

Cold weather doesn’t chill thoughts about golfing

As I sit here in the man cave writing, the temperature is 49 degrees with a 25 mile an hour wind pushing rain in directions rain shouldn't go, which of course has my mind on one thing and one thing only. Golf.

Now to be truthful, golf is on my mind for 10 months out of the year (October and November are reserved for deer hunting) but with the men’s league at tri city revving up, golf season is starting to get real, as the kids used to say.

Right now at the Big Ten tournament, the University of Illinois men's golf team holds an 18-stroke advantage over their nearest competitor. The Illini are the only team to have

scored under par for the tournament, being held in weather that’s similar to what we’re currently experiencing. (They’re currently in a rain delay) At the risk of jinxing them, they still have roughly half a round to play, their performance has been absolutely dominant to this point. Illini Jackson Buchanan is leading the way, currently holding a narrow 1 stroke lead. Teammates Adrien Dumont de Chassart and Matthis Besard are tied for 5th. Illinois’ 5th place man, Morton’s very own Tommy Kuhl sits inside the top twenty at #18 after being amongst the leaders the previous two rounds. There are never guarantees in golf, but

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



this team seems like a strong contender to make match play at the NCAA championship.

Last week, the University of Illinois women's team won their first Big Ten team title as well. The women were led by an otherworldly performance by Chrystal Wang, whose fi-

nal round 62 set a school and tournament record. Wang was the only golfer to break par, winning by 12 strokes to help the team earn a 3-stroke victory over Northwestern. They will be playing in next week’s NCAA regional tournament, as well, and hopefully they'll

make some noise on the national stage. Their coach, Renee (Heiken) Slone, is the greatest women’s golfer in school history, and some of that toughness and tenacity is wearing off on her team.

And then there’s my game. Where to start? I don't hit it very far off the tees, but so far, in four trips around the course, I’ve kept it in the fairways pretty well. My approach shots have been decent, for me. I’m not denting any greens or anything, but I’ve been able to at least keep it in the short(er) stuff well enough to give myself a chance at chipping. Which is where the wheels usually come off. I can't seem to get out of

my own way from 50 yards in. Bladed shots, chili dipped shots, shots off the toe. Pulled shots. To say that it’s been ugly is the worst understatement since the Black Knight called the loss of his arm “a scratch” in Monty Python’s The Holy Grail. Once I finally get it on the green, my putts have been pretty decent, but I’m still a duffer, probably for life. The good news is that with such low expectations, I’m able to surprise myself with a good shot or two each round. I’m sure Illini coach Mike Small isn't going to be calling me for pointers any time soon, but I’m still having a blast out there. By the way, has anyone seen my golf ball?

Being aware of Autism isn’t enough

If my calendar came printed with all of the legal holidays, national and international celebrations, and all of the awareness days and months, there would not be any room left for me to write in my appointments. I can't keep up. I didn't even know there was a National Cat Lady Day, but I count myself as one. National Ice Cream Day, I think we all know how to celebrate that. But April was Autism Awareness Month, and I have something to say about that.

I know a thing or two about Autism. I have two children who have been diagnosed as being on the spectrum. The Autism Spectrum is like a rainbow, an arc. A person can be anywhere on that arc, from severely to mildly affected. One of my children is more severely affected than the other one. But I DO see similarities between the two of them.

One of their doctors told me, “Autism is like an umbrel-

la, more than a box of disorders. Under the umbrella of Autism are many other things that coexist with autism.”

My daughter, Portia, for instance isn't just affected by Autism, but also Attention Deficit Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, Sensory Integration Disorder, Speech timing disorder, easy gag reflex, stomach issues, tic disorder, hypersensitivity to light and noise, and unusual fears. I'm sure there are more things I can list but she has so many good qualities I do not want to forget those. She is very smart and scored higher on her SAT than any of my other six children, was easily accepted into the U of I, has an intense desire to help people and the world around her, and loves God with all her heart. She is a walking encyclopedia on many topics.

My other child on the spectrum can pass as allistic (normal) with a few exceptions: anxiety disorder, attention

deficit disorder, dysgraphia, motion disorder, and executive functioning disorder. He, too, is loving, friendly, giving, smart, and just a good young man.

I have also worked as a certified teacher's aide in the public school systems with several children on the Autism Spectrum who have had more severe issues than my own children, especially with language skills. It is very challenging, but I enjoyed seeing growth in each kiddo that I could reach, even a little bit. It takes patience, understanding, and a growing trust between teacher and student to achieve goals and go beyond when working with special needs kiddos. The parents, too, of these kiddos have all been wonderful to interact with and very helpful in their kids' educational needs. Our local schools are doing a good job working with kids on the Spectrum, in my humble opinion. There is a lot of one-

Holding It All Together

By Amy McCollom



on-one teaching and the right environment to produce a solid growth outcome and fun experience for the kids.

How about you? With 1 in 54 children being diagnosed with Autism by age 8 (according to a 2016 report by the CDC), do you know anyone with autism? If not yet, chances are, you will. What do you really know about autism? Being aware it exists is good, but it is not enough.

Autism is real. It's everywhere. It's quickly reaching into every family. It's not someone else's problem anymore.

Autism is my daughter, it's my son. Autism is incurable, and it's forever. It's not like the shows on TV, where a doctor or a lawyer is endearing and cheerful or a brilliant scientist and has friends to play video games with on Friday night. Autism is secluding, and scary, and separating. It makes my kids wear headphones to hush out the world around them, and keeps them away from crowds and the rush of the world. It affects them and our family as a whole. Autism prevents my daughter from realizing the joke in sarcasm

or understanding comedy in a movie. Autism brings tears instead of laughter.

Autism makes my children (now young adults) prone to tics, both vocal and physical, such as clearing their throat, humming softly, hand fidgeting, etc. For that reason, I have to be vigilant about seating them in public places away from people they will distract. But I will not always be around. Some day my autistic young adults will be on their own and the public must be aware of these unique and wonderfully gifted kind people.

Be aware, but also be kind, be accepting, and be patient. Learn more about autism on your own and teach your children and grandchildren to never shun or shy away from these incredible special kids. The more we know, the more we grow.

Younger generation doesn’t seem to recall May Day

Did you celebrate May Day? Let me know if you are old enough to remember celebrating May Day in your youth. I even asked the kids if they were aware that it was coming up on May 1 and I was met with blank stares. The only people who knew what I was talking about were my mom and a couple older ladies I see weekly at the grocery store and the coffee girls. Perhaps it was never really that popular in the USA but other countries celebrated it as Labor Day. In the USA May Day was the celebration of the return of Spring.

“The Pioneer Woman” website states: “One of the oldest and most famous is the festival of Beltane, which was enjoyed by the Celts of the British Isles. This festival honored the return of life and fertility to the world, and was thought to divide the year in half, between the dark (winter) and the light (summer, which for the Celts started on May 1). Beltane typically featured bonfires, other fire displays, and field frolicking”. If you are interested in reading more about May Day check Chef Ree Drummond’s web site for some really great old pictures : <https://www.thepioneerwoman.com/>.

“The Wild Geese” website (<https://thewildgeese.irish/>) explains May Day as:

Beltane (“Bealtaine” in Irish) is a festival with ancient origins traditionally celebrated on May 1st, a spring time festival of optimism. This was a festival of great spiritual significance for the Celts, but some people celebrate it from a purely secular perspective. Numerous traditions surround the festival of Beltane. Bonfires would be set as a means of purification. Some people even burned their beds and floor coverings to start anew. The fires were also believed to protect people from

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



harm by spirits of the netherworld. Many people put out sweets for the fairies in order to appease them. Among those sweets were honey cakes and the traditional Beltane cake”, the recipe is below.

My mom recalls celebrating May Day in the 1930's, as a child in school, with May baskets and May Poles. By the time I got to grade school in the 1950's the celebrating was already beginning to wind down and mostly remembered by the older teachers. My first and second grade teacher, Mrs. Ruby, was in her forties and she made May Day a special occasion. We drew flowers on construction paper, cut them out and taped them on the windows and made May Day bulletin boards. Almost everyone in class took a real flower to the teacher. In my second grade class Mrs. Ruby received so many fresh flowers she had to go down to the cafeteria and borrow a couple empty coffee cans to hold all of them.

Mom recalls that her teachers made a May pole out of a broken flag pole and all the kids in school decorated it with flowers and dandelions from their yards. The teachers strung the poles with ribbons and pinned the flowers to the ribbon and they would sing and wrap the ribbons around the poles. My school did not make May poles outside but one of the other second grade classes made a pole in their room complete with ribbons

and flowers from the teacher's yard. All the other classes in school got to walk to this second grade class and see the pole which was quite a fun break in the day. By third grade we no longer celebrated May Day in our class but we did get to walk through the first and second grade class rooms to see what the “little” kids were doing and I can recall that I missed not being involved in the activity.

My mom also recalls that when she and her four sisters were little they wanted to make a May pole at home but there was nothing available to make the pole so they decorated the “privy” door and seat with flowers and weeds. Granny played along and thought it was really cute but Grandpa decided tp tease his daughters and after his trip to the “outhouse” he came back to the house holding his backside and complained of having sat on thorns and pretended to be in great pain. Mom said the sisters were al quite concerned for their Daddy's problem and offered silly explanations about how the weeds and thorns could have found their way into the outhouse. One sister was so upset that she ran to the cupboard and retrieved a jar of bacon grease, which was used for cuts and bruises, and offered it to her Dad with a sincere apology. I did not have to be there to picture how this scene played out.

My girl friend, who is five

years older, recalls May Fete dances and skit shows in the gym. She participated in a couple of the skits and at the end of the assembly hall the girls paraded across the stage in formals. Mom recalls that their May Fete dance was especially popular and a May Queen was elected from the whole school but eventually the May Fete celebration and dance turned into Prom while she was in High School which made many of the younger students upset because Prom was for the senior students. I personally have no recollection of May Fete dances in school and can not recall any mention of May Day after grade school. It is a shame such a fun experience did not continue as I grew up but I can recall making May Baskets as a kid and I made one for my Mom this year.

Enjoy May!

Beltane Cake

This recipe makes a rich and spicy one-layer cake with 8-10 slices.

- 1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
 - ½ tsp. baking powder
 - ¼ tsp. nutmeg
 - ½ tsp. ground cardamom
 - ½ tsp. ground cloves
 - ¾ tsp. ground ginger
 - 3 oz. unsweetened chocolate
 - ½ cup milk
 - ¼ cup brandy
 - ½ tsp. vanilla
 - ¾ cups butter
 - ½ lb. dark brown sugar
 - 3 eggs
 - ¾ cups amaretto liqueur
 - confectioner sugar
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Grease a large bundt pan or spring-form pan
- Melt chocolate in a double boiler and set aside.
- Mix milk, brandy, and vanilla.
- Mix flour, baking powder, nutmeg, cardamom, cloves, and ginger in a separate bowl.
- Cream the butter, then add brown sugar and beat until fluffy.
- Add eggs, one at a time, into the butter mixture.
- Add cooled chocolate to the butter mixture.
- Add the flour mixture and

milk mixture to the butter mixture a little at a time.

Pour mixture into greased bundt pan or spring-form pan.

Bake for approximately 50 minutes, or until done (test with a small knife), taking care not to overbake.

Let cake cool for 20 minutes before removing from pan, then place it into a bowl (flat side up) which is just large enough to hold it, but no larger.

Using a skewer, pierce the cake with 10-12 holes, being careful not to go all the way through.

Pour 1/3 of the amaretto over the cake. When that is absorbed, pour another 1/3 amaretto; when absorbed, pour the remainder onto the cake. This will take several hours.

When all of the amaretto has been absorbed, gently invert the cake onto a plate (flat side down).

Dust the cake with confectioner's sugar.

Full Moon lights Friday’s sky

Friday's full Moon is the Flower Moon, the Planting Moon or the Milk Moon. The full Moon is beautiful but not much to look at with any magnification. With none of the craters or mountains on the Moon exhibiting any shadows, the Moon takes on a very flat appearance.

You may hear about a lunar eclipse this weekend and, in fact, there is one, but, for starters, it’s a penumbral eclipse. The earth has two components to its shadow given the fact the Sun isn't a point source. Actually the Sun is pretty large! But the Moon passes through the outer, lighter shadow.

Second, we're on the wrong

In the night sky

By David Leake



side of the Earth to see the event. We'll wait until October to see our next eclipse. What the full Moon will also do is wash out the Eta Aquarid Meteor Shower.

Early next week, wait on the sky to darken and look at brilliant Venus in the west with binoculars. To the left of Venus

is the rich star cluster, M35 or the Shoe-Buckle Cluster. It may appear as a fuzzy spot in your binoculars. Try it!

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