

Televised golf is for the birdies



FROM THE SIDELINES

BY JAKE BERG

Sometimes television and sports mix like water and oil. It doesn't work.

When one thinks of sporting events on television, the Super Bowl comes to mind. Networks charge hundreds of thousands of dollars just for 30-second advertisements during the NFL's big game.

The NBA playoffs have a lion's share of time on both cable television and the regular stations for nearly two months before the postseason is over. And the NCAA men's basketball tournament provides its television viewers with an exciting 64-team festival referred to as simply "March Madness" — with good reason.

But golf? Sunday signaled the end to the professional golfers' pride and joy — the Masters tournament, four days of golf, no more and no less. To think that there were actually people sitting at home, friends toasting beers at the local bars, or shoppers stopping in department store electronic sections watching this event on television.

My dad used to be one of these folk, armed with his remote control and two feet propped up on the footrest of his easy chair. We could be watching an exciting and tight NFL game Sunday afternoon on NBC, but when the commercials came around, dad would turn to CBS to catch the latest golf tournament.

"Wow. Exciting. Golf. Gee dad, why don't we watch this more often?" I'd think with my tongue in cheek.

If my sarcastic whines went

unanswered, I found something else to do that had nothing to do with golf — like stacking wood or painting the garage.

Don't get me wrong, golf is a fine sport to play. Key phrase — to play. Getting a group of good friends together and going to your local course on the discount day is a cheap way to have a good time.

On one of my worst days golfing, I lost more than 40 balls in the trees and water hazards on nine holes alone. I actually had a great time and will never forget it. Just don't tell dad that the balls I used — and lost — were from his set of clubs.

It was his television, too, so I usually had to watch what he wanted to watch. He always had the remote, anyway.

I just didn't get — and still don't — what could be so exciting about literally planting yourself in front of a television set for an entire afternoon (yes, golf tournaments last a long time) just to see overdressed yuppies with guts run around with metal sticks in their hands on well-kept pieces of lawn.

If I really wanted to know what happened in the tournament, I could take five or 10 minutes out of my day the next morning to read about it in the newspaper. And I usually did.

The newspaper could tell me who won, how much he won, who he beat, how many times he's won this year, and what major tourney is next on the circuit. All is learned during the consumption of one bowl of Wheaties before going to class.

The newspaper is my censor. Maybe the most annoying thing about golf on television is not how dry the whole thing is, but how dehydrated the commentary is. With the newspaper, I don't have to listen to overpaid

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sports commentators analyze every little thing about every little putt to get every little stroke.

The commentators' exciting analysis ranks them right up there with fishing programs. They both take the whole thing away from the activity by breaking it down into unneeded analysis that sucks away the whole motive of having fun.

The purpose I see behind fishing is to go out to a river with friends and relax (weather permitting). It is not about watching thick-drawled men do the activity for you on television on rivers you may never see.

Golf is the same way. Only the players are a little different.

Admittedly, though, I am a person who has skipped the Super Bowl in years past in favor of working.

And last week, you wouldn't have found me in front of a television set watching the Duke vs. Michigan NCAA men's basketball championship game. I was at my Ballroom Dance class, learning steps to the waltz and fox trot.

Sunday afternoon, too, had me seated in front of a computer monitor doing work — not in front of a television, watching the Masters.

Jake Berg is sports editor of the Emerald.

Oregon athletes selected for Pac-10 academic teams

Oregon senior wrestler Dan Vidlak and Duck men's basketball guard Jon Mitchell were named to the first-team All-Pacific-10 Conference academic teams.

Vidlak, a two-time All-American at 118 pounds, compiled a 3.05 GPA as a science major.

Mitchell, a sophomore walk-on from Eugene's Churchill High School, posted a 3.68 GPA as an undeclared major.

Kelly Blair, a

guard/forward for the Oregon women's basketball team, and wrestler Darron Gustafson and Wood Norvell picked up second-team honors for the Ducks.

Basketball players Ilesha Smith, Missy Stowell, Sara Wilson and Peggy Swadener earned honorable mentions, representing the largest number of honorees from any one school.

Wrestler Pat Hirai also earned an honorable mention.

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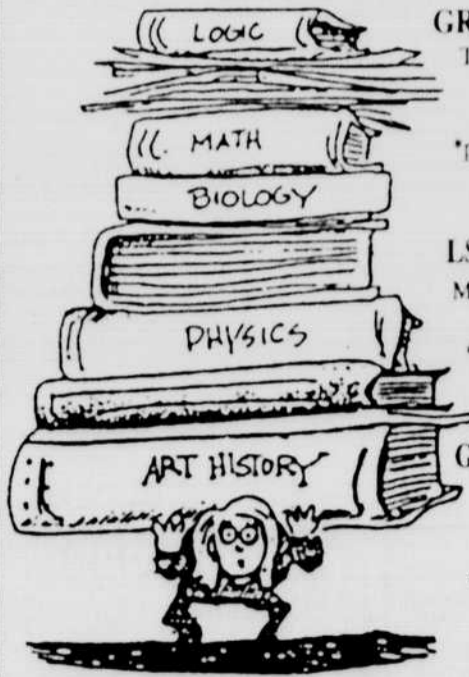


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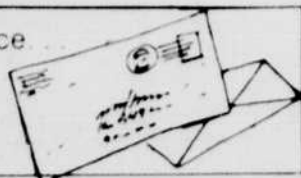
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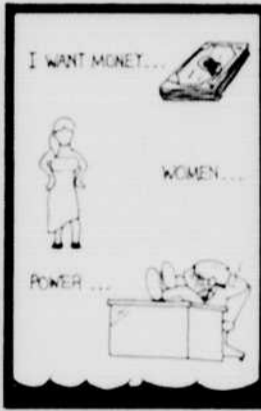
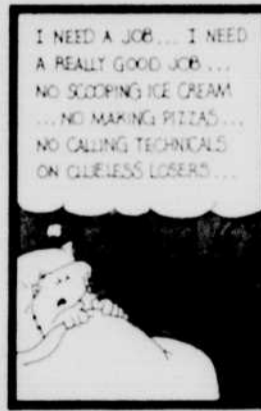
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