

LINKS PLAYERS

DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR AUGUST 12, 2011

CHARACTER OVER CONTENT

As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts... And be thankful. (Colossians 3:12-15, NIV)

YOU NEED TO KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS AS I WRITE: Thursday afternoon of the PGA Championship, about 2:30 in Atlanta, where the season's last major is being played. I'm not there, but I've been watching the scoreboard online in my office. And I can't believe my eyes.

Tiger Woods, erstwhile number one player in the world and self-declared as ready for this championship after months on the physical mend, played his final 13 holes at 10 over par. He posted 77 after three early birdies.

Ryo Ishikawa, the teenage Japanese star who competed to the end at last week's WGC event at Firestone, has made Tiger look good. In fact, Ishikawa made all golfers feel great, for he put six balls in the water en route to 85.

I find these results fascinating in light of an article I just finished for the Links Players web site about the need for all Christian athletes—professionals and amateurs, golfers and others—to concentrate on Scriptures that emphasize character over content. Content for an athlete has everything to do with performance and results. How did you swing it? What did you shoot? And as we know quite well not only from our own outcomes, but also from those of Woods and Ishikawa and every other world-class player who shocks us with a dreadful score, how we perform each time out is anybody's guess. My own best casual round and best tournament round this summer followed absolutely dreadful warm-up sessions; I know you've had similar experiences.

What we *can* anticipate is that in every athletic endeavor, our character will be tested. So we need to go into each tournament or match with Scripture passages like today's firmly fixed in our mind. We need to "let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts" and allow the Holy Spirit full play in our words and actions. Then we can win as reflectors of Jesus and not just competitors on the field.

Detail work

Spend some time picking through Colossians 3:12-15 piece by piece. What matters of Christlike character need particular emphasis in your life right now? What plan might you institute to draw on God's strength for these changes?

More in Paul's letter

Read and consider as well Colossians 3:1-4. What do you think are some of the "things above" Paul was referring to? How might you set your mind on these things?

Preparing for character

Read James 4:13-17. How does this passage support the idea that results are out of our hands, while character is the better pursuit?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2011 Links Players International. Find the article, "The Bible for Athletes in the Thick of Competition," at www.linksplayers.com/articles/articles.html.