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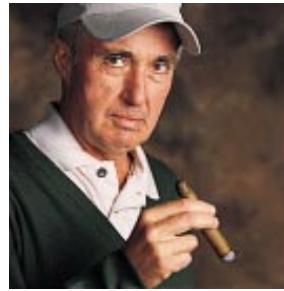
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### One hall of a person

**Nick Price's golf credentials include something more: a hall of fame heart**

By Bob Verdi  
Golf World

It is imperative that an athlete have the numbers for induction to a hall of fame in any sport. The bonus occurs when the man or woman so honored also is blessed with hall of fame credentials. Nick Price brings an abundance of tangibles and intangibles to the podium, which might explain why due process could have happened sooner. "There's no better guy out here than Nick," says Davis Love III. "But he's such a great person that might overshadow what a great player he is." Whatever, when Price enters the World Golf Hall of Fame in St. Augustine, Fla., Monday, don't expect him to say it's about time, or even that it's about me.

Players with lesser résumés than Price's -- 41 victories worldwide, including three majors -- have preceded him, but if he feels the occasion is on the tardy side, rest assured he will get over it, just as he does when he posts a bad score. Price's infrequent periods of ill-humor last about three minutes, after which he resumes his role as golf's goodwill ambassador extraordinaire.

That's where you delve into this area we referred to as credentials. Price's body of work outside the ropes is as profound, if not as quantifiable, as his collection of trophies. Somewhere along the way, Price determined that there is more to being a professional than exhibiting an ability to smack a little white ball toward that cup way off in the distance with a stick of choice. Being a professional to Price means carrying oneself

accordingly, communicating properly with peers and public, respecting the game and all its trappings. Acting the part of a professional does not accurately portray his disposition, however, because nothing about Price is staged. He requires no cue cards. He is as decent and genuine to little old ladies in the parking lot when the TV cameras are nowhere near as he is when he's attempting to close the deal late on a Sunday afternoon before thick galleries.

Among lodge brothers Price is an absolute treat. I have tried to find a fellow golfer with an unkind word to say about him, and I have failed. Instead, there are kids such as Charles Howell III coming on the scene, at once looking for paydays and mentoring, who say simply, "I love

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Nick Price." And there are grizzled veterans such as Hal Sutton, searching for magic on a parboiled practice range, then receiving a swing tip from a friend, who say, "Nicky didn't have to do that." Price is so beloved and such a mentor that he must catch himself every so often. Recently, he has huddled with Ernie Els, gently suggesting it might be time for the Big Easy to taper off his global gallivanting and concentrate on the only four weeks that matter every season: the Masters, U.S. Open, British Open and PGA Championship. "But I must be careful," says Price. "I don't want to force myself on Ernie." On the contrary, the golf community will rue the day when Price isn't lighting up locker rooms with his wit and wisdom.

Price's life hasn't been all strawberries and ice cream. He lost his dad when he was a child, saw buddies die in a civil war and still agonizes daily about what transpires in his native land of Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia. Since 1980 that country has been in the chokehold of Robert Mugabe, a dictator without conscience. But Price still has family there, as does his wife, Sue, so he bites his tongue for fear of reprisals. "Besides," Price says, "have you ever tried to tell your brother to pick up and leave home?"

Proud of his heritage, Price also is thoroughly Americanized. He enjoys all the toys and joys of this nation, but before he became this rich and this famous, he was only a younger Nick Price, not a different Nick Price. When he dominated the PGA Tour in the early '90s, he was the same guy who went winless for seven years, only busier. You don't get where he is without earning it, and you aren't spoiled if you appreciate it. The test will be whether Price can make it through Monday's speech without a cigarette. He will quit, again, soon. Sure he will. But that's all the smoke he'll ever blow. Starting Tuesday Nick Price won't be a better person, but the World Golf Hall of Fame will be a better place.

October 17, 2003



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