

# With Goalby as Mentor, He Just Haas to be Good

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It shouldn't be too surprising that Jay Haas won the recent Toshiba Classic in record-setting fashion. Or that he was the 2006 Champions Tour Player of the Year and topped the money list. After all, he's had veteran professional Bob Goalby to lean on as his uncle, teacher, and mentor. Haas told me that Goalby was his "greatest influence in golf and my biggest supporter."

For those who don't know golf or are too young to remember, Goalby won the 1968 Masters Tournament and ten other PGA tournaments, along with two Senior PGA titles. He played primarily during the Nicklaus-Palmer era, but also during the fifties with many of the greatest players in the game.

Goalby began teaching his nephew at age six and, when older, took him on tour with him so he'd be exposed to the best players. Goalby would point out the physical and mental attributes of various pros, encouraging Haas to imitate the best qualities that he observed. "For example, he'd tell me to watch Gene Littler's tempo and focus on the mental strengths of Nicklaus and how he managed his game."

Goalby, who just turned 78, continues to support Haas. Driving up from his home in Palm Desert, where he spends the winter, he walked every hole of the weekend, watching his nephew win the title. Recognizing him in the gallery, I introduced myself as a columnist. He was kind enough to allow me to interview him as we walked. I told him, as a kid, I remembered attending the L.A. Open at Rancho Park in 1961 that he won. It was a memorable tournament because it marked Jack Nicklaus's professional debut, in which he won \$33 for finishing last. And because Arnold Palmer made a 12 after slicing two balls out of bounds.

When I asked who he thought was the best player he ever saw, Goalby answered with no hesitation. "Snead was the best of his era and over the longest time. He won in six decades. He won more tournaments than anyone. He only played one British Open and won it. Imagine how many victories he might have had if he played it every year, like Nicklaus and Palmer did. When Snead won, travel was too difficult to make it worth the trip. It took three weeks from your schedule. When they asked Snead if he would be returning to defend his title, he said, 'Are you crazy? It cost me \$3,000 to make the trip and I'm paid only \$600 for winning!'" Jay Haas told me he got to play with Snead about 25 times as a result of Goalby's relationship with him.

On the difference between the Snead-Hogan era versus the Nicklaus-Palmer era, Goalby said, "Nicklaus played on modern courses designed with bigger greens. He was a great putter-he didn't need to put all his iron shots close because he knew he would make his share of putts."

Far from the travel convenience of today's private jets and luxury accommodations, playing the tour was a grind back then. "We doubled up in cheap motels, ate cheap food, and drove from one tournament to another. Who knows how well we would have played if we had the fancy life the pros have today with their own jets?"