

Personal Response: Arthur the Dog

“How far would you go....? “

As an athlete who played on the national golf team, who has chased a dream of playing professionally, this question to me, in the height of my playing career, would be used as motivation: 'how hard will I work to achieve my dream?' Intense focus on getting better everyday and training hard IS me attempting to go far. Far is defined by how big of a tournament can I win? Far is working through the progressions of winning locally, winning provincially and then winning nationally. Through this drive, I did get hyper-focused to where I ignored the rest of the world. I would practice the same 3 foot putt for hours until I sunk it 100 times in a row. I would hit balls until blisters prevented me from taking more swings. I would leave competitions disappointed in second place finishes. Many athletes who read this will know what I am talking about. There is always one more thing you can do to get better. There is no time to waste time. The daily routine. The grind. The focus that gets so narrow that it is everyone else in your life that sacrifices so that you can continue toward that dream. When this focused narrowed for me, I didn't ask 'what did I miss out on?'. I only pressed on to get better at my sport. How far would I go?

“How far should you go.....?’

What strikes me most about the piece about Arthur is that I know how hard the Swedish team had to have worked to get to the World Championships. The sacrifice of these athletes (and their loved ones), as a group made is hard for me to comprehend. We are talking about a dirty, injured, stray dog vs the years of training it took to contend to win their dream competition. I don't know if I am proud or ashamed to admit to myself that I am not sure I would have scooped Arthur up into the kayak. I'm not sure I would have given any of my food to a stray dog in that circumstance. Would my competitiveness have allowed me to realize that there is a much bigger aspect in that moment? How far should we go in our athletics when it comes to that focus on winning? I look back at my career and think about times where I did miss out. I chose sleeping on an off day over whale watching off the coast of Newfoundland. I chose the name brand restaurant over the local specialty place. I chose to hang by myself in a hotel room rather than socialize with my competitors. Hindsight is 20/20, but I now know, that I should have made different choices. How far should I go, was messed up ... I was blinded by the ultimate goal, not paying attention to the actual journey.

“How far could I go....?

The emotion that Mikael showed when describing racing with/ bringing Arthur back home as the single best thing he had ever done gives me chills, no matter how many times I watch the video. I'm in awe of Mikael's compassion. I'm in awe of Mikael's sacrifice. Not once in the video do you see Mikael or any of his teammate regret finishing the race with Arthur. I have won big tournaments and even in those moments, I never experienced emotions that strong. I can state

as a fact, nothing I ever accomplished on a golf course can rival the level of emotion Mikael showed.

As an athlete, I could have gone far. Like many athletes, injury has derailed my ultimate dream. But looking back, I do see that I did reach out to help others. I gave my time to teach local juniors while at tournaments. I did help fellow competitors if they were struggling with their game. I did speak to all competitors, regardless of whether they were in the 'top half' or 'bottom half' of the competitions. I always took time to thank the volunteers who spotted my ball, whether it was in the middle of the fairway or 20 yards deep in the bush. I inspired other small town kids, that where you come from does not mean that they can't do great things. I could have done more, which is why this piece about Arthur speaks to me. I recognize how truly special it is to see beyond the trophy and know there is more to our participation than winning. There is more than earning a scholarship. There is more than wearing any color of medal. There is more than one day earning a pay cheque playing a game. What we remember are not the wins/losses, but the people we affect, the 'Arthurs' we take our time out for.

The 'how far could I go..' in terms of accomplishments in a sport, actually doesn't matter. It is being open to be our best selves during the journey that matters most. 'How far should I go..?' is seeing outside of ourselves and embracing the moments where we can make a difference to our community. 'How far will I go..' that is yet to be determined, but I will use the lesson I learned from Mikael and Arthur to know that the destination has very little to do with being a winner in the sport I play.