

World Golf Hall Of Fame Induction Ceremony

Tuesday, September 26 2017

Ian Woosnam

Induction Speech

GARY PLAYER: Ladies and gentlemen, when we came in the room this evening, I'm sure you will all agree when we heard the bagpipes, which you associate with Scotland where this wonderful game started, it warmed the cockles of our heart. We're here tonight to honor the athletes and our dear friend Henry Longhurst for the athletic prowess and his talent as a writer and a TV commentator. But may I put the shoe on the other foot and just say thank you to all the other champions in the room here tonight. You people, who we appreciate your patronage for something, the Hall of Fame that is so dear to our heart.

Respect, gratitude, and humility are prevalent tonight amongst everybody here. Every sportsman and sportswoman's dream is to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. I thank Ian Woosnam for asking me to introduce him tonight, as I did with Charlie Sifford, which was one of the most intriguing inductions that have ever taken place, a man who faced an enormous amount of adversity and came out smiling like a champion, and David Graham, who I must say, of all the inductees I think he appreciated being inducted into the Hall of Fame more than anybody, I introduced him at St. Andrews, he was crying and he's still crying here tonight, you see -- Winston Churchill my great hero said, "It takes great courage to cry amongst people." But once you've been inducted into the Hall of Fame, as I'm sure it's unanimous in decisions that you have arrived.

Ian, when I see you, I'm always happy to see people because I love people and I love my life, and I have a great family and great friends, but when I see you, I'm actually ecstatic, and I'm sorry I've got to be a little repetitive of my introduction on the screen, but I'm ecstatic to see you because you're the only damned man I'm taller than in the entire world. There's nobody that I'm taller, and that's why dynamite is so tough.

Ian, I've known him for a long, long time, and he encouraged -- and we all want to be contributors to society in our lives. I don't know if there are such things as legacies. We forget very quickly. But he encouraged so many people across the globe. As you know, in a world where men have prevailed, are always of pretty big size, here this wee man, this wee giant, as I call him, changed many persons' concept of the game



of golf, what could be achieved with tenacity and talent.

Incidentally, Ian was the longest hitter I ever saw in golf pound for pound. I'll never forget at Sun City, where we have kikuyu rough and it's only that tall, and when you go in there, there's no player that can advance the ball out more than 150 yards. The fairways were narrow, it was the biggest prize money in the world at that stage, and Ian Woosnam, I never saw him miss a fairway. It was one of the greatest exhibitions I've ever seen in my life other than Ben Hogan, who I considered the best golfer from tee to green in my life. It was actually something to see. And when he won the tournament, he came to me and he said, "I'm a wee man, but I've got a great big check here, and watch me spend this, baby."

I can't take it with you.

The beautiful thing that Ian realized that golf is the power of the putter. We hear about long distance all the time, but the putter is what wins the tournaments. He's won since we did that interview, 52 events. How many players can say that? How many players can say that they've won internationally? There's a big difference in winning internationally and winning in your home garden. Now for Augusta, here is this wee man playing at Augusta, this tough, extremely difficult golf course, and I gave him a nickname of Little Tarzan, and he came to me and he said, you know, Gary, I really want the Green Jacket. It's something that I dream about every day of my life. And when we were all watching as golf enthusiasts and he stood on the 18th tee and the commentator says we have bunkers on the left, which you've got to avoid, and the trees on the right, and we're all thinking what is he going to do, and here's this man this size standing up, and he just flies it over the bunkers, something that I'll never forget. We were all in awe and disbelief, but he did his homework, and he realized there wasn't any rough over the bunker. And he went on and you saw him hole that putt with great enthusiasm, and enthusiasm is one of the great essences of life. He finished second in the U.S. Open. Unfortunately, the only people that remember you finishing second or third are your wife and your dog, but I remembered him finishing second and third in the British Open, The Open, and if he never made the mistake of having an extra club in his bag, which some of you may not be familiar with, I

really believe he would have won because he was so charged up.

But you know, the people in Wales, they don't count too well.

Last but not least, attitude of Ian. No excuses. There are no ifs and golf. There are no excuses. Carla mentioned aptitude, fortitude. I think attitude is very important. It can break a church, it can break a home, it can break a marriage, it can break a business. And so many people today when they have to face up to difficulties of some kind, which we all have to do in our life at some time or other, it's God's plan, we're inclined to say, it's 90 percent what happened to me, how unlucky I am, and 10 percent how they react to it.

I think, Ian, that I noticed in my friendship with him, it was the opposite. It was 10 percent what happened to him and 90 percent how he reacted to it. It's a great formula.

I'd just like to say, we come back to this great country of America, which I've had the pleasure and honor of visiting for over 60 years. This evening is produced and given to us by America, as so many things are. The great samaritan you've been. Thank you. Bless you, Ian, and God bless America. Ian?

IAN WOOSNAM: I've been waiting 59 years to hold that trophy, and she's taken it away. Just let me get set here.

Gary, you know, that was just fantastic, yeah. To have you to introduce me is something as a friend but the words you come out with is just incredible, and you're a legend, and you're an ambassador to the game of golf.

So I'd like to start my speech, my thanks go to the World Golf Hall of Fame, the selection committee. Four legends of the game, Nancy Lopez, Annika Sorenstam, my friend Gary Player, and to me, the greatest player ever, Jack Nicklaus.

I was once asked by a gentle member of my golf club around the age of 14, he said, young Woosnam, what are you going to do when you leave school. I said, I'm going to be a professional golfer, like my heroes, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, and Gary Player. I want to travel the world, win golf tournaments and majors and become the best golfer in the world. He laughed, and he tapped me on the head and said, well, if you want to try to achieve all that, you're going to have to grow a little.

Well, he was right. I did grow a little, about four inches. Oh, dear. Yeah, I'm not getting any taller. There's only one way to go from here, and it's shorter.

So ladies and gentlemen, to be inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame with the greatest golfers of all time is truly another dream come true. Today is not all about myself, it's about the people who have been part of my journey, from my school teachers to the members of the golf courses I've been associated with, to the European Tour, the PGA TOUR of America, and the Tours around the world, my fellow professionals, my sponsors, my fans and my friends, I thank you all.

I'd also like to mention some very dear friends who made a big difference in my life but sadly have passed. Jeff Roberts and John Wilson. To my golf coaches Bob Torrance and John Jacobs and my mother and father-in-law, Terry and Glendryth Pew, you're all sadly missed. They say behind any successful person there's always some very special people. To my longtime manager David Barlow, my financial advisor Jonathan Desmond, and my sister-in-law who has been a nanny to my children, she's been my PA, she's even been my travel agent, Magretta Clark, thank you. And to my wonderful family, my son Daniel, to my daughters, Rebecca and Ami, and my son-in-law Doug, thank you. And to my wonderful wife, who has been my rock, she's been my best friend, Glen. You deserve this award as much as I do.

But there's only one thing that could make this day even more better, and that is my parents, and that is if my parents were here today. But I'm sure they're up there looking down with pride and joy, so I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of my brothers and sisters to thank them for giving us a chance to play this wonderful game of golf, and personally thank them for giving me the support and encouragement to follow my dreams.

So I'd like to dedicate this wonderful trophy to my mom and dad, to my parents, to my family, and to every single person who's been part of my life. Thank you, and God bless you all.