

# THE LATTE GUY

## By Tom Tyner

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The U.S. Open Golf tournament was played last weekend at Bethpage State Park in New York, but all real sports fans know that the really important golfing action last week took place out at the Gold Mountain Golf Complex in Bremerton at the Inaugural Les Eathorne Golf Classic.

You may not know Les Eathorne; I certainly didn't before last Friday. Turns out Les is the legendary basketball coach of East High in Bremerton. The Golf Classic named in his honor raised some \$6,000.00 for basketball programs run by Sports Beyond and Total Package Basketball. I won't bore you with a list of Les's accomplishments and honors because it would make most of the rest of us feel like slackers and would take up most of the rest of this column. Besides, if I were to mention the two State Championships East High won under Les's tutelage from 1972-74, I'd be deluged with weepy letters from former Knights reminiscing about the good old days at East, and I'm not sure I can tolerate any more Knight Nostalgia. Suffice it to say that if you can judge a man by the friends he keeps, then Les must be one pretty decent human being.

I participated in the Inaugural Eathorne Classic – it would be a stretch to say I competed in the event. I play golf about once every year or so, and my game reflects my level of commitment to the sport. Without a driving, putting or short iron game to speak of, I generally rely on my skills as a defensive golfer when I'm on the course. These skills manifest themselves in a diverse and ever-changing assortment of tricks, tics and tactics. On the tee, for example, I have mastered the well-timed backswing cough, the sudden sneezing fit at impact, the apparently unconscious but annoyingly incessant rattling of loose change and keys in my pocket, the surprisingly distracting rattling of clubs in my bag, and the opportune and unnervingly vigorous and enthusiastic application of the ball washer to every ball in my bag at every hole. On the green, I use distracting shadows and compulsive scratching and spitting around the cup to maximum advantage. I also try to step on my opponent's lie at every opportunity, all the while offering inane and unintelligible in-swing putting advice to anyone within earshot. None of these tactics improve my own score, of course, but they can usually be counted on to add a stroke or two a hole to my opponent's score.

The Eathorne Classic involved a shotgun start and a best ball format, which I had never played before. In a best ball tournament, all golfers in a foursome are on the same team, and each player hits his ball from the location of the team's best previous shot. Obviously my extensive skills at defensive golf have no place in such a tournament, and my status as a player immediately switched from Feared Opponent to Team Albatross. Even my limited offensive golf skills, such as my uncanny ability to miraculously "find"

my ball in the fairway when everyone else was pretty certain I had hit it into the trees, became useless in the best ball format.

Fortunately the actual playing of golf was only one small part of the Eathorne Golf Classic experience, a jam-packed day of festivities that combined all the best elements of a sporting event, a high school reunion, a walk in the woods and a mobile cocktail party. It started with a free lunch consisting of an interesting assortment of food and food-like items that forever proved that there is no such thing as a free one of. The Classic ended with extensive and hearty post-golf hor d' oeuvres, awards, speeches and a commitment on my part to work on my game religiously in preparation for the Second Annual Eathorne Classic, a commitment that already grows dimmer as I get further from the bright lights and heady excitement of the big tournament.

And by the way, if anyone playing Gold Mountain since last Friday happened to find a 1955 Ben Hogan cherrywood fairway wood with the patented Speed Slot, a loose piece of metal in the shaft, and a grip that looks suspiciously like double-sided Scotch tape, please let me know. That particular club has great sentimental value to me. It's the one I use to knock my opponents balls further into the rough when they aren't looking.

Tom Tyner is an attorney for The Trust for Public Land and author of "Skeletons From Our Closet". Tom writes a bi-weekly humor column for the Bainbridge Review, unless bi-weekly means twice a week, in which case he doesn't.