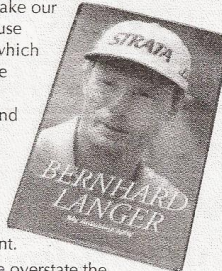


Bernhard Langer: My Autobiography

The best and best-known German golfer ever has led an extraordinary life but you would hardly know it from reading this flat, grey and frankly dispiriting volume. Although perhaps we should take our hats off to him because he has twice won the Masters, three times overcome the yips and been a mainstay of Europe's Ryder Cup teams sound as exciting as cutting your toenails takes a perverse kind of talent.



And if you think we overstate the case, the very first cliché-ridden words of this book are: 'I was born in Anhausen, near Augsburg...' We are pleasantly surprised that he resisted temptation to add the words 'at a very early age.'

The scene and tone are set early—for example, on page four, after Bernhard informs us that he started caddying, he adds: 'I enjoyed having a little money to spend on myself, and saving the rest.' A worrying sign of thrift and prudence for an eight-year-old you might think.

Later, aged 14, he goes to work as an assistant professional to a man called Heinz Fehring who was, Bernhard reveals, 'like a second father to me.' And that's it. No description of the man, or why he meant so much, or anything about his character or personality or anything else, other than the fact that he told his protegee that his grip was too strong.

Ratings:

Eagle: The reading equivalent of a hole-in-one. Excellent

Birdie: Better than average, well worth investing a few quid

Par: Worth a look if it's a subject in which you're particularly interested

Bogey: Like playing in strong wind and rain; only for the dedicated

Double Bogey: Tear up your scorecard and take up bowls

The rest of Bernhard's life to date is dealt with in exactly the same monotonous, tedious, boring, dreary style—with one notable exception. Whenever Bernhard makes a little joke (and the word 'joke' is used very loosely), he adds an exclamation mark just so that we will know he is being jocular.

This book is co-written with Stuart Weir, described as 'a writer and a director of Christians in Sport.' There is much evidence of the latter, virtually none of the former.

Sample quote: 'I also played in the Italian Open at Monticello in October and missed the cut.'

A huge disappointment and wasted opportunity.

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SG rating: Double Bogey
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