THE GOLFER WHO
Died
AND CAME BACK TO Life

Despite its TRANQUIL NATURE, golf can be a CONTACT SPORT. Here we PRESENT STORIES from READERS on the LATENT DANGERS of the GAME—from the SELF-INFLICTED to the UNFORESEEN—and ADVICE for PLAYING IT SAFE in 2018

By Max Adler
rested there while the rest of his group got out and gabbed, the logjam on the first par 3 predictable in events like this.

At first, no one noticed Dupuis die. When you stop breathing and have no pulse, the complete cessation of brain activity isn’t far behind. Henry glanced at the cart and saw Dupuis’ head back, his eyes oddly fixed.

“My first thought was, he was sleeping,” Henry says. After a good-natured taunt got no response, his partner’s earlier complaint of mild indigestion now clicked as a major harbinger. Henry, a burly man, immediately pulled Dupuis from the cart and began pounding his chest. Henry didn’t have CPR training, but his twin teenage boys had been recertified just weeks earlier. On the pick-up from the YMCA pool, they’d given Dad a decently thorough explanation. “I’m hitting hard, screaming at him to Come back! and all I can think about are his four kids,” Henry says. “Vic’s too young. They’re too young.”

Paul Dittmer—the remaining member of the foursome—called 911 as Hollander sped away in the cart. Back at the halfway house was a wall-mounted AED (automated external defibrillator) and the last sighing of William Ashton, M.D., whom they’d watched tee off on 17. Hollander delivered the AED, then went for Ashton. For more than a decade, in his car and in his golf bag, Doc Ashton has stored a syringe of epinephrine. Not an EpiPen, but a more powerful dose for cardiac emergencies. He’d never used any of these. Never removed the box. It was just something an anesthesiologist like him did.

In the second fairway, Lee Russell wondered why play had stalled. He couldn’t see the crowd of 30 around the third tee, but he'd hear shouting? A fistfight? That bizarre notion dissipated the moment he arrived and saw the row of stricken golfers relieving one another of the physical agony of compressing Vic Dupuis’ chest (effective CPR is performed at 100 beats per minute, or about the same tempo of the Bee Gees’ song “Stayin’ Alive”). Most onlookers were frozen, not knowing what to do other than maybe cry and say, “Vic’s gone.”

“His face was navy blue,” Ashton says. Speaking about the realities of medicine and statistics and death, you get the sense this doctor has never used hyperbole in his life. “By a traditional definition, he was dead. We were attempting to reverse it.”

Unable to find a vein, Ashton stuck the syringe under the tongue, the next fastest way to infuse the drug. He repositioned the electrode pads of the AED on the chest. Each charge nearly lifted Dupuis’ 210-pound body off the third tee.

Kennett Square’s head pro at the time, Tom Carpus, had played a tournament that morning at another course and was driving back when he saw the ambulances and commotion. “When you consider the configuration of our course, it was very lucky it happened where it did. There are so many holes where he would’ve been a lot farther from the defibrillator, far from a spot where the ambulances could drive right up, of course, Doc Ashton.”

That Dupuis took his first breath in 10 minutes, that his color changed from purple to

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A TRAGIC BOLT FROM THE BLUE

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The late summer afternoon at Round Valley Golf Course in Morgan, Utah, began as one of the happiest of Kip VanDyke’s life. The teenage golfer was there for a family reunion, with several of his relatives on the course and others at a picnic area by the clubhouse. When a thunderstorm moved up Weber Canyon, VanDyke and his family members evacuated the course (good idea), some taking refuge under a tree (bad idea) and VanDyke blithely wandering over to the putting green (another bad idea). “A single bolt struck almost from nowhere, the flash and sound simultaneous,” VanDyke, now 50 and head pro at Toad’s Fun Zone, a driving range, miniature golf course and go-cart track in nearby Ogden. “It took me to my knees. What I saw when I stood up was the most traumatic event of my life.” The same bolt that felled VanDyke struck three family members, killing one, seriously burning another and injuring a third. “It changed everything for all of us,” he says. “Today, when clouds roll in, my eyes are glued to the Doppler radar screen, and I’m very fast—some say too fast—about getting people off the range. Me, I won’t even take a bath when I hear thunder or when it’s raining hard. Lightning safety is the first thing every golfer should be taught.”

—GUY YOCOM

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AN ERRANT SHOT, THEN FISTS OF FURY

Darryl Wendland joined two teenage boys for a 2009 round at Strathmere Golf Course in Alberta. An enjoyable day turned spectacular when one of the lads aced a par 3 early in the round. But when the second youth hit a wild drive on a subsequent hole, things took a turn for the worse. The shot caromed off the side of a cart occupied by a twosome, and they were not in a forgiving mood. “We apologized, but one of the guys screamed obscenities and then punched me,” Wendland says. His call to the police further enraged the punch-happy twosome. “One of the guys tackled me, and they spent the next several minutes playing kickball with my head,” he says. But it was little solace to Wendland, who spent the next two days in the hospital, then six weeks at home recuperating from the concussion he received.

red to dark pink, that he then opened his eyes and said, “What’s going on?” even though he has no memory of it, isn’t a miracle. That comes later. But for the story to make sense, we need to pick it up at Chester County Hospital, where Dupuis’ wife, Faith, was driving after listening to a series of increasingly frantic voicemail from Henry. What happened there is almost crushingly mundane. Dupuis didn’t report walking toward any white light or tunnels. Awaking a bit groggy to the familiar sight of his wife of 29 years, he asked her to call his assistant to cancel the appointment he’d intended on making after golf. “I love you, too, honey,” she said.

A former nurse, Faith wasn’t surprised when the cardiac-catheterization test for her husband, who maintained a balanced diet and drank moderately, returned as only 10-percent blocked. As in, nowhere near clogged enough to cause a heart attack. Over the weekend, as the blisters on his chest caused by the waves of electric current began to subside, the prevailing diagnosis was that severe dehydration on a hot day had caused this golfer to faint. Faith wasn’t buying it, and on Monday morning she expressed her skepticism to fresh personnel.

Dr. Clay Warnick agreed the case warranted more investigation and even suspected, correctly, a far rarer thing. Sarcoidosis is a collection of inflamed white-blood cells that collect in little lumps called granulomas. More often they’re found in the lungs or skin, and just as often there are no, or only mild, symptoms. But when one migrates to the heart, it’s a deadly matter. At the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania—where Dupuis was transferred by ambulance despite the mischievous and nearly successful attempt of a male nurse with whom he’d bonded over Penn State football to secure him a helicopter—he’d spend a week awake each morning with a team of doctors and students alert at the foot of his bed. “We only ever get to study cardiac sarcoidosis in cadavers.”

“The police arrived and dive-bombed the guys, and it was satisfying to see the cop’s knee grinding the punching man’s face into the gravel,” he says. But it was little solace to Wendland, who spent the next two days in the hospital, then six weeks at home recuperating from the concussion he received.

"It was important to capitalize on his excitement about playing again. Give him something meaningful to look forward to," says Carpus, who recently became a rules official on the PGA Tour Champions. In all, he worked 20 seasons at Kennett Square, all of them close with Dupuis.

"Vic was the chairman of our junior golf committee for 19 years. He’s the kind of guy who’s always giving back and volunteering,” Carpus says. “When I tell Vic’s story, people think it ends there.” With a new set of clubs. Or with the dinner party Dupuis threw at a local orchard to thank everyone who had played a part in saving his life.

D Dupuis returned to golf the first day he was permitted, which happened to be an unseasonably warm one in November. Unwrapping the plastic from his new set of Ping i20s couldn’t be performed without a sense of ceremony, but everything else about the day was loose. Several of his closest golf buddies were playing in—ironically, if you choose to see it that way—a memorial paddle tournament for a former member. Despite that draw, the first tee was packed. So Dupuis and two others snuck off No. 10. Walking off this first hole, whom did they see teeing off No. 9? None other than Ashton.

"I had seen everybody since the event ex-

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GOLFERS PLAYING. PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY

A club in New Jersey was conducting a Monday outing for non-members. Things went smoothly until a group reached a dogleg-right par 4 with ponds on both sides. One guest hit his second shot, then sat in the passenger side of his cart. His playing partner was farther up the fairway, so he decided to move the cart forward.

But instead of sliding over to the driver’s seat, he leaned over and tried using his left foot and hand to drive. The cart lurched out of control, sped down a slope toward a pond and flipped as it entered the water, submerging the golfer. Luckily, his forecaddie dived in and pulled the golfer out. The man, though shaken, was unhurt. The caddie then reentered the pond and retrieved the two bags. Another cart was summoned, and the golfers finished their round.

Illustrations by Tim Lahan
SURVIVAL GUIDE
ADVICE FOR (ALMOST) ANY GOLF-COURSE EMERGENCY

SLIP IN THE SHOWER
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> More than once, your pro has remarked on your fine footwork. He should see you now as you lie prostrate on the floor outside the locker-room shower, the victim of a slip-and-fall while Rushing to get back to your locker. In 2008, some 234,000 people suffered a mishap in the bathroom, 81 percent of them falls. Not the kind of club you'd care to join.
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> COURSE OF ACTION Walk slowly, eyes riveted on your path, staying mindful of tiled floors that might have been cleaned with slippery disinfectant. Be cautious if you've had a couple of drinks. Most of all, avoid any towel-snapping high jinks.

STRUCK BY A GOLF BALL
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> Becky Harmon of Minnesota recalled the time she took a blow near her temple from a ball struck 200 yards away. A friend told her the ball bounced "cartoon style" off her skull, but there was nothing comical about Harmon losing consciousness or taking eight stitches. In fact, when we solicited our readers for their most harrowing on-course accident tales, getting hit by a ball was by far the most common. What do you do when you're on the ground writhing in pain, the swelling around the impacted area getting larger by the second?
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> TO TREAT Get ice and apply immediately. If it's a head shot, get to the hospital and insist that someone else drive. If this can't be done quickly, phone 911. Also, when you hear Fore! face away from the sound and duck, covering your head.

HANGOVER
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> It might be self-imposed, but that doesn't mean you aren't in need of treatment and a dose of sympathy.
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> TO TREAT Tom Weiskopf, who had a few hangovers back in the day, recommends a cheeseburger and milkshake, the former to soak up the remaining alcohol, the latter to coat your stomach. It's actually good advice, but there's a problem: They're hard to find before that early-morning tee time. Go with a pain reliever such as ibuprofen, naproxen, or aspirin for the headache, as much water as you can drink to rehydrate, and yelling warnings in the mirror never to overindulge again.

CHOKING
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> The ravenous chomping of a hot dog. An ill-timed swallow of an energy bar. These can be the makings of one of golf's most stealthy killers. When you see a person clutching or pointing at his throat with a panicked look, act immediately.

First, whack the guy hard between the shoulder blades with the heel of your hand, and we mean hard. If the food isn't dislodged after five whacks, move behind the victim, make a fist with one hand, place it above the navel and then cover that clenched fist with your other hand and pull in and up firmly, as though pulling him off his feet—all while shouting for help. Don't insert your hand in his mouth to probe for the food unless you can see and remove it. If there's more than two of you, command a pal to call 911.

HEAT EXHAUSTION
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> Next to sunburn, heat exhaustion—your body becoming so overheated that levels mechanisms like sweating don't bring it back to normal—is a common on-course health issue. Phil Mickelson and Michelle Wie have fallen victim, proof it can sneak up on even the most experienced players. If it gets out of hand, with your body temperature reaching 106, your organs can shut down, and you might not live to play another day.

> TO TREAT If you feel any
NASTY FALLS

- Rare is the golfer who hasn't taken a tumble on the course. Slipping on the downslope of a wet teeing ground or damp cart path, stepping into small holes, and clumsy trips for no discernible reason happen all the time. Kris Snell of Florida told us of losing his footing while climbing out of a bunker, breaking and dislocating his right ankle. It took nine screws, two pins, three days in the hospital and five months of rehab before he got back on the course.

WHAT TO DO There's an art to falling, one that can be built into your reflexes when you crash to the ground. Keep your arms bent at the elbows, as a stiff-armed fall can lead to a broken wrist. If possible, land on your butt—it's better designed to absorb and disperse impact. Maintain a "soft" body in general, to dampen and spread the trauma of impact. If you're falling on a slope, roll with it so the force isn't so jarring.

GOUGED IN EYE BY TREE BRANCH

- Yet another drive soars into the woods. You tromp through the trees, branches bending this way and that as the end of the five-minute search limit for a lost ball draws near. Out of nowhere—zing—one of the small branches rebounds, catching you in the eye.

TO TREAT You should have worn some type of eyewear and walked gingerly, your head down as you threshed in search of the ball. But that's no help now. There are many types of eye injuries, but in general, treat by covering the eye and resisting the urge to rub or even touch it. Apply a cold compress very lightly and get to the emergency room.

ARMED ROBBERY

- Golf-shop break-ins are one thing, on-course robberies are another. One of the more audacious was a 2015 holdup at The Links at Spanish Bay in which one of the victims fought (unwisely) his two assailants, who were later captured.

WHAT TO DO Stay still, don't panic and talk only in answer to the robbers' demand. Show clearly you are unarmed, keeping your hands open and in plain sight. Note their age, height and hair and eye color. Most of all, give the guys what they want. Even in the era of $500 drivers, there's nothing you have on you that is worth getting hurt over.

ALCOHOL POISONING

- The catch with extreme alcohol intake is, the one on the intake end is usually too intoxicated to be aware of warning signs. But you should know what it looks like in others, because although your frat days are over, it doesn't mean you won't encounter someone who presents the worst symptoms.

THE SIGNS The usual from a really intoxicated person include confusion, vomiting, etc. But look for more, particularly if they're passed out. Any combination of slow and irregular breathing, blueish skin and low body temperature means real trouble is here. Call 911 fast. —GV
cept Doc Ashton, so that was an emotional intersection," Dupuis says. After a long hug, the doctor removed a syringe from his golf bag, raised it for them all to behold, and said, "Don’t worry, Vic, I’ve reloaded!

Maybe because Dupuis was free from three months of negative swing thoughts, or maybe just because he played a decent nine holes. At the turn, they picked up Hollander, who’d finished his paddle match early. Given the routing, Dupuis shouldn’t have been surprised for the reenactment.Still, it was eerie passing Ashton on the 17th tee as they drove across the road to the third. The doc back in place like it was all happening again.

Dupuis asks Hollander to show him. "Right here," Hollander says, and points to a spot of rough on the bank of the box, a few paces up from dead middle. "That’s where you were lying." Dupuis presses. He needs to know more. Needs to know everything. Who was standing where? What was the exact sequence of events? But more happened in that eternity than can be reliably relayed.

All Hollander can say is, "Your first breath was the greatest relief I have ever felt in my life. In my mind, I had just seen you die." Hollander doesn’t dwell on what happened next, at least not in this first retelling.

Tom Henry will say it later. "The ambulance has taken Vic away, the crowd is dispersed, and the three of us are standing there. Vic is with the people he needs to be. For us, it’s either go drink all afternoon in the bar or keep playing. I told Jeff [Hollander] and Paul [Dittmer] I’d be their marker for the tournament. So we teed off."

Everyone bogeyed the par-3 third, understandably, but then the duo of Hollander/Dittmer had a red-hot card the rest of the way and won The Devils. "I feel a little guilty about that," Hollander can now joke, "but to keep playing was the right thing."

Months later, all’s well that ends perfect: 162 yards with a slightly helping breeze, Dupuis knows it’s a 6-iron. Always better to be short than long on this green. Plus, he hasn’t hit the 6 yet. Not this 6. Ever.

When it’s in the air, Hollander says one word: “Perfect.”

Two hops and in.

“I should’ve retired that 6-iron then and there, because I haven’t hit it anywhere near as pure since,” Dupuis says.

There’s yelling. And expletives. Dupuis falls flat to his back, and from the obscured vantage of the 17th tee, Ashton has a dreadful thought: Not again. But it flips when he sees the high-fives. These shouts of “Oh, my God! Oh, my God!” are for something wonderful. They call the golf shop, and the word spreads. The remaining six holes are a blur. When the group reaches the 19th hole, there’s a crowd waiting unlike any other.

“It happened to be a busy day at the club, and so everyone is in there, yet we walk into a room of total silence,” Hollander remembers. “Everyone was in awe. People kept asking me, ‘Did Vic really get a hole-in-one on 3?’”

As the hole-in-one insurance is claimed and reclaimed, again and again, the men’s grill turns boisterous. Doc Ashton, Scotch in hand, gets a glint in his eye followed by a loss for words. “To come back for the first time to the hole he died on and make a hole-in-one, and with a brand-new club, well…”

Dupuis has attended church all his life. Sometimes it can be impossible to believe in God more than one already does. “He's not a changed person. He’s just more himself,” Faith says. “He’s always been a glass-half-full kind of a person. Since the event, we both like to say his cup runneth over.

“My belief is that the great fisher of men threw me back, and that he has an incredible sense of humor to add a hole-in-one," Dupuis says. "But if I've come to realize anything, it's that the people around me were most affected. They had to watch me die.” One witness quit smoking that day. Another had AEDs installed at each of his four business locations. More than 50 members have since taken CPR training. What can’t be counted is how much appreciate life with greater preciosity.

Every year on the last Friday of July, the anniversary of his "death," Dupuis plays with the same foursome of Henry, Hollander and Dittmer. On the third tee, he has the club leave champagne on ice. The tradition started with one bottle and four glasses, but more and more members have requested to join the celebration, so now there’s a case.

If there is anyone who can raise a glass and not believe there is a higher force, then theirs is half empty.