

Be Kind and Listen

A wise person once said that it's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice.

Another *oldie but goodie* is that when you're talking, you're not listening; it's only when you listen that you learn.

Listening can avoid some embarrassments, and might even make you some money.

Take the case of the late Tommy Bolt, who served in the United States Army during World War II and turned golf professional in 1946. He did not join the Professional Golf Association tour until he was in his 30s, but he went on to win 15 PGA tour titles, including one major championship, the 1958 U.S. Open.



Bolt's fiery disposition earned him the nicknames *Thunder* and *Terrible Tommy*. He was known to break clubs during rounds and had a penchant for throwing clubs, which led to the adoption of a rule prohibiting such behavior. In later years, he admitted that a lot of his on-course eruptions were merely showmanship, and that he felt they had detracted from his playing.

Once in a tournament, he drew a caddie who had a reputation for being a talker, so Bolt told him to keep quiet and restrict his conversation to "Yes, Mr. Bolt" or "No, Mr. Bolt."

As luck would have it, one of Bolt's shots stopped close to a tree. To reach the green, he had to hit the ball under a branch and over a lake. He carefully analyzed the situation and made a decision.

As it frequently happens, however – halfway talking to his caddie and halfway talking to himself – he asked, "Should I hit it with my 5-iron?"

The caddie, having been duly warned, responded, "No, Mr. Bolt."

Bolt's temper and pride prompted him to say, "What do you mean, not a 5-iron? Just watch this shot!"

The caddie, still following instructions, said, "No, Mr. Bolt!"

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Bolt wasn't listening. He took dead aim and hit the shot beautifully to the green. It stopped a couple of feet from the hole.

With a look of self-satisfaction, Bolt handed the caddie his 5-iron and commented, "What do you think about that? And it's OK for you to talk now."

"Mr. Bolt, that wasn't your ball," the caddie responded.

Hitting the wrong ball cost Tommy Bolt a two-shot penalty and lots of money.

The message: Be nice to people, especially those who serve you, and listen to what they have to say.

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger (James 1:19 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter