be better. THE PLAYERS Championship is this week. The Masters is two weeks down the road. And Phil Mickelson has joined the battle. The refreshing news, coming out of the Bay Hill Club and Lodge on Sunday,

is that the PGA TOUR is no longer the Tiger Woods Clinic & Exhibition Circuit. This stylish Mickelson kid, overshadowed by Woods and overrun by Tom Lehman at the end of 1996, is back and ready for Augusta.”

When You’ve Been in Reverse, Neutral Is Forward

When you are on the short side of a shift in momentum, there is sometimes little you can do but give it your best, keep your cool by not saying or doing anything you might regret later, and hope the pendulum swings back sooner rather than later. Such was the case with Mickelson at the 1997 Masters.

After missing the cut with rounds of 77 and 76 at the Players Championship, Lefty’s game was not at a peak entering the Masters after all. The weather was perfect in Augusta, Georgia, for the April tournament, but the greens were unusually slick on the opening days, causing putting fiascos for most players. Tiger Woods began the first round at 4 over par after the first nine holes, but turned it around on the back with four birdies and an eagle to get into fourth place with a 2-under-par 70. Phil Mickelson had the same problem as Woods on the front, also posting a 40, but could not get below par on the back. He was 4 over par after the first round (76) and 2 over par in the second round, missing the cut by a stroke and facing major disappointment yet again. Mickelson, wrote one columnist, was “currently at the top of most pundits’ lists for the dubious distinction of ‘best player without a major.’” It seemed to be becoming a professional

noose, Mickelson's success making the one thing he had not yet accomplished emerge as a major weakness.

For Woods and for golf, it was a historic finish in the 1997 Masters as the twenty-one-year-old shot a major tournament record 18-under-par 270 and became the first African American to win the Masters. He was also the youngest to ever win the Masters, beating Jack Nicklaus's record by two years. So powerful was his performance that the question was no longer if he could win the biggest tournaments, but how many he would win and how fast he would win them.

It was the same story for Mickelson again in the U.S. Open at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland. With three rounds in the 70s, Mickelson finished a disappointing forty-third as Ernie Els, a twenty-seven-year-old South African, won his second American golf championship. Mickelson would win once again on the PGA Tour in 1997, claiming the Sprint International and becoming the youngest player since Nicklaus to win eleven times on the tour. The victory sealed a spot on Tom Kite's U.S. Ryder Cup team headed to face the Europeans at Valderrama Golf Club in Spain, but it did not ease frustrations in the season, which saw Woods grab his first major in his first professional try while Mickelson battled to win lesser tournaments he had long since dominated.

"This year hasn't been the most spectacular of years for me, and I needed to get that second win down," Mickelson said.

Mickelson's slump in the majors continued in the British Open, as his twenty-five-year-old college and professional adversary Justin Leonard won at Royal Troon, and in the PGA

Championship, where Davis Love III claimed his first major championship. So many youngsters were taking over the PGA's major events that Mickelson, just twenty-seven, was beginning to look more like a seasoned, second-tier star than the next young Jack Nicklaus. Committing himself in the off-season, Mickelson once again started a PGA season exceptionally strong in 1998, winning the opening Mercedes Championships by holding off a hard-charging Tiger Woods and Mark O'Meara by a stroke.

Paired with David Duval on the final day at La Costa, a course in the San Diego area Mickelson knows well, he held a one-shot lead on a soggy course where Saturday rains forced a lift-clean-and-play rule. In the group just ahead were Orlando friends and neighbors Mark O'Meara and Tiger Woods, who began the day five shots off the lead but within striking distance. Mickelson opened his round with a three-putt bogey on the first hole and looked shaky but never worried, suggesting that he often starts his "best rounds with a bogey."

Mickelson birdied the third and fourth holes, but when he arrived at the 7th hole, paused momentarily when a loud roar erupted from the 9th, where Tiger Woods had rolled in a thirty-foot putt for an eagle to move within a shot. The electrified crowd sensed the rare early-season battle between the game's top players developing. Feeding off their friendly competitiveness, Woods and O'Meara were throwing birdies at each other, with both tying Mickelson for the lead at 14 under on the 10th after spectacular plays. Knowing he had to respond with birdies to earn the win, Mickelson birdied the 9th, 10th, 12th, and 13th, sending a

strong message ahead that he was bowing to nobody. In the end, Woods and O'Meara shot spectacular final rounds of 64, but they weren't enough, as Mickelson claimed the one-shot victory.

The strong start created a buzz once again that Mickelson might be ready to finally win his first major. A story that ran during the Masters suggesting that "time was flying by" for the twenty-eight-year-old in his quest to win a major said Mickelson did "not want to talk about" his winless streak because "too much was at stake."

After solid scores of 69 in the second and third rounds, Mickelson was in the hunt on the final day of play at Augusta. He was playing well, having hit thirty-eight of forty-two greens and needing just thirty-eight putts to post his 4-under-par, but he had to catch David Duval, Mark O'Meara, and leader Freddy Couples. Phil was in the hunt when making the turn after a solid front nine. Tied for second and just a couple of strokes off the pace, Mickelson reached the difficult 12th hole, part of Augusta National's famed "Amen Corner," and fell victim to the short but extremely difficult layout, dumping his second shot into Rae's Creek and ending any chances at a win. Duval lost his lead with a three-putt on the 16th, and the forty-one-year-old O'Meara came from behind, holing a twenty-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole to claim a surprising win. Mickelson ended up in a tie for twelfth place.

When players gathered for the ninety-eighth U.S. Open at Olympic Club in San Francisco, Mickelson was again among a handful of top favorites. He played consistently for four rounds, never breaking par, but he did keep himself

in contention by eliminating costly blowups. In the end, Mickelson tied for a respectable tenth with a strong closing round as Lee Janzen came from behind to nip friend Payne Stewart by a stroke. Mickelson's strong play in the season's first two majors turned from hope to heartache in the last two.

In the British Open, for instance, Mickelson was in contention at Royal Birkdale after two rounds but shot a disastrous 85 in wind and heavy rain conditions to end his chances. It was his highest score ever as a professional, and he followed that up with a 78, ending twenty-eight shots out of the lead.

The most painful for Mickelson, though, was in the eightieth PGA championship, at Sahalee Country Club in Seattle, Washington. Mickelson was in contention after shooting consecutive par rounds of 70. Just four strokes back, he posted a 9-over 79 to fall out of the title chase, ending yet another season with a major disappointment. Publicly, Mickelson denied that the pressure of winning a major was getting to him, but anyone watching his game knew he was obviously pressing on "moving day" in the big tournaments, trying to make too much happen too quickly, ultimately costing him any chance at winning.

"What happens to me there is that I get that one bad swing, that one bad break, and that tends to send me into a flux," Mickelson said. "I'm still learning how to turn adversity into something positive."

But even though Phil Mickelson continued to avoid the winner's circle in the majors, his 0-for record combined with his openness with the fans began to build a unique

persona for Mickelson, beloved underdog. Mickelson had long ago determined by watching hero Arnold Palmer take time to sign autographs and speak to fans and answer questions from the media that being approachable and appreciative of those who love and watch the game were far more rewarding than not.

Even as disappointments in the majors mounted, Mickelson continued to emerge from the clubhouse round after round and mingle with fans, signing whatever was put in front of him and smiling and graciously accepting “hang in there, Phil” encouragement. As for the fans, appreciative of his approachable demeanor when stars like Woods displayed something close at times to disdain for crowds, and sympathetic with his losing record in big tournaments, they began to see Phil Mickelson not as the next Jack Nicklaus but as their beloved underdog, the anti-Tiger.

Mickelson had earned millions of dollars each year through earnings on the tour and through corporate sponsorship, flew himself around in a personal jet, and was married to a bubbly, picturesque wife. Fans uniquely identified with the left-handed player. Mickelson’s wife, Amy, usually flew with him to tournaments where, at any available chance, he gushed when speaking about her and treated her with complete reverence. “Amy and I do this” or “Amy and I think this” came out of his mouth so much that some fellow players professed at being somewhat put off. Mickelson openly acknowledged that “some people” had a problem with how he treated her, yet he made no apologies.

When *Sports Illustrated* included men for the first time in its celebrated swimsuit issue in 1998, famous sports stars

were selected to appear, along with their wives. Included among seven professional sports “hot couples” were the Mickelsons, with Amy shown in a swimsuit.

The Mickelsons’ seemingly perfect young-couple life was apparently fine with the fans, whose love of the left-handed golfer was increasingly growing despite his continuing disappointment in major tournaments. He was confident but gracious, and aside from a tendency to often visit Las Vegas for gambling jaunts, he had no visible vices. He just loved to win at whatever he was doing. Not having won a major in a professional career that was otherwise so promising was beginning to take a toll.

There’s Nothing Like Being a Father

When you continually lose, it’s easy to demand to others that you are doing it right, but sometimes even the most stubborn have to change. After seven winless years as a professional in majors, Phil Mickelson continued to maintain with the media that he would never back away from his attacking style of play. Realizing, though, that to have a chance at finally winning a major he needed to eliminate the overzealous disaster days, Mickelson approached 1999 with a new spirit of playing within himself in the big tournaments. What else could he do? The previous approach was obviously not working, and something had to be done. Mickelson’s goal was to get into contention, remain in contention, then charge late with birdies fueled by his trademark attacking style.

The strategy worked at the Masters. Entering the tournament, David Duval was the talk of Augusta. He had been

leaving everyone in his wake during the season and had won the BellSouth Classic by two strokes the week before. Having won four times before the April event, he was a clear favorite. But even though he began the tournament at 2-under, Duval quickly gave way to others. Augusta National, made more difficult with a longer rough and a couple of lengthened tee boxes, made play difficult. In the lead after the second day was José María Olazábal, who was 8-under-par following a second round 66. Close behind, though, was Mickelson who remained in contention with a 3-under-par 69 in round two. Entering the final day, Greg Norman trailed Olazábal by just one stroke and Mickelson was close behind, in striking distance at just five strokes off the pace.

Paired together in the final group, the leading duo of Olazábal and Norman was fitting for the last Masters of the millennium, considering that Olazábal had endured much trouble due to a nagging foot problem that forced him to miss eighteen months away from the game and Norman had such a painful, close-but-yet-so-far Masters record. Norman had caught Olazábal and was tied for the lead entering Augusta's most famous hole, the par-2 12th. Perhaps juiced by the crowd cheering his surge, Norman goosed his ball at impact, sending it flying over the slender green and into the bushes behind it. After the allowed search of five minutes yielded no ball, Norman was forced to re-tee. He made a bogey and lost the lead, headed toward more heartbreak at Augusta National. Olazábal proceeded to claim a two-shot victory, his second at the Masters.

Meanwhile, methodically plowing along close behind was Mickelson, who broke par for three consecutive rounds

after opening with a 74. On the final day, Mickelson's 71 left him tied for sixth place. He had hovered near the leader board throughout the entire tournament. He was never considered a serious threat to win the tournament, but remaining in contention throughout when pars were particularly precious due to difficult greens conditions and longer rough, Mickelson found renewed confidence and believed his moment was just around the corner.

As the U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2 neared in 1999, Phil Mickelson confided among those close to him that he felt better about winning a major tournament than ever before. His game was peaking along with his confidence. There was one big issue at hand, however. Amy Mickelson was pregnant with the couple's first child. As bad as Mickelson wanted to get that monkey off his back and win a major, he would not dream of missing the delivery. With an original due date of June 30 and the U.S. Open scheduled to begin two weeks earlier, Mickelson agreed to play in the tournament under one condition: he would have a beeper; his wife would beep him if she went into labor; and he would leave the tournament immediately, even if in the middle of a round. He did not leave for the tournament until two days before it began, under assurances that everything was fine. And he made his wife "swear" she would page with the beeper if anything changed.

Excited about the impending delivery, Mickelson shared the story with anyone who would listen, and it became a featured story line in media around the country in the days leading up to the tournament. Always under a watchful eye due to his talent and continuing major slump, Mickelson was

now more at the forefront of the U.S. Open than at any recent major.

Expected to be exceedingly difficult because of the hard and fast greens at Pinehurst No. 2, which make holding an approach shot difficult, the U.S. Open began one day after a rainstorm, which made the greens more soft and forgiving. Taking advantage of the conditions, Mickelson attacked pins when they were placed in approachable positions, shooting a 3-under-par 67 and landing in a four-way tie for first.

The next day, the sun came out and the wind blew, drying out the greens and sending scores soaring. More than twenty players made par on the first day, but on the second, the number was only three. Continuing to manage his game, Mickelson shot an even-par 70, remaining in a tie for the lead with David Duval and popular, knickers-wearing golfer Payne Stewart. Difficult golf continued on the third day of the tournament as leaders gave shots back to par, but not to the field. At 1-under, Stewart was the leader heading into the final round, and Mickelson was just a shot back, at even par.

"I feel like I'm just a smidge away," Mickelson said after his round.

But his wife was just a smidge away from delivery as well. Just seven hours after ending his second round, Amy Mickelson started contractions. They had a deal, but she did not want to call, knowing that her husband could turn his fortunes with the major victory.

"I was totally in tears," she said. "The worst thing that could happen was I have the baby Saturday night and he's leading the U.S. Open."

Amy Mickelson went to the hospital, telling the doctor

her situation. All she needed was twenty-four hours. She was given a drug, Tribulatin, which slows the labor process, and her contractions went away. Her husband woke up the next morning unaware, and set about winning his first major tournament. By the middle of the round, four golfers remained in contention: Mickelson, Stewart, Tiger Woods, and Vijay Singh. As the leaders reached the final three holes, it was Mickelson, though, who held a single-shot lead.

As a worldwide television audience watched the dramatic play down the stretch unfold on Father's Day, Mickelson missed an eight-foot par putt on the 16th to fall into a tie. With just two holes to play, both golfers played the par-3 17th hole to perfection, but Mickelson just missed his birdie putt, while Stewart stepped up and holed his three-footer, taking him to one under par and giving him the outright lead.

Heading into the 18th hole, it appeared Mickelson was certainly doomed for another major defeat. Tension was high, however, and Stewart pushed his drive into the rough, making a bogey very likely. Mickelson pounded his tee shot into the fairway, giving him a chance for a birdie. The game was on, and the golf world hunkered down for a gripping finish. Forced to pitch out of the rough, Stewart was faced with seventy-five yards to the green. His third shot ended up fifteen feet short of the pin. After hitting the green in regulation, Mickelson could force a tie by making his birdie putt. His ball rolled toward the hole on his twenty-five-foot putt and looked as if it would fall, but it ended up just barely missing the cup. He had to settle for par and hope Stewart would miss his fifteen-footer, forcing a playoff the next day.

Stewart took a long time studying his putt, then rolled it

smoothly into the heart of the cup, becoming the first player in the 105-year history of the U.S. Open to win in such dramatic fashion. He clenched his fist and leaped high into the air in celebration. On impulse, he reached for Mickelson, grabbing him on both sides of the face and telling him as the camera zoomed close and millions watched, "Good luck with the baby, there's nothing like being a father."

"When he grabbed my face," Mickelson said, "and spoke to me about fatherhood, it changed my feeling about the disappointment I had just felt to what's more important in my life. And Payne made it very apparent that that was what was more important to him, too."

The golf world cheered with Stewart, long a leading favorite on the tour. It was another major defeat for Mickelson, but in his disappointment, something for him clearly changed. He had shown a gritty competitiveness down the stretch as well as a familial soft side in promising to leave the tournament on a moment's notice. In defeat, he hated to have let another slip by, but he was proud for Stewart and far from bitter.

Back in Arizona the next day, Mickelson's wife gave birth to their first child, Amanda Brynn. "I can't describe how special that feeling is when you see your own child come out of the woman you love," Mickelson said. "It was amazing. I can't believe that people would want to miss that. There are few experiences in life that you always cherish, and those events are what you live for."

Four months later, Stewart boarded a private plane with crew members on a flight from his home in Orlando, Florida, bound for Dallas, Texas. The small Learjet lost pressurization

in the cabin, and all five crew members and passengers aboard lost consciousness and ultimately died in the air before the plane crashed in South Dakota after veering for hours off course.

As the lone survivor of that historic U.S. Open battle at Pinehurst, Mickelson would leap from a tour favorite with a sympathetic label into modern golf iconic status. He never did win a single event in 1999, ending the longest active streak of consecutive years with victories, but by so graciously dealing with a difficult defeat, he became a winner, and the American everyman that most all golf fans pulled for.

TAKEAWAYS



1 Success leads to more harsh criticism. Deal with it. The more we win, the more attention others pay to our weaknesses. The only way to survive the increased pressure is to address it head-on.

2 When the pendulum swings momentum away, beyond your control, don't lash out. It has long been said that life is not always fair. It's not. But when others get the breaks, avoid saying or doing what you might later regret.


3 The gracious loser always wins. Coming in second, or worse, is never easy. Defeat often turns to victory, though, with the right attitude.

4 There's nothing like being a father. And that's the truth.

6



Setting Priorities

Getting completely absorbed by the one thing people identify us most with is easy. Our utter concentration on work or hobby is generally what led to success in the first place. Once we are successful, the need to continually improve often drives further obsession with staying on top, creating a never-ending cycle that takes time away from every other aspect of our lives. The ability to manage our lives through priority-setting is often a key to enduring happiness and success.

It's easier said than done, though, particularly in professional golf, where the work calendar involves weekends; holidays; and, especially for the top players, year-round events. Where was Daddy on Father's Day? Where was Daddy all summer? Where was Daddy on my first day of school? Where was Daddy on Easter? The answer is always the same: the golf course. And, to perform well in all the events, it takes even the best professional hundreds of hours

of practice. If you can't draw a line and know when to walk away, you often pay a price.

Take Lee Trevino, for instance. An above-average talent in his day but never considered one of the game's greatest talents, Trevino won six majors on the PGA Tour. The reason he won so many, he said, is that he outworked Jack Nicklaus.

"Jack was the most talented," Trevino said. "But I could outwork him. You know why? Because Jack was a great husband and a great daddy to five kids."

Trevino said he was the opposite, always putting his family second to golf. It cost him, he said, in the form of two families, something he often regrets. On the other hand, Nicklaus maintained a close-knit family while playing as a regular on the tour, and as a result he still has an active involvement in the lives of his grown sons. They are involved in his business, and the Nicklaus family often does many things together outside of golf, such as travel.

In this era of the PGA Tour, a dashing Tiger Woods emerged as the Jack Nicklaus on the course, beginning with the end of the 1999 season and extending through 2001. At twenty-five years old and a lean 6-foot-2 and 180 pounds, the golfing phenomenon was still a bachelor at the turn of the century, and his commitment was to establish himself as the best player in the game. Working with swing coach Butch Harmon, Woods had refined his game into one that blended power with course management. After winning four consecutive tour starts to end the 1999 season, Woods began 2000 at the same torrid pace, winning the season-opening Mercedes Championships and the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am. By the time he reached the Buick Invitational at

Torrey Pines in mid-February, Woods had notched seven consecutive wins and was dead set on extending his head-turning streak.

Phil Mickelson was still committed to his game as well, but the latter half of 1999 had been a life-changing eye-opener and a period when he worked harder than ever before to set priorities so that he did not live to play golf. The game was his job, as well as a lifelong hobby and passion, but even though it was his source of fame and the way most people in the world identified him, he did not want to be consumed by it above all else. The events of 1999, including the loss of yet another major when he was so close, followed by the birth of his daughter and the death of Payne Stewart, were reminders to Mickelson that family and loved ones matter most and that the games we play must always be kept in perspective.

“It was the biggest emotional swing that you could ever have imagined, from the lows of losing the greatest championship in the game of golf, following it with the most emotional high that I’ve ever experienced, sharing the birth of our child the very next day,” Mickelson said.

With the beginning of the new millennium, Mickelson committed to spending quality time with his wife and daughter. Family would be first, career second; then plenty of time for other hobbies and passions.

“A lot of pros think how well you play and the record you leave is the end-all,” Mickelson said. “But to me, there are so many more things to enjoy in life. I love competitive golf. But I also love spending time with my family and a million other things. When you look at the big picture, golf

is a game and it's fun, but I don't live for it. It's really not like it's a critical element."

Golf is what Mickelson loves, however, and he began in 2000 working to effectively balance his career and his family. The professional tour demands a busy schedule, but his solution was to take his family on the road with him in his airplane so that even while he's playing week after week, he's not missing watching his daughter grow up half the year. Spending time with his family was a priority, and playing golf was a priority. He was fortunate enough to be able to make both happen at the same time.

"Having such a great wife and family as I do, that's a support system that I want and need to play my best," Mickelson said. "Having them out traveling with me and having my wife watch many of the rounds allows me to play my best. I'm not going to spend 365 days a year golf-oriented. I think I have a few more dimensions than just one."

Disappointed that he did not win a major in the 1990s, Mickelson recommitted himself to doing whatever he had to do to improve his game, with the specific goal of winning major golf tournaments. He'd had a great career thus far in eight years of action on the PGA Tour, but he was not yet considered a great player because the big ones had eluded him. To say that winning a major became a top priority at the turn of the century would be an understatement.

"I think it's very important that it take place fairly soon, because I've had so many opportunities to really break through and win, and for whatever reason I just haven't come through and done it," Mickelson said.

Always Be Willing to Change Your Approach

As good as we are at something, we can always get better. Our environment is constantly changing, creating the need to improve. If we stay the same, others will pass us by. It's the reason why professionals such as lawyers and doctors have continuing education, and it's the reason why golfers hire swing coaches and spend hours practicing.

It was certainly no secret on the PGA Tour that the streaking success of Tiger Woods was largely due to his hard work with swing coach Butch Harmon. Sure, Woods was arguably the most talented golfer in the world, but golf, by its nature, is a game where mistakes are highly magnified, making it difficult to win regularly. By refining his swing, Woods was making fewer mistakes and thus winning more often. Aware that his own game could use refinement, Mickelson summoned coach Rick Smith and began major work on his swing. It was a simple matter of priority. If he wanted to catch Tiger, he needed to be willing to change.

Mickelson was known both for his smooth, sweeping power off the tee and a soft touch around the green. But his single swing claim to fame among average golf fans was his creation and deployment of the flop shot. With a chipping green in his backyard as a youngster, the flop shot—taking a full swing and moving the ball a very short distance with height and softness—became something fun to practice. In play it allows him to attack seemingly unattainable pins from difficult spots off the green. To create the flop from a tight lie, Mickelson “keeps his weight forward” and swings “down

steeply behind the ball to get the club underneath.” From a good lie, Mickelson moves his weight “more back so the club bottoms or shallows out through impact.”

“It’s a shot anyone can learn, but it takes a lot of practice,” he said.

What most anyone can’t learn is to hit the shot with the precision that Mickelson does. On a popular Golf Channel segment, Mickelson lined up just three feet in front of instructor Dave Pelz, who’s six-foot-five, with a small pile of balls and proceeded to hit them directly up and over his head with his patented full-swing flop shot. Had Mickelson miss-hit just one ball and struck Pelz in the face, the damage would have been severe. Yet he stood there as the film rolled, never flinching, sure that Mickelson would execute to perfection, which, of course, he did.

Nor can most anyone learn to execute the shot with such touch that the ball actually goes up and over Mickelson’s head—backward. Hitting the ball effectively forward is difficult enough for most golfers, but with a big follow-through, Mickelson has perfected the backward golf shot. It was shown first to the world in a television commercial, and Mickelson actually used the backward shot in competition during a tour event at Pebble Beach. In the midst of a terrible round and with his ball lying on the upslope of a bunker behind the green, he decided to use the backward shot. With a big swing, the ball went over his head and landed three feet from the cup before running off the front of the green.

Outside of the flop shot, though, Mickelson and his coach believed his swing needed retooling in 2000, and they approached three areas of his swing. First, Smith worked at

getting Mickelson to take the club back straight, instead of with a closed face. Second, he got Mickelson to reduce lower-body movement, enhancing arm extension and obtaining a more full release of the club. Third, he had Mickelson work on staying “on top of the ball” at follow-through to get a more controlled and stable swing. The biggest results would not happen overnight, of course. Mickelson certainly knew that. He also knew that while he was very good—one of the world’s best—he was obviously not good enough during his career to date to achieve a top and pressing priority, winning a major tournament. To do that, he needed to refine his game and be willing to change.

A Tiger Can Be Caught, Even If by the Tail

Even the most confident and talented of people need an occasional reminder of their abilities along the way in an ongoing pursuit of meeting priorities and achieving larger goals. A good, hands-on parent looks for signs in his or her children’s lives as they grow and mature, for reinforcement that they are moving in the right direction. A leading coach, questioning if his team grasps a message, seeks a reassuring victory.

On the professional golf tour, there is certainly no lack of confidence or talent. To stare a three-foot putt into the hole with a million dollars on the line and thousands of breath-holding fans crowded around the green takes a person with an unusual amount of “I’m the best” cockiness. As for talent, just to be able to average par in a hundred or

more rounds of golf on the best courses in the world is an achievement. No game is more difficult to perform well on an ongoing basis.

Phil Mickelson showed the golf world as an amateur that his was a rare talent. His confidence, a mentality that thinks he could do anything and everything successfully, from playing quarterback for the San Diego Chargers to pitching for a professional baseball team to beating the odds in gambling, is well documented. But even he admits to being caught in the roller-coaster nature of the game, where one reminder of talent takes confidence a long way down the road to the future.

In his first three events of 2000, Mickelson had played respectably, posting top-twenty finishes in the Bob Hope Classic (tied for sixteenth) and the Phoenix Open (tied for tenth), but the early wins he traditionally posted each PGA Tour season had proven elusive. He had been in the lead going into the back nine on Sunday in the Phoenix Open, played in his hometown of Phoenix, but he blew up with a 40, costing him the championship.

The Buick Invitational was played on a course that Mickelson knew perhaps better than any other golfer on tour, Torrey Pines in La Jolla. As a golfer at San Diego's "Uni" High School, he had played the front nine as many as three times per week, and his first professional win ever had come at the course, in 1993.

Also entered into the tournament, though, was the world's top-ranked player, Tiger Woods, who was in the midst of the longest PGA winning streak in fifty-two years: six. But it was Mickelson who got off to a fast start in the

tournament, shooting first- and second-round scores of 66 and 67, respectively, to claim a single-shot lead at 11-under-par 133. Seemingly out of contention, Woods was six shots back and just made the cut, by three strokes. Still, despite the fact that Mickelson was the hometown boy in the lead and was one of the game's most successful players ever, the crowds followed Woods in larger numbers, waiting for him to make a run at Lefty.

On the final day, it happened. Woods was seven shots out of the lead early on Sunday, but after Mickelson made double bogeys on No. 7 and No. 11, Woods actually caught him with a birdie on No. 13. The gallery and a national television audience sensed another Mickelson breakdown. He had not won in eighteen months, and Tiger was on a tear. Everyone wondered, almost prophetically, whether Mickelson would yield another tournament to the hard-charging Woods.

Mickelson fought back with a birdie on the par-5 13th when it appeared he was in trouble. His drive was "blocked to the left, in the rough and under a eucalyptus tree, leaving him no chance to reach the green in two."

"I knew I needed to make 4," Mickelson said. "I just didn't know how."

He had 116 yards to the pin. Pulling out a 9-iron to pry the ball from its difficult lie, Mickelson hit it perfectly, landing on the green and spinning back to within two feet for an easy birdie putt.

"After that, I was back in control of my game," he said.

Tiger would bogey the 14th and 15th holes, and Mickelson would follow with another birdie on the 14th, getting the

unusually large hometown crowd of thirty-five thousand strongly behind him. Tiger might have been the hottest and best player in the world at the time, but Americans love an underdog, and the smiling, personable Phil Mickelson emerged perhaps most significantly for the first time as the anti-Tiger, the hopeful force challenging the all-powerful leader. They came to watch Woods, but ended up being won over by Mickelson, who earned his biggest winner's check ever at the time and perhaps more importantly gave himself a confidence-boosting reminder that he, too, was one of the best in the world and capable of reaching his goals.

"To go against the best player in the world and come out on top means a lot," Mickelson said. "I know I can play against the best and win."

It was a priority he had set during the off-season, proving to himself and the world that he could play with Tiger Woods. Actually doing it restored his faith in his game and his hunger to reach even higher levels.

A little extra confidence can go a long way. For Phil Mickelson, it did not help him win a major golf tournament in 2000, but beating Tiger Woods in an intense, championship-style setting was a turning point, paving the way for his best year ever on the PGA Tour. Mickelson believed he could win, was working hard on his game, and expressed happiness because his family was not being neglected in the process.

A perfect example occurred the week before the 2000 Masters, when Mickelson became just the second player besides Woods to claim more than one victory on the tour. A rain-shortened event caused BellSouth Classic clubhouse leaders Mickelson and Gary Nicklaus (a son of Jack

Nicklaus), both at 11 under par, to have a sudden-death playoff to decide the winner. Playing the par-3 16th, Mickelson placed a 9-iron shot from 163 yards 18 feet from the hole. Nicklaus “caught his shot just a little heavy,” ending up with a difficult bunker lie. When his chip did not clear the lip, requiring another shot to the green, it became evident that all Mickelson had to do was two-putt for the win. Never one to leave a birdie, anyone’s guess at what Lefty did would be right. He promptly sailed his eighteen-footer directly into the cup for an exclamation point on his second win of the PGA season. Upon claiming the BellSouth Classic, Mickelson immediately sought out his wife, who, of course, was along for the trip and holding their nine-month-old daughter, Amanda. A smiling Mickelson embraced his wife and daughter, celebrating the win with his family on the spot.

At the sixty-fourth Masters the following week, Woods was the odds-on favorite, but by virtue of his improved play and two wins, Mickelson was considered a contender as well. After two days of play, Mickelson was in second place at 5 under par and just a stroke behind the leader, David Duval. But the man known as the best player to never win a major found bad luck in the tournament’s third round. The day began nicely enough in Augusta, but a strong, early April cold front that swept through the South postponed play for more than two hours. When it resumed, winds gusted to forty-two miles per hour and the temperature dropped into the forties, “turning the tree-lined fairways at Augusta National into Arctic wind tunnels.”

“It’s the worst conditions I’ve ever seen here, by far,” said Jack Nicklaus, who had played in the Masters since 1959.

Having to play almost his entire third round in the wind and cold, Mickelson battled for a 76. The damage, however, was done. He would compete well again on Sunday, shooting a 71 and earning a tie for seventh with Davis Love III and a \$143,000 paycheck, but faced another frustrating setback in a major tournament he believed he could win.

Mickelson was getting closer, though, and others were taking notice, particularly golf fans, who watched his record in the majors add on one by painful one and increasingly saw the talented golfer as an underdog to cheer for. With each passing major, he continued to sign autographs for fans, even after defeat, and continued facing the media and talking forthrightly about what could have been. His wife, for one, tried to dismiss the “no major thing,” suggesting it was no different from what other great athletes have faced in not winning the big one. Former NBA great Charles Barkley never won a championship ring, nor did former NFL quarterback Dan Fouts. But these players were part of teams. In professional golf, it’s one man against the others. Even Jack Nicklaus admitted that Mickelson was a “nice golfer,” but without major championships to his name, could not be considered a “great golfer.”

Mickelson’s consistent 2000 performance, earning three wins on the tour (he added the MasterCard Invitational) and playing near the top of the field in the Masters, the U.S. Open (tied for sixteenth), and the British Open (tied for eleventh), made him a leading favorite for the season’s final major, the PGA championship at Valhalla. A course Mickelson had played well in his career, Valhalla was viewed by many, including rival Tiger Woods, as setting up the perfect stage

for Mickelson to win his first major tournament. Designed by Nicklaus, Valhalla rewards those who hit high shots softly to the green, a Mickelson trademark.

He played solidly in the tournament, limiting mistakes and never taking himself out of contention, but never made a significant birdie run and ended up in a tie for ninth place, at 9 strokes back. Woods won his third major of the season and clearly established himself as PGA player of the year. Mickelson, though, was in the midst of a breakout season, having won three titles and having competed in every single major stronger than ever before. He was sitting third on the money list entering the season-ending Tour Championship and was pleased with his overall performance and move back toward the top of the professional field.

Held at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta and featuring the PGA season's top thirty money winners, the Tour Championship is not officially a major due to its limited field. But the course is set up like a major, the stakes are high (a \$5 million purse in 2000), and the field of players is the best in the world. Tiger Woods was a co-leader after two rounds, and while Mickelson was close behind (just a stroke back, at 9 under), few gave him a chance, considering Woods's winning record when in the lead going into the final day of a tournament. One person who did not agree was Mickelson, in the midst of capping his priority-driven season and full of confidence following his victory over Woods at Torrey Pines.

"I didn't really expect him to win," Mickelson said. "I thought I had a pretty good chance. And I really liked the position I was in, being one group in front and having them watch me make birdies."

Shooting a 4-under 67, Mickelson clipped Woods by two shots, winning his biggest paycheck ever and becoming the first in twenty tournaments since the world's No. 1 player turned pro to defeat him on Sunday when in the lead. It was also the second time of the season that Mickelson had beaten Woods down the stretch in a tournament. As usual, Mickelson was excited, but humble. The win capped yet another season in which Mickelson did not win a major, but it was a breakthrough season for him in the sense that confidence and swagger were regained and many priorities fulfilled.

"It's a wonderful way to end the year," he said.

Critics Are Paid to Criticize

When doing the best you can but still facing the close scrutiny of others, the best response is to keep doing your job and trying to meet your goals while making sure to see things from your own point of view. Phil Mickelson took exactly that approach during the 2001 season after becoming firmly established in the world golf community as the "best player to never win a major" and constantly undergoing analysis of others speculating why he could not get it done.

Wrote one golf journalist just before the 2001 Masters tournament: "Phil Mickelson, whose picture may be in the golf encyclopedia under the heading 'Best Player Without a Major,' comes into The Masters on a bit of a shaky streak. Sure, he survived a playoff to defend his Buick Invitational title in February, and has posted three other top-threes to

boot. But ‘Lefty’ lately has turned in some pretty interesting scorecards rife with a mixture of birdies, eagles, bogeys and worse.”

The play continued in the Masters, when Mickelson began the final round just a shot behind Tiger Woods, who was trying to win his fourth consecutive major tournament spanning two years. Down the stretch, though, Mickelson faltered, missing a relatively easy bogey putt on No. 16 and missing a twenty-foot birdie putt on No. 17. Woods escaped with a historic win.

Another close major that got away led to even more speculation from the media as the 101st U.S. Open approached as to why Mickelson could not win the biggest tournaments. The biggest assumption was that by playing such a gambling, go-for-broke style, he was taking himself out of play in tournaments where each stroke was so preciously important. Mickelson, however, made it clear to members of the media gathered at Southern Hills in Tulsa, Oklahoma, that he had a style that made him unique and successful, and changing it for the benefit of others did not seem to make sense.

“Well, I’ve come to the realization that I can’t change my approach to the game,” Mickelson said. “I don’t enjoy playing conservative. And I have not won tournaments playing conservative. And I’ve never played conservative.

“So to change my style of play would be wrong,” he continued. “It would really be putting me at a disadvantage. To make a few more intelligent decisions or less risky shots that I wouldn’t necessarily call conservative, I would just call making birdie from thirty feet, as opposed to five feet away;

that I will certainly approach certain pins, but it will still be aggressive. I'll still be thinking birdie."

On his thirty-first birthday, Mickelson did indeed make birdies, putting himself into contention in yet another major. He fired a 68 on the third day of play at Southern Hills, moving into sixth place at 3 under. Sunday, though, was the same story for Mickelson, who made a handful of bogeys midway through his round—on the 9th, 10th, 13th, 15th, and 17th holes—to shoot a 75 and end up in seventh place, six strokes off the lead. He knew golf fans and the media were still counting his major winless record, but he let them know it would not be his ultimate measuring stick.

"It's certainly not the finish I would have liked, but out of playing [thirty-six] majors now, and not winning any, I'm tired of beating myself up time after time," said Mickelson. "If I happen to win the British Open or the PGA this year, that would be great. And it's something I will be gung-ho for and working hard for. But again, if it doesn't happen, I'm tired of beating myself up."

When the final major of 2001 arrived, questions to Mickelson about his inability to win a major intensified even more. Young David Duval, who often received the same "best player to never win a major" tag, had claimed his the month before, winning the Claret Jug in the British Open at Royal Latham. So heavy was the media pressure that even heated rival Tiger Woods came to Phil's defense with the media.

"Phil will win one," Tiger said. "It's a matter of time. He's not that old. It's not like he's fifty years old. He's in his early thirties. He will be contending and he'll get a couple of

lucky breaks and win a major championship. Or he'll just flat outplay everybody."

The media, though, kept on hammering, reminding Mickelson that he was tagged the PGA's underachiever. With more than twenty PGA Tour wins, it was a tag that Mickelson earned and did not deny. But he had decided before the season that a priority was to focus on what he had—including family and an excellent career—instead of what he did not have.

"What I would see as being a negative is having not won a major and not even being included among the best players to have not won a major," he said. "That's basically saying, 'Gosh, you may never do it.'"

At the Atlanta Athletic Club's Highland course, Mickelson came so very close during the eighty-third PGA Open in 2001 to winning his first major. Once again, however, a second-place finish was difficult, as Mickelson watched victory slip from his hands on the 18th hole on the final day.

With consecutive opening rounds of 66, Mickelson was just a shot out of the lead behind David Toms and Shingo Katayama of Japan on Saturday. Phil remained in close contention entering the final day after shooting a 4-under-par 66, trailing Toms by two strokes. On Sunday, he and Toms battled back and forth. Tied for the lead, however, Mickelson had a disastrous three-putt on 16 that put him a stroke out with just two to play.

After making pars on the 17th, they reached the 18th hole with Mickelson trailing by a shot. Toms gave Mickelson hope off the tee, however, hitting into the rough on the 490-yard hole. He had a tough stance and lie, and the hole, more

than two hundred yards away, was guarded at the front by water. Toms first grabbed a 5-wood, and the crowd cheered. He had second thoughts, though, and took a 6-iron to lay up. The Atlanta golf crowd cooed and begged Toms to go for it, but he played conservatively, successfully laying up instead.

Mickelson reached the green in two shots and had a major advantage, apparently on the verge of securing a major win. On his third shot, however, Toms hit to within eight feet with a sand wedge, placing pressure on Mickelson to make his thirty-foot birdie putt. He came close, hitting the long putt right on the line, but it stopped just inches short of the cup. Toms then stood over his eight-footer and calmly knocked it into the hole, claiming victory and leaving Mickelson with yet another close call.

After the tournament, Mickelson was frustrated at having let another major tournament get away, but he talked with the media about the majors he planned to win in the future. "I'm not going to beat myself up," he said. "There is a long time in between majors. People are talking about one win. I'm trying to win a bunch of majors."

He was disappointed, but he left the Atlanta tournament with his priorities still in order. His wife, eight months pregnant, was on the trip, sharing in the ups and downs of the close call. After the tournament, they walked out the back door of the media center together, arm in arm, and Mickelson managed to smile and speak to well-wishers. Second place was not so bad, nor was his current place in life. It was all just a matter of priorities.

TAKEAWAYS



1 Continually reassess priorities. Our lives change more frequently than we may sometimes be aware, creating the need to reassess our priorities and set new ones accordingly.

2 Always be willing to change. No matter how skilled we are at work or play, our game can always use improvement. Don't be afraid to try.

3 A little confidence goes a long way. Talent is often not enough. Even the most talented need an occasional confidence boost through smaller wins along the journey in search of victory in life's majors.

4 The perspective that matters most is our own. We need to be aware of what others think, but when trying our best and delivering good results, the question of success or failure should be determined through our own priorities and expectations.

7



Enduring Tough Times

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Much like the game of golf, life is a matter of balance. For everything to be nearly perfect, many elements have to come together at once. They rarely do, of course, because nothing ever stays the same. When our driver is on and we're pounding the ball far and straight off the tee, it seems without fail that our irons will go awry. If we're getting off the tee adequately and our irons are dialed in, the green become a foreign object, leaving us in a constant struggle to maintain happiness and success through equilibrium.

For Phil Mickelson, the elements had come nicely together during the 2001 PGA Tour season. He had moved into second in the world golf rankings, trailing only Tiger Woods. After finishing eighth at the NEC Invitational in late August and pushing his season's earnings well beyond \$4 million, he did what many professionals would never have conceived of doing at that stage of their career and

took a break, skipping the lucrative Tour Championship in November, of which he was the defending champion.

His second child, daughter Sophia, had just been born. Mickelson said she was having colic and he wanted to spend more time with his family. And they were packing as well to move from Scottsdale to a new, custom-built home in the San Diego area. He and Amy had apparently decided to move for several reasons. With two children, one being a new baby, being near family made sense, as did being in the area where he first learned to love and play the game.

The new Mickelson home was built “on a botanical six-acre hillside” in Rancho Santa Fe, California, a small community thirty miles north of San Diego. It has just five thousand residents, but due to the nearly perfect year-round climate and the proximity to San Diego, they are among the richest per capita in the United States.

The six-thousand-square-foot, Tuscan-style home has all the amenities that a rich family-man professional golfer would want, including a swimming pool and a living room with a pool table and six television screens, “all with their own cable hookup, so on Sundays when he’s home the resident NFL addict can watch every football game on the schedule. There’s also a workout room and in the backyard is a large, figure-eight putting green, built to professional specification (of course).”

Whether it was the comfortable environs, the desire to be with his children, burnout of the game, personal issues, or a combination of all was not evident, but when Mickelson said he was taking a break, he meant it. Beginning at the end of August 2001, he did not return to competitive play for five

months, skipping the season-opening Mercedes Championships and the opportunity to begin a new season square-off against the world's top player, Tiger Woods.

But even though Phil Mickelson seemed to have all the elements of his life in balance and claimed to be doing exactly what he wanted to do—spending more time with his wife and daughters and taking a much-needed break—the media that had for so long been so kind to Mickelson began to throw him jabs and barbs, suggesting he was having personal and family problems linked to gambling and was overweight and out of shape and not prepared to maintain his lofty world ranking and battle Woods for the top position. Some players even hinted that something with Mickelson was amiss.

Said Tiger Woods when Mickelson did not show up for the 2002 season-opening Mercedes Championships: “But I’ve heard a lot of different things about what’s going on with his family. Whatever it is, I’m sure it’s a good reason.”

Play the Odds . . .

One person's enjoyment is often another's scorn, and nothing illustrates that better for Mickelson than his admitted passion for gambling. A frequent visitor to Las Vegas, a former ESPN radio handicapper of NFL games, and a passionate card player, Mickelson no doubt developed a passion for the odds on the golf course. Long a game where betting, even among friends, is considered standard at the amateur level, casual rounds of golf are made more interesting for players when money is on the line. Most professionals don't gamble during practice rounds, focusing their attention on

the course and their game, but a few do, and Mickelson is one of them.

Typically, the pros play a Skins game, with each skin—the value set for winning each hole, typically \$100—going to the winner of each hole (ties are carried over). Mickelson is said to prefer a Skins variation called Hammer, in which the bets can be doubled at any time during a hole. This makes the stakes higher and puts more pressure on players because if the Hammer is accepted, the value of the hole is doubled.

“The reason we play Hammer or play Skins is because each putt matters,” says Mickelson. “It gets us in a frame of mind that each three- or four-footer makes a difference. It gives us a chance to prepare for the pressure that we will feel during the tournament. Hammer allows you to double the bet and makes each shot critical.”

Most games are based on amounts from \$20 to \$200.

“That’s a typical day,” he said.

When the heavy hitters get together, however, rounds have been played for much larger stakes. Even Mickelson admitted that one game that was widely rumored in the clubhouse and among the media between himself and John Huston against John Daly and Tim Herron over two practice rounds at the 1998 Masters escalated to \$27,000—won by Mickelson and Huston.

“Out on tour there are some guys who really like to play,” Mickelson said. “And that was one of those times. That was the first practice round I ever got excited to play.”

Mickelson’s off-course taste for playing the odds is what began to draw scrutiny and make others question if his life, in fact, was in the balance he portrayed. It was well known

that he frequented Las Vegas. When meeting one journalist for an interview, even, the chosen meeting place was Las Vegas. When asked during the interview about the most he'd ever lost in a casino, Mickelson replied matter-of-factly, "That's personal."

He made no secret of a big win, however, from a sports bet. After posting on his www.phil-mickelson.com Web site in August 2000 his opinion that the Baltimore Ravens would win the 2001 Super Bowl hands down, Mickelson went to Las Vegas and placed a big bet to support his conviction. Getting 28–1 odds, he placed a \$20,000 wager on the Ravens to win. Saying he shared the bet with his mother-in-law, Mickelson boasted of his bet and prediction through the 2000 NFL season as the Ravens did in fact make their way to the Super Bowl. They did win, and the payout was \$560,000.

"My mother-in-law and I were on the phone with each other five, six, seven times every Sunday," Mickelson said.

Handicapping professional football was not new to Mickelson. He did it publicly on ESPN radio for the *Dan Patrick Show* in 2001. In week two, for instance, Mickelson made the following picks:

Phil Mickelson's Week 2 NFL Picks:

Miami (–1½) vs. Oakland

Detroit (–1½) at Cleveland

Philly (–3) at Seattle

Buffalo (+10) at Indy

Rams (–6½*) at San Francisco

*Phil's weekend "lock" is Rams at San Francisco and he believes Buffalo at Indy will be the highest-scoring game.

If someone had taken Mickelson's advice in 2001—which almost assuredly they did—and bet \$100 on each pick, doubling up on his “lock,” they would have made \$200, minus, of course, a 10 percent fee to the booking agent. What Mickelson knows picking NFL games that others don't is anybody's guess, but he has played the stakes with other sports as well.

When he announced during 2001 that he would not play in the Tour Championship in order to spend more time with his wife and children, he drew the ire of some in the media when he showed up in Arizona for a World Series baseball game between the Diamondbacks and New York Yankees. It was reported that he had placed a \$20,000 pre-season wager at odds of 35 to 1 on Arizona winning it all. The winner's share was reportedly split since it was a pool bet shared by others, but the news, while showing Mickelson as an effective gambler, only fueled rumors he no doubt was wanting to go away.

In 2001, Mickelson even broke a PGA Tour policy by gambling on an actual tournament event. It was a small amount of money and a seemingly innocent wager, but it forced the tour commissioner to fine Mickelson and created yet even more publicity connecting him to gambling. First reported in *Golf World* magazine, the story goes that Mickelson was in the players' lounge after having finished his round at Firestone Country Club. The tournament had gone to a playoff involving Jim Furyk and Tiger Woods. Furyk's third shot was in a bunker, and Woods had a thirty-five-foot birdie putt. The *Golf World* story said Mickelson “turned to the table next to him and offered 25–1 odds that Furyk would hole out from the bunker.”

Two players, Stewart Cink and David Toms, turned the bet down, but fellow tour left-hander Mike Weir accepted the \$20 bet. Furyk holed his shot, meaning Weir owed Mickelson \$500. When the PGA learned of the bet through the magazine article, both Mickelson and Weir received small fines and reprimands.

. . . While Going for Broke

The only thing that bothered some people more than Phil Mickelson's wagering was his on-course gambling. Attributing it to a personality flaw that made Mickelson believe he was invincible and could overcome stacked odds, many people, including some of the game's most respected professionals, believed it was keeping the talented left-handed player from fulfilling his potential.

Despite more than twenty wins on the PGA Tour and a record second to only Tiger Woods, known as arguably the greatest player ever in the game, Mickelson's critics could always find a shot in a tournament said to be risky or gambling in nature that supposedly cost him dearly, keeping him two steps off the heels of Woods.

At the 2002 Bay Hill Invitational, for instance, No. 2-ranked Mickelson challenged the No. 1-ranked Woods on the final day for the championship, only to lose by five strokes. Never mind that Mickelson shot an under-par round of 71 on the final day, and all that Woods shot was a 69. He'd had a three-shot lead going into the final day, and Mickelson was just fortunate to catch him on the front nine. Still, when Mickelson made a "dubious" decision to go for the green

with a bad lie under trees on the par-5 16th hole, hitting into water, scribes reported that Mickelson “only raised more questions about his game—and his decisions.”

Mickelson bristles at the thought that he continually causes himself to lose by taking the aggressive position with golf clubs. Gambling to create shots and force birdies makes Phil the Thrill a top player in the game. He also said it’s what keeps the game fun, and he enjoys trying to “make birdies from behind the trees.”

“I have had a number of chances to win majors . . . I wouldn’t have had those chances had I played any other way,” Mickelson said. “Now, I may never win a major playing that way, I don’t know. I believe if I’m patient, I will. But the fact is that if I change the way I play golf, one, I won’t enjoy the game as much, and two, I won’t play to the level I have been playing.

“So I won’t ever change. Not tomorrow, Sunday, or at Augusta or the U.S. Open, or any tournament.”

The dialogue was part of an ongoing rant unleashed by Mickelson to members of the media during the Players Championship. Defensive over attacks from his play at Bay Hill the previous week, he launched into what is now known by many as the “Mickelson Manifesto,” his convicted approach to how he plays the game no matter what anyone else says or thinks.

As long as he was the world’s No. 2 player behind Tiger Woods, arguably the best to ever play the game of golf, there was little chance of convincing Mickelson that his go-for-broke style was costly. In 2002 he was having one of his best starts ever on the PGA Tour, having finished third at the

Masters and planning to make a run at the U.S. Open, scheduled at one of the most beautiful and challenging public golf courses in the country, Bethpage Black, the 7,214-yard course situated in New York's Bethpage State Park.

Along with Woods, Mickelson was a natural favorite in the tournament because of his length from the tee, the generally flat and manageable greens, and the fact that he'd been hanging near the leader board of most recent majors. The feeling was strong that his time was near, and a long public course not too dissimilar from a Torrey Pines, which Mickelson played regularly as a youngster, had the makings of the perfect breakthrough setting for Lefty.

A nontraditional major venue since it was the site of millions of rounds of public golf since opening in the 1930s, Bethpage Black was long considered one of the country's top courses, but it wasn't until the 2002 U.S. Open that it hosted a USGA or PGA event. Updated in 1998 by Rees Jones to accommodate the U.S. Open, the course is played regularly by amateur hackers who can sleep in their car for a morning tee time, paying just \$31 on weekdays for a round.

For the U.S. Open, the course's length was to be its biggest bite for the professionals. The longest Open venue ever promised to reward long drives, but put a premium on accuracy when the wind would blow. And for good measure, the USGA dumped nine thousand tons of sand in seventy bunkers to make getting out more difficult. They also let grass around the greens grow so long that players did not know whether to flop or chop up to greens.

On the first day, Tiger Woods ran away from the field, shooting a 3-under-par 67 when only fourteen other players

broke par. More players than that did not even record a single birdie. Mickelson found real trouble on just one hole, the 459-yard 15th hole. Trying to play safely for a change, he hit a 2-iron off the tee into the wind. The short drive forced him to hit another 2-iron from the fairway, but it did not reach the elevated green. His chop-shot approach from the thick grass sailed seventy feet past the pin, leaving Mickelson with a three-putt double bogey. Still, he managed to shoot an even-par 70 for the round, and the bloated scores of the field meant he was in contention from the start.

By the second day of play at Bethpage, it became obvious that something unique was under way regarding Mickelson, and it had less to do with his play than with his appeal. The New York crowd, noted for its discerning manner, anointed Mickelson, not the world's No. 1 player, Tiger Woods, as the crowd favorite, following his every move with thunderous applause and raucous New York support. The movement caught the attention of everyone, including fellow players who shook heads in amazement at the rock star treatment and eager encouragement the masses showered on Mickelson.

After shooting a second-round 73, Lefty gave his New York entourage a thrilling Saturday as he charged hard at leader Tiger Woods with seven birdies on a wild day of play that resulted in a 3-under-par 67. At one point he was ten strokes behind Woods in the round, but a surge of birdies, including a twenty-five-foot putt on the par-3 17th hole that sent the crowd into a heightened frenzy, got him fist-pumping and within eyesight of the top of the leader board.

A rough start and a bogey on the 18th cost him a spot in

the final group with Woods, but the difficult conditions of Bethpage Black meant that he was still in major contention. Despite a shaky swing, Woods shot even par in the third round and held a four-shot lead going into the final round, with Spain's Sergio Garcia close behind. With Tiger's spectacular record for holding final-round leads in majors (seven of seven), few gave Mickelson decent odds of overtaking him.

Mickelson was not conceding, however, suggesting before the round that he would charge with birdies to put pressure on the leader. Tiger gave up ground on Saturday; he could do it again on Sunday. On the day of Mickelson's thirty-second birthday—the gallery serenaded him with “Happy Birthday” while he hit on the practice range—Lefty cut Woods's five-shot lead down to two on two different occasions. The one that got the most attention was a birdie on the par-5 13th, which came after a weather suspension in play.

“When I birdied 13, I thought I had a very good chance,” Mickelson said to the media after the tournament. “I could feel the electricity. I could feel the excitement. I could feel I was making a run at it.”

Mickelson's run at Woods and his first major tournament victory ended with the harsh realities of bogeys on the 16th and 17th holes, however, and twenty-six-year-old Tiger claimed his seventh major in his last eleven outings. But even in another major defeat Mickelson had won, surging to unprecedented popularity with the New York crowd and establishing himself as one of the more popular players ever in the game. “The people of New York helped me and gave me one of the most valuable experiences of my career,” he said.

The very next week Mickelson reinforced the premise that he was the world's second-best player in talent and the world's No. 1 player in popularity by winning the Canon Greater Hartford Open to the approving roars of fifty thousand fans clamoring at the Tournament Players Club at River Highlands in Cromwell, Connecticut, to watch and support the anti-Tiger. Entering the final round, Mickelson faced a five-shot deficit, but it was not Tiger Woods he trailed. Mickelson shot a final-round 6-under-par, 64 that included a dramatic birdie on the 18th hole to escape a playoff with runners-up Davis Love III and Jonathan Kaye.

By the time Mickelson reached the final major of 2002, his game had slipped and his energy seemed to be drained. An opening round of 76 at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Minnesota was followed by a second-round 72 and a third-round 78 to leave Lefty nineteen strokes off the pace entering the final day. He was talking not about charging at the finish, but just finding the rhythm to muster a decent shot or two. He finished tied for thirty-fourth after a strong final round, but would not win again on the PGA Tour in 2002, and the questions about his style of play grew louder in the offseason and in the beginning of the 2003 season, when many wondered if he was in denial about what elements of his game needed changing.

ESPN golf analyst and former two-time U.S. Open winner Andy North is a Mickelson fan "enamored with his skills," but he said in 2003 that unless Lefty changed his game, he might never win a major. Gambling with shots was fine in January at the Bob Hope Classic, played on resort courses in Palm

Springs, California, but the punishment of risky attempts was much more severe and costly in majors.

“Phil, in my opinion, may be the one guy that has enough talent to beat Tiger day in and day out,” said North. “I have an unbelievable amount of respect for Phil, and you hate to keep comparing Phil to Tiger.

“But Tiger has figured out that if you can put it in the fairway with a 2-iron and have a 7-iron shot, that’s fine. Phil will decide to hit a driver to have a wedge in. Players at that level, the difference between wedges and 7-irons isn’t a big deal, but playing from the fairway as opposed to the rough in major championships, that’s a huge deal.”

Simply, Mickelson’s style and personality are of confident humbleness in which he believes he can get it done, but he takes responsibility and makes no apologies when he can’t. It’s the “I can’t fail” mentality common with high achievers that rewards people because they are willing to take risks and often makes them pay for having done so as well. Mickelson plays that way pretty much no matter what he is doing.

When his swing coach, Rick Smith, arranged a pitching tryout for Mickelson in 2003 with the Toledo Mud Hens, a Triple-A professional baseball affiliate of the Detroit Tigers, Mickelson flew to Ohio gung-ho, believing he could throw the baseball well enough that he might get a chance to actually pitch in a professional game. Mickelson is known to loosen his rotator cuff by playing catch before tournaments. He was a youth league all-star as a pitcher and had worked with a former Texas Rangers pitching coach on his stuff.

With his wife in tow (in the dugout, Amy Mickelson

acknowledged to an onlooker how “cute” her husband looked), Mickelson flew to Toledo, put on a uniform, and with Tigers organization coaches watching, threw batting practice to eighteen members of the Toledo team. Most were pitchers, yet Mickelson challenged each that if they could hit a home run off him, he would give them \$300.

“I know I don’t have the talent the players here do,” Mickelson said, “but this is a lifetime dream.”

Nobody hit the ball out of the park against Mickelson. The closest call was one ball to the warning track. But with a fastball that reportedly did not break a paltry seventy miles per hour, Mickelson was not offered a chance to pitch in the pros, and the trip to Toledo ended up costing him more grief from the media for his distraction from the game of golf.

Your Body Is Your Most Important Club

Another area of Mickelson’s life members of the media and others mumbled about being out of balance and inconsistent with his professional goals was his physical fitness, or what some said was a lack thereof. He was listed in the PGA media guide as 6-foot-2 and 190 pounds, but his weight dramatically increased. It came at a time when other young players on the tour, most notably Tiger Woods and David Duval, were gaining increasing attention for using finely toned muscles as means of improving their golf games.

Long known for having slight pudginess and a flabby chest, Mickelson gained weight in his face and elsewhere, causing others to suggest that he was not doing what it

takes to win major golf tournaments. He often disagreed when asked about the benefits of using muscles as weapons on the golf course. After all, he was known as one of the longer hitters in the game, able to rip 350-yard drives in competition with regularity.

“Right or wrong,” he said, “my opinion is that staying in shape isn’t going to help you shoot lower scores. It may lengthen your career, and granted, I’m not exactly a fanatic about it. I do spend time in the gym working out, lifting weights, trying to stay somewhat loose and limber and have decent strength. But I don’t go to the gym to pump iron, thinking it’s going to help me shoot 64 tomorrow. That’s not how it works.”

Mickelson built a workout room in his new house, hired a trainer, and did in fact begin working out, but apparently used different techniques other than raw weight lifting to achieve more nimbleness with the golf club and in hopes of ultimately gaining more control of his game. But even though he reported for duty at the beginning of the 2001 season obviously more fit, he still had some of his trademark pudginess and claimed he always would.

He says he gained more weight than usual during his wife’s pregnancies but that because he has subcutaneous fat, or fat that lies underneath the muscle, as opposed to visceral fat, above the muscle, getting rid of it was almost impossible. People would just have to learn to accept the fact that Phil Mickelson’s physique might never look like Tiger Woods’s, but that did not mean Phil did not want to win or had lost his balance and no longer wanted to win big on the PGA Tour.

You Can Keep Your Head Down . . .

Whether gambling or weight gain or anything else was creating a lack of balance in Phil Mickelson's life to the degree that it was bothering others is doubtful. It is safe to assume, though, that insinuating barbs from the media and stories attributed only to "rumors" certainly were bothering him. How could they not? Mickelson was widely considered one of the more sensitive players on tour, known for paying attention to what was being said about him in the press. When the heat began pouring on and kept coming, Mickelson understandably got defensive, and members of his family did as well.

Radio personality Scott Kaplan, cohost of the *Scott and B. R. Show* on the "Mighty 1090" in San Diego, said that "every time I mention [Mickelson's] name on the radio, his sister/spokesperson calls to complain, as if I don't have the right to be complimentary or critical. I suppose I better watch my words."

The sister/spokesperson is Tina Mickelson, a television golf analyst and Phil's older sister. "How dare I question Phil's desire? Well, it didn't seem to be eating him up, he didn't seem consumed with a Major, his conditioning was certainly in question, it all seemed reasonable to me. Sister/spokesperson told a colleague that Phil was unhappy because fans would yell to him on the course during the Buick Invitational, that he should hear what I was saying about him on the radio. As far as I can recall, what I was saying was that Phil had a great life and career going, with or without a Major, and that I was willing to trade places."

One of the more frustrating blows against Mickelson came during one of the PGA's biggest annual events, the Players Championship. A so-called fifth major, the Ponte Vedra, Florida, tournament was skipped by Mickelson in 2003 for what at the time was an unknown reason. Writers and television commentators picked at Lefty once again, suggesting that by skipping the tournament, he was showing a total lack of commitment to the game. Warned by members of Mickelson's inner circle that "they would be sorry" for making a big deal of his no-show, they did it anyway, only to find out three months later that Mickelson skipped the tournament because his wife and his newborn son, Evan, had almost died during a complicated delivery.

"It's pretty bad when you turn on the TV and hear them questioning his drive for the game and whether he still cared about golf," Tina Mickelson said.

The reason cited by Mickelson allies for his not just setting the record straight at the time was that "he's a very private guy." In many instances, however, Mickelson is quite public, like the time his wife was due to give birth during the 1999 U.S. Open. He wore that on his sleeve to the chagrin of some but in this instance chose not to talk about it, creating more frustration between himself and the media.

Late in the 2003 season, the media took issues with Mickelson before the start of the PGA championship, held in Rochester, New York. Before big tournaments, he often likes to get away from the course while other players weave through the media and fans for last-minute practice rounds. In this instance, he did not go to another course to practice,

but to the nearby training camp of the Buffalo Bills. He considered it a way to get away from the 0-for-whatever pressure. Many members of the media considered it another sign that Mickelson was no longer committed to winning the biggest tournaments.

“I don’t feel as though I’ve tried to stay ‘off the radar,’ if you will,” he said. “I just wanted a little time to myself to get things going again. It’s a nice way to get away from the golf course and, physically and mentally, have a little bit of a break.”

In response to the continued barbs, Mickelson tried to fight back at the media by shunning some of them, but he was not very good at it due to his niceness. Frustrated that the media had seemingly turned against him and kept “rumors” as a means of validating speculation, the normally agreeable Mickelson began turning down media requests as best he could. When asked by *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* writer Jeff Schultz for an interview in late 2003, Mickelson replied, “I’m gonna take a pass.”

“Really, I’m sorry,” Mickelson said. “I’m just fed up. It’s you and your colleagues. I’m not going to waste any more of my time. So I’m going to go on a date now.”

After being told by Schultz that he had never talked to the golfer before, Mickelson still declined, but began talking nonetheless. “No, I can’t. It’s been four years of shot after shot after shot and I’m just tired of giving my time and taking it on the chin.”

Minutes later, Mickelson was still giving an interview in trying to decline one and offering his questioner water and pleasantries. The point, however, was made. Phil Mickelson

was too nice to be mean, but the balance of his life was in public question, and he was not happy about it.

. . . While Keeping Your Chin Up

No matter how pleased we are with some areas of life at any given time, those that need the most propping up in the ebb and flow of strengths and weaknesses will usually take a toll if they continue for too long.

For Mickelson, the impact of tough times on his golf game was a slow progression. He began 2002 by winning his first tournament of the year, the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic in Palm Springs, California. Not bad, claiming a \$720,000 check the first day back at the office after a five-month lay-off. Mickelson did it in style, capping the five-round event with a 64 to force a playoff with David Berganio. On the first hole of the playoff, Mickelson stuck a wedge from eighty yards to within inches of the hole on his second shot to earn the win.

“It’s only been five months,” Mickelson said. “It’s not that long. I’ve played golf for twenty-nine, thirty years, so it’s not like I’m going to forget how.”

Mickelson also won the Canon Greater Hartford Open for his second tour victory of 2002 and maintained his No. 2 world ranking through the end of the season, but the majors eluded him once again, and a slump began after his poor showing in the PGA championship at Hazeltine that continued into the 2003 season. The ongoing pressure to win a major appeared to finally be taking its toll on Mickelson, and his game hit an all-time professional low.

The 2003 season began with promise when he made another serious bid at the Masters. In the year of rain at Augusta National—the first round was washed out for the first time in history—the winner was a left-hander, but his name was Mike Weir, not Phil Mickelson. After remaining in close contention with three respectable rounds, Mickelson made a charge at the leader board with his best closing round at the Masters yet, a 4-under-par 68. He holed a ninety-foot birdie putt on the 2nd hole after hitting into a creek, sending cheers through the crowd and rumbles that this might finally be his year. Weir, however, came from two strokes back with six holes to play to force a playoff with Len Mattiace, beating him on the first extra hole. Mickelson claimed a \$408,000 check and another top-five finish at the Masters, taking with him confidence from the strong final-round finish.

That was as good as it would get in 2003 for Phil Mickelson, however. His finishes throughout the rest of the year looked more like they belonged to a Tour journeyman than the man who began the season ranked second in the world. He finished sixty-seventh at the HP Classic of New Orleans, forty-fourth at the Byron Nelson Championship, fifty-fifth at the U.S. Open, and fifty-ninth at the British Open. In defending his back-to-back championships at the Greater Hartford Open, Mickelson posted a dismal 2-over-par after four days to tie for fifty-eighth place. At the Chrysler Championship, Mickelson's final PGA Tour event of 2003, he opened with a horrendous 80 and followed that up with a 74, missing the cut.

Playing in twenty-six events, Mickelson won more than \$1.6 million, but he did not win once. He dropped to

thirty-eighth on the money list, missing the cut for the Tour Championship, and his world ranking dropped to thirteenth, behind such players as Kenny Perry and Nick Price. Dating back to 2002, he had gone more than thirty tournaments without a win.

“If the skid continues for any length of time, expect rumors to resurface that there’s a gambling problem behind it,” wrote *Boston Globe* golf writer Jim McCabe in a column for *NBCSports.com*. “He vehemently denied reports late last year, but at the Tour Championship in Houston—just the first Tour Championship the left-hander had failed to qualify for since his rookie year (1992)—some players admitted that they believed the rumors and conceded that Mickelson didn’t seem nearly the player he had been in previous seasons.”

Adding insult to the disappointing season was a loss to Annika Sorenstam in the Skins Game and an 0-for-5 performance in the President’s Cup in South Africa, pitting the United States against a team of internationals. The match ended in a tie, and many mutterings had it that if Mickelson had only scratched once, the United States would have the cup.

Mickelson’s infamous streak in the majors, counted by the media back to his days as an amateur, extended during his winning streak as well. It was not without effort, and there were some sterling performances that most players would be exceedingly proud of. They were not wins, however, and the streak went on, beginning with a third-place finish in the Masters (0 for 43), a tie for fifty-fifth in the U.S. Open (0 for 44), a tie for fifty-ninth at the British Open (0 for 45), and a tie for twenty-third at the PGA championship (0 for 46).

Mickelson claimed the record did not matter, that it was

only something others worried excessively about. “Not having won a major doesn’t drive me nuts, it really doesn’t,” he said. “I rarely think about it, and it doesn’t consume me, even though I get asked about it a lot. Other than the attention it receives, it’s not something that really affects me or something I think about disproportionately.”

Winning majors was still important, of course, but for Mickelson, it appeared to be all a matter of balance, the positive outlook that propped him up in the tough times to keep him coming back for more.

TAKEAWAYS



1 One person's enjoyment is often another's scorn. Just because we like something and think it's fine does not mean we can enjoy it without scrutiny from others who think it's a problem.

2 Risks bring great rewards and great disappointments. Playing games against the odds means the payoffs will be big. But when you lose, it hurts.

3 What others say about us matters, whether we admit it or not. Unfair criticism by others about us hurts, but fighting back does not help. If they are wrong, all we can do is prove them wrong.

8



Mastering the Moment

B

Beginning a new year in life is much like beginning the back nine in golf. Everything you've done to that point counts and is in the record books, but the scorecard is fresh, and the new opportunity represents a chance to make a major, direction-altering impact.

That's why Phil and Amy Mickelson said they were counting down the days to New Year's at the end of 2003, looking forward to the promise held by the changing of the calendar year. Saying he had "a lot going on" and wasn't in the "best frame of mind," the thirty-three-year-old wanted to move beyond the "overwhelming and frustrating" issues of the previous year, including the difficult week in which his wife and baby were both in intensive care, the negative stories that swirled both in print and through gossipy rumors, and the decline of his trademark short game.

"I didn't really get into it too much, but Amy had a very dangerous delivery with the birth of Evan," Mickelson said.

“He didn’t breathe for seven minutes, and had the emergency nurses not been there with the equipment ready, he might have had some severe brain damage.”

It was not much better for his wife.

“We were two or three minutes away from losing her,” Mickelson said. “They had to stop a six-inch tear in a major artery, or I would have been without my wife.”

Thankful for a healthy wife and three happy, healthy children, Mickelson refocused on his career and went in search of reclaiming what he had before the slump with a plan of adding something new, a major championship.

“When I enjoyed playing golf the most was from 2000 to 2002,” Mickelson said. “I was No. 2 in the world. I was in contention a lot. I won my share of tournaments. I had opportunities in the majors. It was really fun. I want to get back to that.”

To make it happen, the first thing that Mickelson had to do was get a change of attitude. The new year presented that opportunity. On December 31, 2003, the Mickelsons were just sitting around their Rancho Santa Fe house, waiting for the clock to strike midnight so they could begin a new chapter in their lives.

“Their impulse,” wrote Bob Verdi in *Golf World* magazine, “was to stuff all 2003 calendars in a bottle, then walk toward the nearby Pacific Ocean to make a deposit. But that would have constituted littering so she gave him a big smooch and they agreed instead to recycle all the positive vibes they’d shared while eliminating garbage before it accumulated.”

“I could not wait for 2004,” Mickelson said.

He would approach it with a clean slate, completely blowing off all frustrations from the previous year, no longer talking about them with his wife, and no longer dwelling on them himself. Mickelson would open his eyes and ears to areas of his game that needed improvement and work hard to get changes made. He recommitted himself during the off-season to reclaiming his positive “I will win” attitude, addressed the issue of playing aggressively in major tournaments, and he worked hard with swing coaches Rick Smith and Dave Pelz to refine areas of his game that wandered during his slump the year before. He worked out harder than before, shedding fifteen pounds of extra weight.

He wanted a fresh start with the media as well, inviting many to a preseason press conference in which he announced a new charity, “Birdies for the Brave,” that would give through the Phil and Amy Mickelson Charitable Fund \$100 for each birdie and \$500 for each eagle he made during the season to the Special Operations Warrior Foundation, which provides full college scholarships for the children of special operations personnel killed in action or training missions.

The one thing that did not change was the attention paid by others to Mickelson’s lack of a major championship. Aware of the story that Mickelson was refocusing on his game in the new year, many journalists assumed that would simply translate into just another fast January minor tournament start followed by major tournament close calls. Predicted golf columnist Jim McCabe before the season in regard to Mickelson: “Will he win in 2004? Yes. Will he win a major? No. In other words, things will be back to normal.”

Even Mickelson's grandparents got in on the action. Al Santos, his grandfather from his mother's side, used to collect pin flags from each of his grandson's PGA Tour victories. Mickelson was to "write a little something on there and he would put them on his wall." The ninety-six-year-old told Mickelson during Christmas 2003, however, that he did not want any more flags from minor tournaments.

"He said, 'Enough of these TOUR wins. I want a major,'" Mickelson remembered. "Just before he passed away, over Christmas, he said that this was going to be my year."

Wining a major was a big deal, no matter what Mickelson said about it in previous seasons. The 0-for-46 record in major tournaments was not necessarily a negative. To get to that level and play close so many times, you had to be one of the best players in the world. But playing so long without a major tournament win was defining Mickelson. Wrote *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Jay Mariotti in early 2004: "Golf, like life itself, is governed by major events. The ordinary days matter, but the big ones determine who we are and how we are remembered. That's why some of us have been so hard on Phil Mickelson, always the master of tournaments that don't count and often a self-absorber in those that do."

For so long, Mickelson had debated such statements, suggesting that he would not define himself according to whether he would win a major, but with his attitude change during the break between the 2003 and 2004 seasons, he began to hint that he felt differently and even believed differently, suggesting change was in the near future.

"It's been a fun challenge," Mickelson said. "I've really

enjoyed the challenge of trying to break through because it has been so difficult. Things are much more rewarding when they are difficult. For whatever reason, it's been much more difficult for me to win major championships than regular tournaments. But that's starting to change a little."

There was plenty of time, after all. Granted, the thirty-four-year-old Mickelson had played twelve seasons on the PGA Tour before the beginning of the season. As an experienced and battle-hardened pro, people tended to forget that he was still a relative youngster. Ben Hogan did not win his first major tournament until he was thirty-five years of age. After the first, he proceeded to win nine and is now considered one of the all-time greats of the game. Hogan turned his game significantly on the back nine of his round, just as Mickelson hoped to do, beginning in 2004.

Reinforce Change through Action

There's no better way to put an exclamation on talk of change than fast reinforcement through actions. It not only proves to others there's a difference, but, perhaps more importantly, it shows to the one working to create change that the payoff is coming. That's why Phil Mickelson was so excited in January 2004 when he won the Bob Hope Classic in Palm Springs, California. It was hardly a major, but it was his first tournament of the year after off-season work and rededication, and it was his first win in more than thirty consecutive outings.

Behind an opening round of 68 and a blistering second round of 63, Mickelson surged to near the top of the leader

board in the Bob Hope Classic. He had just one bogey and thirteen birdies in his first thirty-six holes of competition. He was driving the ball with accuracy and strength and had obviously returned his short game to its old form in working with Dave Pelz. A third-round score of 8-under-par 64 gave Mickelson his best-ever fifty-four-hole start in a tournament and brought smiles to his face throughout the round.

“To have the first three rounds of the year be as low as they were is very encouraging for the time I’ve put in the off-season,” Mickelson said.

In the final round, on Sunday, Skip Kendall grabbed a one-shot lead briefly with a birdie on the 16th hole, but stumbled with a bogey on the short 17th hole to fall back into a tie with Mickelson at 29 under par. After Kendall birdied the par-5 18th, Mickelson was forced to birdie one of his final two holes to force a playoff.

Both players reached the fairway on the playoff hole, but Mickelson had almost a thirty-yard advantage off the tee and was able to set up the perfect pitch with a second shot that landed just thirty-five yards from the pin. He chipped close, then knocked in a three-foot birdie putt for the win. Greeting him immediately was his wife and three children, who posed for pictures with Mickelson and celebrated the first victory of the new season.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve won a tournament and to be able to start the year with a win is very exciting for me,” Mickelson said. “It’s also very encouraging because I’m starting to see results very quickly.”

With top-ten finishes in six of his next seven tournaments, Mickelson sent a message to his critics that he was

focused more than ever on steady play and the approaching Masters tournament in Augusta. He was striking the ball better than ever before and keeping himself in contention by eliminating risky shots that led to blow-up rounds and high levels of frustration.

As the PGA Tour made its annual swing through Florida in March, a major advertising campaign debuted nationally that allowed Mickelson to poke fun at himself, elevating his underdog, pull-for status with fans, and taking even more pressure off his game with its tongue-in-cheek approach. Mickelson had signed a sponsorship with Ford Motor Company in 2002. Ford division president Steve Lyons was longtime friends with Mickelson's swing coach, Rick Smith, and when Lyons heard at the time that Mickelson had a sponsorship opening, he jumped at the opportunity to sign up the family man.

Instead of shying away from its spokesman after his difficult performance in 2003, the company worked with its agency to create a media campaign that actually poked fun at Mickelson's activities, including the pitching tryout with the Toledo Mud Hens. The question posed in the ads, "What will Phil do next?" showed Mickelson playing hockey with Wayne Gretzky, singing with Toby Keith, and talking about the racing business with Dale Jarrett.

"I loved it," Mickelson said, "because you have to be able to laugh at yourself."

If You Expect, So Will They

When you talk with confidence and back it up with results at the same time, people begin to expect big things. Phil

Mickelson had flashed confidence and posted results in 2003, but both were sporadic and almost never at the same time. By changing his outlook and adding the element of hard work and conviction at the same time, he had gotten sterling results from the first quarter of the PGA Tour season to the point that by the time the Masters rolled around he was considered a leading favorite.

Talk about turning the whole game around. Almost single-handedly, Mickelson had inched closer to being a major winner without actually having won one by putting a smile on his face; talking a confident game; and showing a tighter, smoother, and more consistent swing. Mentally he had improved drastically, and statistically he had improved drastically. Before the Masters he was the PGA Tour's leading money winner of the 2004 season, had the best scoring average, was 8th in putting, and was 19th in greens in regulation. (Mickelson had fallen to a paltry 107th the year before.)

As a result, the doubters were dropping fast as the tour moved to Augusta, and Mickelson graciously egged them along, hinting that his game was ready at least for a breakout moment. He had long believed Augusta National was the most likely site of his first major win because the course best suits his skills and after three consecutive third-place finishes he was ready to make a leap forward.

"This year, I feel like I've been playing better than I ever have and playing with more confidence and maybe with a little better course management," Mickelson said the week before the 2004 Masters. "It's to the point I'm more curious to see how I'll do when the penalty is as great as it is at a major. I'm actually looking forward to (the Masters)."

When Mickelson arranged his travel plans, he booked the house he rented for the family through Monday and did not arrange for their return flight on his private jet until Monday. The power of positive thinking was at work.

Others were listening. Oddsmakers put Mickelson in as a 5–1 favorite to win the Masters in the days before it began, second only to Tiger Woods, who was a 3–1 favorite. A poll conducted among some of the world's top golf writers went a step further, making Phil Mickelson their favorite to win the event, with Ernie Els being second, followed by Vijay Singh.

The Round Is Won before the Round

To win the majors, it often takes more than confidence, talent, and to be on your A game. The most difficult courses played under the most intense pressure require strategy above and beyond the usual that involves selecting the right club off the tee and knowing when to lay up a fairway or lag a putt on the green.

Recognizing that he had been so close, so many times, Phil Mickelson formulated a strategy with swing coach Rick Smith that would enable him to save precious strokes and win his first major at the Masters. The aggressive, club-wielding gambler would use his head first, thinking through beforehand how to preserve shots through a more thoughtful approach.

"The last three years, if I could have shaved a shot a round, I would have had two wins and a tie," Mickelson said. "So I spent Monday and Tuesday of last week here trying to find areas where I can just save half a shot to a shot a round."

The strategy was to play “conservatively aggressive,” using 3-woods off the tee more often, putting around the fringes of the green instead of chipping, and “throttling back” the driver when it was in use. The result, he hoped, would be more fairways hit and fewer bogeys caused by overzealous pitches.

Before the tournament, even his wife noticed a difference in his demeanor. The couple was playing Ping-Pong at the house they rented. The matches normally get heated, she said, as Phil grows tired of her continual returns and typically starts slamming the ball back at her hard in frustration. She asked him if the fact that he was going to hit 3-woods off the tee instead of driver meant that he was taking a more conservative approach to their Ping-Pong matches as well. He showed her with his game that that was the case, and she claims to have not won a single Ping-Pong match during their stay in Augusta. An admitted skeptic, Mickelson was heeding 100 percent of the advice from his swing coaches Rick Smith and Dave Pelz and approaching competition with a decided hint of conservation.

On the first day of play at Augusta, conditions were damp after rain, the skies were overcast, and the pins on the golf course were in the most difficult positions imaginable for a first round of play. The clubhouse leader of a weather-halted first round was twenty-three-year-old Justin Rose, who fired a 5-under-par 67. Most of the field struggled, however, including Mickelson, who shot an even-par 72. He was 2 under through 15, but made a double bogey on the par-3 16th, causing frustration that he took into the clubhouse.

“There were a lot of tough pins out there—Sunday pins,” Mickelson said. “I felt I was playing for pars all day. The difficulty today was there was a penalty for a perfectly struck shot. It is just part of the course.”

The weather improved on the second day of play and so did Mickelson’s score. He shot a second-round 69, putting himself in third place, just three shots behind two-day leader Rose. The third round of play is when Mickelson served notice to the golf world—and himself—that he would be the contender to be reckoned with on Sunday for his first-ever major championship.

Sensing a win by their underdog favorite, the Augusta fans had been buzzing around Mickelson with growing intensity through the week. By Saturday, cheers of “It’s your turn, Phil” and boisterous encouragement grew to levels the popular Lefty had not seen before. Mickelson inspired the crowd from the start in the third round, getting up and down from a difficult position on the first hole and rolling in a twenty-five-foot putt for a birdie on the fourth. Each time he made another seemingly miraculous shot, the crowd roared, and he waved an appreciative hand accompanied by a smile.

After forty-six tries to no avail, Mickelson was bound and determined by his New Year’s recommitment to enjoy the game and not press to win in the big events. He shot a 33 on the front nine, boosted by a fifteen-foot par save on the 6th. When the third round ended, Mickelson had another 69 and a three-day total of 6-under-par 210. He was tied for the lead with Chris Demarco and would be playing in the final group of a major for the first time ever.

“I’m still going at it pretty hard,” he said. “The difference is, I’m keeping it in play. It feels like a whole different game.”

By following his pre-tournament strategy shot by shot, Mickelson was avoiding trouble (and bogeys) and making each of his birdies count. He was in the fairway, and at one point, he ripped off more than thirty holes without a bogey—rare for Lefty in his previous major tournament appearances.

“It’s a much easier game when you keep it in play,” Mickelson said. “I wish someone had told me this earlier.”

If Destiny Lets You Drive, Drive

When the moment arrives that you’ve worked so hard for, all you can do is hope to be in charge of the outcome yourself. Playing from behind and hoping for others to come back to you are iffy. Playing from in front of the pack and knowing that if you do your job the way you know how you will win are assuring.

For the first time in his professional golf career, Phil Mickelson had the assurance going into the final round of the Masters tournament at Augusta National that he controlled his own destiny. All he had to do was shoot a respectable, subpar round, something he’d done on the course dozens of times, and the coveted green jacket that goes to the victor would be his.

Every other major tournament Mickelson had played in, he was behind and having to force the issue by trying to make birdies when the course and pin placement said par. This time he could seek birdies when the opportunity pre-

sented itself and save par when it didn't, and have a direct eye on the direction the one tied with him for the lead was going. Everyone else would have to play catch-up.

"I did want to be in the final group," Mickelson said. "I did want to be in a position where I didn't have to change my game plan to try to catch anyone. That's the nice thing about being in the lead right now."

For once in a major, everything felt right for the left-handed Mickelson. After the first nine holes of the final round of play, however, it appeared Mickelson would drop yet another heartbreaking loss. He shot a 2-over 38 on the front that included an extra shot out of the sand on No. 5 when he failed to escape the bunker. Major-proven Ernie Els made his second eagle of the day as Mickelson stood waiting to hit on the par-3 12th hole, leaving the left-hander three shots back and not in the best of shape with just seven holes left to play.

"I heard the roar," Mickelson said. "I didn't know what had happened, but I figured he had just made eagle."

But Mickelson was not done for the day himself. He took aim on the 12th, hitting an 8-iron to twelve feet on the ticklish par 3 and proceeded to roll the ball into the cup on his first stroke, making a crucial birdie. The crowd, which at this point was largely partisan toward the smiling Californian, went wild as Mickelson sensed momentum shifting his way.

"I took a pretty aggressive line at that pin," he said. "Nobody goes after that pin, and I took a pretty aggressive line at it, knocked it in there about twelve feet and made the putt."

“That’s when I started to feel like I could make this happen.”

Taking charge of his own destiny down the stretch, Mickelson went on a birdie barrage on the remaining holes. He birdied the par-5 13th and almost holed out from the fairway on 14 (tapping in for a birdie) to remain within a shot of front-runner Els. It was a classic major championship shoot-out, with the leader charging forward to the very end, forcing the hungry challenger to stalk with intensity. On the 16th hole, Mickelson caught Els. Phil hit an 8-iron to twenty feet, then made a left-to-right breaking putt from that distance, riveting the crowd and further charging a winning spirit.

Els made pars on 17 and 18, finishing at 8 under and watching from the scorer’s booth as Mickelson, who made par on 17 and remained tied for the lead, approached the 465-yard par-4 18th, needing a birdie to win and a par to force a playoff.

As the gallery gathered closely around, Mickelson crushed a 3-wood off the tee, sending it more than three hundred yards and placing it in the middle of the fairway. With a well-struck 8-iron that sent the ball straight over the flag, Mickelson ended up on the green for a birdie, some twenty feet from the hole, on his second shot. As Mickelson made the famous walk up the hill to the 18th green, he was not yet a champion, but he smiled and waved to the crowd with such appreciation and enjoyment that television commentator Jim Nantz told viewers, “He’s savoring the moment as if he knows the outcome.”

Believe It

Before attempting his birdie putt, Mickelson caught a break when playing partner Chris Demarco, out of contention, hit a bunker shot to within inches of Mickelson's ball, meaning he would putt first, giving Mickelson a great look at his putting line to victory. Demarco's putt barely missed, but it gave Mickelson an ever so slight but very important advantage.

As the crowd hushed and Els watched a television monitor to see if he would have a playoff, Mickelson stood over his putt with an opportunity to end in an instant the one label that followed him everywhere, best player to never win a major. He could also win that major that his grandfather Al Santos had asked for at Christmas before dying in January.

With one confident, smooth stroke, Mickelson sent his long putt rolling right to left down the slope toward the hole on the 18th green. The golf world held its breath as the putt held its line by the smallest fraction of an inch. The ball hit the lip of the cup, then rattled home into the bottom, giving Phil Mickelson a birdie and the first major victory of his career.

"Chris's ball caught the lip and just fell off," Mickelson said later. "My ball was on a very similar line and caught the left edge and went in, and I can't help but think [my grandfather] had something to do with it."

Seconds after realizing the ball had gone into the cup, the victor leaped high into the air without the greatest of ease and turned to his longtime caddie for a hug. The realization was barely sinking in: Phil Mickelson's fresh start had yielded new opportunity. The changes he had made, the

renewed confidence, and the detailed strategy paid off. For once in a major, he did not feel the anxiety of wondering if it was slipping away down the stretch. He was only thinking, “let’s hit some shots.” The result: Phil Mickelson became a major champion.

When he made the putt, Mickelson’s wife and children were near the 18th green, of course. When Mickelson saw his four-year-old daughter Amanda, he walked to the edge of the green and reached, picking her up as the crowd wildly cheered and millions watched on television.

“Daddy won,” Mickelson exclaimed. “Can you believe it?”

TAKEAWAYS



1 Life is full of new opportunity; we just have to seize it. Wiping the slate clean allows us to forget the past and focus on goals and objectives of the future.

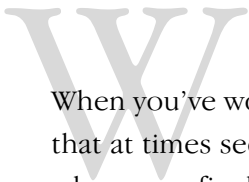
2 Talking about change is not enough. When deploying a new approach, small victories early serve as valuable reinforcements.

3 Every objective needs a strategy. The competition we face in our lives is too strong to hope we win on confidence and talent alone. Every shot we play must have a purpose if it is to ultimately result in a major victory.

9



Savoring Victory



When you've worked so hard for so long for a major victory that at times seems incredibly elusive, the only thing to do when you finally earn it is to enjoy every detail of the moment and make it last as long as you possibly can. Too often, grand victories are instantaneously greeted with a "What have you done for me lately?" mentality.

During Super Bowl celebrations, the media ask the quarterback if he thinks the team can repeat. When Tiger Woods won his first Masters, the media quickly asked him if he thought he could win all remaining majors that year. When a company has a record-breaking year in profits, Wall Street immediately wants to know if it can be bested the next year.

Not Phil Mickelson.

"I just want to cherish this one," he said moments after the tournament when asked about winning future majors.

The celebration that began with his arms-straight-up, mouth-wide-open, two-footed leap the moment his

twenty-foot putt rattled around the cup and in to win the 2004 Masters tournament on Easter Sunday at Augusta National Golf Club was not one Mickelson, his family, and his friends wanted to ever end. It's understandable. After you've labored for twelve long years and finally won the one thing that people thought at first would come so easily but more recently thought might never come, you've earned the right to savor every last crumb the victory has to offer.

Mickelson's first reaction to winning was intense emotion as the frustrations of forty-six previous events without a win came pouring out. There was a hug for his longtime caddie, Jim (Bones) Mackay, the memorable clutching of his blond-haired daughters, an emotional embrace with his wife, and a greenside television interview that turned to tears and inaudible words.

"I think the most difficult part of this ten-year journey has just been dealing with—I don't want to say failure—but dealing with losses time after time," Mickelson said. "It just gets frustrating. It can wear you out . . . except that you just can't let it."

Giddy, and almost childlike in his celebration immediately after the win, Mickelson promised to return to Augusta as a champion "every first week of April," adding that he would "look forward to this tournament every year for the rest of my life." In a playful, post-tournament interview with CBS commentator Jim Nantz in Augusta National's historic Butler Cabin, Mickelson talked about how the win lifted his burden of being the world's best player to never win a major and actually made him "feel so much better now that it has happened." When the interview continued and Mickelson

had not yet been presented his coveted green jacket (size 43 long), he stole the moment by asking Nantz if he was “holding out.”

“I want one of these [green jackets]. Let’s get to the good stuff.”

Share Victory

Major victories in life would only be half as good, if that, if we had nobody to share them with. That was hardly the case with Phil Mickelson and his Masters win, undoubtedly one reason why his enjoyment of the moment was extraordinarily high. Having received much ribbing through the years for taking his wife and children along to tournaments and posing with them portrait-style in victories, Mickelson showed the world why family meant so much to him at Augusta in 2004. In victory, he accepted with much appreciation the congratulations from others, including the wild cheering of fans, slaps on the back from fellow golfers, and even a call from President George W. Bush. Mickelson also divulged what President Bush told him in a phone call shortly after his jump for joy on the 18th green “roughed” him up.

“[The President] said, ‘Now I understand why last year you tried to throw a baseball instead of a basketball.’ I said, ‘What do you mean?’ and he said, ‘I saw you try to jump.’ So my seven-inch rise wasn’t good enough for him, I guess,” Mickelson said.

It was his family, though, who made the battle and victory so downright blissful. Throughout the week of the Masters tournament, and long before there was anything

more than hope that Mickelson would win, his family was there to support his every move and presence in yet another major. His parents, Phil Sr. and Mary, walked every hole Mickelson played, with his sister Tina offering encouragement at every turn. Normally in the role of golf television analyst and golf-tip columnist (Copley News Service), Tina took off from work during the Masters to avoid professional conflict about being unbiased about her brother's game and chances of winning.

His younger brother, Tim, could not be there because as University of San Diego golf coach, he had other obligations. Nor could Mickelson's recently widowed grandmother attend. She had planned to, but could not at the last minute due to a minor stroke. They were there in spirit, however, as was Mickelson's late grandfather, who urged him just months before to go out and get a major in 2004. His sister even dreamed before the Masters about the winning sequence as it unfolded.

"I dreamed it all—we were in the exact same place, the exact same hole, the exact same putt," she said. "In my dream, I turned to my grandfather and said, 'I really want him to make that putt.' And he said, 'Don't worry.' It was exactly the same."

When Mickelson endured such tough times in 2003 with his struggling game, facing frustrating rumors, and with the intensive-care experience of his wife and child, it was his family there by his side. When he won the biggest event of his life at Augusta National, his family was standing by his side, including his wife and three children. And it made all the difference.

"I'm so proud of him," Amy Mickelson said after the tournament, tears welling in her eyes. "At the end of last year, we were at an all-time low. I've been amazed by my husband this year. He has walked the walk to make himself better, and actually do what it takes to win.

"This is surreal and overwhelming," she said. "Is it real?"

Surreal it was. Mickelson himself acknowledged feeling the support of his deceased grandfather on his now famous twenty-foot putt. Others in the family said the spirit was definitely there, all week long. "I don't want to say he had a little help . . . but I felt the presence of my grandfather," Tina Mickelson said. "We know that he was there, watching. That was just a good feeling to know, a little confirmation that he's with us."

And who could forget the late Payne Stewart grabbing Mickelson's face after his defeat at the 1999 U.S. Open, telling him "there's nothing like being a father." Call it luck or destiny, but there's no denying the words were fortuitous in Phil Mickelson's future. In the toughest times, he drew strength from his family. In the best of times, he celebrated with his family.

"To have my children there was awesome, to walk off the 18th green there and to see my wife experiencing the whole thing with me and feeling the same emotion that I felt," Mickelson said.

On the night of Mickelson's head-turning win, the family was so excited and moved by the events that they could not sleep. In the house where they stayed in Augusta, the television was on, and every few minutes the replay of the day's biggest event ran again. The Mickelson clan "played

something of a drinking game, taking sips of champagne every time the highlights came on, followed by the screaming of the No. 18 gallery and the TV-huddled Mickelsons.”

“Yeah, we’re big drinkers—we maybe had a half-glass each,” Tina Mickelson said. “We screamed until two o’clock in the morning. It was a blast.”

Good Things Do Happen to Good People

Sometimes good things really do happen and there are no painful punch lines to follow the next day. Such was the case when Phil Mickelson won the Masters. Waking up Monday morning, he had to wonder if the previous day had been a dream. But then all he had to do was look down and see that the green jacket he slept in was still there, although a bit wrinkled.

“It was me, Phil, and the green jacket,” Amy Mickelson said. “We might be sleeping with that green jacket for a while.”

Validation of the reality was everywhere he looked or listened, from continuing television replays to a buzz on radio and television talk shows to blaring newspaper headlines. It was true: Phil Mickelson held the world’s longest major winning streak (1–0), and it seemed like the whole country was celebrating because the win was more than just another PGA notch for Lefty. It was a victory for millions of Americans and others around the world who identified with the ongoing pressure and struggle to win life’s majors, including golf fans, nongolf fans, and even typically jaded sportswriters.

“Azaleas cried and dogwoods cheered as Phil Mickelson pulled the sword out of the stone and slayed the dragon that had grown into a behemoth with each near miss and heart-break.”

“It wasn’t just Easter at the Masters. It was Father’s Day, too.”

“Phil Mickelson emerged from being the best golfer in the world to never win a major to being simply the best player on golf’s grandest stage.”

Mickelson returned home to the San Diego area Monday, a place of great celebration the day before. At a public golf course where Mickelson once shagged range balls, men talked to young boys about the former San Diego youngster who had made them all so proud. People were driving by Phil and Mary Mickelson’s home after their son made the putt to win, honking their horns.

“When I came out to hit balls,” said one San Diego old-timer, “I went by the house and honked my horn, too. Just thought it was something I should do. Felt good to do it.”

After spending Monday relaxing with his family at home, Mickelson was back to business on Tuesday. He was not, however, working on his golf game or trying to plan how to win the next tournament. He had worked so hard for so long that he wanted to enjoy his family and winning the Masters before anything else. The work he was doing, promoting his first-ever major tournament win, hardly seemed like work at all.

At a press conference at La Jolla Country Club, where Mickelson is a member, he showed off his green jacket and explained the feelings of winning all over again. The next day, he appeared on the *Tonight Show with Jay Leno*.

Mickelson would take a couple of weeks off from the PGA Tour before playing again, taking his children to amusement parks, working casually on his game, and hanging around the house with a smile on his face.

He said nothing would change, that he would always be the same. But when he returned to the game, Mickelson quickly learned that much had changed—maybe not from his perspective in terms of his commitment and priorities, but definitely so in regard to how others viewed him. Before the Masters, Phil Mickelson was a talented golfer viewed by many as a likable underachiever worth pulling for. With a green jacket, he was a champion, having proven to himself and everyone else that he could do it. And if he could do it once, he could do it again and again.

“I do feel that the second will not be as difficult as the first,” Mickelson said. “Because every time I would get in contention, it was almost as though it was an opportunity not to succeed, but an opportunity to fail. I never looked at it like that, but at times, when things began to slide, it was harder for me to turn it around.”

Getting Back into the Game

In his first tournament back after winning the Masters, fans at the HP Classic of New Orleans followed Mickelson in droves, seeking autographs and just to be in the presence of the newly crowned champion. Proclaiming before the tournament that he did not feel any different as a person or as a golfer, Mickelson nonetheless seemed to enjoy the surge in celebrity resulting from the historic win. In the two weeks

after the Masters, he had received calls from the president and boxing promoter Don King, appeared on *Late Night with David Letterman* and the *Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, rung the bell on the New York Stock Exchange to raucous cheers, and conducted almost two dozen major media interviews. It was hardly life as usual, and while Mickelson took advantage of the opportunity, he refused to admit it was a life-altering experience.

“I don’t think anything changed over the course of four or five days other than me gaining the experience of a lifetime,” Mickelson said. “I don’t look at my record any different. Some people do. That’s fine.”

He did admit to family at feeling pleasantly surprised by the overwhelmingly positive support he received after winning the Masters, but other than that, apparently did not want to create an atmosphere that detracted from the tour and his game. Majors had been won by others before, and while it was a monumental and defining event for Mickelson, he no doubt did not want it to appear as if it was the beginning of the end of his career. If anything, he wanted the win at the Masters to be a new beginning, with more major victories to come.

He had gotten off to his best start ever in 2004, and after a couple of weeks of celebrating was ready to get back into the game and continue his hot hand, which had resulted in eight top-ten finishes in nine events, including his dramatic victory at Augusta, in the first quarter of the PGA Tour season. Once Mickelson stepped back onto the course at the HP Classic of New Orleans, his game and professional life returned to reasonable normalcy. After opening rounds of 67 and 65,

he moved into a tie for second after the third round at English Turn and appeared poised to continue his streaking success. But the event would ultimately belong to Vijay Singh, who came from six strokes back on the tournament's final day to pass Mickelson and leader Joe Ogilvie for his third PGA Tour win of the young season. Finishing in a tie for second, though, Mickelson was pleased to still be in form following his layoff and aiming to get back into full gear for the following month's U.S. Open, which promised to provide much attention and a favorite's role for the Masters champion.

It became evident following Mickelson's return that the unusual adulation shown him immediately after his first major win would not be short-lived. The media in particular gave Mickelson bouquet after bouquet, casting him and his wife in a warm and fuzzy light. No more stones cast for playing the wrong way, underutilizing major talent, or spending too much time trying to gamble and beat the odds. The Mickelson story was all about his conviction to forget the recent, bitter past, to lay up instead of taking a giant swat when appropriate, and the strength gained from his dearly departed grandfather and the near-death experience of his wife and infant son. And crowds that once adored now flocked, treating Mickelson like a champion instead of a contender. The enthusiasm began the moment he stepped to the 1st tee and continued until he walked off the 18th hole.

Mickelson finished strong at the Wachovia championship (fifth place) and the Buick Classic (sixteenth place), so that when players arrived in New York for the U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills, he was a favorite to win the tournament, slated for one of the country's most difficult courses. The week

appeared to be custom-made for Mickelson from the start. He was a favorite of New York golf fans before his Masters win, and his support took a rarely-seen-before turn toward pandemonium during the four-day event. A crowd favorite at Bethpage two years before, Mickelson had surged in popularity to what one golf analyst called “the most popular player of modern times” at Shinnecock Hills, and he gave them a game to back it up.

After an opening round of 68, Mickelson shot a bogey-free 66 in the second round to reach the top of the leader board with Japan’s Shigeki Maruyama at 6 under, and the enthusiastic crowd following their favorite seemed to sense back-to-back majors forthcoming from Mickelson. Conditions toughened at Shinnecock Hills for the third round as the wind increased, drying out grass and hardening greens into a “crusty” state that penalized the best of shots for no apparent reason. Mickelson was in a tie for the lead with three holes left to play, but his putter went awry on the hard-to-read greens, and Retief Goosen, the 2001 champion, made birdies on the 15th and 16th holes to claim a 5-under-par, two-shot lead over Ernie Els and Mickelson.

The drama was far from over, however. As the crowd cheered the thirty-four-year-old Mickelson on throughout the final round, he battled Goosen and excruciatingly difficult conditions that forced the grounds crew to water some holes during play. On a day when no golfer beat par and the winds made clothes and pin flags audibly flap, Mickelson fought valiantly to remain in contention. On the 15th hole he rolled in a rare birdie putt (his third in a four-hole stretch) to take a one-stroke lead over Goosen. The crowd erupted

in a deafening roar, believing Mickelson was moments away from claiming his second consecutive major tournament.

On the par-3 17th, however, it was all any Mickelson fan could do to watch. He hit into a bunker on his tee shot, but blasted out to within five feet of the pin on his second shot, seemingly poised to save par and remain in the hunt. His first putt missed left and kept on going past the hole, leaving another five feet for a bogey. He missed that one, too, and settled for a bitter double bogey that he and everyone else knew cost him the tournament.

“[The green] broke right to left but the wind was left to right,” Mickelson said, “so I played it straight and the wind took it.”

Goosen took the championship as the deflated crowd cheered with a hint of politeness. Mickelson suffered yet another frustrating major defeat in fashion similar to his previous heartbreaks in which he played brilliantly, only to see victory slip painstakingly away.

“I don’t know what to say,” Mickelson said. “I played some of the best golf of my life and still couldn’t shoot par.”

In defeat, Mickelson was typically gracious, giving Goosen heartfelt congratulations, but after tasting major victory, his third runner-up finish in a U.S. Open was more difficult to accept. He had been right there, ready to claim victory, but watched it slip away in a slippery, downhill five-foot putt.

“As thrilling as it was at Augusta, it seems like it’s that much of the wind taken out of you when you end up coming so close and playing so hard for 72 holes,” Mickelson said. “To play better than everyone but one guy, it’s disappointing.”

Mickelson’s U.S. Open performance had been superb,

arguably the best of his career. He shot a 1-over-par 71 on a day when conditions forced a bloated scoring average among players of more than 78. And it was yet another in a long string of disappointments. The loss hurt, though, because the U.S. Open, too, was a coveted crown, another goal in the ambitious golfer's major sights. He had enjoyed major victory, every allowable moment of it, but was back in the game, and the close call stung. Still, there was lingering consolation from Augusta.

"Well, no question," Mickelson said, "having now won a major and not have to answer questions about, oh, yeah, second again, as opposed to second this week being a negative, I look at it as a positive because I played such difficult conditions well and came so close and was able to shoot a good round on a very difficult Sunday."

Good Times Can't Last Forever

Mickelson played valiantly in the British Open at Royal Troon in 2004, but missed by just one shot making a playoff among eventual champion Todd Hamilton and Ernie Els. He also posted a sixth-place finish at the PGA championship, won by Vijay Singh, and was well on his way to his most successful year ever on the PGA Tour. But as Mickelson learned earlier in his career, a price for being in the spotlight is close scrutiny that never really goes away.

The warm, fuzzy treatment given by many members of the media wore off just before the Ryder Cup in September 2004 at Oakland Hills Country Club in the Detroit metropolitan area. Mickelson became the source of two

major controversies that gave members of the media and even some of his fans heavy ammunition to take potshots at the pedestal-perched golfer.

It started the week before the much-anticipated Ryder Cup, which pits European professionals against Americans in a classic and traditional links battle that usually captivates the golf world. Mickelson had an equipment contract with Titleist worth a reported \$4 million that was not to run out until the end of the year. He was to play Titleist clubs and Titleist balls. But with his soaring popularity after the Masters win and increased marketing stance, Mickelson was certainly in a financially negotiable position. He apparently asked Titleist for more money before his contract was out, and apparently they said no. In a blink, he made a switch just before the Ryder Cup to a Callaway driver, fairway woods, and balls, leaving behind the Titleist equipment with which he won the Masters. He used the equipment in tournament play for the first time in the Bell Canadian, held the week before the Ryder Cup. Mickelson had the fewest number of birdies (eleven) and shot a 79 on the third day to finish a dismal fifty-seventh.

Players frequently change equipment, of course, but because it is usually done at the end of the season and not before events as big as the Ryder Cup, Mickelson became the subject of much scrutiny, the majority of his detractors wondering why he would jeopardize his play for the American team with new equipment. Couldn't the change have waited until *after* the Ryder Cup?

Mickelson did not agree and said he would accept any scrutiny but argued that he knew what was best regarding

his game. "I feel that I am most confident in my ability to score lowest now," Mickelson said. "It's with the ball I'm playing and it's the woods I'm playing. I didn't make a change with the irons because of exactly that concern, the distance controls and so forth. I had not had enough time to factor that in. The biggest concern, I thought, would have been the ball. But I am so excited about this ball."

The day before the Ryder Cup began, Mickelson became embroiled in another controversy when some questioned his decision to skip a practice round with teammates. He attended a photo media session, but left as other players hit the course. Mickelson's reasoning was that he does not play the course on Wednesdays before majors and considered the Ryder Cup a major. That was good enough for team captain Hal Sutton, but only added fuel to the simmering club-change controversy.

It did not help Mickelson when the U.S. team was blistered in surprising fashion by the Europeans in the Ryder Cup. Sutton even benched Mickelson for morning second-day matches after he played tense and poorly on the first day, struggling with his new driver. One of Mickelson's errant tee shots almost hit his wife, and another, on the crucial 18th hole, went out of bounds by 40 feet and cost him and Tiger Woods a chance at a point. Woods flashed an ugly face at the shot and Mickelson cringed with the realization of what he had done. Sutton wanted to give him a little time to think about it.

"It's not going to cause us any grief in the morning because he's going to be cheering instead of playing," Sutton said.

In the end, the Americans were outplayed in every facet of the game and lost to the Europeans, 18½ points to 9½, the team's worst defeat in the seventy-seven-year history of the Ryder Cup. For his part, Mickelson did not shy away from the controversy, addressing it head-on and speaking directly about what seemed to bother so many people. He admitted to not playing well, but attributed it to nerves and an overeager desire to win. He had forgotten in the first two rounds to have fun. His smile was gone and he was "filled with anxiety." He bounced back on the final day to pair with David Toms and claim a win and salvage some amount of dignity. As for the new clubs and the skipped practice round, he claimed to have done what he believed was right and was giving no thought to the matters.

Mickelson's finish in the 2004 season was less than spectacular, just like his Ryder Cup performance. Vijay Singh had become the world's No. 1 ranked player, overtaking Tiger Woods, and was poised to run away with player of the year honors that months before seemed so promising for Mickelson. But even though Phil had hoped for more, the endurance he had displayed since turning professional in 1992 had paid off. Mickelson owned the one thing that had eluded him for so long, the one thing nobody could ever take away: a major championship.

TAKEAWAYS



1 Cherish major victories for as long as time allows. It's easy to start worrying about the next challenge after a big win, but more rewarding to savor the moment.

2 The biggest victories are better with people to share them with. Winning alone is not nearly as fulfilling as winning with the support of close friends and family.

3 Minor victories are forgotten. Major ones last a lifetime. People usually are identified with and remembered for their biggest victories in life.

Acknowledgments

The secret to the success of any worthwhile book is having a good editor. I am fortunate that Wiley senior editor Stephen Power recognized the value of this project from the first moment we talked and worked hard along the way, shaping it to best serve readers. He is uniquely talented editorially and is passionate about getting the story right. That is often a lost art in publishing today, and it is deeply appreciated. Thanks at Wiley also go to editorial assistant Naomi Rothwell, who ably shepherded the project through production and is quite capable and always a pleasure.

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Phil Mickelson's Road to Major Victory

Year	Tournament	Scores				Place
1990 (amateur)	U.S. Open	74	71	71	72—288	T29
1991 (amateur)	Masters	69	73	74	74—290	T46
1991 (amateur)	U.S. Open	73	72	80	75—300	T55
1991 (amateur)	British Open	77	67	73	71—288	T73
1992	U.S. Open	68	81			MC
1993	Masters	72	71	75	73—291	T34
1993	PGA	67	71	69	70—277	T6
1994	U.S. Open	75	70	73	79—297	T47
1994	PGA	68	71	67	70—276	3
1995	Masters	66	71	70	73—280	T7
1995	U.S. Open	68	70	72	74—284	T4
1995	British Open	70	71	77	73—291	T40
1995	PGA	77	71			MC
1996	Masters	65	73	72	72—282	3
1996	U.S. Open	76	71	73	76—296	T94
1996	British Open	72	71	72	69—284	T41
1996	PGA	67	67	74	72—280	T8
1997	Masters	77	74			MC
1997	U.S. Open	75	68	73	74—290	T43
1997	British Open	76	68	69	71—284	T24

Phil Mickelson's Road to Major Victory

Year	Tournament	Scores				Place
1997	PGA	69	69	73	65—286	T29
1998	Masters	74	69	69	74—286	T12
1998	U.S. Open	71	73	74	70—288	T10
1998	British Open	71	74	85	78—308	79
1998	PGA	70	70	78	67—285	T34
1999	Masters	74	69	71	71—285	T6
1999	U.S. Open	67	70	73	70—275	2
1999	British Open	79	76			MC
1999	PGA	72	72	74	77—295	T57
2000	Masters	71	68	76	71—286	T7
2000	U.S. Open	71	73	73	76—297	T16
2000	British Open	72	66	71	72—281	T11
2000	PGA	70	70	69	70—279	T9
2001	Masters	67	69	69	70—275	3
2001	U.S. Open	70	69	68	75—282	T7
2001	British Open	70	72	72	71—285	T30
2001	PGA	66	66	66	68—266	2
2002	Masters	69	72	68	71—280	3
2002	U.S. Open	70	73	67	70—280	2
2002	British Open	68	76	76	70—290	T66
2002	PGA	76	72	78	68—284	T34
2003	Masters	73	70	72	68—283	3
2003	U.S. Open	70	70	75	74—289	T55
2003	British Open	74	72	73	78—297	T59
2003	PGA	66	75	72	75—288	T23
2004	Masters	72	69	69	69—279	1

Phil Mickelson's PGA Tour Results

Date	Tournament	Pos.	Rounds					Total Score	To Par	Official Money
			1	2	3	4	5			
1988 (amateur)										
2/21/88	Shearson Lehman Hutton Andy Williams Open	Cut	74	71	—	—	—	145	+1	—
2/28/88	Los Angeles Open Presented by Nissan	Cut	76	72	—	—	—	148	+6	—
1989 (amateur)										
1/22/89	Phoenix Open	Cut	71	76	—	—	—	147	+5	—
1990 (amateur)										
1/14/90	Northern Telecom Tucson Open	T19	71	66	71	72	—	280	−8	—
6/17/90	U.S. Open Championship	T29	74	71	71	72	—	288	E	—
1991 (amateur)										
1/10/91	Northern Telecom Open	1	65	71	65	71	—	272	−16	—
1/27/91	Phoenix Open	T32	67	70	68	70	—	275	−9	—
2/17/91	Shearson Lehman Brothers Open	T42	66	74	71	70	—	281	−7	—
3/03/91	Doral-Ryder Open	Cut	70	74	—	—	—	144	E	—
4/14/91	Masters Tournament	T46	69	73	74	74	—	290	+2	—
5/19/91	Memorial Tournament	T66	75	71	77	73	—	296	+8	—
6/16/91	U.S. Open Championship	T55	73	72	80	75	—	300	+12	—
7/22/91	*British Open Championship	T73	77	67	73	71	—	288	+8	—
1992 (turned professional)										
1/12/92	Infiniti Tournament of Champions	T30	74	71	77	75	—	297	+9	—
1/26/92	Phoenix Open	Cut	76	75	—	—	—	151	+9	—
2/16/92	Northern Telecom Open	Cut	72	71	—	—	—	143	−1	—
2/23/92	Buick Invitational of California	Cut	73	72	—	—	—	145	+1	—

*unofficial event

†turned professional

Phil Mickelson's PGA Tour Results

Date	Tournament	Pos.	Rounds					Total Score	To Par	Official Money
			1	2	3	4	5			
3/29/92	Players Championship	Cut	75	71	—	—	—	146	+2	—
5/17/92	GTE Byron Nelson Golf Classic	Cut	75	74	—	—	—	149	+9	—
6/21/92	*U.S. Open Championship	Cut	68	81	—	—	—	149	+5	—
7/05/92	Centel Western Open	T38	70	72	73	71	—	286	-2	\$4,400.00
7/26/92	New England Classic	2	66	69	69	66	—	270	-14	\$108,000.00
8/02/92	Canon Greater Hartford Open	Cut	69	75	—	—	—	144	+4	—
8/23/92	The International	T14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$20,400.00
9/06/92	Greater Milwaukee Open	Cut	70	74	—	—	—	144	E	—
9/27/92	B.C. Open	T13	71	63	68	76	—	278	-6	\$13,714.28
10/04/92	Buick Southern Open	T8	68	75	68	—	—	211	-5	\$20,300.00
10/11/92	Las Vegas Invitational	Cut	74	74	71	—	—	219	+3	—
10/18/92	Walt Disney World/Oldsmobile Classic	T46	70	70	68	69	—	277	-11	\$2,520.00
10/25/92	H.E.B. Texas Open	T47	71	66	69	72	—	278	-6	\$2,379.60
1993										
1/24/93	Northern Telecom Open	T8	67	65	69	75	—	276	-12	\$29,700.00
1/31/93	Phoenix Open	T45	67	70	78	70	—	285	+1	\$2,752.50
2/14/93	Bob Hope Chrysler Classic	Cut	71	68	76	71	—	286	-2	—
2/21/93	Buick Invitational of California	1	75	69	69	65	—	278	-10	\$180,000.00
2/28/93	Nissan Los Angeles Open	T19	70	71	71	—	—	212	-1	\$11,285.71
3/07/93	Doral-Ryder Open	Cut	72	72	—	—	—	144	E	—
3/28/93	Players Championship	Cut	71	75	—	—	—	146	+2	—
4/11/93	Masters Tournament	T34	72	71	75	73	—	291	+3	\$8,975.00
4/18/93	MCI Heritage Golf Classic	T28	70	72	72	69	—	283	-1	\$7,649.80
4/25/93	KMart Greater Greensboro Open	T50	77	68	73	74	—	292	+4	\$3,485.45
5/16/93	GTE Byron Nelson Golf Classic	Cut	72	75	—	—	—	147	+7	—
5/30/93	Southwestern Bell Colonial	Cut	76	74	—	—	—	150	+10	—
6/06/93	Memorial Tournament	T22	73	70	72	68	—	283	-5	\$14,560.00
6/13/93	Buick Classic	Cut	77	75	—	—	—	152	+10	—
7/04/93	Sprint Western Open	Cut	72	73	—	—	—	145	+1	—
7/11/93	Anheuser-Busch Golf Classic	Cut	70	74	—	—	—	144	+2	—
7/25/93	New England Classic	Cut	73	72	—	—	—	145	+3	—
8/08/93	Buick Open	T48	70	74	69	72	—	285	-3	\$2,544.00
8/15/93	PGA Championship	T6	67	71	69	70	—	277	-7	\$47,812.50
8/22/93	The International	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$234,000.00
8/29/93	NEC World Series of Golf	T36	77	75	71	77	—	300	+20	\$19,200.00
9/12/93	Canadian Open	DQ	68	—	—	—	—	68	-4	—
10/24/93	Las Vegas Invitational	T19	65	69	68	71	74	347	-13	\$17,570.00
10/31/93	Tour Championship	28	71	75	74	74	—	294	+10	\$49,200.00
1994										
1/09/94	Mercedes Championships	P1	70	68	70	68	—	276	-12	\$180,000.00
1/23/94	Northern Telecom Open	T9	69	70	70	67	—	276	-12	\$22,400.00
1/30/94	Phoenix Open	T8	67	70	71	66	—	274	-10	\$32,400.00
2/13/94	Nissan Los Angeles Open	T27	70	73	73	69	—	285	+1	\$6,245.46
2/20/94	Bob Hope Chrysler Classic	Cut	72	70	76	69	—	287	-1	—
2/27/94	Buick Invitational of California	3	68	69	69	64	—	270	-18	\$74,800.00
5/29/94	Southwestern Bell Colonial	8	68	68	71	65	—	272	-8	\$43,400.00
6/05/94	Kemper Open	T4	70	69	67	69	—	275	-9	\$57,200.00
6/19/94	U.S. Open Championship	T47	75	70	73	79	—	297	+13	\$5,105.37
6/26/94	Canon Greater Hartford Open	T26	65	72	70	72	—	279	-1	\$8,520.00
7/03/94	Motorola Western Open	T64	66	69	77	77	—	289	+1	\$2,520.00

Phil Mickelson's PGA Tour Results

Date	Tournament	Pos.	Rounds					Total Score	To Par	Official Money
			1	2	3	4	5			
7/17/94	*British Open Championship	Cut	78	74	—	—	—	152	+12	—
8/14/94	PGA Championship	3	68	71	67	70	—	276	—4	\$110,000.00
8/21/94	Sprint International	T10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$36,400.00
8/28/94	NEC World Series of Golf	T26	75	70	68	68	—	281	+1	\$15,110.00
9/11/94	Bell Canadian Open	T31	69	71	71	75	—	286	—2	\$7,215.00
9/18/94	The Presidents Cup	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10/23/94	Las Vegas Invitational	T3	70	66	66	70	63	335	—24	\$87,000.00
10/30/94	Tour Championship	T17	68	71	70	74	—	283	—1	\$60,000.00
12/11/94	*Diners Club Matches	T5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$15,000.00

1995

1/08/95	Mercedes Championships	19	72	73	71	73	—	289	+1	\$19,250.00
1/22/95	Northern Telecom Open	1	65	66	70	68	—	269	—18	\$225,000.00
1/29/95	Phoenix Open	T35	70	66	70	73	—	279	—5	\$6,272.50
2/05/95	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	Cut	74	74	72	—	—	220	+4	—
2/12/95	Buick Invitational of California	T16	65	69	75	69	—	278	—10	\$15,240.00
2/26/95	Nissan Open	Cut	71	74	—	—	—	145	+3	—
3/12/95	Honda Classic	Cut	70	76	—	—	—	146	+4	—
3/19/95	Nestle Invitational	Cut	73	73	—	—	—	146	+2	—
3/26/95	Players Championship	T14	78	66	75	70	—	289	+1	\$52,500.00
4/09/95	Masters Tournament	T7	66	71	70	73	—	280	—8	\$70,950.00
4/11/95	*Accenture WCG—United States	T5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4/16/95	MCI Classic	T13	68	69	71	70	—	278	—6	\$22,285.71
4/30/95	Shell Houston Open	Cut	71	75	—	—	—	146	+2	—
5/07/95	BellSouth Classic	Cut	73	72	—	—	—	145	+1	—
5/28/95	Colonial National Invitation	T33	69	71	73	69	—	282	+2	\$7,087.50
6/04/95	Memorial Tournament	T59	70	73	71	73	—	287	—1	\$3,740.00
6/11/95	Kemper Open	Cut	73	71	—	—	—	144	+2	—
6/18/95	U.S. Open Championship	T4	68	70	72	74	—	284	+4	\$66,633.67
7/09/95	Motorola Western Open	T43	72	73	70	73	—	288	E	\$6,240.00
7/23/95	British Open Championship	T40	70	71	77	73	—	291	+3	\$11,244.75
8/13/95	PGA Championship	Cut	77	71	—	—	—	148	+6	—
8/20/95	Sprint International	Cut	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
8/27/95	NEC World Series of Golf	T4	69	74	70	66	—	279	—1	\$88,000.00
10/15/95	Las Vegas Invitational	T30	71	65	70	69	68	343	—16	\$8,533.34
10/29/95	Tour Championship	24	79	73	68	75	—	295	+15	\$52,800.00
9/24/95	*Ryder Cup Matches	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
12/10/95	*Diners Club Matches	T4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$20,000.00

1996

1/07/96	Mercedes Championships	28	74	72	74	74	—	294	+6	\$15,050.00
1/14/96	Nortel Open	1	69	66	71	67	—	273	—14	\$225,000.00
1/27/96	Phoenix Open	P1	69	67	66	67	—	269	—15	\$234,000.00
2/04/96	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	CNL	72	66	—	—	—	138	—6	—
2/11/96	Buick Invitational	2	68	70	66	67	—	271	—17	\$129,600.00
2/25/96	Nissan Open	Cut	75	75	—	—	—	150	+8	—
3/03/96	Doral-Ryder Open	T38	72	68	74	70	—	284	—4	\$7,920.00
3/17/96	Bay Hill Invitational	Cut	75	72	—	—	—	147	+3	—
3/31/96	Players Championship	T33	71	72	64	74	—	281	—7	\$17,718.75
4/14/96	Masters Tournament	3	65	73	72	72	—	282	—6	\$170,000.00

Phil Mickelson's PGA Tour Results

Date	Tournament	Pos.	Rounds					Total Score	To Par	Official Money
			1	2	3	4	5			
4/21/96	MCI Classic	T66	74	66	72	74	—	286	+2	\$2,856.00
5/12/96	GTE Byron Nelson Golf Classic	1	67	65	67	66	—	265	-15	\$270,000.00
6/02/96	Memorial Tournament	T71	73	74	76	72	—	295	+7	\$3,546.00
6/16/96	U.S. Open Championship	T94	76	71	73	76	—	296	+16	\$5,235.00
7/07/96	Motorola Western Open	T26	69	71	70	73	—	283	-5	\$13,611.11
7/21/96	British Open Championship	T40	72	71	72	69	—	284	E	\$11,082.50
8/04/96	Buick Open	T33	73	69	69	68	—	279	-9	\$6,480.00
8/11/96	PGA Championship	T8	67	67	74	72	—	280	-8	\$57,500.00
8/18/96	Sprint International	16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$27,200.00
8/25/96	NEC World Series of Golf	1	70	66	68	70	—	274	-6	\$378,000.00
9/15/96	Presidents Cup	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10/06/96	Las Vegas Invitational	T8	68	67	68	67	66	336	-23	\$46,200.00
10/27/96	Tour Championship	12	67	75	68	73	—	283	+3	\$76,800.00
1997										
1/12/97	Mercedes Championships	T11	71	68	72	—	—	211	-5	\$30,600.00
1/26/97	Phoenix Open	T7	70	71	66	66	—	273	-11	\$40,607.15
2/02/97	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	T33	67	71	69	74	—	281	-7	\$10,260.00
2/09/97	Buick Invitational	T38	69	67	77	72	—	285	-3	\$6,150.00
2/23/97	Tucson Chrysler Classic	T13	71	71	69	69	—	280	-8	\$24,375.00
3/09/97	Doral-Ryder Open	T20	69	68	71	78	—	286	-2	\$18,157.50
3/23/97	Bay Hill Invitational	1	72	65	70	65	—	272	-16	\$270,000.00
3/30/97	Players Championship	Cut	77	76	—	—	—	153	+9	—
4/13/97	Masters Tournament	Cut	76	74	—	—	—	150	+6	—
4/20/97	MCI Classic	T20	68	72	72	72	—	284	E	\$15,642.85
4/22/97	*Accenture WCG—United States	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4/27/97	Greater Greensboro Chrysler Classic	T9	71	68	70	70	—	279	-9	\$49,400.00
5/18/97	GTE Byron Nelson Golf Classic	T12	66	67	68	68	—	269	-11	\$33,171.43
5/25/97	MasterCard Colonial	T22	70	64	70	72	—	276	-4	\$13,047.27
6/08/97	Kemper Open	T14	69	73	68	70	—	280	-4	\$25,500.00
6/15/97	U.S. Open Championship	T43	75	68	73	74	—	290	+10	\$10,491.20
7/20/97	British Open Championship	T24	76	68	69	71	—	284	E	\$17,362.37
8/03/97	Sprint International	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$306,000.00
8/17/97	PGA Championship	T29	69	69	73	75	—	286	+6	\$13,625.00
8/24/97	NEC World Series of Golf	2	67	72	66	72	—	277	-3	\$237,600.00
9/28/97	*Ryder Cup	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10/26/97	Las Vegas Invitational	T14	68	63	79	70	69	349	-11	\$30,600.00
11/02/97	Tour Championship	T22	69	72	73	72	—	286	+2	\$72,800.00
1998										
1/11/98	Mercedes Championships	1	68	67	68	68	—	271	-17	\$306,000.00
1/25/98	Phoenix Open	T58	68	71	72	75	—	286	+2	\$5,475.00
2/01/98	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	1	65	70	67	—	—	202	-14	\$450,000.00
2/08/98	Buick Invitational	T49	70	69	73	—	—	212	-4	\$5,050.50
2/22/98	Tucson Chrysler Classic	Cut	73	72	—	—	—	145	+1	—
3/01/98	Nissan Open	T52	67	76	74	71	—	288	+4	\$4,924.50
3/22/98	Bay Hill Invitational	T65	71	75	—	—	—	146	+2	\$4,000.00
3/29/98	Players Championship	T8	69	73	70	71	—	283	-5	\$116,000.00
4/12/98	Masters Tournament	T12	74	69	69	74	—	286	-2	\$64,800.00
4/19/98	MCI Classic	T3	67	71	65	73	—	276	-8	\$110,200.00

Phil Mickelson's PGA Tour Results

Date	Tournament	Pos.	Rounds					Total Score	To Par	Official Money
			1	2	3	4	5			
4/26/98	Greater Greensboro Chrysler Classic	T6	74	65	71	70	—	280	-8	\$76,450.00
5/03/98	Shell Houston Open	T30	71	75	72	68	—	286	-2	\$12,150.00
5/17/98	GTE Byron Nelson Golf Classic	T6	66	68	69	67	—	270	-10	\$83,750.00
5/24/98	MasterCard Colonial	Cut	78	72	—	—	—	150	+10	—
5/31/98	Memorial Tournament	Cut	70	78	—	—	—	148	+4	—
6/21/98	U.S. Open Championship	T10	71	73	74	70	—	288	+8	\$64,490.00
6/28/98	Motorola Western Open	T35	77	69	69	71	—	286	-2	\$10,387.14
7/19/98	British Open Championship	79	71	74	85	78	—	308	+28	\$8,718.50
8/16/98	PGA Championship	T34	70	70	78	67	—	285	+5	\$14,250.00
8/23/98	Sprint International	T2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$176,000.00
8/30/98	NEC World Series of Golf	2	66	71	66	68	—	271	-9	\$243,000.00
10/18/98	Las Vegas Invitational	Cut	74	70	77	—	—	221	+5	—
10/25/98	National Car Rental Golf Classic/Disney	Cut	73	77	—	—	—	150	+6	—
11/01/98	Tour Championship	17	73	74	69	70	—	286	+6	\$81,600.00
12/13/98	The Presidents Cup		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1999										
1/10/99	Mercedes Championships	T22	72	70	70	78	—	290	-2	\$43,550.00
1/31/99	Phoenix Open	61	74	71	70	80	—	295	+11	\$6,540.00
2/07/99	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	T21	72	67	75	—	—	214	-2	\$30,240.00
2/14/99	Buick Invitational	Cut	72	70	—	—	—	142	-2	—
2/21/99	Nissan Open	T15	68	72	68	70	—	278	-6	\$40,670.00
2/28/99	WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship	T9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$75,000.00
3/21/99	Bay Hill Invitational	T5	74	67	68	71	—	280	-8	\$81,875.00
3/28/99	Players Championship	T32	71	71	71	82	—	295	+7	\$27,666.66
4/04/99	BellSouth Classic	T7	69	71	64	71	—	275	-13	\$77,916.66
4/11/99	Masters Tournament	T6	74	69	71	71	—	285	-3	\$125,200.00
4/18/99	MCI Classic	T36	74	67	71	71	—	283	-1	\$11,267.86
5/16/99	GTE Byron Nelson Classic	Cut	67	75	—	—	—	142	+2	—
5/23/99	MasterCard Colonial	T11	72	63	70	70	—	275	-5	\$50,680.00
6/06/99	Memorial Tournament	T11	69	73	69	71	—	282	-6	\$58,650.00
6/20/99	U.S. Open Championship	2	67	70	73	70	—	280	E	\$370,000.00
7/18/99	British Open Championship	Cut	79	76	—	—	—	155	+13	—
8/15/99	PGA Championship	T57	72	72	74	77	—	295	+7	\$7,175.00
8/22/99	Sprint International	T16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$41,600.00
8/29/99	WGC-NEC Invitational	2	69	67	70	65	—	271	-9	\$510,000.00
9/19/99	B.C. Open	T12	68	76	71	64	—	279	-9	\$30,400.00
9/26/99	*Ryder Cup		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10/17/99	Las Vegas Invitational	T37	69	63	69	79	70	350	-10	\$11,000.00
10/31/99	Tour Championship	T21	73	68	70	71	—	282	-2	\$91,000.00
11/07/99	WGC-American Express Championship	T40	69	71	77	78	—	295	+11	\$32,250.00
2000										
1/02/00	*Williams World Challenge	11	72	74	72	70	—	288	+8	\$125,000.00
1/23/00	Bob Hope Chrysler Classic	T16	67	72	64	68	68	339	-19	\$42,085.72
1/30/00	Phoenix Open	T10	63	73	65	73	—	274	-10	\$66,400.00
2/06/00	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	T61	71	72	74	—	—	217	+1	\$8,360.00

Phil Mickelson's PGA Tour Results

Date	Tournament	Pos.	Rounds					Total Score	To Par	Official Money
			1	2	3	4	5			
2/13/00	Buick Invitational	1	66	67	67	70	—	270	-18	\$540,000.00
2/27/00	WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship	T33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$25,000.00
3/05/00	Doral-Ryder Open	T21	66	73	68	70	—	277	-11	\$27,400.00
3/19/00	Bay Hill Invitational	T46	70	67	73	78	—	288	E	\$8,160.00
3/26/00	Players Championship	Cut	83	71	—	—	—	154	+10	—
4/02/00	BellSouth Classic	P1	67	69	69	—	—	205	-11	\$504,000.00
4/09/00	Masters Tournament	T7	71	68	76	71	—	286	-2	\$143,367.00
5/07/00	Compaq Classic of New Orleans	T17	71	67	69	71	—	278	-10	\$44,491.43
5/14/00	GTE Byron Nelson Classic	P2	73	63	68	65	—	269	-11	\$352,000.00
5/21/00	MasterCard Colonial	1	67	68	70	63	—	268	-12	\$594,000.00
6/11/00	Buick Classic	T13	69	70	68	75	—	282	-2	\$58,000.00
6/18/00	U.S. Open Championship	T16	71	73	73	76	—	293	+9	\$65,214.00
7/09/00	Advil Western Open	Cut	74	70	—	—	—	144	E	—
7/23/00	British Open Championship	T11	72	66	71	72	—	281	-7	\$56,345.63
8/06/00	The International Presented by Qwest	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$378,000.00
8/13/00	Buick Open	T4	69	71	65	68	—	273	-15	\$118,800.00
8/20/00	PGA Championship	T9	70	70	69	70	—	279	-9	\$112,500.00
8/27/00	WGC-NEC Invitational	T4	66	66	69	70	—	271	-9	\$243,333.33
10/15/00	Invensys Classic at Las Vegas	2	69	65	67	66	66	333	-27	\$459,000.00
10/22/00	Presidents Cup	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
11/05/00	Tour Championship	1	67	69	65	66	—	267	-13	\$900,000.00
12/17/00	*Hyundai Team Matches	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$20,000.00

2001

1/14/01	Mercedes Championships	T28	72	73	72	73	—	290	-2	\$49,500.00
1/28/01	Phoenix Open	Cut	71	72	—	—	—	143	+1	—
2/04/01	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	T3	70	66	66	73	—	275	-13	\$232,000.00
2/11/01	Buick Invitational	P1	68	64	71	66	—	269	-19	\$630,000.00
2/25/01	Nissan Open	Cut	73	74	—	—	—	147	+5	—
3/11/01	Honda Classic	T27	69	70	67	71	—	277	-11	\$19,573.33
3/18/01	Bay Hill Invitational	2	66	72	70	66	—	274	-14	\$378,000.00
3/25/01	Players Championship	T33	73	68	72	77	—	290	+2	\$31,028.57
4/01/01	BellSouth Classic	T3	70	66	73	75	—	284	-4	\$171,600.00
4/08/01	Masters Tournament	3	67	69	69	70	—	275	-13	\$380,800.00
5/06/01	Compaq Classic of New Orleans	2	66	66	64	72	—	268	-20	\$432,000.00
5/13/01	Verizon Byron Nelson Classic	T28	72	66	68	66	—	272	-8	\$28,050.00
5/20/01	MasterCard Colonial	T2	65	68	66	70	—	269	-11	\$352,000.00
5/27/01	Kemper Insurance Open	T3	68	67	72	65	—	272	-12	\$182,000.00
6/10/01	FedEx St. Jude Classic	Cut	70	71	—	—	—	141	-1	—
6/17/01	U.S. Open Championship	T7	70	69	68	75	—	282	+2	\$125,172.00
7/01/01	Canon Greater Hartford Open	1	67	68	61	68	—	264	-16	\$558,000.00
7/08/01	Advil Western Open	T42	66	74	67	76	—	283	-5	\$11,583.00
7/22/01	British Open Championship	T30	70	72	72	71	—	285	+1	\$30,755.75
8/05/01	International Presented by Qwest	71	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$7,920.00
8/12/01	Buick Open	T10	65	70	71	64	—	270	-18	\$74,400.00
8/19/01	PGA Championship	2	66	66	66	68	—	266	-14	\$562,000.00
8/26/01	WGC-NEC Invitational	T8	67	66	70	72	—	275	-5	\$147,500.00

Phil Mickelson's PGA Tour Results

Date	Tournament	Pos.	Rounds					Total Score	To Par	Official Money
			1	2	3	4	5			
2002										
1/20/02	Bob Hope Chrysler Classic	P1	64	67	70	65	64	330	-30	\$720,000.00
1/27/02	Phoenix Open	T23	72	66	70	68	—	276	-8	\$35,600.00
2/03/02	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	Cut	74	76	79	—	—	229	+13	—
2/10/02	Buick Invitational	Cut	73	75	—	—	—	148	+4	—
2/24/02	WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship	T33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$27,500.00
3/10/02	Honda Classic	T11	70	66	68	71	—	275	-13	\$63,350.00
3/17/02	Bay Hill Invitational Presented by Cooper Tires	T3	69	71	69	71	—	280	-8	\$192,000.00
3/24/02	Players Championship	T28	64	75	75	76	—	290	+2	\$38,212.50
4/07/02	BellSouth Classic	3	65	68	71	73	—	277	-11	\$258,400.00
4/14/02	Masters Tournament	3	69	72	68	71	—	280	-8	\$380,800.00
4/21/02	Worldcom Classic—The Heritage of Golf	3	65	64	72	71	—	272	-12	\$272,000.00
5/05/02	Compaq Classic of New Orleans	T9	73	66	71	68	—	278	-10	\$112,500.00
5/12/02	Verizon Byron Nelson Classic	T17	69	64	71	72	—	276	-4	\$67,200.00
5/19/02	MasterCard Colonial	T23	73	70	69	67	—	279	-1	\$38,270.00
5/26/02	Memorial Tournament	T9	73	66	70	69	—	278	-10	\$117,000.00
6/09/02	Buick Classic	T25	69	70	71	71	—	281	-3	\$25,593.75
6/16/02	U.S. Open Championship	2	70	73	67	70	—	280	E	\$585,000.00
6/23/02	Canon Greater Hartford Open	1	69	67	66	64	—	266	-14	\$720,000.00
7/21/02	British Open Championship	T66	68	76	76	70	—	290	+6	\$13,905.76
8/04/02	International Presented by Qwest	Cut	—	—	—	—	—	-18	—	—
8/11/02	Buick Open	T29	69	70	69	72	—	280	-8	\$19,239.00
8/18/02	PGA Championship	T34	76	72	78	68	—	294	+6	\$26,300.00
8/25/02	WGC-NEC Invitational	T9	66	69	71	71	—	277	-7	\$105,000.00
9/22/02	WGC-American Express Championship	T23	70	72	71	64	—	277	-11	\$52,500.00
9/29/02	*Ryder Cup		—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10/27/02	Buick Challenge	3	65	67	70	63	—	265	-23	\$251,600.00
11/03/02	Tour Championship presented by Coca-Cola	T5	70	69	67	69	—	275	-5	\$190,000.00
12/01/02	*Skins Game	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$300,000.00
12/08/02	*Target World Challenge Presented by Williams	10	68	74	68	68	—	278	-10	\$145,000.00
12/15/02	*WGC-EMC World Cup	T2	65	67	57	65	—	254	-34	\$250,000.00
2003										
1/26/03	Phoenix Open	T9	69	67	67	64	—	267	-17	\$112,000.00
2/02/03	Bob Hope Chrysler Classic	T6	70	68	63	69	67	337	-23	\$156,375.00
2/09/03	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	64	72	71	73	80	—	296	+8	\$10,600.00
2/16/03	Buick Invitational	T4	69	68	69	72	—	278	-10	\$186,000.00
3/02/03	WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship	T9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$95,000.00
4/06/03	BellSouth Classic	Cut	73	79	—	—	—	152	+8	—
4/13/03	Masters Tournament	3	73	70	72	68	—	283	-5	\$408,000.00
4/27/03	Shell Houston Open	T28	70	69	68	73	—	280	-8	\$31,950.00
5/04/03	HP Classic of New Orleans	T67	70	69	67	77	—	283	-5	\$10,100.00

Phil Mickelson's PGA Tour Results

Date	Tournament	Pos.	Rounds					Total Score	To Par	Official Money
			1	2	3	4	5			
5/18/03	EDS Byron Nelson Championship	T44	65	72	71	71	—	279	−1	\$16,184.00
5/25/03	Bank of America Colonial	T13	67	70	68	68	—	273	−7	\$91,000.00
6/08/03	FBR Capital Open	Cut	75	70	—	—	—	145	+3	—
6/15/03	U.S. Open Championship	T55	70	70	75	74	—	289	+9	\$16,199.00
7/06/03	100th Western Open Presented by <i>Golf Digest</i>	T30	70	69	68	76	—	283	−5	\$26,742.85
7/20/03	British Open Championship	T59	74	72	73	78	—	297	+13	\$15,180.68
7/27/03	Greater Hartford Open	T58	67	73	70	72	—	282	+2	\$8,800.00
8/10/03	International	T6	—	—	—	—	—	+26	—	\$173,750.00
8/17/03	PGA Championship	T23	66	75	72	75	—	288	+8	\$52,000.00
8/24/03	WGC-NEC Invitational	T23	68	73	70	70	—	281	+1	\$48,000.00
10/05/03	WGC-American Express Championship	T38	73	77	70	71	—	291	+11	\$38,500.00
10/12/03	Las Vegas Invitational	T9	67	64	69	68	68	336	−23	\$104,000.00
10/26/03	Funai Classic at the Walt Disney World Resort	T30	71	67	72	67	—	277	−11	\$22,755.55
11/02/03	Chrysler Championship	Cut	80	74	—	—	—	154	+12	—
11/23/03	*Presidents Cup	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
11/30/03	*ConAgra Foods Skins Game	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$170,000.00

2004

1/25/04	Bob Hope Chrysler Classic	P1	68	63	64	67	68	330	−30	\$810,000.00
2/01/04	FBR Open	T7	64	68	68	72	—	272	−12	\$167,700.00
2/08/04	AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am	3	68	68	71	69	—	276	−12	\$360,400.00
2/15/04	Buick Invitational	T4	74	69	69	67	—	279	−9	\$174,000.00
2/29/04	WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship	T5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	\$225,000.00
3/07/04	Ford Championship at Doral	T24	67	69	69	74	—	279	−9	\$44,000.00
3/28/04	Players Championship	T3	70	69	70	71	—	280	−8	\$416,000.00
4/04/04	BellSouth Classic	10	69	72	71	71	—	283	−5	\$121,500.00
4/11/04	Masters Tournament	1	72	69	69	69	—	279	−9	\$1,170,000.00
5/02/04	HP Classic of New Orleans	T2	67	65	69	66	—	267	−21	\$448,800.00
5/09/04	Wachovia Championship	T5	70	70	72	67	—	279	−9	\$196,700.00
5/16/04	EDS Byron Nelson Championship	Cut	69	72	—	—	—	141	+1	—
5/23/04	Bank of America Colonial	T35	71	66	70	74	—	281	+1	\$25,572.50
6/13/04	Buick Classic	T16	69	68	69	73	—	279	−5	\$73,650.00
6/20/04	U.S. Open Championship	2	68	66	73	71	—	278	−2	\$675,000.00
7/18/04	British Open Championship	3	73	66	68	68	—	275	−9	\$514,965.00
8/15/04	PGA Championship	T6	69	72	67	74	—	282	−6	\$196,000.00
8/22/04	WGC-NEC Invitational	T43	70	75	68	72	—	285	+5	\$43,000.00
9/12/04	Bell Canadian Open	T57	75	69	79	68	—	291	+7	\$10,035.00
9/19/04	*Ryder Cup	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10/10/04	Michelin Championship at Las Vegas	W/D	68	66	—	—	—	134	−9	—
10/31/04	Chrysler Championship	Cut	71	76	—	—	—	147	+5	—
11/07/04	Tour Championship	T19	71	72	67	74	—	284	+4	\$112,500.00

Career Totals 1988–2004

Events Played	1st	2nd	3rd	Top 10	Finish Top 25	Made Cut	Cut	W/D	Official Money Total
303	23	17	18	103	156	242	61	1	\$29,557,928.00

Source: PGA Tour, Inc.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

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