

Angela Johnson: a lesson in following through

by Paul Baswick

SIX NATIONS – From the first hole, the first swing, Angela Johnson knew her driver and ball weren't going to get along. The opening shot soared off the tee with all the grace of a shot put, grinding to a quick stop 25 yards away. The sphere then strayed misguidedly towards the rough to the foot of a tree. Then Angela accidentally toed the ball, which may sound cute to most of us, but not to a golfer. It cost her a two-point penalty.

After eight swings, and a few heavy sighs, the ball eventually, reluctantly, dropped in the cup.

While some golfers may have been tempted to make a bee-line straight for the club house, Angela decided to carry on. It's a good thing she did, too. She ended up shooting the best round of golf in her life.

It was a moment when the game spoke more eloquently of the player than any words could. In spite of an opening hole rife with imperfection, Angela resolved not to quit, and in the end, she came out on top.

Triumphing under less than idyllic conditions has become a way of life for Angela since she took up the game three years ago. She, unlike most who have risen in the sport's ranks, is completely blind. She's never seen the ball resting on its tee, or watched it as it glides gently across the green into the cup. But she hears it. Feels it. Excels at it.

Angela and her husband Bob have spent the past three weeks on Six Nations, vacationing in their motor home at Chiefswood Park — although vacationing is rarely so productive. That game with the shaky beginning she shot at the Chippawa Creek Golf Course in Mount Hope on Aug. 5 proved not only to be a personal best, but a world record for a woman golfer with her degree of blindness. It was two shots better than the 92 she shot the day before, which combined set another world record for 36 holes.

To Angela, a native of California, golf is much more than an enjoyable passtime. The seemingly simple game has given her a passion for life and a strength to overcome her life's darkest tragedies.

"Golf has given mesomething to grab a hold of. It's given me a purpose," says Angela.

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