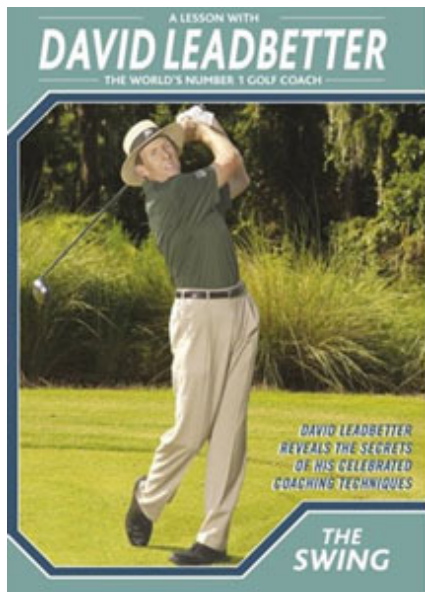


THE STAR AND I CHAPTER 3: Orlando days

When I turned eighteen after finishing high school, dad and I headed off to the David Leadbetter Golf Academy in Orlando, Florida. Why Orlando? Simple really. That was where the wonder kid had first shown his prodigious talent.



Leadbetter Academy



Golfer's dream place, Orlando, Florida

He still played and took coaching lessons there. By then, his name and nickname had become household words all over the globe – Woods, 'Tiger' Woods. This was to be my opportunity to see if I could make it into the PGA circus and also to bond as father and son, man to man in an all-male milieu.



Tiger Woods and his Dad Earl Woods



Father and son like Tiger and Earl

But first Dad had to gain entry to the exclusive Isleworth Golf and Country Club developed by billionaire Joe Lewis. Membership became even more vital once Dad had contracted to buy a lovely house, complete with swimming pool and rose garden, overlooking the 6th hole. The vendor was an American Indian plastic surgeon who had made his fortune from breast enhancement.



Home in Isleworth



Breast enhancement

Despite his degree from Berkeley, substantial property portfolio, business interests in China, membership of Saint-Nom-la-Breteche, the Hong Kong Royal Golf Club and his reciprocal membership of Japan's prestigious Three Hundred Club, Dad was by no means certain that his credentials would gain him membership of Isleworth, with sculptures by celebrated Columbian artist Fernando Botero adorning each of the eighteen greens. Fernando Botero was renowned for rendering rotund figure in his paintings and sculpture. Membership was confined to one hundred or so few of whom actually played golf.



Horseman sculpture by Fernando Botero



Horseman painting by Fernando Botero

Instead, Isleworth was 'home' course to such luminaries as 'Tiger' Woods, Marc O'Meara and

Stuart Appleby. The chairman of the interview board also happened to be chairman of Disney Florida.



Disney, Orlando Florida



Isleworth Clubhouse

Dad shared with my mother over the phone his concern regarding his next interview. She suggested he tell the panel that he had raced Urban Sea, winner of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe 1993. My mother happened to know that Joe Lewis had a substantial interest in the stallion Desert Prince then standing at the Irish National Stud but Dad did not pay attention to her "female" suggestion. Was it not an all male milieu?



Irish National Stud



Was it not an all male milieu?

The longer the interview went, the more solemn it became. He simply was not connecting. Yes, even for Dad who repeatedly used My Fair Lady's quote "men are good natured, considerate and kind" but he realized that it was time to listen to "his muse wife".



My Fair Lady



Is my wife a muse?

He threw caution to the winds: "By the way, I have won the 1993 Arc of Triumph with one of my fillies, Urban Sea. The effect was electric. Sombre faces split into wide grins of fellowship. "How is Urban Sea? How are her offspring?" Dad had cracked it all thanks to my mother and her magical mare. Now he could wine and dine alongside his newest golf idol "Tiger" Woods.



Mother's magical mare



Wine and dine alongside his newest Golf idol "Tiger" Woods

Dad subsequently became good friends with the Amerian Indian surgeon, playing golf with him most days while I was getting coaching, practising and beginning to play in tournaments.



I was getting coaching



I was practicing

They became so close that the surgeon made a curious request. It involved "entrée" together with a right-of-way across his former property whereby he could park his car, stow his golf cart in the car port and – crucially – keep a stock of beers in our refrigerator to lubricate his progress round the course. Dad readily assented, being both hospitable and casual by nature. However, only two out of the three of us were party to this arrangement.



Request to get a free "entrée" to his sold property

Resigned now to the (temporary) desertion of her precious son to the dreaded, anti-social, time-consuming 'Scottish game', my mother paid us a visit from her business in Beijing. While there, she performed her daily tai chi routine beside the swimming pool, clad in her white silk pyjamas. You can picture her consternation on seeing a large Indian man strolling into 'her' space, helping himself to a few beers from 'her' refrigerator and heading towards a golf cart in 'her' garage.



Tai Chi, internal Chinese martial art technique



The symbol of yin and yang "Light cannot exist without Darkness"

"What are you doing in my garden?", as she prepared to defend herself with her Tai Chi Sword. Of course, a petite Chinese woman had little chance against such an intruder, but my mother was never one to funk a challenge.

"I'm a plastic surgeon."

" I don't get the sense we are a clinique here'



Struggle against an intruder



My mother thought it was an intruder in the house

Hearing the commotion, I jumped out of a window to rescue the situation. Peace restored, I reassured my startled mother that I, too, had taken a while to become accustomed to finding the Doctor in the kitchen, helping himself to his daily beer quota, acknowledging me with a casual, cheery "Good morning."

Good Morning



Just Wanted to Pop In
& Wish You A
Good Morning!
Have a good Day!!

Good morning to the Tsui family!!

Yes, I realise that I have strayed from the title of my book "The Star and I" but I thought you might like to know something of the circuitous route I followed to find my 'ling' horse, eventually. To cut a long story short, I sought entry to the American PGA 'hot 100' for three gruelling years, opting instead for the Canadian equivalent. In that, I was successful to Dad's absolute delight.



My Professional Golf Association Tour Card



All the blood, sweat and tears to get this Tour player qualification

Sadly for me, after all the blood, sweat and tears, the professional golf circuit turned out to be a poisoned chalice. This realisation answered my mother's prayers, in dread as she had been of her only son being seen as an 'under-achiever'. She steered me firmly to the path of academy, in my case a Business Administration course in London's CASS Business School.



CASS Business School in London



Mother has a high esteem for UK Business Schools