

Why George Lopez is Great for Golf

Written by Nichole Brophy

There are few Hollywood types as gracious as one Mr. George Lopez. The extremely successful actor/comedian/all around genuine creature touched down in Phoenix this week for the Waste Management Phoenix Open.



Lopez has become a tournament staple since he first stepped onto the fairways of TPC Scottsdale for the event four years ago. After following him during the FBR/Xerox Pro-Am on Wednesday (for the second year in a row), it became clear that Lopez's involvement in the game stretches far beyond mere admiration of the sport.

"I'm only here to say yes, I'm not here to say no," Lopez said Wednesday as a member of security following his foursome approached to speed play along. Granted the other members of his foursome had all hit their shots into the fairway and were waiting on Lopez, but an onslaught of autograph requests had slowed the TV star down. After taking a few more moments to indulge the crowd, he walked up to the tee with his signature swagger. Fully aware of the tee situation, he sarcastically questioned, "Did everybody already hit?" Cue gallery laughter.

Golfers need to laugh more. Especially considering the drama-ridden headlines that have encircled the sport these last few months, Lopez reminds golfers and fans that the sport shouldn't be taken so darn seriously.

Walking outside the ropes with the general public on Wednesday, I've never seen such a smiley gallery. Kids and adults alike grinned from ear to ear as Lopez ran through the famed 16th hole Nacho Libre-style and attacked a member of his security team (mask over the face and all). I was most impressed when former MLB player Mark Grace pitched golf balls to the Lopez Tonight host, who hit it a few yards short of the green with a baseball bat. Actor Andy Garcia wasn't so successful.

On No.18, something so simple as standing on a tee-side boulder with his arms raised in a 'Come my people' fashion made the crowd roar with laughter and Lopez didn't even utter a word. On the golf course, surrounded by fans, Lopez is in his element. You can just tell by the smile on his face that he is loving life, golf and all the success his career has brought him. His joy is infectious.

Over the course of the day, I never once saw Lopez turn down a request for an autograph or photo, in fact, I snapped a picture with him myself. In a sport where all fans want is a sense of connectivity to what is going on inside the ropes, Lopez makes an effort to go outside the ropes and bring people in.