

A Boy Named Juan

With the eyes of the golf world focused on Augusta, Georgia, for the Masters Tournament this past weekend -- won by crowd favorite Phil Mickelson -- a story of one of the game's fierce competitors comes to mind.

Juan grew up in Puerto Rico, the son of a sugar-cane plantation foreman. He lived with his family of eight in a three-room shack with a dirt floor and no toilet. His first job, at the age of six, was to drive oxen to plow the cane fields eight hours a day for one dollar, with no breaks.

It was in the cane fields that he learned to be on time, work hard, and be loyal and respectful to his employers. At age seven, he got a job at a golf course spotting balls for golfers.

Juan began to dream of playing golf. He made a club out of a guava limb and a piece of pipe, and then he hammered an empty tin can into a ball. Next, he dug two small holes in the ground and hit the ball back and forth between them. He practiced "golf" with the same intensity he had put into his job in the cane field, only this time he was driving golf balls with a club rather than oxen with a stick. Over time, he became a very good golfer.

During his career, Juan "Chi Chi" Rodriguez has won eight Professional Golf Association tour tournaments and 22 Senior PGA titles. He has earned millions of dollars.

For Rodriguez, and any of us, the lesson is clear: No matter where or how we start out in life, we can use our circumstances for our benefit, if we follow our dream and keep the right attitude.

--Beecher Hunter