

## ***“The Back 9: Life Lessons Learned Later in Life”***

### ***Hole #13, “Adversity”***



#### **“The Bad Break”**

*“This is a game of misses. The one who misses the best is going to win!”*

*Ben Hogan, Champion Golfer*

Along with Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods, Ben Hogan is included in most golf conversations regarding the game’s greatest player of all time. Of all the accolades given to Hogan (64 professional victories including nine major championships), his most admired character trait was his determination to overcome adversity.

On February 2, 1949, Hogan and his wife, Valerie were driving home to Fort Worth, Texas after a Monday playoff loss at the 1949 Phoenix Open. In the early morning fog, they were involved in a head-on collision with a Greyhound bus. The doctors gave Valerie little hope that Ben would survive and, if he did, they were not sure he would walk again, let alone play competitive golf.

Hogan not only survived, he thrived. Through hard work and a fierce determination, he returned to the PGA Tour one year after the accident. Due to poor circulation in his legs, he had to limit his tournament appearances to no more than seven events a year. Even so, his relentless dedication to his rehabilitation and long hours of practice propelled him to win 13 more tournaments, including six major championships in the years following the accident. In 1953, only four years after the accident, Ben Hogan had arguably one of the single best year’s performances in the history of golf. He won five of the six tournaments he entered that year, including three major championships.

Ben Hogan learned how to overcome adversity on the golf course...and in life.

### **Hole #13, “Adversity”**

As we continue the Back 9 holes of life, the 13th hole is where we will learn the valuable life lesson of overcoming adversity. Adversity is “*adverse or unfavorable fortune or fate; a condition marked by misfortune, calamity, or distress.*” No one is immune from adversity. At times, life gives us a bad break. Eventually, every one of us will experience disappointment in life whether in a medical diagnosis, a financial hardship, a failed relationship or other unexpected difficulties.

The great Apostle Paul was no stranger to adversity. On more than one occasion, the Roman authorities put him in prison because of his faith. He was constantly facing danger and death. Yet, Paul was not only able to *survive* the adversity he faced, but actually *thrived* because of it. In his letter to the Philippian church, Paul writes

*“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. **I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.**” (Philippians 4:12-13)*

Paul learned the secret to finding contentment in life regardless of his circumstances. The present reality of Christ living within him gave him the strength to handle any kind of adversity. When Paul declared that he can “do all things” through Christ who gives him strength, he was stating that he could *handle* any adversity in his life and ministry. The same is true for us. Christ within us gives us the strength to handle all things.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul says that adversity (suffering) produces endurance, endurance produces character and character produces hope (Romans 5:3-5). Ben Hogan learned how to handle a bad break on the golf course. The life lesson of overcoming adversity gave him the strength to handle a devastating bad break in life. Adversity can make us better by challenging us to be our best in trying times. The anvil of adversity is where Godly character is forged.

I missed the fairway on my tee shot on the 13<sup>th</sup> hole and the ball took a bad bounce and ended up in the water. It was only a few feet away from being a great shot! How frustrating! There was a day when a temper tantrum would follow a shot like that one! That is ok, that was my first bad break on the Back 9 and the 14<sup>th</sup> hole is the easiest hole on the course! I am not going to let one bad break ruin my day! On to Hole #14...I can't wait to hit this next shot!