

The 14th at King's Course

By Nico Earhart

From the tee box, a raised platform of grey basalt and salt-washed grass high above the flowing vegetation of the fairway that stretched away before it, the 14th hole at the King's course played as a lengthy and slender par four that seemed to roll endlessly away to the quaint and bunker-lined green, squatted about four hundred yards below. Thick, green stands of banyan trees lined the small field of yellowy-green and arid grass on either side. Below the spread out arms of the woods were dense and thorn covered collections of shrubs that sent out thin, green tendrils in the constant search for sunlight. The hole, which seemed to flow as one entity from the top of the cliff down below the canopy of trees and into the small crevasse where a stream flowed behind the green, presented a number of different obstacles to be avoided, and precarious locations where one's ball could be lost – there must have been hundreds of them hidden along either side of the grass field, slowly being worn and colored a matted copper tinge by the deep-red volcanic clay of the Hawaiian Islands.

The 14th was also protected by the unceasing hum of the summer trade winds blowing through the sharp, emerald cliffs of the volcano, crossing and turning circles as the wind shuttered through the narrow crags on the hills, flowing towards the sea on the unceasing journey over the Pacific. On some days, the winds blew so circuitously across the gentle slope of the course that even the biggest hitters of a golf ball could not match the constant bellows and the half-gales as they looped out towards the sea. Well-stuck balls would fly headlong into the atmosphere, turning on a slight pitch while the power of the striker still resonated inside of them, before the wind grabbed them and slung them incomprehensively around the wisps of air to haphazard locations scattered about the red mud below the tree line. Assisting in the

confoundedness of this wicked hole, were two pale-brown bunkers scattered on either side of the fairway – cavernous pits that sank in their middle six feet below the deck, who’s granular sand composition made for infuriating hassles.

On this day, however, as the three men lumbered from their carts and bound up the uniformly stone-cut steps that lead to the bleached grass of the teeing ground, the wind had yet to begin its constant, nagging barrage, as thin streams of low-hanging clouds floated deliberately overhead, projecting ambiguous shadows that mutated as they rolled over the landscape. Reaching the small peak of the tee box, perched on the green hill above the canyon below, the three men molded into a small collection, gazing out over the grass and jungle, assessing the challenge that lay before them.

“Well... I tell you what Barry. This is why we keep on coming over to Kauai. For my money it’s the best of all the islands... And I’ll never get tired of playing this course,” said one of the older gentlemen to his partner as they peered down into the belly of the valley below.

Shane still hadn’t picked up the other man’s name yet, though they had played the last five holes together, but he was happy now to be reminded of Barry’s while the three of them stood in close inspection of the hole. Shane, having played the hole hundreds of times, looked out to the white-capped ocean waves as they scattered around the heavy boulders at the shore’s edge.

“So what’s the deal with this one Shane. What’s the plan here? Since you seem to know all the secrets out here. Looks like there’s a couple problems down there if you don’t find the fairway,” the man, whose name Shane still searched for, asked to their newly acquired playing partner.

“Well... Let’s see here. If you don’t find the fairway there’s plenty of trouble down there. Left side’s no good. Tons of trees and bushes and junk down there. Right side’s no good either. Pretty much the same thing as the left. The safe play is to pull a long iron, I guess. Maybe a hybrid. Just try and get it as far down the middle as you can and then play your second as a long approach... Maybe have about two hundred in from there. Unless you think you can pull out the big stick. You hit it just right on this one you can get it down there pretty close to the green; then just a little chip on. Might even be able to drive the green with the wind down like it is today,” Shane reported back to the two vacationers whom he now played with.

“Drive the green?” One of the men asked, looking over the hole in the process. “No way. That seems about impossible from where we’re sitting up here. Not sure about you. You’d have to hit it over four hundred yards, right?”

“I’d say about four fifteen from this tee box to the pin... But it’s mostly downhill. If you can catch a good bounce on the fairway, it’ll run way down there.”

“Seems impossible to me ... But I’d sure like to see you try Shane.”

An hour earlier, Shane had been making his way swiftly through the front nine, hitting some casual shot and playing a number of tee shots into his favorite par threes; pacing his way through the course to try and catch up with the two-some in front of him. He had been resting at his house before the game, sitting around in the Hawaiian sun on his patio, catching up on some reading while the brassy tones of a Jamaican band played monotonously and barely-heard in the background. He hadn’t planned on heading to King’s course that day, but as his phone buzzed its way across the nightstand, moving with vibrations diagonally as each ring edged it a few inches further across the wood surface, he saw that Mark from the pro shop had been the one

who dialed him. Mark, who only called him this time of day when some prospective victims had turned up at the course, had good news for Shane.

“Brah, you gotta get ova to King’s course. We got two old kooks ova here... Spending all kinda money, brah. Flashin’ a big’ol wad around. Guys are just beggin’ to get pinched. Get ova here and take some money from these fools, fast as you can, yea. Fuckeen guy asked me whea I learned to speek English, dat mothafucka. Trust me. I’ll be wort tha trip, brah.” Mark said in a calamitous stream of thought as Shane listened on silently under the draft of his ceiling fan.

“Be right there, buddy. Thanks for the tip.” Shane replied into the phone as he raised from his bed to search for his leather sandals.

As he walked through the shaded corridor of his place, he shouldered his clubs and jumped into his red, mud-spattered pickup. He fired up the engine and made his way out to the organic and rain-smelling Kuhio Highway, away from his apartment and on to the King’s course, which lay on the lush, northern shore of the island. There would be no need to call the course ahead of time to check for availability; the twenty years he had spent playing there was all that was required of him to be able to play any time he liked, usually free of charge depending on who was working at the time.

His raised truck, with its oblong wheels projected from the wells, took the bumps of the curb sturdily and he slid up into the red, muddy track by the side of the main entrance to the King’s Hotel and Golf Resort, passing a long line of ubiquitous rental cars that idled as they waited at the gate. By now, the guard knew Shane’s red truck by heart and flashed him an abrupt *shaka* as he skirted the line on the raised maintenance path adjacent the side street, bounding back onto the road as his oversized tires slid onto the wet asphalt once he cleared the entryway.

This grand avenue would lead him a mile into the compound before he took the unmarked dirt path that lead to the rear of the wooden maintenance shed; a small green hovel that stood well away from the majestic clubhouse. After parking near the dilapidated shed and lifting his clubs from the open bed of the pickup, throwing on a light blue collared shirt as he made his way from the maintenance shed and through the parking lot, he lifted the phone from his pocket. He scrolled through to the phonebook searching for Mark's number, but, as he leapt up the sun-beaten steps that lead to the rear entrance of the club house, Mark had seen him and was already making his way out the door to greet him.

The specific details had been relayed to him as he made his way through the shop and passed a man at the desk, giving him a curtly-flashed smile and greeting as he wound past the desk, asking which of the carts he should take. The two men Shane would be looking for on the course had been profoundly obnoxious in the clubhouse, according to Mark. Buying large amounts of merchandise and rifraff and paying with bills produced from a plump money clip one of the men had displayed with an unhealthy sense of pride. Hustling the customers was never good for business out here, but he knew a direct call from Mark must have meant the targets were both deserving of the scam, and that the powers-at-be had given him the go-ahead to put these two in his crosshairs. This was beyond a legitimate establishment and one of the best courses on the golf-rich island, but somehow, the rules that applied to daily Hawaiian life still reverberated in this vacationer's mecca: respect for the locals was a way of life on Kauai.

Having been informed of the pair's starting time, Shane figured that they would be pushing up the hill to the top of the 7th hole by now. If he hurried, he might be able to catch them before they made the turn. Pushing past the first three holes without hitting a shot, he

scooted past a few sparsely-scattered groups of Japanese tourists and a deeply sunburnt crew of oversized men who wore the matching orange shirts and weathered, old hats of the Texas Longhorns. Swinging past the 6th, a par three that played over a sharp draw in the volcanic rock with a muddy creek flowing through its center, he threw a dirty and weathered ball onto the box and took up his eight iron for his first warm-up shot. Swinging his beautiful swing, with its smooth and mechanical action, Shane sent a ball cutting through the light flow of wind, dropping the red-stained ball to within twenty feet of the pin – The ball was still on the green as Shane's cart skidded around a winding curve that lead up through head high trees and to the next tee.

Walking casually from his cart to raised mound of the box, Shane could see the two men as they wandered along lazily in the fairway below him, searching for their drives that must have been scattered around the vividly green grass – these were the two he had set out to find when he had received the call from Mark that morning. He gazed upon the two men inconspicuously from his hidden vantage point, their salt and pepper hair falling like waterfalls from the brims of their sharp white caps, and watched as the two hit their approach shots into the green. Neither of the two balls landed near the pin, which had been placed behind a sweeping and dirty-white bunker that guarded the right, front half of the green. Judging by the two meager shots the pair had hit Shane knew that to get these two men into a bet, the game couldn't be straight up – he would have to golf poorly to the best of his abilities if he was going to plant a seed in their minds that they had a chance. A bet would never be accorded on once the pair had seen Shane hit a few shots, even his best impression of poor shots. The trick was to find a way to get them into a bet that Shane knew he could win, and one that would mask the obvious fact that the pair had been hustled. He pulled a thick, folded sheet of paper from his back pocket and glanced down at the scorecard, even though he had already memorized the distances from each set of tees on every

hole during the thousands of rounds he had played on the course, and inspected the upcoming set of holes, trying to imagine which of them would be best to work his magic. His stare locked upon the yardage of the 14th hole as he moved down the list. Plucking a few lonely shoots of grass from the ground, he threw them into the air and watched as they individually separated, rotating and swaying with the soft breeze that spilled down from the verdant hills above him.

“Perfect,” Shane whispered to himself as he pulled a reflective, unblemished ball from his shorts and tucked in his off-white and dimly red-stained collared shirt.

He had tugged his drive a little off the box, fading it a shade to the left side of the fairway as it turned over in the light, right-to-left wind, but still hit it long enough so that it rolled to within twenty yards of the back of the cart the two men had parked near the green. The pair had not yet seen his ball as he made his way up from the back of the hole, and he feared that he might have wasted the lengthy drive, when he saw one of the men flash a quick, pointed finger towards his ball as they walked laboriously and damp, back to their carts. The taller of the two men shook his head, his cap rocking back and forth above his face and the mess of white hair, as they uttered a few unheard words between them and then glanced up to the approaching cart that conveyed Shane towards the green.

“Hell of a shot from up there,” the taller of the two men called out to Shane as he drove up the slope that lead to the green.

“Yea, thanks… Sorry about that. I didn’t think I’d get it this close from the where I was playing.” Shane, greeting the two men for the first time, spoke to the pair.

“Not a problem. Like I said, that’s one hell of a shot.” He replied to Shane.

The three of them had stood on the green as Shane played his short approach shot; a chip that Shane had purposefully skulled and let roll past the hole about fifteen feet. One of the older men had asked Shane if he wanted to play through the pair, and continue his rapid pace, but Shane said he was in no hurry, and that if the two gentlemen didn't mind, he might just play the back nine with them. The proposition, of course, was not a problem. The two had seen the drive Shane had hit, and they were content to watch somebody who knew what he was doing around this demanding course that made most golfers shake with nervousness.

The next six holes had been a clinic in deception put on by Shane. He would have to continue to belt his drives, as the two men had witnessed his power, but the skulled chip shot was the first of many deliberately poor shots he had to hit to suck the two of them into a bet. His aiming points had changed – he was no longer attacking the flags like he was accustomed to doing and had learned in tournament play, opting instead to aim for bunkers or to patches of grass that had stood out behind the greens that would put him out of position or leave him high-sided. The ruse was so well-played that the two men had even started to make offhand comments at Shane's play. Getting these two men into a bet with him however, would take patience and knowledge of the course; both of which Shane had in spades.

By the time the threesome had made their way to the 14th, the gears had already been set in motion, and he had come up with a plan he thought would be the perfect bait to draw in his prey on the difficultly set up hole.

“Well, I guess if you'd like to see me try... I'm going to have to go ahead and give it a shot,” Shane said to the pair as he sunk his tee into the pungent earth and took a few deliberate

practice swings with his driver. “But if you really don’t think I can drive the green on this hole, why don’t we go ahead and make it a little interesting.” He concluded, preparing to spring the trap.

“What’s your definition of making it interesting, Shane?” The quieter of the two men spoke as he took a few steps and turned to look over the shot.

“Let’s see... I think I’ve got a few bucks over there in my golf bag. We could always place a little wager down... Make it *really* interesting.” Shane, still looking out over the canyon of the 14th hole and avoiding eye-contact, suggested to the pair. He knew he had to draw them in slowly to the bet, not wanting to seem too eager or insistent on going for the big money right out of the gate for fear that it would scare them off. They had to believe they had a chance to prevail.

“How much money do you have in your golf bag there, Shane?” The bigger and more boisterous of the two men finally said as he took the conversation over from his hushed partner.

“I’d say I might have about eighty bucks in there right now,” Shane lied, as he knew he had only the remanence of forty dollars from a previous match he had won a few days earlier on the Eastside, “maybe a little less than that.” Golf was now his primary mean of financial gain.

“Eighty bucks... I wipe my ass with eighty bucks. I thought you said we were going to make this interesting.” The man replied to Shane’s proposal.

“We could always do some sort of odds on it if you really want to get crazy. Now, for me, if I walk away today without that eighty, I’m going to be a lot worse for the wear than you are. But if that’s not really going to get your blood flowing, we could always do something like... five to one? ... That might make it a little more worth your while,” trying to sound less enthusiastic about the prospect of a sumptuous payout than he really was.

The man who had taken over the conversation from his unobtrusive partner, stood a minute in the near-silence of the breeze whispering over the tee box, scraping the small section of his head that was accessible through the open crescent at the rear of his cap, and finally eased a foot forward as he looked to the other men, his thought now complete.

“You say you’ve got eighty total in there, Shane?” The man asked, gazing out to the sea and never turning to Shane to see if the question had been heard.

“How’s about you take out fifty of it out and throw it underneath that rock over there,” he pointed to the stained-white volcanic rock that marked the tee box in front of the group.

“Now, I’ll give you ten-to-one odds on that fifty, meaning if you get it up there on the green, which I’m thinking you won’t, you’ll be walking away with five of my crisp, hundred dollar bills.” The man stated his proposition and then waited in the dead silence.

Shane had to hide his astonishment for a brief moment, knowing that if he took the bet too eagerly, the man might shy away before he could hit the shot. But he knew that he could make that shot, as he had done many times before.

“What’s the catch?” He asked the man, showing a degree of trepidation that, if executed correctly, would fill this visitor with confidence and draw him in deeper.

“No catch… Just need to get it onto the green’s all,” the man concluded.

Looking out to the sea and seeing the effusive waves spilling away from the black volcanic coastline, Shane stood in a moment of supposed thought, even though he had known he would take the bet the second the man, whose name he still couldn’t remember, had proposed it. He took a quick step back from the ball, swung his driver a few more times around his body, feeling it turn slightly in the wind as he moved through the imagined impact zone, and hit the head of the driver squarely onto the deck with a thud the called out from the mud and grass.

“Ok... You’ve got yourself a deal,” Shane finally said to the man after his moment of disguised thought.

The pair clasped hands in a quick and nervous handshake where the eyes locked for only a brief moment. Shane, now moving back from his ball a few steps to get a clear view of what the shot would entail, filled his lungs with a quick but deep breath then let out a hushed exhalation that sapped the air clean from his lungs. Taking his stance over the ball, a few quickly shot glances and robotic turns of his head towards green as he prepared, Shane stood motionless. He had reached the moment in his swing before any movement was made. Holding dead still, and getting ready to transfer the weight from the even distribution it was in now, to the very subtle backward weight shift to his right foot that marked the start of his angular swing, he let out one last small puff of air.

“*Good aftanoon Gentlemens!!*” The voice from behind the green cut the silence sharply as the baritone din echoed off the pockmarked rocks and was then swept away by the offshore wind.

“*Coud I intris any of yous en da purchass of some gof balls dis aftanoon?*”

Shane recognized the deep and booming voice as soon as he heard it to be Eddie, a true Hawaiian of immense proportion and one of the veteran greenkeepers, who he had seen bumbling around a few holes before the group joined up in shaded and unseen pockets along the fairways. He disengaged from the swing, raised his eyes up to the volcano, which shot into the sky in front of him, and turned to face the impressionable and leather-skinned man. Eddie, who had inevitably been watching the group from afar, knew the hand shake between the pair must have meant there was the possibility of currency being exchanged, and he wanted to be part of it.

It was fine with Eddie if Shane came out here to rip these two men off, but if there was to be some sort of bet, Eddie wanted his cut. This was the real reason behind the silence-breaking interruption.

“Do you mind, Sir?” The man with whom Shane had made the bet said as he spun around in a quick circle to see what had made the calamity behind him, “we’re trying to play some golf here.”

Before Eddie had a chance to respond to the character, who was now visibly upset with the uncouthly interruption, Shane had taken a few steps towards the burly, unkempt green maintenance cart that Eddie used to tour the course, knowing he would have to intercept Eddie before he got any closer. Having known most of Shane’s secrets – about his days of high school prominence as a junior golfer and his success at the division-two school where he played in California – Eddie was potentially devastating to the wager. If these two men found out that Shane had won the California State High School championship, they would certainly smell a rat. Things could get ugly fast, if he had to clarify the omission of his noteworthy golfing background to the two men who could otherwise potentially owe him a lot of money in a moment. He had to address this disruption as soon as possible and steer Eddie clear of the scene.

“Do you guys mind, actually, if I take a look at what he’s got?” Shane quipped to the two-some. “Balls are so damn expensive over here... I might as well fill up while he’s here,” Shane explained to the men as he slithered down the rock steps, head sunken below the shoulders, towards Eddie’s cart.

“Unbelievable...” One of them said in a whisper. Shane walked towards where the beastly-large man had pulled his cart into the shade of a palm.

“Step into my office, ser,” his voice boomed again to Shane as he neared the hardy looking vehicle.

The two walked over to the shaded hallow cut between the short palms, turning their backs to the men as they neared the bed of the cart with sharp, protruding metal equipment sticking out of the back, and spoke in a hushed whisper.

“Eddie... What the fuck are you doing to me, man? I had these fucking chumps on the line are you’re fucking it up. You trying to blow this for me or what?”

“Oh, *Shane-boy, you adorable, brah.*” Eddie said. “*You got des too chumps on da line an you ain’t going to cut in ol’ Uncle Eddie? Who you tink you are tryna screw, brah, me o des two haoles? You gone lost yo mine.*”

“No way Eddie. I had these kooks fair and square man. You’re making them nervous with your fucking interruption, man.”

“*So sorry brah, but as long as you out hea hustlin’ you kno you need to consult da boss firs. How much you got dese two in fo anyhow?*” Eddie asked Shane.

“I had them squared up for a good payoff until your fat ass came around.”

“*Now be nice, brah. How much?*”

“Two hundred if I hit this shot,” Shane lied to Eddie.

Eddie let out a quiet, but audible laugh, stirring around in the bed of the cart a little more to make it look as though he was still searching for a certain type of ball.

“*My ass, brah. I sees des guys earlia. I know you ain’t out here bustin yo butt up da course for no measly two hundred.*”

“Well I can explain the math to you if you want but I don’t think it’ll do much. I put down a twenty, and homeboy over here gave me ten-to-one that I can’t drive the green from the

whites. So he's a sitting duck... But you're scaring him, brah," Shane explained to Eddie, although the math would be something Eddie would need a calculator to work out.

"Ok, brah. Two hundred you say? Well... How's bout we split dat down the middle and call it even, brah. Dat way I won't have to tell these fools you playa mean game in high school and college – Cali State Champ, right? Best golfa dis side da island."

"Down the middle, Eddie, are you out of your fucking mind? I need that shit man. How am I going to pay rent if you take half my loot every time I come out here to do work?" Shane, pleading now, still talking in his hushed voice but trying to move the conversation away from the dollar amount had lie to Eddie about.

"Brah, yo don like it, you can take yo ass back to Wailua where you got to tryan beat people who can actually play."

"Ok, Fine. How about eighty? That's fair man. I'll only get one-twenty then, and I'll be the one who's doing all the work."

"Brah, I seen you hit dis green a hundred times. Ain't no work fo you, brah. You tryna take food off my plate?"

"I fucking doubt it."

There was a brief impasse between the men, both of them gazing through the dark lenses of their sunglasses before Eddie finally stepped back, peering at the two other men through his concealed peripheral vision. He knew he had to wrap this deal up soon, or there'd be no money for either of them to split.

"Ok, brah. You gotta deal. Eighty bucks. Just drop it off at da shed befo you take off."

"What if I don't make the shot?"

Eddie had already started to rummage around in the cart before answering Shane's question with a low laugh that soaked out from the sides of his oversized face, taking a few of the beat up golf balls from the bed and placing them into a fresh cardboard box. He handed the box over to Shane, flashing him and his playing partners a plate-sized smile in the process as he grabbed the bills that Shane had since taken out from his pocket.

“Sorry to have disturbed yous gentlemens on dis fine aftanoon. Enjoy the rest of your round... And hit em straight, yea.” Eddie began again in his soprano voice that cut through the wind, effortlessly. *“Hit em straight brah.”*

Having finished his business with the rotund maintenance man, Shane walked slowly away from his cart as he peeled down the hill heading towards the green of the 14th hole, possibly looking for another inconspicuous location to watch Shane work his magic. He placed the small, cardboard box full of marginal balls back into the front pocket of his golf bag, trying not to arise any suspicion from the two men who were now, potentially, locked in to the gamble with him.

“Sorry about that guys. It's just that golf balls over here are so bloody expensive that it's usually a good idea to load up on some cheap ones whenever I can,” Shane declared to the white haired men as he bounded is way back up the flat slate steps that lead back to the bleached grass of the tee box. He knew he had been faintly discreet with his dealing with Eddie, and the men couldn't have been any wiser after the two-minute conversation he had with the mocha-skinned man behind the obfuscated black-rimmed sunglasses. They couldn't have known the duplicitous nature of the conversation.

“Well... Where were we?” Shane, posing the question to the men, but knowing exactly where he stood and what was at stake with the next shot.

“You were about to try and drive the green... And then you were going to miss it and give me all the money that you had in your wallet,” the old man said with a slight chuckle to cover up the serious nature of his comment.

“Ah, that’s right. I was about to hit this shot.” Shane replied.

Sauntering back up to the front of the tee box, he found his ball still resting, perched on the white stick he had balanced it on a few minutes before. He raised up the ball again, finding the grey mid-line on the ball in his hand and re-centered the line again with the same tall palm he had lined it up with the first time. While still crouched over he plucked a few thin strands of grass from the shortly-mowed surface, and with a slight rotation of his wrists, tossed the cluster into the air and watched as it fell, some of the blades spinning as they fell, in a loose pattern of right-to-left that pushed the grass about a foot from where he had dropped them above his head. He studied the patter of grass and where it had fallen, the smaller shoots landing directly around his feet and the specs, being carried further on the breeze, slightly more to the left of where he stood.

Taking his stance, and in the process forming an obtuse triangle that at its base, pointed dead-on to the high palm he had aimed at many times before, he held the face of the driver a microscopic distance from the backside of the ball. He took his routinely mechanical looks to the tree and back to the ball, always making sure he was still on his intended line and making miniature adjustments as he felt the wind speed and slow, through the strands of hair that protruded from the bill of his cap. He had a waggle, one that broke his wrists only slightly, as he took the club back a foot or so and then raced it forward again so that it came to a stop just above

where the ball remained stationary. Then came the frozen moment, when he stood in a total, stationary trance, closing his eyes for a moment as he took a in his last short, cutting breath before making his first movement of the shot; pulling the back of the driver back and to the right as his weight started to rotate to his back foot and his front knee took an elastic bend toward his rear leg. His forward arm, still locked in a statuesquely straight line, began to first pull behind his body, then up and then around so that it came to a momentary pause, still arrow-straight, just below the underside of his stubbled chin. The body then began to spring back around, back towards the green, slowly activating his entire rotation as the waist came around, followed by his front leg with the arms following closely behind in a tornado of motion and weight shift. The driver, now following the tilt of his body, followed a half-millisecond behind, a discreet bend in the shaft as the momentum flowed through his arms and into his hands and up through the cylindrical section and then through the head of the club. His left arm still concrete. It made the long draw around his body and gained speed as its face began to come into alignment with the ball, squaring up perfectly only a few inches behind the ball and releasing all of the stored energy he had created on the tiny, white object.

The sound when he hit the ball was like a railroad spike landing square on an iron anvil, the metallic tinge of the sounds cutting out and away from where the ball had been hit and bouncing of the trees and scrubs near the tee box. The contact had been good and he had seen the ball hit, keeping his head squared to the deck momentarily, until his head flowed through the swing, following the rest of his spinning body.

As the ball moved away from the raised tee box, the hissing sound had been sudden, and then faded away again as the cutting air was pushed aside from the ball as it moved away and up above the cut in the earth that formed the valley of the hole. Looking up into the sky and

following the path of the ball, Shane could see that it was a degree or two to the right of where he had intended the shot to go, but it was still rising into the air and hadn't yet moved above the tree line where the air could push it back to the left. Then the ball caught the gust and shifted on its path before it moved back towards the line he had taken on the flopping fronds of the palm that shot out from the vegetation across the rocky draw behind the green. The wind would push the ball as it rose in the air, first sluggishly coaxing the ball but then taking full effect as the energy Shane had put into the ball began to subside. It dropped from its upward trajectory and began its slow fall back to the earth, though still moving on the wind as it fell.

When the ball finally sank below the tree line, it took a bounding hop to the left, hitting just beyond the right-hand fairway bunker that Shane knew he had to clear in order to have any chance of rolling the ball through the little valley that lead to the green, and took a number of lengthy bounces the lead it between the earthen mounds that acted like a large funnel. The energy was still in the ball and the jumps it took were perfect, rolling along the smooth grass and coming to a steadfast roll once it had stopped with the bounces. It spilled like a waterfall through the last narrow depression, past the wide greenside bunkers that marked the last obstacle of the journey and across the skirt. The ball rolled like a putt now. Ending the long right-to-left action it had taken to make it onto the green, the white orb began to move back to the right on the flat surface of the green now, finally slowing enough to maintain a steady roll. As Shane and the two men watched from their perched observatory above the hole, the ball slowed to its last crawl, moving now hard to the right as it followed the slope of the green towards the valley behind it, coming to an abrupt stop on the putting surface about twenty feet from the pin that had been placed at the rear of the green.