

BUMBLER, FUMBLER,
AND STUMBLER

BY

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MARCH 4, 1993

This paper is dedicated to all people who have ever fumbled, bumbled or stumbled in life! We always anticipate hard work and determination will bring success. That is not always the case.

In coaching a young baseball player, this phenomenon was observed every time Herbert came to bat. The little league player, although talented and fleet of foot, foresaw himself scoring a homerun every time at bat. Herbert would stand forthright with determination in his eye and dribble the ball to the infield. He would always leave the plate like a bullet being shot, but as he rounded second, he was oblivious to the irate coaches fervent cries to stop. Onward he would press until the umpires resounding call - "You're Out!" This scene was repeated throughout his many little league seasons to the dismay of "Tommy Lasorda Tilly" and myself.

Many great and not so great men and women have fallen victim to always expecting greatness in all they do. These perceptions undoubtedly will manage to give each reason for humility and reflection.

The following stories will portray how we are not always dealt a winning hand.

An eighteen year old worked many years to realize her goal of playing at Wimbledon. She wanted to make a lasting impression. That she did! She arduously perfected her strokes and she selected a stunning new tennis outfit no one would ever forget.

For everyone who plays at Wimbledon, it's the championship or bust. For Linda Siegal, it was bust in every sense of the word.

Linda was battling Billie Jean King in a second-round match when she first exposed herself to serious trouble. During a change of sides, Linda bent over near the umpire's stand and realized that she was coming out of the top of her tennis dress. "I kept hanging a towel around my neck to make sure nothing happened," she recalled. "But when I got back on the court, everything just fell out."

The crowd tittered and then broke into guffaws when a spectator shouted, "Now that's what I call a deuce!" Wearing little more than an embarrassed smile, the bare-chested tennis player stuffed herself back into her outfit. Although Linda held onto her cool, she lost the match 6-1, 6-3. Afterward, when asked by reporters what she thought of the revealing dress, Billie Jean said, "If endowed, wear it."

The next day, the front pages of several British tabloids prominently displayed photos of Linda spilling out of her outfit. The conservative Daily Telegraph reported, "The lawn tennis was not spectacular, but Miss Siegal, needing to make some essential adjustments, did not learn of the strategic value of a pin."

The flashy Daily Mail said that Linda's eye-popping dress "kept all heads turned one way" in wait for the fallout. Finally, "Linda's dress-bra-less, back-less, and as she admitted later, a bit reckless - could take the strain no longer, Linda clearly was out."

Hinting that she had launched a new tennis fad, The Evening Standard ran a photo of four women in topless outfits marching onto center court with their racquets under their arms. The caption read, "I heard (tennis dress designer) Teddy Tingling was up all night making them."

So what was the result of all this publicity? Linda was asked to pose nude for another tabloid.

Being her very first Wimbledon, Linda had wanted to make a lasting impression. That she did! Veteran observers said that of all the debuts they had ever seen, hers was the breast.

If there is a hell for bowlers, Richard Caplette is a charter member. No one ever rolled a more deplorable game in league competition than he did.

During one horrendous and unforgettable night, Caplette, who owned a creditable 170 average, set the American Bowling Congress record for the lowest score in league play - an incredible 3! Not only that, but he also established a black mark for most gutter balls in a single game - nineteen!

The pins could have been as big as sequoias and it wouldn't have made any difference. Caplette simply couldn't hit them. He ended up in the gutter more times than a Skid Row drunk.

"No matter what I tried, I just couldn't keep the ball on the alley," recalled Caplette. "The biggest mistake I made that night was showing up at the bowling alley."

It was the opener of the new bowling season and Caplette was rolling for the VFW team at the Friendly Bowl in nearby Brooklyn, Connecticut. He felt good and hoped to shoot a 200 game. By the end of the evening, he discovered that his expectations were off by 197 pins.

Caplette's first inclination that this was not going to be his night came early when he knocked down only three pins on his first ball and rolled his second into the gutter. He muttered and cursed. But had Caplette known what misfortune lay ahead, he probably would have cheered, because that was the only frame in which he managed to score!

"I couldn't stop throwing gutter balls," he said, "I kept doing it frame after frame. Our scores were posted overhead and that didn't help, especially since our team bowled in a lane right next to the women's league. After each gutter ball, I'd sit down and a different woman would come over and say, 'Can I help you?' That was bad enough. But then about the seventh frame, the president of our league hollered over to our team captain, 'Hey Duke. Who do you have on your team tonight? A blind bowler?' I was ready to give up then, but I went ahead and finished."

"I was trying my best, too. I wasn't drunk or anything like that. It was just the harder I tried, the worse I got. I never saw anything like that in my life."

Neither had anyone else. Of the twenty balls he rolled, nineteen were consecutive gutter balls - an ABC record for ~~future~~ consistency.
FUTURE

Caplette, who lives only two miles away from the Friendly Bowl, says he has never set foot in the place since that awful night. He even worked on the roof of the bowling alley - but wouldn't go inside. "I just never went back," he admitted. "I completely gave up bowling after that. I never threw another ball. I was too embarrassed to show my face around an alley again."

GERALD FORD,

Next is a story of our former President, who is renowned for his fumbles, bumbles and stumbles. He stated for the record in 1984, "I deny allegations by Bob Hope...that during our last game, I hit an eagle, a birdie, an elk and a moose." The former president played regularly on the pro-am circuit. It is understood the former president always refused to take an unplayable lie. He would angrily flail away at the ball while those nearby would bust a gut to keep from laughing.

Such was the story at the famed Pebble Beach in 1981. While playing with the likes of Arnold Palmer and Hale Irwin, Ford was going to hold his own. He drew his club back for the tee shot on the Par 4, 327 yard 4th hole. The ball sailed onto the beach, resting on the surf-pounded rocks. Rather than take a two-stroke penalty and play a new ball, Ford hiked down to the rocky beach to hit the old ball. The golf rule states, "The ball has to be at rest before you can hit it." Ford would get set and go into his swing and in came the surf and there went the ball. The constant

flow of the tide kept poor Jerry hacking away, the more he hacked the madder he got. Sprays of sand, surf and muffled explicatives were heard as he relentlessly swung and missed. Finally, he managed to smack the ball to the fairway only to overshoot the green! A lucky thirteen score for the Par 4. Moose Wammock, the former PGA official who handled Ford's security on the tour claimed, "The funniest thing about Jerry is not his temper. It's his clumsiness. I guarantee you there's not a tee marker on a course he hasn't fallen over. It's automatic every time he plays!" Golf has a way of keeping us humble!

Many Kentuckians may remember the Kentucky Derby, of May 4, 1957. Willie Shoemaker found that dreams really do come true. Willie heard from Ralph Lowe, the owner of Shoemaker's mount for the day, Gallant Man. He told Willie, "I dreamed last night that my rider had misjudged the finish line in the Derby." Shoemaker just laughed and said, "Oh, don't worry at that Mr. Lowe. That's never going to happen to me. I've been riding too long to allow something like that." During the race charging up on the final turn, Willie made his move as Gallant Man shot from third into the lead, heading down the stretch. When his mount galloped past the sixteenth pole for the finish, Shoemaker stood up in his stirrups, thinking he had crossed the finish line as a winner. Suddenly he realized he was confused, that it was not the finish line. Willie sat down, Gallant Man's stride had been broken. Shoemaker felt this was the difference between winning and losing. Later Shoemaker said, "Some good did come out of that embarrassing moment - it reined in a galloping ego." "At the time," he said, "I was beginning to believe that I was just the greatest, and that I couldn't do anything wrong."

Sometimes athletes feel inspirational and do their best to motivate their teams.

Before a big game, Coach Butch Morgan read his team a poem he hoped would lead the squad to victory. Unfortunately, the verse did the reverse.

In the locker room - before the St. Joseph cagers of Rutland, Vermont, tangled with their more powerful rival, Castleton State College - Morgan tried to psyche up his players with an inspirational poem called "Don't Quit." He made copies of the ode and gave one to each player before reading it out loud.

"After I read the poem to them, I asked their response to it," recalled Morgan. "I took a few extra minutes to make sure each player had the chance to study the poem and

talk about it. The gym was jammed and the fans were waiting for us to come out. The ref kept coming into the locker room telling us to get out on the floor and I kept telling him we weren't done yet. I felt what I was doing in the locker room was more important than what was going to happen on the court, anyway."

The refs found no rhyme or reason for Morgan's muse. When St. Joseph finally came out on the floor, the officials assessed the team five technical fouls - one for each starting player - for delaying the game. Before the clock ticked off a single second, Castleton's Dave Bove shot five technical free throws and made three of them. They turned out to be crucial points! St. Joseph lost 79-78.

Despite losing because of the poem, Morgan called the game, "the high point" of his coaching career. "I expected my team to get beat by fifteen or twenty points, yet those kids played a phenomenal game. In all honesty," added Morgan, who now runs a bar in Rutland, "they probably would have won it - with a little more decent coaching."

Even as we fumble, stumble, and bumble through life we have to remember to laugh at our own misfortunes. Even the great Eddie Arcaro, who won 4779 races, lost his first 250 races. So as Linda Siegal, Richard Caplette, Gerald Ford, Willie Shoemaker, Butch Morgan and Charles Tilley learned, even with hard work, determination, and the best of plans things don't always work out.