

A memorable Easter Sunday

I had won the US Masters in 1985. I suppose I expected it to be easy to win more majors. I had come close to adding other major titles, notably the Open Championship, on two or three occasions. I had succumbed to the yips in 1988 and had beaten them again. By the early 1990s I was more determined than ever to win another major.

My performances in the Masters had been solid. I had made the cut every year since 1984 and had had three top-ten finishes. My best chance to win had been in 1987, when I had been one off the lead with nine holes to play but had then dropped shots in four of six holes to finish forty for the back nine. That was the year Larry Mize beat Greg Norman and Seve in the play-off by holing a chip from thirty yards.

In 1993 I made a solid start, playing well in the opening two rounds for sixty-eight and seventy. So, at the halfway stage, I was tied with Don Forsman. I had an excellent round of sixty-nine on the Saturday in windy conditions and that gave me a four-shot lead going into the final round. I had never been in that position in a major before.

Four shots seems a lot but in a round at Augusta, anything is possible – especially when you are playing against the best players in the world. I couldn't help remembering that in 1985, Curtis Strange was four shots ahead of me with nine to play. If I could make up four shots on nine holes, I could also lose four shots. The tournament was far from over and I could not afford to be complacent. There is no guarantee in golf.

I knew that I had the best chance to win but I was still a little nervous. I played pretty solid on the first nine holes, which I always find harder than the back nine with fewer birdie opportunities. I was level at the turn, but the problem was that everyone else was playing better. My four-shot lead had slipped to one by the eleventh. Chip Beck, who was my playing partner, and Dan Forsman, who was a hole ahead, were my two closest rivals. As Chip had won the par-three competition, tradition was against him winning the tournament – but as I've mentioned, I don't believe in superstitions like that!

The eleventh green is just by the twelfth tee – the par-three. I was on the edge of the green, waiting for Forsman to tee off before I played. He put his tee shot in the water, and he put his next shot in the water as well. I knew he was then out of contention. I all but holed my chip and made par.

That meant that it was effectively down to Chip Beck and me. As we were playing together, it was like matchplay. The thirteenth was a big hole. In 1993 it was 465 yards but the green is protected by water. I outdrove Chip, taking a tight line down the left. He put his second on the green to set up an eagle opportunity. I had to go for the green with a three iron of a sidehill lie and over water. I made it! He made birdie but I holed the eagle putt to increase my lead to two shots. It was a big putt with about three inches of break.

That shows how tight it is and how small the margins are between success and failure.

When Chip's ball was already on the green and I was hitting my second, I could have missed the green, and gone in the water or one of the many bunkers, and only par or even bogey or double. Instead I made eagle and gained a shot.

It is a good example of how Augusta has changed over the years. In 1993 the thirteenth was 465 yards. Now it is 510 yards. Again the fourteenth, which that year was 405 yards is now 440 yards. On the fourteenth we were both on the green in two and made par. I all but holed the birdie putt.

On the 500-yard fifteenth, another hole with water, I decided to lay up with my second shot. There was no reason for me to take a risk with the water as I needed only to match Chip in the closing holes. After I played he seemed to take an age to decide what to do. Peter and I said to each other, 'Surely he has got to go for it if he's going to try to win the tournament?' But he decided to lay up. My pitch was close to the flag but he was through the back. I holed the birdie putt but Chip had to settle for a par. So it was pretty much over, with a three-shot lead and three holes to play.

People ask me, on a hole like the fifteenth at Augusta, how I decide whether or not to go for the green in two. That is a good example. The first factor is that you must be close enough and have a good enough lie to be able to reach the green. The second factor is the state of the game. If I had been in Chip's position, I would almost certainly have gone for the green to try to make eagle and to put me under pressure. By laying up he made it easier for me.

It was such a nice feeling, playing the last two holes with the cushion of a five-stroke lead, not having to worry about how to play those holes. I knew that if I kept the ball in play, I would win.

The sixteenth is the par-three with water all down the left. I played safe and landed in the middle of the green. It left me with a long downhill putt with a lot of swing. I hit it about three feet past and holed for par.

The seventeenth is 400 yards. My drive was good but I hit a poor approach shot, missing the green on the right. However, I saved par with a chip and a putt. On the eighteenth, I hit my second into a greenside bunker. I played a safe bunker shot and took two putts. The round started and ended with bogey but in between I had done enough to secure the win.

I was fairly calm all week. I had the confidence to believe that I would play well and possibly win. I was aware of friends praying for me. Two people rang me to say that while they were praying for me they had had a sense that I was going to win. My mother had had the same feeling. All these people saying that gave me real confidence that it could happen.

The 1993 Masters finished on Easter Sunday. As usual I was taken into the Butler cabin for the live TV interview. The first question I was asked was how the first Masters win compared with the second. I answered, 'It's a great honour to win the

greatest tournament in the world, and especially on Easter Sunday, the day my Lord was resurrected.'

In saying those words, which went round the world on live television, I hope I was able to make up for my shortcomings in 1985 by saying something more positive. Having the opportunity of sharing with the world my faith in Jesus Christ was, for me, a unique situation.

People have asked me which Masters victory gave me the most pleasure. I really cannot answer that – they were both special in their own way. The earlier one was my first major and my first win in the USA. Not a lot of people expected me to win. The second time, I had become a believer and I won on Easter Sunday, which was a very special day for me.

Some people may not understand that, but it was very meaningful for me as a believer to have won on the day that we celebrate that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. You see, I strongly believe that the resurrection of Jesus actually happened. There were about 500 eye-witnesses who saw him alive again. I believe that it takes more faith not to believe in Jesus Christ than to believe in him. Don't take my word for it – check it yourself.