

A Steady Hand, a True Putter and a Love for the Game

For the leader of the Eastern Senior, the formula for success is refreshingly simple: respect the golf course, trust the putter and never get caught up in what everyone else is doing.

Having never played in the Eastern Senior before, the timing of the opportunity may not have been ideal. But once the round began, the approach was familiar. After more than 60 years of playing golf, there is little reason to change what works.

“I just try to make pars,” the leader explained. “I have a general idea of what I’m shooting, but I don’t watch the leaderboard. It doesn’t matter. It’s just golf.”

That philosophy has served as a steady guide throughout a long playing career. Rather than worrying about the competition or trying to force the action, the focus remains on the course, one shot at a time.

And there is plenty on this course to command a player’s attention.

The back nine is the tougher test, and the 18th hole is particularly demanding. Playing in the wind only adds to the challenge. Off the tee, the priority is straightforward: find the fairway. From there, the second shot requires discipline, with the goal of staying away from the water on the left.

“It’s one of the best finishing holes that I’ve seen,” the leader said. “It’s hard.”

That appreciation for the challenge is part of what makes the course enjoyable. The par 3s each have their own character, while the par 5s have proved difficult, in large part because of the demands of the greens. Simply reaching the putting surface is not always enough. Players must hit the ball in the right place to give themselves a realistic chance.

For someone known as a great putter, the greens are a particular source of admiration.

“I love the greens,” the leader said. “They’re fabulous. They’re true. If you hit it in the right spot, it’s going in.”

Great greens have always been a favorite, and these offer the kind of consistency that rewards good shots and sound decisions. When playing well, the strategy is to aim for the middle of the green and let the putter do the work. There is no need to chase a flag or take unnecessary risks when a reliable putting stroke can do the rest.

“Play to the middle of the green when you’re cruising along and rely on my putter,” the leader explained.

It is a strategy built on experience and confidence, and the day's highlights offered a reminder of how effective it can be.

On the fifth hole, a long putt across the green fell for birdie. At No. 11, a shot finished on the fringe, but a putt from approximately 20 feet found its way into the hole for another birdie.

Golf, of course, has a way of testing even the most patient players. On the 12th, a chunked shot led to a second bogey. But there was no reason to let one mistake dictate what came next. At No. 13, the long putter came through again, leaving the ball inside a two-foot circle.

The response was consistent with the approach that has defined the round: accept what happens, make the next shot count and keep moving forward.

“Do what I’ve been doing,” the leader said of the plan for the remainder of the round. It makes little difference which side of the course the round begins on. The process remains the same.

The same goes for the leaderboard.

“Why look at the field? It doesn’t matter to you.”

It is not a lack of interest in winning. Rather, it is an understanding that watching other players cannot help execute the next shot. The golf course is the only opponent that matters in the moment.

Still, the thought of winning is there.

“What would it mean to win?” the leader mused. “It means I have to come back.”

That answer carries a hint of humor, but it also reflects a genuine affection for senior competition and the opportunities it provides. The Florida State Golf Association, in particular, holds a special place in the leader’s heart.

The 2018 Florida Senior Open remains a memorable milestone. In a performance that stands out among the highlights of a long amateur career, the leader became the first amateur to win the championship, prevailing in a three-person, three-hole playoff.

It was a special achievement, one that demonstrated the level of golf still possible after decades in the game. Yet turning professional was never part of the plan.

There was no need to make golf a different kind of pursuit. The enjoyment came from playing, competing and measuring oneself against the course.

After six decades, that enjoyment has only grown.

“Doesn’t make it better or worse,” the leader said of all those years playing the game. “It just makes it more fun.”

Even the smallest details can become part of a golfer’s routine. The equipment carried includes one small tee, one medium-sized tee, a flat marker and a divot repair tool. Each has its purpose, and each reflects the habits developed over years of playing.

For a player who has spent more than 60 years learning the game, those details are second nature. So is the understanding that golf rarely rewards impatience. The right shot, played to the right place, followed by a confident putt, is often enough.

As the Eastern Senior unfolds, the leader's approach remains unchanged. There is no need to monitor the field, calculate every possible outcome or alter a trusted game plan. The greens are true, the course is challenging and the putter is ready.

The rest will take care of itself.

After all, it is just golf — and after more than 60 years, that is still what makes it so much fun.