This follows from a previous interview published in the 14th issue of the *Bulletins*' predecessor, *Dot Dot Dot*: "Right to Burn: a drink with Christoph Keller" (2007). This is available to download from www.dextersinister.org/library.html. At the time, Christoph had recently sold Revolver, the art publishing house he'd set up in Frankfurt, moved to the country, and inadvertently started distilling alcohol instead. The interview drunkenly circled around a comparison between publishing and distilling. In the eight years since, Christoph started playing golf. This seemed a good excuse to continue the unlikely arc of conversation — from books to schnapps to balls.

The conversation took place on 16 May, 2015, at Golf Club Schloss Langenstein. Christoph and David played a total of seven holes before retiring to the 19th Hole for drinks, then a quick drive to the train station. Stuart caddied and held the recording device.

A brief glossary of relevant terms courtesy of Wikipedia can be found at the end of the bulletin.

The article referred to throughout is: David Owen, "The Ghost Course: Links to the Past on a Scottish Island," *The New Yorker* (April 20, 2009).

Cover image: hole in a barrel of Black Whisky at Stählemühle, the distillery Christoph runs in southeastern Germany. See: www.staehlemuehle.de.

D: You say that golf is not a sport but a game. Why?

C: Because the rules are so simple. You have a ball, a hole somewhere in the distance. The ball has to go in the hole, and you use clubs to get it there. That's it! And even for the better players, it has so much to do with luck. It's a bit of a lottery: What's your form today? Are the balls flying well? Are the greens quick or fast enough? … All these unforeseen factors that are hugely important. Sometimes — most of the time, even — you hit the ball and have no idea if it's just right or just wrong. Both are equally possible.

S: A friend says that the difference between games and sports is precisely that games necessarily involve an element of luck, whereas sports don't.

C: Yes, I agree with that. Then again, I don't think any other sport has such a big difference between professionals and amateurs. If I hit the ball well, I'll reach maybe 250 meters, while a professional will go maybe 100 meters further on average. And he'll always play an essentially good round, where I'll have maybe 20 strokes difference between a good one and a bad one. It's all about exercising the coordination of a single movement — which is one of the most complicated movements that you can do because it involves so many muscles. A professional has repeated this movement 10,000 times, 100,000 times, to the extent that they can always redo it more or less perfectly. As an amateur, by comparison, you don't stand a chance. It's very different from soccer. Assuming you played soccer as a kid, I think you could play with professionals for five minutes at least before anyone would realize you're an amateur. Of course, after those five minutes they'd realize it because you'd be on the point of collapse …

D: In tennis that wouldn't work, obviously.

C: No, but with golf if you look at these professional guys, it's a completely different world.

D: It's the same thing with basketball. You don't realize what a difference there is between somebody who really can play and …

C: Yeah, but with basketball it's about other issues. It's about height, physical strength, size. A pro golfer can look just like us! When you see the smaller players in professional basketball you always think they're dwarves until you realize they're still 188 cm or something.

S: Do you think that the professional/amateur difference is more mental than physical, or the other way round, or both? It seems to me that in golf, the player's mental mood, state of mind, concentration, whatever, seems crucial. (Not that this is exclusive to golf.)

C: I'd say it's ONLY mental.

S: But you just mentioned the number of muscles and the body memory used in the swing, which is a totally physical thing.

C: Yeah, but the physical part is secondary to coordination. Essentially, anyone can learn how to work the muscles and do the swing correctly. You don't have to be strong. You don't have to be tall. You just have to coordinate — and that's totally mental. In any case, I think the key thing about golf is the pleasure of seeing something flying over a distance. There's a great essay by Peter Sloterdijk about Arnold Schwarzenegger and *Terminator*. He says the difference between men and animals is only that we can bridge distances by throwing things and shooting material from A to B. No other animal can do that, other than monkeys throwing down coconuts or something. But they can't project into the distance. Then he goes on to say that's why people love to shoot guns — because you see something moving over this distance.

S: That's funny. Last night I re-read an article by David Owen in *The New Yorker* called "The Ghost Course," about a legendarily lost *ur*-golf course called Askernish on an Island called South Uist in the Outer Hebrides, off the northwest coast of Scotland. At one point, Owen says the main cause of golf addiction is the sense of "effecting something at a distance." And like you, he says that the sensation is the same for people who operate anti-aircraft guns. You're doing something here, but the effect is visible over there — about as far away as you can see.

C: Yes, for some reason, it's very, very satisfying. If the ball is flying

well — if it's really the right shape and so on — it makes you incredibly happy. I can stand on the driving range and shoot balls on an empty field without any goal, just watching those things flying.

D: Since you described effecting action at a distance, I haven't been able to stop thinking about a phrase famously used to describe quantum physics: *spooky action at a distance.* This is when two things are separated by space, yet still have a relationship with each other in another state.

C: Like the butterfly effect?

D: It's not quite that. Two elements can be distinct in space and have what's called "quantum entanglement," where something happening in one place can physically affect another thing happening somewhere else.

C: "Spooky action" — that's a real term?

D: Well, that's a description of it, I think by Einstein being critical of quantum physics as an explanation of the way the world works.

C: Well, yes, it's very appropriate to golf.

D: I know what you mean about the happy peace of the driving range — when you're concentrating only on the shape of the curve made by the ball, the parabola, slower on the up and faster on the down …

C: If you're good (and I'm not) you can hit all kinds of curves and shapes. But this feeling that you can shoot something for 200 meters …. I'd always wondered why people love shooting guns. Theoretically it's so boring, but probably it gives you the same feeling. As a right-handed golfer, you always try to hit "draws," shots that curve from right to left and fly longer. The opposite, from left to right, is known as the "fade," and the ball flies shorter. And I more commonly hit "slices," the bad ones. (Laughs) That's MY spooky action in the distance.

D: So the slice is like in tennis, where you're basically hitting the ball too far underneath, which makes it spin opposite to the way you want it?

C: Yes. With the fade you come from the outside and cut to the inside, with the draw you come from the inside and cut to the outside. But something else about golf that's really important is the idea of fairness. There's no other sport where cheating is so common, whether deliberately miscounting your hits, your strokes, or cheating by moving the ball from a bad line to a good line when no one's looking, and so on. How golf works here, like most clubs, is that you're more or less randomly assigned to play with the other members who happen to be there at the same time as you. Personally, I don't need anybody to play with. I can come here alone in the evening and happily play nine holes by myself. This feeling is quite common, that the game is really about beating or improving yourself, learning your weaknesses, and the other players aren't that important, just nominal opponents. That's where the English thing about sportsmanship comes in. Even the professionals rely on their own honesty — when there are no TV cameras, of course. It's all about fairness and good manners, because there's all this golf etiquette, the rules about not stepping into another player's line, not talking when the other player's hitting, and so on. But while in theory there's this high discipline, the reality on the course is the complete opposite: cheating, jealousy, rage, and all that kind of stuff goes on all the time.

S: In our last interview some years ago, we talked about distilling alcohol in relation to publishing books. To take that a logical step further, I wonder if you can draw any connections — similarities, dissimilarities, resonances — between distilling and golfing?

C: Yes, there's a clear one: it's a striving for perfection. The most important thing you have to learn when you start playing (if you have any sort of ambition) is the nature of your personal imperfections. This is what really drives people crazy, and why lots of people quit golf, because they can't deal with it. There's always this thing about the wealthy, powerful businessmen who start golf, who are used to commanding, you know, 1000 people in a factory or whatever. They come onto the golf course, and they're inevitably not great, and they just DIE out there. I've seen people smashing clubs, the whole thing. So, this is another form of discipline you learn. Golf is the search for perfection in a single movement, as I've said, because that's all the game really comprises. And the idea is to re-enact this one movement to perfection, and that's exactly the same

as distilling — the possibility, the necessity, of repeating this one crucial moment when the actual act of distillation happens, which is always partly a matter of good fortune.

S: When we walked out of the bunker where the 12-year whisky was busy maturing this morning, you noted that the only thing doing the work now is *time.* I suppose there's some analogy between that and what we're saying about effecting things at a (spooky) distance. Golf seems to be both far more immediate AND durational than, say, soccer or basketball, in terms of cause and effect. Even if we're talking about watching a ball fly for five seconds, ten seconds … that still seems quite a long span to be enjoying — or despairing at — the result of the movement you've made.

C: Yes, that moment of impact is the shortest you can imagine. It's more akin to baseball or cricket, of course, where everything that happens is dependent on the millisecond of the hit. Whisky's a bad example, actually, because the moment of distillation is actually not so important. But with the fruit brandies, for instance, it's all about the moment in the mesh. With whisky, you can do bad distilling and it can easily improve through being in the barrel. With the brandies, you only know the result a year later.

S: After you started distilling, you found yourself making award-winning schnapps and became, let's say, very professional very quickly in the sense of, um, peer approval. What's the difference here, in the sense that you're absolutely sure you'll never be anything more than an amateur golfer? What are your personal weaknesses?

C: I don't know! I began with a certain amount of talent because I played a lot of baseball when I was younger, so swinging was no problem, and in the beginning you improve very quickly. So, you start with a handicap of, say, 54. After one year I'd more or less halved it. The next year I was down to 22, then 15, and now I've been stuck at 11 for a year and a half. It doesn't look like I'll be getting any lower than that in the foreseeable future. The whole idea of the handicap is interesting. In Germany or the U.S. it's very important, but in England nobody cares. In England, golf is far more about playing the particular course. If you're on a links course in Scotland or Ireland, it's all about playing against the wind, the weather, the dunes, the tall grasses where you get lost. It's more about survival! In

Central Europe it's all about the handicap, which is a nightmare. Well, on one hand it's totally stupid, but of course the handicap is a great thing in terms of, let's say, "egalitarian" possibilities to play with each other. In one of my first tournament rounds, I played with a 75-year-old guy whom I'd seen on the driving range and thought, Jesus Christ, hopefully I don't get to play with this guy because he was sort of jumping while hitting the ball. It looked terrible. (Laughter) And he was wearing this straw hat … but of course this guy completely destroyed me .

S: With his jumping technique.

C: Yeah, well he could just hit the ball exactly where he needed it to go. He couldn't hit it far, but he could keep *moving on,* and that's exactly how you'd need to play in Scotland on a links course when the weather is unpredictable. Anyway, if you have a handicap and play with a beginner, thanks to the handicap system and the so-called "netto" game, they can beat you, because it's ultimately relative to their personal rating, which is a good thing, I think.

S: They win on points.

C: Yeah, on net points, exactly. So I've been able to play with my son Caspar ever since he started, even though I was naturally stronger and able to hit the ball further. He can still beat me due to the handicap.

S: You basically just subtract the handicap from the total number of actual strokes to get a mean score?

C: Exactly.

D: Do any other sports use the same sort of system?

S: I've always been amazed at how efficient (and civilized) the draft system is in American football—the idea that every year the worst team gets the first pick of new talent seems such an unusually democratic way of doing things, compared to, say, European soccer, where big money simply buys big players and so tends to perpetuate the existing hierarchy. Does the draft system apply in baseball, too?

D: Yes, in baseball and basketball in the U.S.

C: It's also funny that you start a sport with a handicap—the whole idea is quite odd, counterintuitive. But that's what makes you especially aware of your imperfections. There's a great German word for this: *demut*.

D: It's quite protestant.

C: It's protestant, yes, but it's also very catholic. It's *both,* actually. *Demut*: there's really no accurate translation. It means something like being very small in comparison to the, um, sacred creation of the world. No matter how good or bad you are, you're always told that you can't really do it—and that's great. It keeps you modest. Two days ago, I was playing at eight o'clock in the evening, very late, the only person here. At this club you're basically alone from the end of the afternoon, because it's all seniors, people who've retired and play during the day then go home for dinner. So it was just me and a few deer, who were not even moving. In that state you get distracted by all kinds of things. In fact, the reason I really started was because when I'm having problems with work, I find that once I get out on the course I can't really think about anything else because the game requires such focus and concentrated activity. I get back in the car and drive home, the problems start coming back again, and it's only then that I realize I've been properly out of it for hours.

S: Back to what you said about playing the course rather than the handicaps in England. Would it also be true to say that there, because the conditions change so drastically from day to day, game to game, hole to hole to hole, or even shot to shot, that you tend to play more *in the moment,* in response to what's happening there and then—as opposed to playing in a country where the weather is more monotonous and the game relies more on repetition?

C: I would say so. It can get boring here. I played once in Tenerife, and there you tend to play extremely low numbers (a low number of total strokes) because the course is designed in such a way as to really predetermine your game. There's not much room for maneuver. The southern clubs tend to make courses very easy to play, because all the

Scandinavian, German, and French seniors have their houses there! The grass is cut very short, and there's no rough, the holes are all very close to each other so you can hit wherever you want and always find the ball, and that makes it very uninteresting. Then last year I played in Ireland at a famous course called Waterville, which is a dune course with massive bunkers, hardly any fairways, and somewhere in the far-off distance you just about make out a flag … So it's really authentic, original golf, descended from back when at some point someone decided to hit little stones over the dunes and made a hole somewhere. The designers of this kind of course today talk about "defending" the holes with bunkers and other topographic obstacles. And you know that if you have bad weather, you're going to be playing 20 strokes worse than you normally would — which is just the reality that you have to accept when you're playing there. I like that.

S: David Owen makes an observation in "The Ghost Course" that's as beautiful as it is obvious, about how the components that make up a modern golf course — fairway, green, bunker, rough, whatever — are all fundamentally based on natural topographic features of the original links landscape, and therefore essentially artificial, cartoon versions of what was the real thing in the early games. He follows a consortium who are trying to first locate and then rebuild the lost course in a manner true to the way it would originally have been built — which is to say, by hand, filling in the rabbit holes and doing little else in the way of sculpting or manicuring. In one episode, the writer is invited to play a few strokes while the course is still in the process of being uncovered, and he notes that as someone who's used to contemporary, crafted courses, he suddenly realizes how much they pander to the golfer, are designed to flatter him or her. In other words, modern designers make feelgood courses set up foremost to reward the player in ways that, he says, are conspicuously absent at Askernith. His immediate impression is that the golf course is distorted, tilting the wrong way — as if the topography could have a "wrong" direction! Which is naturally because he's so used to the levelling effect of the design.

D: And of course those courses are primarily designed from a one person, first person perspective — to be seen from the point of view of the golfer. You're encouraged to evaluate the course as you move through it, rather

than see it obliquely in any way. You tend to avoid the panorama, because there's always a focused endpoint built into the design.

C: Yes, and it's actually very tough while playing to enjoy the landscape. Sometimes I walk through the course afterwards, to understand the totality.

S: Owen also writes that it was incredibly disorienting to play on the original Askernith course, because for several of the holes you can't actually see what you're aiming towards — you can't see the flag, so you haven't got a single point of focus, just a broad expanse, a range, that you're vaguely guessing at.

C: On the other hand, some of these American park-like courses are also great, and they can be made so terribly difficult by dog legs, bunkers and water everywhere. It also works.

S: You asked earlier why we said we're interested in designing a golf course, and I think it's precisely because we know nothing about the science of golf course design — but that that doesn't matter, because even if we did something ridiculous or counterintuitive or anathema in terms of modern golf course design, it would still be as challenging as anything for amateurs and professionals alike.

C: Yes, that's true — although there are some things you really need, like the landing zone for the drive. Then again, at St. Andrews, which is famous for being the first proper golf course, you have holes that are like straight, flat soccer fields, one after another. Then there are these pot bunkers on the right, very deep bunkers where you really don't want to end up, which are positioned precisely at the spots where a typical drive would land, and so on. We sometimes play a version called cross-golf, where we play from certain tees to the wrong holes, so you have absolutely no feeling for the holes, you haven't done it before, you don't know how far to hit from memory, and it gets very interesting. So probably it would be like that if you started building a golf course — a permanent wrong hole!

D: I'm sure.

C: But I actually think it's not so difficult. The golf course designers make a big fuss out of it so they can ask tons of money, of course. And all the old golfers have a second life as a golf course designer.

S: One particular character in the *New Yorker* piece who's spent his whole life working as a golf course consultant offers to rebuild the original course for the same fee the course's original founder ("Old Tom") was paid, which they somehow worked out to have been 9 pounds in the early 1890s. He starts by walking around the supposed area, but can't see how it could have possibly been a golf course and so initially thinks the whole legend is apocryphal. But then he returns a couple of days later via a different route. He comes over the brow of a hill, takes in the vista, and has a moment of revelation during which he apprehends the whole topography as a golf course, revealed in the relative scale of the valleys and dips and proportions.

C: The proportions of the game have changed drastically according to the technology of the golf ball. If you compare today's balls to the original ones, back when they started with sand and feathers and leather, you used to be able to hit one maybe 100 meters if you were lucky, whereas you can hit a modern one some 400 meters. That's why all the old courses, especially the west coast of the U.S. in San Francisco and L.A. and so on, are being rebuilt now: the professionals just kill them because they hit the ball so far. I saw those old links areas for the first time last year, and because I mainly know golf from TV, a parkland in Augusta looks much more like a golf course to me — so I'm a product of these modern interpretations!

S: Back to your weaknesses. (Laughter) You must have some impression of whether you're a better distance hitter or a putter or…

C: The problem is that I'm bad at everything, it just depends on the day. Sometimes I have a good driving day, or a good stroking day, and a miserable putting day. The only real law is that they never all come good together on the same day!

S: Can you hit a further distance when you're angry?

C: No, it's the opposite, because a good swing is something that can be

done better with patience than with violence. But of course, sure, sometimes it's good if you're really angry and you just want to hit something —then it doesn't matter where the ball goes. You know, I'm not used to talking intellectually on the golf course (laughs).

S: Maybe it'll improve your game.

C: The thing is, when you meet golfers on the course, the talk is always the same. It's too warm, too cold, too wet, too dry. Anything and everything is wrong all the time, obviously in service of explaining why you're playing so badly, or as an advance excuse for doing so.

S: The fact that you're supposed to play with other members of the club is also unusually egalitarian, right? Like the handicap system. You're coerced into this social scene, as part of the sport.

C: Yeah, you really are. Here in Central Europe it's not even so strict, but if you play in Scotland you're really forced to play with whoever's there. If you reserve a tee time, they put other people with you without asking —that's normal. You have to meet people and you have to behave. It was really interesting when Caspar was small because I didn't know the golf scene at all, and he started in the same way, playing with 50-year-old people, grown-ups, strangers, foreigners. And so he was forced to behave correctly, say hello and thank you, and so on.

S: If you're about to play a new course, do you walk through it before playing?

C: No. Although, if you're playing a league match, you'd usually play a test round the day before in order to have some idea of which clubs are best to use in which places. But generally, if I travel somewhere and play golf, no. You can get things called Birdie Books and maps and stuff to help you understand the course, but I'm so far away from hitting the ball where I want it to be that I don't need to worry about that level of detail.

S: You have a better chance if you don't know what you're getting into.

D: What's our common feeling on Mulligans?

C: For me, no problem.

S: What's a Mulligan?

D: A do-over.

S: What's a do-over?

D: It's what you do when you've messed up.

S: Oh, you mean you redo it.

D: Yeah, and if you agree to play Mulligans, you don't count the mistakes.

S: Why's it called a Mulligan?

C: No idea, probably some Irish guy called Mulligan who started it.

S: A terrible golfer.

D: A terrible person.

C: Well, either terrible or very good.

D: He was only cheating himself.

S: And have you played against people who are obviously cheating?

C: Yes. Then you have two options.

S: Get them in the shower.

C: No, just let them play. The thing with cheating is, in a normal round when people are playing badly they cheat a lot, then you just have to let them play it out. Who cares? When it's a league game, you sometimes have, not really cheating, but lots of discussions — often animated — because there are lots of detailed rules about when the ball is in the water, next to the water, next to an obstacle and all that kind of stuff.

The general rule is, of course, the better the player the less they cheat.

S: Regarding what you were saying about how once you're on the course you totally focus on the game and everything else disappears, it strikes me that the golf ball is so perfectly suited to that hypnosis, being so small and white—like a full stop, an ideal point of concentration.

C. Yes, you're focusing while you're hitting, while you're preparing to hit, even while you're walking between greens.

S: Why do good tennis players make good golfers? Because of the geometrical thinking?

C: No, it's about the imagination of flying balls, being able to perceive the topspin, the idea that a ball has to spin one way or another. And of course it's also because of the physical movement, the ability to roll the hand correctly. The thing about golf is, it's as difficult to get the ball 2 meters into the hole as it is to hit it 200 meters to get it there in the first place.

D: So the scale constantly shrinks, but the difficulty doesn't.

C: Exactly.

S: When you watch golf on TV, can you discern the different techniques of different players?

C: Yes, because the cameras are so amazing nowadays. If you compare golf on TV with ten years ago, the sharpness of the image now compared with how blurred it was then is incredible (although of course you wouldn't have even thought twice about it at the time). Then they track the ball with the camera so you have the sensation of flying with it. And of course they have slow-motion replays of the swings and stuff like that, so it's easy to tell techniques apart. They start with the grip, then the swing, how they lay the ball, and how they move the leg. The main thing you notice is how the professionals really whip the ball. These are the sorts of things we can't do.

S: But are there differences as big as the classic stylistic ones between,

say, Björn Borg and Jimmy Connors in tennis?

C: Well, there are what you might call exotic players, like Bubba Watson, a very strange guy, or Jim Furyk. These are autodidactic guys whom you can immediately see don't have the textbook swing. Watching golf on TV is weird because it's one of the most boring things you can do, yet I can watch it for four hours at a time: a green screen, somebody talking incessantly, sometimes someone hits a ball, but most of the time they're showing beauty shots of the course, flowering trees and so on, and nobody understands why it's so hypnotizing.

S: Like a screensaver.

C: The other thing you notice is, every hole is a new beginning and can develop very differently. You had a miserable first shot, but still end up playing a good hole or round. That's the problem with golf psychology: you forget the good shots immediately, but the bad ones stay with you forever. Good shots seem normal.

S: Does any of that mental education help with life off the golf course?

C: It should, but it takes a long time, because you have to first realize it on the course. You can certainly learn to be calmer on the course, more accepting, then you have to start all over to translate it into real life.

S: And do you notice any difference with Caspar in that regard?

C: He was very accepting from the start, actually.

S: He has the ideal temperament for a golfer?

C: Well, he's in a bad mood if he plays badly, but you wouldn't see it because he has a lot of self-discipline. I'm the choleric type, so for me golfing is total therapy. I really struggle to accept imperfections and mistakes. That's the thing with me and golf: I'm good at learning, at understanding what I've done wrong and correcting so if I make the same shot three times, the third one will be perfect. But in golf only the first shot counts, of course.

D: It's a classic case of being able to do it when you don't think about it. And I'm realizing that losing a ball for me is a bit like the social situation when you can't remember the name of a person you have no good reason to remember. It's the same with a bad shot: when it happens I immediately forget where the ball went.

S: What's the drinking culture like? What do they drink in the 19th hole?

C: Well, they always drink whisky because of the Scottish connection. And we also have a little bottle with us, if I can find it in here … Then the business people drink wine, but the real golfers drink beer.

S: Are there traditions like, say, whoever wins the round of golf buys a round of drinks?

C: There are a few different ones. This bottle in the bag is known as the "birdie water," so as soon as you birdie everyone has to drink. Then you have a sexist one called "the lady." If you have a bad tee shot that doesn't make it past the lady tee — that's the one of the three different teeing off points that's closest to the green — then you're automatically obliged to buy a round for everyone. There's also one called "last in," where whoever makes the last putt has to pay the round. This makes the last putt a higher risk for all involved.

D: The more we're out here on the course, the more I can really feel that everything disappears apart from what's right in front of me, as you said.

C: Yes, it's really even difficult for me to have a conversation with you right now.

S: I've only ever experienced that state of unthinking we've been talking about when I played video games as a kid, never with a physical sport. And it's not simply that you're not thinking about anything, more that you're operating on autopilot.

C: Yes, I think that's the same thing, a kind of unconscious flow. Although with golf it's not the same kind of flow, because you have all these breaks in start between where you have to walk to the ball and you're usually

talking. If I'm alone I sometimes have it, that longer out-of-time state, but as soon as you talk you break it. So it's an interrupted flow, an interrupted bliss. Then you start dreaming about golf, where you get really stuck.

S: As if you're playing a round in your sleep?

C: No, no … all kinds of strange details. It's similar to when you try to sleep after skiing and your body still feels the slopes and you have the sensation of the same motion.

D: I wonder whether that has to do with the amount of time you have to spend here — four hours or whatever, so it really takes over your psyche.

S: It's the sort of single-mindedness that also means you're not able to move onto thinking about how to capitalize on what you're doing — that you're also socially retarded, in a sense.

D: I'm totally single-minded in that sense. I cannot multitask at all. If I'm doing something, I have to do only that one thing.

C: Professional golfers can't do anything else. You can often see this when you see them on TV. Not the really big business guys like Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer who made millions and millions of dollars — that's different. But the normal golf stars these days, they can hardly string together a full sentence. It's very much native to golf, I think: you can only do golf. There's a great project by a sports researcher from Princeton or Yale or somewhere, who has this thesis that you need 10,000 hours of practice — professional practice — and then you're good in any sport.

S: So pure quantity over quality, practice over talent.

C: Yes. And then there's this guy who does something called the Dan project, a photographer who read this thesis and thought okay, I'll try this out, and decided that his sport would be golf. So he has a website where you can see how many hours he's practicing, his progress, some videos, and so on. If I had 10,000 hours to spare, that would be my project, too. Anyway, he started two years ago, and the plan is to do it for five years

and see how it's going, but he seriously intends to become a professional golfer. It's more or less a joke, of course, but an interesting one. This is another key problem with golf, though: you need so much time. You drive out to the golf course and play a round that typically takes four hours, and with travel and drinking you end up spending something like five or six hours out of life at a time.

S: At least half a day then.

C: Yes, the time's expensive, but actually it doesn't cost that much money, or at least not as much as people tend to think.

S: If that's so, why do you think it still has the money-class associations?

C: Well, it's just the types of people who play. And in Germany at least, that's a hangover from the fact that golf really started to catch on only in the 1970s and 1980s. There were some older clubs, of course, but they were only for the super-elite. And in the beginning, since land is short in Germany, those first clubs were very expensive, and the whole game still suffers from that reputation. Most people could easily afford it, but they just don't want to be involved with the other people they rightly or wrongly anticipate will be here.

S: So when golf came on the public radar in the 1980s, it was part of the whole scenario: new money, new economy, a yuppie sport.

C: Yeah, in the 1980s you had Bernhard Langer. All the fashions in sport are so much linked to stars, so we had this tennis boom in Germany once Boris Becker was big news. With golf it was a bit different because the media didn't really take notice of Bernhard Langer at first, but then he started a German Open with his brother, a German Masters or something—a big tournament where all the big stars played. Then it took off for a few years in the 1980s, and that was when a lot of clubs were born, including this one. And you know, some members just don't care about sport, the game. They come three times a year to eat. Others come to do business.

D: I'm still thinking about the strange thing that happens to time with the

cause and effect of golf. It seems to me that a big part of the appeal is that you *both* do the thing, and then watch what you've done. That seems quite unique in sports. In tennis, for instance, you don't really get to watch what you've done in the same way because you're always immediately setting up for the next shot.

C: The kids play so differently from us, with so much more confidence. They never think about what's going wrong, which as you've seen is pretty much all I think about. That's the difference. But Caspar always wanted to play soccer, as well. He loves golf, but he says that it's just so much discipline. You have to hold it together all the time, and he also wants to just run and turn and, you know, live. Golf isn't living. Golf is the reduction of life to one very strange and specific movement.

*

GLOSSARY

BIRDIE: A hole played in one stroke under par.

BOGEY: A hole played one stroke over par.

BUNKER: A depression in bare ground that is usually covered with sand. Also called a "sand trap." It is considered a hazard under the Rules of Golf.

CADDY: A person, often paid, who carries a player's clubs and offers advice. Players are responsible for the actions of their caddies. Players cannot receive advice from anyone other than their caddy or partner. A Scots form of the French "Cadet," meaning an assistant or errand-runner.

DRAW: A shot that, for a right-handed golfer, curves to the left; often played intentionally by skilled golfers. An overdone draw usually becomes a hook.

FADE: A shot that, for a right-handed golfer, curves slightly to the right, and is often played intentionally by skilled golfers. An overdone fade will appear similar to a slice.

FAIRWAY: The area of the course between the tee and the green that is well-maintained allowing a good lie for the ball.

GREEN: The area of specially prepared grass around the hole, where putts are played.

HANDICAP: A number assigned to each player based on his ability and used to adjust each player's score to provide equality among the players. In simplified terms, a handicap number, based on the slope of a course, is subtracted from the player's gross score and gives him a net score of par or better half the time.

HOOK: A shot that initially takes a trajectory opposite the side of the golf ball from which the player swings but eventually curves sharply back towards the player. Under normal circumstances, a hook is unintentional; however, good players can use a hook to their advantage in certain situations.

LINKS: A type of golf course, usually located on coastal sand dunes.

MULLIGAN: A do-over, or replay of the shot, without counting the shot as a stroke and without assessing any penalties that might apply.

ROUGH: The grass that borders the fairway, usually taller and coarser than the fairway.

SLICE: A shot that initially takes a trajectory on the same side of the golf ball from which the player swings but eventually curves sharply back opposite of the player. Under normal circumstances, a slice is unintentional; however, good players can use a slice to their advantage in certain situations. Slices are often the most common miss for below-average players.

PAR: Standard score for a hole (defined by its length) or a course (sum of all the holes' pars).

TEE: A small peg, usually made of wood or plastic, placed in the ground upon which the golf ball may be placed prior to the first stroke on a hole. May also refer to the teeing ground.

19TH HOLE: The clubhouse bar.

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