

Play It Where It Lies

By LCdr. Norm Presecan,
VAW-116

I was a salty fleet replacement squadron (FRS) instructor on a three-week field carrier landing practice (FCLP) detachment for fledgling E-2 and C-2 pilots. My role was straightforward: assistant OinC for the detachment and functional check flight naval flight officer (FCF NFO). Fortunately, no FCFs were required, because I managed to take myself out of the flying game after the first week.

One of the benefits of NAS Pensacola is a great golf course. An avid (though not terribly good) golfer, I took advantage of the down time to duff around a little. We'd set up an informal tournament on Friday afternoon before our mid-detachment dinner at McGuire's Irish Pub (another benefit of Pensacola). As anyone who has played in Pensacola knows, you have to contend with a lot of roots if a wayward shot finds the trees. Not surprisingly, I spent some time under the trees on this round, but I was shooting reasonably well, and the day was gorgeous. I also was starting to feel a little cocky.

On the 16th hole, my ball ended up nuzzled up to one of those roots I mentioned earlier. While considering how to play my next shot, I thought about moving the ball a little to prevent damaging my club on the root. Because I only was going to chop the ball out to the fairway (I had no shot to the green), and I was using my old clubs, I decided to play the ball as it lay. "Very honorable," I thought—but "very stupid," I soon realized.

My light chop resulted in the ball shooting straight up—into my left eye. "Boy did that hurt!" I thought. Then I realized I couldn't see anything out of that eye—just blackness. I also realized that a significant amount of blood was streaming down my face. Fortunately, my playing partners arrived on the scene and drove me back to the clubhouse. I kept direct pressure on my eye socket, and the vision slowly came back. The ambulance eventually arrived and drove me to the emergency room at Pensacola Naval Hospital for stitches and some painkiller. The ball had hit just above my left eye and produced a one-inch-long cut along the eyebrow.

Proper application of off-duty risk management could have kept me out of trouble. Although I correctly



identified the hazard to my golf club (it might get damaged by the root), I didn't identify the hazard to my eyeball. Because of my run-in with the root, I today am particularly careful to identify all potential hazards of my golf shots, e.g., unintended caroms, loose debris, tree limbs, and other golfers. It hasn't improved my game much, but I haven't had to make any more trips to the ER, either. ■

Resources:

- <http://golf.about.com/od/fitnesshealth/a/safetyguideline.htm> [*Simple Safety Guidelines for Golfers*]
- [www.smartplay.com.au/vic/DocLib/Pub/DocLibDownload.asp?lngDocLibID=16&FileName=Fact+Sheet+Golf\(new\).pdf](http://www.smartplay.com.au/vic/DocLib/Pub/DocLibDownload.asp?lngDocLibID=16&FileName=Fact+Sheet+Golf(new).pdf) [*Preventing Golf Injuries*].