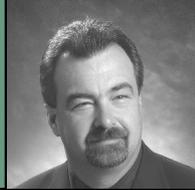


# Surveying 'Da Situation



By John D. Matonich, LS

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## The Chance of a Lifetime



**W**hat has been your most embarrassing moment? I've had so many I can't tell you which one was the worst, but I did have one not too long ago that ranks right up there. I had the pleasure of being asked to play in a three-day golf tournament with some good friends and great guys. I had never played the course before and asked if we could get a practice round in the day before the tournament started. My buddies told me it would be no problem and I would get a good feel for the course after the round.

A little less than a week before we were supposed to play, I was told there would be a "slight" change of plans. Instead of playing a practice round at the course hosting the tournament, we were going to make a detour to another course in a different town to play in a one-day charity tournament. I didn't mind the detour. It sounded like a lot of fun, and usually those charity tournaments are pretty relaxing because there isn't much pressure.

Our team actually played pretty well and I was pleased with my own play. I was able to contribute on some holes and actually was the closest to the pin of all the players in the tournament on one hole in

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particular. On another hole I was able to make a long putt that got my team the lowest score on that hole of all the teams. Needless to say, when we got back in the clubhouse we were having a good time and really enjoying the day.

About then, circumstances began to turn for yours truly. Since we had finished playing, I had put my clubs and various accessories away and sat with my teammates and enjoyed some liquid refreshment before dinner was to be served. I had forgotten there was one more contest that day and it was a very important one. Four lucky players were each going to be able to take a single shot at making a hole-in-one. If one of the players happened to be successful, the lucky player would walk

away with a cool *million* dollars. Our group immediately agreed if one of us were chosen and the shot went in the hole, we would split the money four ways. I never thought we would see a chance at the money, let alone make the shot. I was simply content to go back to our table conversation until I heard an announcer slaughter a name that was pretty close to mine. It appeared I was going to be one of the "lucky" four.

Back to the truck I went to put on my golf shoes, get the right club and mentally prepare myself for something I really did not want to do. It was like Charlie Brown being told by Lucy to go ahead and kick the ball. You know Lucy is going to pull the ball away at the last minute and Charlie Brown is going to end up flat on his back. Charlie Brown knows this too, but has to try to kick the ball anyway. So,

like Charlie Brown, I knew I was going to try the shot.

One of my playing partners was kind enough to take me out to the spot where the shot was to occur. Thinking I needed time to prepare, he never said a word, but let me slowly sink into the reality of what I was about to do. I watched as the other three contestants stood up to their shots and proceeded to hit the ball forward . . . but none was ever close to the million-dollar prize.

Now it was my turn. All I really wanted to do was hit the ball. I didn't care if it even went close to the green as long as it went reasonably forward. I took my stance at the ball and took a practice swing. It was a very good swing and I

could feel a little confidence come back to my system. I took a deep breath and felt the club go up. I then felt the club come back down and strike the ground. I saw the ball squirt about 35 yards on a diagonal away from the green. I also saw a huge piece of turf fly straight down the fairway toward the green and land closer to the green than my ball.

The shot was over. The money was still safe in the bank and I tried to make the best of it as I got back in the cart. Again, my playing partner the chauffeur never said a word, but this time I swear I saw a very slight, faint smirk on one side of his face. When I got back to the clubhouse, my other partners said they were trying to watch my shot from near the green, but all of a sudden a big piece of sod flew from the earth and blocked the sun and they weren't able to see a thing. I let them have their fun (mainly because they did have something cool and refreshing waiting for me). We had dinner and a few more laughs (at my expense no less) and left to head to the big tournament.

I replayed the shot way too many times in my mind as we traveled to our destination, but by the time we arrived, I kind of shook it off and tried to put it in the "let's forget about" category. This worked for about 7½ seconds which is exactly how long it took my playing partners to tell everyone they could about that afternoon. By the next morning, not only did all 160 players in the tournament hear about it, but so did everyone in the supper club (including the staff) where we relaxed in the evening. There were individuals who had never swung a golf club in their lives coming up to me to ask if I would tell the story.

I knew it was all in fun and being the new guy to this group you have to expect some razzing. I really did enjoy the entire weekend and my hopes are that my buddies will forget about that afternoon, but something tells me it will be a story that's told around that tournament for a long time to come. How many times does a chance to shoot for a million dollars roll around? This is one guy that hopes once was enough.

And that's the situation as I survey it . . . *A*

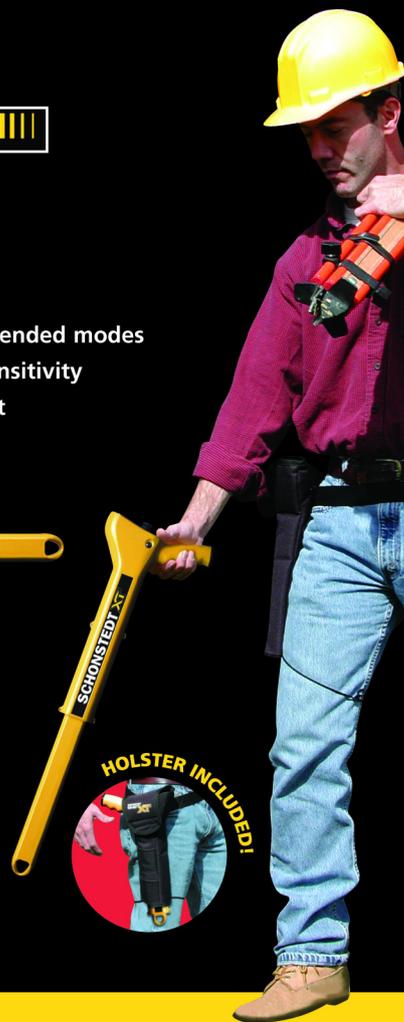
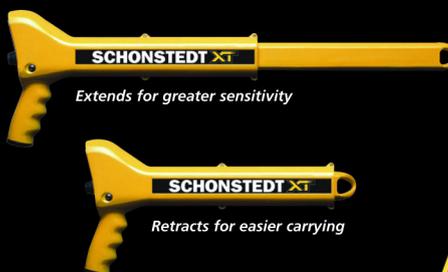
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