

Gary Player's Secret to Getting lucky

Andrew Wood

When Gary Player arrived in the United States in the late 1950s, he was already becoming known as a "world traveler." His schedule was at first limited; nevertheless, he quickly made an impression on many of the home-grown pros, and soon developed a reputation among them as a "lucky" golfer. As is common when faced with someone who is more successful, many of the regular Tour players decided Player was winning because he was luckier than they. Incidentally, this epithet would also be hung around the neck of Seve Ballesteros when he burst upon the tournament golf scene.

Rumors of Player's lucky play were circulating in the clubhouse after he had won a PGA tournament, and a less than tactful reporter asked him to comment on the matter. Throughout his career, Player has always seemed to be at his best when the odds were against him, and he summed up his feelings about luck by paraphrasing Thomas Jefferson.

"Sure I'm lucky," he told the journalist, "and the more I practice the luckier I get."

Make no mistake about it. The key to dramatically improving your "luck" is practice. Other pro golfers were reluctant to admit, even to themselves, that Gary Player practiced harder than they, hitting thousands more balls as he grooved and fine tuned his swing. Or that he showed up before dawn and stayed after dusk, then went to bed early, avoiding parties and hangovers. They also ignored the fact that he compensated for his small stature with a rigorous program of exercises and muscle building, long before it became fashionable to do so. Player was almost fanatical about his diet, his body and his physical conditioning, all with the objective of playing better golf. Other pros dismissed his fine performance as "lucky" because he was more comfortable than facing the cold, hard truth. He was better than most of them because he worked harder and tried harder.

Excerpted from [The Traits of Champions](#) by Andrew Wood & Brian Tracy