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Partners

Trevor Immelman

NOTHING BUT BLUE SKIES AHEAD
FOR DETERMINED SOUTH AFRICAN

PGA TOUR INSIDER:
Playoffs Preview

INSTRUCTION:
BOO's Tip—
Keep It Simple

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golfer. Not yet. But he's probably got the best swing, from a purity standpoint." —Gary Player



4 Slightly farther down than the backswing photo, you can see that the planes are identical. It doesn't get much simpler than that. **5** The club is fully released. No holding back here. **6** Balanced finish, a testament to the efficiency that started at address and continued to here. [Kevin Smeltz is a Senior Instructor at the David Leadbetter Golf Academy and a regular instruction contributor to PGA TOUR Partners Magazine.]

He remains the inquisitive kid he's always been. A few months back, Immelman participated in a golf skills event that included New York Yankees pitcher Roger Clemens. Immelman peppered the baseball legend with questions about the mental side of the sport.

"Any time he gets the chance to talk to stars in other sports, he picks their brains about the way they think," Leadbetter said.

Not long ago, people were wondering what Player was thinking when he picked Immelman to play on his 2005 Presidents Cup team. Since Immelman didn't make the team on points, and was one of two captain's picks, Player had some explaining to do, given his familiarity with the Immelman clan. Some wanted the established Australian Steve Elkington on his International roster and screamed that Player had shown favoritism to an old friend and countryman.

"The press crucified me," Player said. "How could I put Trevor Immelman in? They had five Australians on the team as it was, and I picked Immelman.

"Immelman is now becoming one of the best players in the world. But I never heard them say, 'You were right, I apologize.' I was the bum. Now, it's plain they made a terrible mistake and this guy [Trevor] has gone from strength to strength."

That's called vindication, folks.

Player first met Immelman when Trevor was five, and hilarious evidence exists to prove the point. Player, ever serving as the golf ambassador, played in an exhibition 22 years ago at Immelman's home course in Somerset West, a suburb of Cape Town.

Somehow, Immelman ended up in Player's arms and a photo was snapped. It's hard to tell which of the pair is beaming more broadly, especially in Immelman's case, because he hardly had any teeth. Just mentioning the photograph to either player generates grins every time.

In a generational role reversal of sorts, Player has been the grinning angel on Immelman's shoulders ever since.

"Luckily enough for me our paths have crossed many times since then," Trevor said. "He was able to keep an eye on me and give me plenty of advice. Right place, right time. I was very lucky."

Lucky and pretty darned good.

He and Player have something else in common. Because both are small in stature—Immelman stands 5-foot-9—they have become unrelenting exercise fiends.

In February, Immelman released an exercise video with Orlando-based sports trainer David Herman, demonstrating how the pair uses a series of large rubber bands for a unique and effective form of resistance training. Over three years of serious workouts with Herman, Immelman had gone from 155 to 178 pounds, before he contracted a nasty stomach bug at the Masters this spring and lost all the weight. It temporarily slowed his steady career ascent as he tried to recover his equilibrium and strength.

"I'm just going to have to start over again," he said.

He won't have to do much heavy lifting on his game, to be sure.

"He's probably got the best golf swing in the world today," Player said. "I'm not saying he is the best golfer. Not yet. But he's probably got the best golf swing, from a purity standpoint."

The moral to the Immelman story is that it pays to be the tag-along, inquisitive type, even if you are occasionally a pain in the rear to your brother and his friends.

"He still is," older brother Mark laughed.

Steve Elling is the national golf writer for CBS SportsLine.