

# GOLFING

A View Through the Golf Hole

LEE H. VAN DAM



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## Addressing the Ball

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A favorite TV sitcom from years ago was *The Honeymooners*, starring Jackie Gleason. The episode called “**The Golfer**” that first aired on **October 15, 1955** has been ranked as one of the top ten sitcom episodes of all time. (Another one in the top ten that you’re probably familiar with is Lucille Ball’s 1952 candy factory episode where Lucy and Ethel try wrapping chocolates on a moving conveyor belt that keeps increasing in speed.) In the *Honeymooners* episode, Ralph Kramden (played by Gleason) and his best pal, Ed Norton (played by Art Carney), are in Ralph’s apartment and they have a big problem. Ralph has been pretending at work that he is an expert golfer in order to get a promotion. **But Ralph doesn’t actually know how to play golf, and when his boss invites him to join him for a round, Ralph is in a pickle.**

So Norton gets out a big golf instruction book and tries to give Ralph a golf lesson. Ralph shows up in the kitchen of the apartment for the lesson wearing outrageous plaid knicker pants, argyle socks, an ugly patterned sweater, and a hilarious tam o’ shanter golf hat with a toorie pom pom in the center. Ralph has one golf club, an old wooden driver, but no ball, so Ed gets out a

pin cushion that still has pins in it to use as a ball. They then proceed with the lesson.

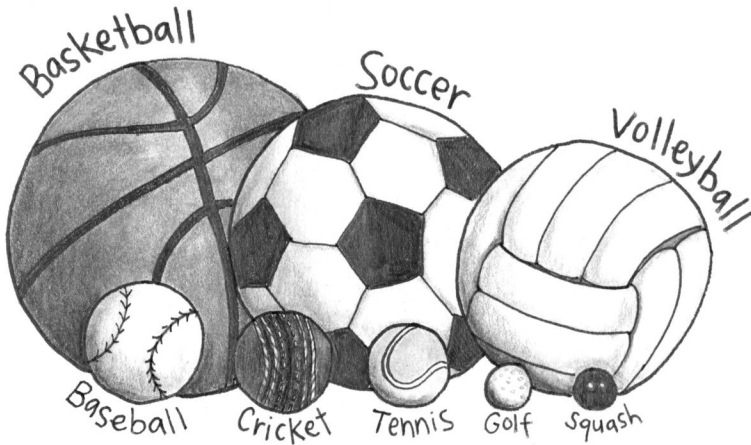
A highlight of the episode is when Norton, reading from the instruction book, tells Ralph that the first thing he needs to do is to step up, plant his feet firmly on the ground, and **“address the ball.”** Ralph gives Ed one of his patented *Honeymooners* glares and asks him what in the world it means to address the ball. Norton, not having any idea, takes the club, steps up to the ball, plants his feet, looks at the ball, and says, **“Hellooooo ball!”** (The entire episode is available on YouTube, as is the Lucille Ball one. I highly recommend both of them.)

Whether it is addressing the ball, or whatever we choose to do with it, the golf ball itself is a most interesting part of the game of golf. **The golf ball has been studied, analyzed, tested, compared, and redesigned more than any other ball in sports.** There are many interesting facts and numerous bits of information about golf balls. Let’s look at just a few of them:

- It has been estimated that at any given time on any given day **there is at least one golf ball up in the air somewhere in the world.**
- The fastest-moving ball in all of sports is a golf ball with a top recorded speed of **204 miles per hour.** The second fastest is a pelota, the goatskin-covered ball used in the sport of jai alai. It has been measured at 188 mph.
- Golf balls require **more steps in the manufacturing process** than any other sports ball.
- **Golf balls travel farther on hot days.** For each 25°F increase in air temperature, the ball will go an additional eight to ten yards. And, of course, they also travel farther at higher altitudes.
- Studies say that **the most visible golf balls** in order of ease of spotting them are **(1) yellow, (2) white, (3) orange, and (4) pink.** Yellow balls are said to be about three times easier to see than white balls at a distance of 250 yards.
- **There are over 130 games or sports that involve the**



**use of a ball**, with golf balls being among the smallest of all the sports balls used in these games. Only several others, such as squash balls and table tennis balls, are smaller in size than a golf ball.

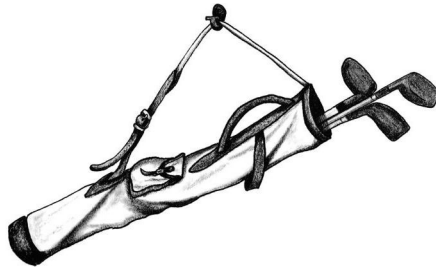


- **A golf ball will float in the Dead Sea.** A regulation golf ball will sink in fresh water and in the ocean – but it will float in the Dead Sea. And it will sometimes float in the Great Salt Lake. The salinity of the Great Salt Lake varies from year to year and it also varies in different parts of the lake, and so a golf ball will sometimes float in the lake and sometimes it will not.
- The highest price at auction ever paid for a golf ball was **\$55,865** for a ball autographed by Bobby Jones.
- Golf balls have the distinction **of being lost more than any other ball in sports – by a huge margin!**
- The U.S. patent office has granted **over 5,000 patents for golf balls.**
- **There are two golf balls sitting on the moon.** Alan Shepard never retrieved the two balls he hit there on February 6, 1971.
- **The driving of golf balls off the back of cruise ships has been banned.** The Marpol V international treaty

(Marpol stands for marine pollution) prohibits the dumping of plastic and plastic-type items, including golf balls, from ships at sea. However, several companies are developing biodegradable golf balls that would be considered permissible to use under the treaty.

And concerning the phrase “**addressing the ball,**” it is an **actual term used in the official Rules of Golf**. It means to step up to the ball, take your stance, and prepare to hit the ball. Addressing the ball is a critical action in golf because if a player’s ball in play moves after it has been addressed (other than as a result of a stroke), **the player incurs a penalty of one stroke** – unless it is obvious that an outside force such as a gust of wind moved it.

## *Golf Term*



## *Sabbath Sticks*

**Sabbath sticks were old golf clubs disguised as walking sticks or canes – and sometimes even as umbrellas. In the 1800s, because playing golf on Sunday was frowned on by the Church of Scotland, some avid golfers made or obtained walking sticks with a small golf club-type head on one end. The small wood or iron head fit in the palm of the hand and was virtually unnoticeable as the golfer strolled to church with the aid of the cane. After church services, the golfer would take the long way home, playing a little golf along the way with his Sabbath stick, hitting stones, acorns, or even a golf ball he had hidden in his coat.**