

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

### ***Hole #16, “Loss”***



#### ***“A Heartbreaking Loss”***

*“It's not the victories that count to me. It's the quality of how you deliver your losses and the quality of how you deliver your victories.”*

*Greg Norman, Champion Golfer*

As I begin the final three holes of the Back 9 of my life, I am keenly aware of the times I have been ushered into the heartbreak of loss. We all have. The older we get the more familiar with loss we become. Winning in life has nothing to do with victories or performance; it has everything to do with how we handle loss.

Greg Norman's name will always be associated with heartbreaking losses. Although he spent 331 weeks as the number one ranked golfer in the world and won 89 professional tournaments, his legacy will always include how he dealt with loss.

In 1986, the popular Australian golfer, nicknamed “The Great White Shark”, came to the final hole of the Masters tied for the lead with Jack Nicklaus. Greg made a careless mistake on his final shot and lost the tournament by one stroke. Heartbreaking. One year later, he finished the Masters in a three-way tie for the lead. On the second playoff hole, Larry Mize hit a one-in-a-million miracle chip shot into the hole from 140 feet away. Norman stood on the side of the green in disbelief. Another heartbreaking loss. In 1996, Greg was the top-ranked golfer in the world. He entered the final round of the Masters that year leading by six strokes. The golfing world prepared to celebrate what seemed inevitable, the Shark putting on the Master's famous green jacket specially tailored for the new champion. As Norman teed off on the first hole of the final round, the Tailor was finishing the final touches on his green jacket. On

the Front 9, Greg lost four of his six-stroke lead. On the Back 9, he hit two balls in the water, made several other costly mistakes and ended up losing the Masters by five strokes. In the midst of his devastating loss, his words of wisdom touched millions. In his post-round interview, Norman said,

*"I am a winner. I just didn't win today."*

### ***Hole #16, "Loss"***

The Biblical prophet, Isaiah, offered words of comfort and hope to people whose hearts were broken from loss. They had lost their homeland, their culture, their worship and their sense of community. Some had lost family members. Their sense of loss was overwhelming. Hope was slipping away. Isaiah's words of comfort offered hope to those experiencing loss. They still do.

*"Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint."*

*Isaiah 40:28-31*

Loss never has the final word. The promise of Isaiah reminds us there is life after loss that will include soaring and running. The sting of loss is real. It hurts. While in the midst of a season of a devastating loss, often we are left struggling each day to put one foot in front of the other and walk without fainting. Soaring and running seem impossible. Simply walking without fainting is challenging enough. We have all been there. Some of us are there right now. Our faith reassures us that God is ever-present with us in our loss and provides hope and strength to believe that on the other side of loss is renewal.

The Lord understands loss. He also understands there is life after loss. Jesus wept when his good friend died (John 11). He stayed with the man's sisters who were grieving the loss of their brother. His tears over their loss gave those around him renewed strength and hope. It still does today.

In his heartbreaking losses, Greg Norman became a greater champion. He understands loss is a part of golf, and of life. The Great White Shark does not own a green jacket from Augusta National Golf Club. He never will. He has something much more valuable...a depth of character and wisdom regarding what really matters in life. A life lesson he learned in the school of loss.

As I putt out on the 16<sup>th</sup> Hole, I realize that I am too far behind to win this match. I am disappointed in my performance. I am discouraged. It has not been my day. Regardless of how well I play the final two holes, I will not win. It is hard to keep grinding. I notice a sign hanging on the 17<sup>th</sup> Tee Marker as I make my way to the tee box, "PERSEVERANCE". Ok, I get the message. I will give it my best.