

editor's
letter

BY
S. MURALI

It's easy to say that you have a great swing and you're one of the best players out here, but if you truly don't believe in it, you're never going to be. The last piece of the puzzle is to really understand up here [points to head]. Everyone is good to be out here. Everyone is a good golfer. Everyone can be great. The biggest thing that separates the best players in the world from the good players is upstairs.

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GREAT GAME WILL HAUNT PETTERSEN

Golf apparently saw one of its worst displays of sportsmanship at the Solheim Cup last week.

European team stalwart Suzann Pettersen (right) came under universal criticism for penalising her American opponents for accidentally picking up a 16-inch putt which had not been conceded.

US Solheim Cup team captain Juli Inkster said she had never seen anything like that in her career.

English great Laura Davies cast partisan ties aside and termed Pettersen's act "disgusting", adding "How Suzann can justify that I will never, ever know. She has let herself down and she has certainly let her team down."

Although she defended her actions at the time, Pettersen apologised profusely a day later, saying "I am sorry for the way I carried myself. I can be so much better and being an ambassador for this great game means a lot to me."

Ironically, Pettersen was playing by the rules of the 'great game'.

Until a putt is conceded in matchplay, you cannot pick the ball up, however short you deem your tap-in to be.

But that did not stop an outpouring of hate directed at the Norwegian, whom many felt ought to have "given chance" and conceded the putt to her American rivals rather than force the rule to be applied.

Immediately, parallels were drawn to what the legendary Jack Nicklaus did in the 1969

Ryder Cup, where he conceded a two-footer to Tony Jacklin, allowing that Ryder Cup to end in a tie.

Pettersen, argued the critics, has made the same impact with her anti-concession.

Only in a sport like golf do you see such expectations of sporting behaviour from players.

Only in a sport like golf do you expect players to call rule infringements on themselves and to behave in an impeccable manner, even while competing for some of sport's greatest trophies and prize money.

Contrast that with a football lout like Chelsea's Diego Costa, who feels no remorse whatsoever in hitting his opponents in the face as long as the referee is not looking.

Contrast that with boxer Mike Tyson, who feels no shame in biting off bits of Evander Holyfield's ear during a clinch.

Contrast that with numerous sprinters who have no qualms about injecting themselves with illegal substances in order to win races, only praying that they don't get caught in the process, or can serve out their bans in time for the next Olympics.

Pettersen's only crime was to apply the rules of the game in a high-stakes encounter. Now she is grovelling in her apology for doing so. I cannot help but feel sorry for her.

She may be forever tainted by a game that is unrelenting in its desire to be a bastion of everything that is good and pure in sports.

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