



GARY BY GUY YOCOM THE GREAT

photo by AFP

AN APPRECIATION OF THE INDOMITABLE GARY PLAYER AS HE TURNS 80

For Gary Player's 80th birthday on Nov 1, friends and family will gather to deliver cards, gifts, a book of memories, 80 birthday spanks and a pinch to grow an inch. Which is only fair, seeing how in his 62 years as a pro, it was Player who did most of the spanking. He won 165 tournaments worldwide, 24 of them on the US PGA Tour and nine of them Major championships. He's one of five players to capture the career Grand Slam. After he turned 50, he won 19 times on the Champions Tour, six of them senior Majors. He has also raised more than US\$50 million for charity through The Player Foundation. As a golfer, course designer and philanthropist, Player has iced a lot of cakes. »Along the way, he has run up some curious numbers, real Ripley's Believe It Or Not! stuff, much of which Player himself is quick to point out. Among the feats:

MILES WALKED

820 »A three-time Masters champion, Player has competed in 52 Masters. Accounting for missed cuts and 72-hole finishes, he has played 164 official rounds. If each round constitutes a five-mile walk, he has hoofed 820 miles at Augusta National. Add the customary practice rounds, and Gary has easily walked the equivalent of Chicago to Houston.

COURSES DESIGNED

325 »Player has designed 325 courses worldwide, according to GaryPlayer.com. If the layouts average 120 acres, that comes to just more than 61 square miles—nearly twice as big as Manhattan and larger than Kahoolawe, the smallest of the Hawaiian Islands.

STOMACH CRUNCHES A DAY

1,000 »Player does 1,000 stomach crunches daily. Over 55 years (we'll give him seven years' worth of days off) that's more than 20 million crunches. Men's Health estimates it takes 22,000 crunches to shed one pound of body fat. So Player has lost 909 pounds, or roughly six full versions of himself.

MILES FLOWN

15,000,000 »Since 1953, Player has flown an estimated 15 million miles. "Certainly more than any golfer, and I think it's more than any human being in history, including pilots and astronauts," he told us in 2002. We're not so sure about the astronauts part, but we know the busiest commercial airline pilots log about 450,000 miles a year, so he outstrips them easily. The 15 million miles susses out to about 6,000 New York-to-LA trips.

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