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Quigley's life is on quite a roll

Golfer now enjoys gambling at tables, not with alcohol.

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Dana Quigley loves the noise. Loves the flashing lights, loves the hot action all over the table, loves the luck involved in every toss of the dice. It keeps his mind stimulated, which is all Quigley has ever needed.

Some of his Champions Tour winnings are sprinkled all over the craps table at Ameristar Casino. Quigley plays every number on the table. That way, there's something to yell about after each throw.

Quigley creates his own luck. Always has. On Wednesday afternoon, he makes it by befriending Hong Tran, a nicely dressed young woman who didn't have any more gambling money. Quigley approaches Hong and gives her \$100. Now that Quigley has his own good-luck charm, it's time to get rolling.

It's Hong's turn to throw the dice. All she has to do to make Quigley happy is toss anything other than He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, the sinister seven.

"Come awn Hawwwwwnng!" Quigley snorts repeatedly in his Rhode Island accent.

Hong rolls for about 15 minutes without throwing that number, and Quigley is tickled. The team slaps hands after each successful roll as their chips up. Hong is turning out to be his best investment yet.

All the workers at the table know Quigley by name.

"You having fun, Iron Man?" one woman asks.

"Always," he says.

Iron Man. You think a 15-minute roll at a craps table is jaw-dropping? Try 275 straight golf tournaments. That's a roll. The Bayer Advantage Classic at Nicklaus Golf Club at LionsGate is No. 276 for Quigley, who hasn't missed a Champions Tour event since 1997. Quigley shot a 5-under-par 67 in the first round Friday, and is 2 strokes behind co-leaders R.W. Eaks and Gil Morgan.

This week in Kansas City, at Ameristar and LionsGate, Quigley is mixing his current passions, golf and gambling. They're pretty harmless. Not like an addiction he survived 15 years ago.

It's 5:30 p.m. now, and Hong has to leave. She cashes out \$400. Quigley doesn't ask for the original \$100 back, though. The Champions Tour's leading money winner is just hoping Hong doesn't take his luck with her.

Within an hour after Hong's departure, though, the table is so sour that Quigley's stack is cut by three-fourths. He moves to two different tables, trying to find the next run. Nothing.

"She was a lucky girl," Quigley says.

He's not dejected. He's been here before, where the roll runs out.

A waitress stops and offers Quigley a cocktail. He refuses.

"Don't drink," Quigley says bluntly.

Instead, Quigley orders an orange and cranberry juice mix. He is staying at the Ameristar Hotel this week. It's 25 miles from LionsGate.

"Gotta stay close to your enemies," Quigley jokes.

Quigley says he's a controlled gambler, which is easy when you've raked in more than a million bucks in just the last five months on the Champions Tour.

Quigley was not a controlled drinker. He didn't touch the stuff while living under his mother's roof as a kid in Barrington, R.I., but the independence he had as a college golfer at Rhode Island opened up a new world to him.

Quigley's club-pro days in the mid-1970s were a hazy mix of beer, wine and vodka tonics. The drinking never affected his golf, though.

"I didn't have hangovers," Quigley says. "I could get up and shoot 66. I won so many state opens dead drunk the night before."

Winning all those state opens set Quigley on a path to the PGA Tour. He started on the tour in 1977. He was gone by '82. Quigley didn't win one tournament, his highest finish was sixth, and he made \$92,000 in five years.

Quigley idolized Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer. He didn't think he belonged on the same tour with them. His insecurities overcame his ball-striking ability and his putter.

"I didn't think I was good enough," Quigley says. "I was fine with it. Couldn't play with those guys. Then I'd go out and drink and sabotage myself so that I wouldn't play well with those guys."

Back in Rhode Island as a club pro again, Quigley began to sabotage his family and his job with his drinking. The club nearly fired him several times, but he was saved by a close friend on the board.

By the late '80s, Quigley's roll had him gambling with his own life and the lives of others. Twice he drove into trees, receiving two DWIs. His first wife kicked him out of the house, and he had to leave his kids Nicole and Devon behind.

"I didn't hurt anyone but myself," Quigley says.

After the second car accident, Quigley checked himself into a 30-day inpatient treatment center. Eight months after he was let out, he started drinking again, thinking he could control it. What's a couple of glasses of wine anyway? But Quigley couldn't control it.

On the night of Feb. 1, 1990, Quigley drove drunk on an interstate in West Palm Beach, Fla., where he was playing in club-pro tournaments. He didn't know where the roll was taking him this time, just to some club or bar where the excitement was. He passed the exit to his home on the way.

"I was drunk," Quigley says. "I realized I was going to end up killing myself or someone else."

Quigley swerved the car off the road, turned around and took the exit toward home.

"I haven't had a drink since," Quigley says. "That was it. I still want to. It's just not an option."

That was a seven for Quigley.

Time to start over.

Addictive personalities can't control the roll. It controls them. Quigley began to realize this. He dropped the harmful addiction and honed in on the good one that had been there all along: golf.

Since he was in high school, Quigley and his older brother Paul had been playing 36 to 54 holes a day. Quigley continued to play that much through all the drinking and the 14 years as a club pro. His game was still sharp, and he knew it.

Quigley wowed the people he played with. Once, he played a round in swirling winds with renowned sports psychologist Bob Rotella and shot a 66.

"What are you doing as a club pro?" Rotella asked him.

Quigley marked his 50th birthday as the time he'd try to make his return to the PGA on the Senior Tour. But Quigley didn't have the money to restart his career. He and his second wife, Angie, lived paycheck to paycheck in a 900-square-foot apartment.

Quigley's luck, however, would change. A friend named Bob McDonald gave Quigley \$100,000 to restart his career. McDonald worked for Allianz, an insurance company formerly known as Life USA, so Quigley would have to wear their apparel. In the winter of 1997, Quigley was off for Florida, where he'd prepare for his April birthday by playing in club-pro tournaments. He made a crucial stop along the way to meet for two days with Rotella in his Virginia home.

"It was three grand for him to go," says Quigley's son, Devon, 20, "and we just thought it was nuts for him to go do that."

Rotella transformed Quigley mentally. No longer would he get bummed after a bad shot or bad round. No longer would he let his insecurities take over. He belonged, Rotella said.

"What I admire about Dana is that at the age of 50, he still had some big-time dreams in his head," Rotella says. "And he was willing to do the stuff to get there."

Quigley had never won a club-pro tournament in Florida. He won five out of 12 that winter. When he turned 50, he had to play in Monday qualifying rounds - two spots for about 100 golfers - to play in Champions Tour events. He qualified for five out of 10.

"I never thought I'd make it," Quigley says. "I was a good club pro, a big fish in a small pond. I figured I'd bump around, do it a year or two and live happily ever after."

Angie Quigley still cries today when she thinks about that Sunday afternoon in 1997 at the Northville Long Island Classic. Dana had qualified on Monday for the fifth time that summer with a 65. On Sunday, he was in the hunt for the championship.

Angie had bigger worries. She had been told the night before that Dana's father, who had been battling cancer for years, might die on Sunday. The family agreed that Dana shouldn't know.

Angie wore sunglasses the entire day as she followed her husband of two years through the most important round of his life. Dana would look at her, as tears welled up in her eyes. All he'd see is the smile she feigned in return.

Quigley beat Jay Sigel in a three-hole playoff and won his first PGA tournament. He became just the sixth Monday-qualifier to win a senior tournament, and he would be exempt for a year, able to play in every tournament without qualifying.

As Quigley walked to the media tent, Angie handed the phone to Dana. His brother, Paul, told him their father, Wally, had died that afternoon. Dana collapsed to the ground.

"The media thought he was crying because of the win," Angie says.

That day, Quigley started a roll that's still going. He's played in every single Champions Tour event since, almost eight years and 276 tournaments. Then, he played through the pain of losing his father. Now, he plays through the pain all over his body. He is, after all, 58.

Three years into "the streak," Rotella told Quigley to take a week off, and Quigley agreed. But on the Thursday night before that tournament, Rotella saw Quigley's name in the pairings.

"I couldn't do it," Quigley told him.

Rotella says, "Dana has a love affair with the game of golf. It's amazing how long he's loved it."

Quigley's back, elbow and shoulder were hurting him last year. Quigley got acupuncture treatment three times a week to combat it.

"To have someone stick pins in you three times a week, you have to be a little crazy," Paul says. "If there's a tournament, he's going. He's proud of that streak. It'll probably never be broken because no one's that crazy."

Quigley has won nine tournaments and more than \$11 million during the streak. He finished second at the Senior PGA championship two weeks ago, his highest finish in a major.

"Last year, when he almost didn't go, I told him, 'They're talking about you all over the world,'" Angie says. "You have to go. I hear people in the crowd saying, 'There's Iron Man.' He's made a name."

Quigley is the only Champions Tour golfer smoking a fatty cigar as he practices on the putting green Wednesday afternoon at LionsGate in Overland Park.

He whittles it to a nub as he sinks putt after putt with his new putter. Quigley has a box of cigars with him at all times on tour. You could call it another addiction.

Quigley doesn't just putt on the putting green. He holds court. He's the fixture of this tour, the life of the party.

Everybody is fair game with Quigley, who sports bleached blonde hair to honor his Red Sox's World Series triumph. He lambastes Ed Dougherty for playing the slowest rounds on tour. He challenges Gary Player, whom Quigley overheard talking about him. When caddie Larry Reinfeld tries to fire back at Quigley, he warns, "Don't try to outtalk me, Larry!"

After 45 minutes, he's tired of just putting mindlessly. He's ready to move to the next bit of fun, at Ameristar. First, he says, he'll make three putts in a row. It takes him 20 putts, but he gets it done.

"Casino," Quigley says. "The only thing that can make me choke with a putter."

Quigley admits that his whole routine, the 54 holes a day, the casino living, is a way of keeping him occupied, away from the drinks he still desires.

"I'm sure everything I do, I do too much of, no question," Quigley says. "Golf is my addiction now."