



COVER ME BOYS, I'M GOING IN - SAMPLE

GUNS ABLAZIN'

So, we holstered our guns and headed out to the golf course to put our latest “technology” on TV. In my mind, and in theory, it always worked; in practice, not so much. There were a couple of issues when it came to getting results; first and foremost was the operator. Much of our help on the golf course came from a local volunteer base that, in many cases on our Canadian Tour coverage, was new to the game and, in every case, new to television broadcasts of the game. When Karel left, for what he perceived to be greener pastures, I promoted Daisy to the position of Associate Producer, in charge of the volunteer base that would serve as spotters, scorers, and now JUGGS gun operators. It fell on her to train new people weekly, and sometimes daily, in the operation of the guns and then prepare them for a variety of situations, ranging from cramped muscles to crabby golfers and cameramen.

Emmett, our director, also had to rethink his technique, because we did not have the technology to independently show the JUGGS gun results on the screen. Instead, the cameraman had to take his normal position, behind the player, hold his “head to toe” shot through the swing, then quickly pan and tilt the camera to find the readout illuminated on the display of the gun. Simultaneously, the volunteer had to hold the trigger until it clicked, keep the gun placed directly behind the ball, pointed at the angle of launch, and then, immediately after contact, turn and tilt the back of the gun to meet the lens of the hand-held camera. It was a ballet and, when it worked, it was enlightening; when it didn't, it could be embarrassing.

Adding insult to injury, the gun had limitations. To get a reading, you had to pull the trigger no more than ten seconds before impact, and to show the reading to the world, the volunteer had that same amount of time to “meet” the cameraman. As you can imagine, there were occasions when the volunteer pulled the trigger too soon or too late and other occasions when the cameraman made his move to the gun at the same time the readout disappeared. If I had a dollar for every time the camera panned and tilted to show three horizontal lines, instead of numbers, I could buy you dinner at the restaurant of your choice, anywhere in the world. But honestly, it worked more often than it didn't, and the readings were surprisingly accurate. Our coverage even made a little news around the golf world when long-hitting Hank Kuehne, the 1998 U. S. Amateur Champion, won one of our Canadian Tour events in 2002, while consistently registering JUGGS gun ball speed readings in excess of 185/mph. In my mind, it was an unqualified success. In at least one player's mind, it was a disaster.

That player was a journeyman PGA TOUR player, named Bobby Wadkins. Bobby's big brother, Lanny, won the U. S. Amateur in 1970, the PGA Championship in 1977, and twenty other PGA TOUR events along the way. He competed on eight Ryder Cup teams and captained the American squad once, during a more-than-twenty year career. Lanny was always considered a great player; he was also known as a surly guy to everyone, save his closest friends; and maybe, in fact, even to them. Younger brother Bobby also had talent, albeit not as much as Lanny, finishing second six times on the PGA TOUR, and winning

four tournaments on the Champions Tour. He wasn't as good a player, but he could be just as big a jerk, and he proved it one day in front of our cameras on the Canadian Tour.

Our cameras and our JUGGS gun operator parked themselves on a particular hole, overlooking the beautiful Texas city of San Antonio. It was the perfect set-up for the gun: a wide open, downhill par five, at which every player pulled out a driver and attempted to hit it as far as he could. The volunteer had been doing a great job, timing the start of the gun and turning the readout upward in perfect harmony with the cameraman's downward tilt. Group after group, we got great readings and, since the word was out, it wasn't unusual for the players, after hitting their tee shots, to approach our volunteer and our cameraman and ask at what speed their ball had launched. Everyone was having a good time and it made for good TV. Then Bobby Wadkins' group showed up. As Wadkins punctured the ground with his tee, the volunteer operating the JUGGS gun squatted in place, catching Wadkins eye,

"What's that?" he asked, pointing the head of the driver at the gun. Randy Koury, our hand-held camera operator, kept his camera pointed at Wadkins and answered, "It's a JUGGS gun," he said. "It measures ball speed."

Wadkins slowly shook his head back and forth, grunted, and began to set up for his tee shot. This was all captured on camera and broadcast live to Golf Channel viewers all over the world; and so was what happened next. Wadkins addressed the ball and our volunteer started the process of getting a reading by pressing the JUGGS gun trigger. As indicated earlier, when that happened the gun began to make a soft clicking noise, a noise that hadn't seem to bother any other player but, for some reason, it bothered Bobby Wadkins and he backed away from his ball and turned his glare once again on our JUGGS gun operator, "Turn it off," he growled. "I'm supposed to get a reading from every player," our volunteer bravely replied and, before our cameraman Randy could intervene, Wadkins took one more step toward the gun operator and let go with both barrels, "If you don't turn it off right now," he said, again pointing the head of his driver at the gun, "I'm going to shove that thing all the way up your ass and we'll see what kind of reading you get then." On the tee, our operator was mortified; in the truck, the crew was mesmerized; and Bobby Wadkins was clearly satisfied, as he hit his shot and walked off the tee box.

END OF SAMPLE

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