**Prayer and Sports**

**Indiana basketball fans insist on having the last word--even in church.  Although I live in Kentucky, I serve as pastor to a church in southern Indiana.  On the Sunday morning following a victory by the Hoosiers over my Kentucky Wildcats, I chided my friend Hank as he sat in the pew. “I am sorely disappointed in Hank,” I said. “We agreed that he would not pray for Indiana, and I would not pray for Kentucky. Obviously he didn’t keep his end of the bargain.” The congregation, well-populated with Hoosier fans, chuckled. “Preacher,” Hank replied, “I didn’t pray for Indiana. I just asked God to let the best team win.” *(Gary Story, in Reader’s Digest)***

**With less than a minute to go in a tied basketball game, our team was on the free throw line. “Quick!” a child seated behind me directed a friend. “You pray in Mormon . . . and I’ll pray in Catholic!” *(Gayle Garrett, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Steve wanted to qualify for an amateur golf tournament but was anxious about who would be watching. At the first tee, he was appalled to find a TV crew. Muttering a prayer, Steve hit the ball 275 yards down the fairway. Trying to appear nonchalant, a relieved Steve strode off toward his ball. His partner ran after him. “Aren’t you going to bring your clubs?” he asked. *(Andrea Fust, in Reader’s Digest)***

**A minister who was a keen if somewhat erratic golfer approached the green and was advised by his caddie to use a Number 3 iron. “I think I can make it with a 4,” answered the minister. But when the ball landed in a trap short of the green he commented, “Well, I guess the good Lord didn’t hear me.” “Could be,” snapped the caddie, “but in my church when we pray we keep our heads down.” *(Herm Albright, in Golf Digest)***

**You can always tell the golfers in church. They are the ones who use interlocking grips when they put their hands together to pray. *(Jim Reed, in Catholic Digest)***

**There’s a nice story told of a rabbi and a priest playing golf. Before putting, the priest crosses himself. By the ninth hole he is nine strokes ahead. So the rabbi asks if the priest thinks it would be all right if he too crossed himself. “Sure, rabbi, go ahead,” says the priest. “But if won’t do you any good until you learn how to putt.” *(William Sloane Coffin, in Sermons from Riverside)***

**The softball game between members of our church and a local synagogue was tied until the bottom of the ninth inning, when our pastor hit the game-winning home run. He jokingly attributed his success to the benediction he had given before the game. The following week we presented him with a trophy inscribed “Most Valuable Prayer.” *(E. Kramer, in Reader’s Digest)***

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