

Par for the Course Not Good Enough!

Last week Geno Bonnalie proved that he's a heck of a good golfer, one tough warrior and a world-class inspiration.

Playing an amazing 2,000 holes of golf in one week – 16 rounds a day – Geno shattered the previous Guinness World Record by more than 150 holes, at Lewiston Golf and Country Club in Idaho.

By day's end on Sunday, Geno looked like an emotionally and physically battered soldier who was returning home from a long, hard battle. With a crowd cheering him on as he finished his final round, Geno was in obvious pain. His right knee was stiff, his hands were blistered and his normally slender body looked gaunt.

Two More Records and a Few Near Misses

In addition to the 2,000 holes he played, Geno smashed two other records: Most Birdies in One Week at 491 (previously 250) and Most Birdies in 12 Hours at 67. If that wasn't enough, Geno also had seven eagles and a few holes-in-one that just barely failed to drop.

"It is really cool to say that I've played more holes in a week than anybody else on the planet – and made more birdies than anyone else on the planet, by a long ways," Bonnalie said.

His Most Important Number: \$15,000 to Help Save a Life

But even with all of the record-breaking numbers floating around perhaps the most important one was the \$15,000 Geno raised for Tina's Hope for a Cure, an affiliate organization of the Cystinosis Research Foundation.

Geno's numbers are staggering by any measure, but they pale when compared to those of his 7-year-old cousin, Tina Flerchinger, who was diagnosed with cystinosis when she was 17 months old.

A Tough Young Warrior

Tina may be young, but she's no less a warrior, albeit an unexpected one. Since her treatment began 5-1/2 years ago, Tina has taken 50,000 pills and 46,000 syringes of liquid meds as she bravely battles the rare, genetic disease that is destroying every organ in her frail body. Unfortunately, unlike Geno's quest, Tina's battle goes on 24/7, 365 days a year until a cure is found for cystinosis.

Remembering his courageous young cousin, Bonnalie never considered quitting, but he admitted that "mornings were the hardest." He would drag himself out of bed at 4 am, playing from 5 am until about 10 pm.

While Geno is the man who holds the new world records, he needed some help. "The maintenance staff and the pro shop, I can't thank them enough," he said.

"And all the members out here let me play through – I didn't wait a single time all week long. The second they would see me, they would pick up their clubs and run out of the way."

His wife, Holly reports that when he woke up Monday morning, Geno was upset. When she asked why, he said, "Because I gave up too quickly."

To Tina, we offer our thoughts and prayers, and to Geno, congratulations. In striking a blow – actually thousands of blows – to further the quest for a cure for cystinosis you have shown us that one person can make a difference. And you have inspired us to look for ways in which each of us can make a contribution.

