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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
WORLD GOLF HALL OF FAME  
ENSHRINEMENT DINNER

AT 10:35 P.M. EDT

Thank you very, very much, Governor Jim Holshouser, my good golfing partner, the Governor of South Carolina, Senator Jesse Helms, my old friend Earl Ruth. But I do wish to acknowledge and pay special tribute to the inductees who I tremendously admire and greatly respect, and I have really enjoyed listening to the stories that each of them have given.

And it is an awfully hard act to follow after the tales they have told and the incidents that they have related.

It has also been one of the great things that I have admired, excellence, and I have spent a great deal of time in the last few years on Saturday afternoons and Sunday afternoons watching various tournaments.

I usually take with me and sit in front of the television and take a pile of work and in between this shot and that shot, I try to concentrate. But I really am more interested in the excellence that they demonstrate to the American people. I admire excellence. I respect it.

And it seems to me that this is what we want in this country and what we want in the world. And to be here this afternoon and this evening and to get better acquainted with those I have known, and to meet others that I have not known, in the sport of golf, has been a great and an exhilarating day to me, and I compliment and congratulate everyone of them because they epitomize excellence in probably one of the most competitive areas of athletic competition that I have ever seen.

And I just hope that they, through their example, give to all Americans the kind of spirit, the kind of drive, the kind of dedication that is so essential if we are to achieve what is the best for everybody in this country and throughout the world.

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If I may, I would like to tell you the most memorable golfing experience I ever had. I was at the Burning Tree course, which is one of those courses in Washington, D. C. I was playing with Ben Hogan, and Arnold Palmer and Byron Nelson. And they came up to me and they said they were looking for another great, great golfer to join them. I said, "Well, here I am." And they said, "Good. You can help us look for one." (Laughter)

I didn't mind that so much, but what really hurt me was when Arnold Palmer asked if I would not wear his slacks except under an assumed name. (Laughter)

I do appreciate the honor of the invitation from Don and Bill, but as I stand before all of you golfing immortals, one thought keeps running through my mind. I have an 18 handicap, and I guess I played it that way today in between the first and 18th hole. You need me as a good golfer like Sam Snead needs another tomato can. (Laughter)

They say you can always tell a good player by the number of people in the gallery. You have heard, and we have all heard, of Arnie's Army. My group is called Ford's Few. (Laughter)

I figured it out, that my problem is I have a very wild swing and I demonstrated it on a number of occasions for Patty and some of the others this afternoon. Back on my home course in Grand Rapids, Michigan, they don't yell "Fore," they yell "Ford."

And you know, all of these fine Secret Service men you have seen around me today, and elsewhere. When I play golf, I am told they qualify for combat pay. (Laughter)

But I try to keep my hands in whenever I can. Personally, I thoroughly enjoy playing golf with Henry Kissinger. Henry is undoubtedly one of the greatest, one of the finest, and one of the very best diplomats the world has ever known, and fortunately for us, he has been carrying out that responsibility on behalf of our country. I will tell you why I say that: Last week, I was in a sand trap, which I frequently find myself in. There was a water hazard beyond that, and then some 95 feet or more to the pin, and Henry conceded the putt. (Laughter)

But this afternoon, I had one of the greatest thrills of my lifetime, the chance to play a few holes with the super stars of world golfing and I thoroughly enjoyed it and they were most considerate of my difficulties.

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I can't tell you how I felt out there surrounded by such legendary names as Berg, Hogan, Nelson, Nicklaus, Palmer, Player, Sarazen, Snead. And in all honesty, it was something like being in a golfer's heaven, and I appreciate the opportunity to be there.

But as the cliché goes, tonight I have good news and some bad news. The good news, that four of our honorees, Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Gary Player and Sam Snead, will be competing in the World Open beginning tomorrow.

The bad news is today they shared the course with me. And I will tell you what I mean.

In 1972, I played with Sam Snead in the Pro-Am before the Kemper Open, and he didn't win. (Laughter) In 1973, I played with Miller Barber before the Kemper Open, and he didn't win. And this year, I played with Tom Weiskopf before the Kemper Open and then I played with Dave Stockton up at Pleasant Valley in the Pro-Am, and neither of them won the tournament.

Now, you know why, I am sure, in Washington I am known as the President of the United States, and in golf, I am sort of known as the jinx of the links. (Laughter)

Frankly, I figured it out, that Snead, Barber, Weiskopf and Stockton blew about \$165,000 in prize money by their performance with me in the several Pro-Am tours that I indicated. But if you think they are unhappy, you should see the Internal Revenue Service. (Laughter)

As you undoubtedly know by now, I thoroughly enjoy golf, not only the competition, but the people. I enjoy the exercise it provides, the competitive challenge, the good fellowship before and after each game.

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But if I had to single out one attribute of golf above all others, it would be found in the very simple statement from the ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, and I quote, "Golf is played on the honor system. A player is expected to count his own strokes even though he may miss the ball completely, to acknowledge the fact promptly if he violates a rule and incurs a penalty, and to avoid interfering in any way with his opponents or his fellow competitor's play.

Golf is one of the few games where honor is more important than the rules. Without good sportsmanship, golf could not exist. Without trust, another name for good sportsmanship, governments cannot exist.

But there is still one more lesson to be learned from golf and I have never seen a tournament, regardless of how much money, or how much fame, or prestige, or emotion was ever involved, that didn't end with the victor extending his hand to the vanquished.

I have enjoyed sitting there watching on television the pat on the back, the arm around the shoulder, the praise for what was done right, and the sympathetic nod for what wasn't. These are as much a part of golf as life itself, and I would hope that understanding and reconciliation are not limited to the 19th hole.

Before I leave -- and let me express to Don and Bill my great enjoyment to be with all of you -- I would like to thank them and you for asking me. It was a delightful day, after a few kind of tough ones.  
(Laughter)

This afternoon for a few hours, quite unsuccessfully, I tried to make a hole in one. Tomorrow morning I will be back in Washington trying to get out of one.  
(Laughter)

And thank all of you for making this a most welcome "mini" vacation.

Thank you, and good night.

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(AT 10:35 P.M. EDT)

