

2016

# Playing Through

Jim Moriarty

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/unpresssamples>

---

Moriarty, Jim, "Playing Through" (2016). *University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and Chapters*. 328.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/unpresssamples/328>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Nebraska Press at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and Chapters by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# PLAYING THROUGH

[Buy the Book](#)



# PLAYING

[Buy the Book](#)

# THROUGH

Modern Golf's Most Iconic Players  
and Moments · JIM MORIARTY

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS · LINCOLN AND LONDON

[Buy the Book](#)

© 2016 by Jim Moriarty. All rights reserved.  
Manufactured in the United States of America.



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Moriarty, Jim.

Title: Playing through: modern golf's most iconic players  
and moments / Jim Moriarty.

Description: Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016011020

ISBN 9780803278653 (hardback: alk. paper)

ISBN 9780803295452 (epub)

ISBN 9780803295469 (mobi)

ISBN 9780803295476 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Golf—History. | Golfers—Biography. | BISAC:  
SPORTS & RECREATION / Golf.

Classification: LCC GV963 .M67 2016 | DDC 796.352—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016011020>

Set in ITC New Baskerville by M. Scheer.

For Maya and Hayley



## Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction 1

- 1 Last Tango in Pebble Beach 3
- 2 El Momento and Mr. Ryder's Cup 21
- 3 The Shark and Sir Nick 39
- 4 A Country Boy from Springfield 65
- 5 Phil the Thrill 83
- 6 Long, Gone John 105
- 7 Lady Inkster 109
- 8 Hidden Tiger, Crouching Dragon 131
- 9 Change of Fortune 179
- 10 Everybody Wants to Rule the World 205
- 11 Parting Is Such Sweet Sorrow 229
- 12 Generation Next 251



## Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without relying on the work I did over a thirty-five-year period for *Golf Digest* and *Golf World*, and for that, I'm deeply grateful. I'm especially thankful and privileged to have had the opportunity to do it in the first place. These days the number of resources available with a keystroke or two is vast, but some works are especially valuable. The series of annuals created for International Management Group and Mark H. McCormack by the late, great Bev Norwood—with contributing writers too numerous, and sometimes too anonymous, to mention—is worth every inch it occupies on the bookshelves. The biographies of Greg Norman and Seve Ballesteros by Lauren St. John and Melanie Hauser's book with Ben Crenshaw are timeless resources, as are the autobiographies of Nick Faldo and Jack Nicklaus, the latter written with Ken Bowden. *Sports Illustrated's* "Vault" is a deep well of knowledge produced by a long list of great writers, from Dan Jenkins to Jaime Diaz. The interviews compiled and archived by ASAP Sports Transcripts are as rich a vein of primary material as exists in the

game. The exquisite “My Shot” series, written by Guy Yocom for *Golf Digest*, is the finest compilation of interviews ever produced in the sport and the source of countless nuggets. And, when it comes to the history of golf, Bill Fields is nothing short of a divining rod.

# PLAYING THROUGH

[Buy the Book](#)



## Introduction

In 1982 the Pebble Beach Golf Links on the Monterey Peninsula hosted the U.S. Open Championship and played to 6,815 yards and a par of seventy-two. In 2015, in the second round of the U.S. Open, Chambers Bay Golf Course on Puget Sound played to 7,695 yards and a par of seventy. Perhaps never in the six-hundred-plus-year history of golf has the game changed as much as it has in its last thirty or so years. If you need to find a fall guy, blame the computer chip.

No doubt there has been golf instruction since one Scottish shepherd wielded a crook more proficiently than another. From H. B. Farnie's book in 1857 to Bobby Jones's newsreels to high-speed photographic sequences and videotape, the golf swing has been as dissected as any single athletic move. Now, launch monitors can tell you everything about the flight of a golf ball except whether the eyes of the person who hit it are blue or brown. In 1982 drivers were polished persimmon, almost works of art. Now, they're outsized laboratory experiments the size of small pumpkins fashioned out of titanium with a measurable coefficient of restitution—something that

guys in 1982 would have thought was the time it took to get rid of a hangover. Today, golf balls are engineered. In 1982 some guys carried little steel rings to make sure they were round. Back then golfers didn't travel with instructors or sit in the dark with sports psychologists or get their menus from nutritionists or have their backs pulverized by chiropractors or their abs ripped by personal trainers. If you saw an agent at all, it was because someone needed to fill the field in the Philippines in November and was prepared to pay handsomely, maybe several thousand dollars, to do it. These days every player has his or her "team."

Are golfers more fit now? Sure, but how much clean and jerk is too much? Are they mentally more able to compete at the highest level? Well, that depends on whom you're talking about and whether you think you can buy self-belief or, at the very least, rent it for a while. Has stretching championship venues like Gumbay made the game better or just more expensive to maintain? Have sports psychologists slowed play with preshot routines and visualization? Are drivers that cost as much as the used vw beetle I bought right out of college in the early '70s worth the price, or have they priced the game out of reach? Those weren't even considerations thirty years ago.

Nostalgia, however, is a losing bet. Distance, time, cost, meta-data, all the things that are right or wrong about the modern game, failed to do one thing—change it fundamentally. During my time covering golf, most of my colleagues and virtually all of the players were introduced to the game as children. I came to it as a sports-writer covering a beat no one else wanted and grew to understand that golf tests an athlete's insides like no other sport. To be able to perform as if that performance meant nothing more than stopping at the corner convenience store when it actually means all the world is an immeasurable talent some seem born into, while others forge it in failure. The essays that follow are about my people, the players I saw revealing the best of themselves in the biggest moments. Whatever it is that made Jack versus Tom great in 1982 hasn't been altered one whit. The fundamental things still apply, as time goes by.