

Our First Nine...

A couple weeks ago, I mentioned that I snuck out of the house one morning for a quick round of golf. With two young kids, that is more of a rare occurrence these days. To be honest, I did not have to sneak; I kissed my wife and kids goodbye on the way out the door, as is my usual custom. Parker, our three year old boy, made the normal fuss about my leaving, but I could see him back to his toys as we pulled down the driveway. All was well, as far as I knew.

A few days later, Parker was playing outside with one of his grandfathers and the subject of golf came out. When Parker was asked about the game, he said that Dad had played last weekend and "didn't want me." You can only imagine the look on Jennifer and her father's faces when those words were uttered.

For you parents out there, you know what I felt like when I heard that story. For those of you who do not have kids, imagine letting down the person you love most in the world and then multiply that feeling a thousand fold. I was determined to make amends, so, against most logic; I invited Parker for half a round of golf this last weekend. The following is a short recap of how we fared.

We arrived at the Llano course early enough to avoid other golfers and stay out of everyone's way. Golf etiquette is serious business, but not well comprehended by three year olds. We played the back nine holes to make sure we had an open track. As I put on my spikes I learned lesson number one for the day. Whatever I have, Parker needs too. A slight ruckus broke out because he had no glove, no bag of clubs, and no special shoes to put on. This was quickly quelled by the appearance of a neon yellow golf ball. Not my first rodeo, as well as a head start on Santa's Christmas shopping list.

On the first tee box, Parker was happy to lob a wedge ten feet down the fairway. His yellow ball went half that distance. He then proceeded to run, pick his ball up, and deposit it back to the cart. After Dad's opening drive found a resting place amongst a covey of range balls, Parker offered up his first bit of sage advice for the day, "Dad, your ball would be better if it went there (pointing to the fairway)." Who said I can't teach my kid the basics of the game?

Riding from shot to shot in the golf cart seemed to be the highlight of the day. That and the assortment of fruit juice and chocolate milk that Dad brought along. Three or four holes into the day, Parker had given up on the long shots (he'd rather not get Dad's help) and just ran up to every green with a putter and his yellow ball. After placing his ball on the lip, he would putt it in and proceeded to celebrate by pulling the flagstick and twirl it around the green. Effectively, he managed a hole in one on every hole. Golf should be this easy for the rest of us.

Late in the round, I actually had a legitimate birdie putt. Mind you, I had given up keeping score at this point because Parker enjoyed running from the cart to pick up my ball and throw it wherever he saw fit, usually not in a helpful direction. After we got to the green and he made his usual ace, Parker pulled the pin and sat down to watch me putt. It appeared that I struck the ball well, but I will never know as Parker jumped up and kicked my ball as it neared the hole. He then ran across the green and jumped into my arms, laughing all the way.

We spent the rest of our round looking for frogs and hitting balls into the river (on purpose for a change). I hit some good shots and more than a few bad, but it never seemed to dampen the mood of my playing partner. As we walked up to the last hole, Parker said that it was time to go. When I asked him why, he looked at me dumfounded and said, "'cause I'm done with juice and Mommy misses me."

I can only hope that there are quite a few rounds in our future. I'm sure that we'll play some fancy and not so fancy courses. Heck, some day I may even outscore Parker, nine being a round that even Tiger would be hard pressed to post. Despite all that, I doubt I'll ever play a better round of golf, at least until my baby girl picks up a club.

Until next time, keep smiling.

-Questions and comments can be sent to Drs. Parrish at ParrishDental@aol.com.