



When the Goose Got Cooked

Did a bolt from the blue make the defending champ eerily calm?

BY TARA GRAVEL

Retief Goosen can light up a scoreboard with birdies, but he's not known for brightening a room with his electric personality. "He keeps himself to himself," says fellow international star Lee Westwood. Goosen's mother thinks a near-fatal lightning strike when he was 17 is responsible for his reserve. "Retief was lying naked and unconscious on the fairway," said Annetjie Goosen. "His clothes were burned off his body... He suffered a burst eardrum." He was rushed to the hospital, where he spent six days. "He emerged a much humbler and quieter person," Annetjie said.

Goosen says just the opposite. "I was just lucky to survive. Maybe it's done me some good. I am playing pretty good golf—it got me going a little bit, added energy."

Which Goosen knows best? "After a person is hit by lightning, the brain is like a computer that's had a high-voltage

shock," says Mary Ann Cooper, M.D., a lightning-injury researcher at the University of Illinois. "It looks fine inside; the cables aren't melted and the board isn't fried. It's

1 in 3,000: Odds of being struck by lightning in a lifetime

the same with the brain. When you do a CAT scan or an MRI it looks okay. But when you boot up the computer, the files don't come up or they don't interact correctly."

Depending on the severity of the injury, lightning-strike survivors often have to relearn—and think about—daily skills, from tying shoelaces to walking. They can also find it difficult to focus on more than one thing at a time. That's been the case for Michael Utley, a former stockbroker who became a lightning-safety advocate after being struck during a 2000 charity golf tournament. "Victims shun crowds or people because too much input is overwhelming," Utley says. "For Retief, if he's with a bunch of reporters asking questions, and he can't multitask, that's going to affect how he interacts."

But could it have helped him in the pressure cooker of the U.S. Open, where absolute focus is a coveted skill?

"He could have turned the negative into a positive and improved his focus," Utley says. "The blind man learns to smell very well. The mind is a powerful thing."

LIGHTNING BOLTS The shocking truth



- Are approximately the size of a quarter in diameter
- Last about a quarter of a second
- Strike the earth 50 to 100 times per second at any given moment
- Contain somewhere in the neighborhood of 100 million electrical volts
- Can be five miles long from base to tip
- Are much hotter (50,000° F) than the surface of the sun (about 10,000° F)
- Kill approximately 54 people annually in the U.S.
- Kill more people in Florida each year (nine on average) than in any other state



100 Years Ago in the U.S. Open

DATE: September 22, 1905 **SITE:** Myopia Hunt Club, South Hamilton, MA **STORYLINE:** Willie Anderson Wins Third in a Row

Scotsman Willie Anderson arrived at Myopia having won three of the previous four U.S. Opens. He left as the only man in history to win three in a row.

On the first of two 36 hole days, Anderson's inauspicious 80-81 start left him five strokes off the pace. Myopia was known as

one the hardest courses of the time—Anderson also won there in 1901, and did not break 81 in doing so. But in 1905 a deeper field of players, including 36-hole co-leader Alex Smith, meant he would have to go lower in order to win.

Showing the confidence of a champion,

Anderson closed the gap, trailing Smith by just one stroke after a third-round 76. He finished with 77, winning by two. It was Anderson's last moment in the spotlight. He never contended in another Open, and died in 1910 at age 32. The record threepeat has never been seriously threatened.