

Golf Journey: Seven Continents to Fifty Capitals
(October 2008 to October 2018)

Who? Binod (Ben) Thapa, South Riding, Virginia, U.S.

What? Playing Golf in All 50 U.S. Capitals

Criteria:

- 1) Play golf only in the U.S. Capital golf courses
- 2) Play in 18 Holes Course
- 3) Play in USGA Rated Golf Course for posting score
- 4) Play with the Club Members or someone Local in that Capital/State

Where? First (1) Golf Course: Hawktree Golf Course, Bismarck, North Dakota
Last (50) Golf Course: Honolulu Country Club, Honolulu, Hawaii

When? Completed playing golf in 50 Capitals in October 2018, last Capital, Honolulu

Why? Golf Bucket List #2.

Seeing some beautiful parts of East Coast and West Coast from early 1990's thru early 2000's, I always wanted to go on cross country trips. So driving across the country and playing golf in all 50 Capitals (States), I would accomplish three things at once – Playing golf in the capitals, cross country trips and visit Capitols (Domes/Buildings) in all 50 States – and I did it!

I also like to stay active, need to have plans and work on my checklist items throughout the year etc. so probably that has something to do with it. Original plan was to play in every State, not necessarily every Capital. But I also wanted to visit/see all 50 Capitol Domes/Buildings and the Cities. Last but not least, these trips were also part of my cross-country journey.

How?

I had been planning and coordinating for these trips for about 5 years, but I had been saving for longer than that. I have been working for the same company 20+ years so I get plenty of vacation weeks. These are all personal trips and I did travel alone in all except two Capitals – Annapolis (MD) & Honolulu (HI). I did my golf trips by region. In average, I played golf in 4 states in each trip. During Fall/Winter months, I took the trips in in Southern States; and during the Spring/Summer, I travelled to Northern States. I always made tee times in two Golf Courses for the same day – second Tee time is for backup course just in case if there is some events at the first GC so I can still play in second GC. It did happen handful of times and I had to play in my backup course close by. Also, traveling alone and playing as a single was somewhat beneficial for me. As a single player, if I missed my tee times, I wouldn't have problem joining another group. Traveling solo was good because I could leave the hotel to go to Capitol, downtown, other places or travel to next Capital/State anytime I wanted.

18/9 Holes

Played in 47 Capitals in 18 Holes Golf Courses. But Juneau, Alaska; Augusta, Maine; and Montpelier, Vermont had only 9 Holes Courses so I had to play twice to make 18 Holes to post my scores. Because I had to play in the Capital (#1 criteria), I didn't want to go outside of the city to play golf in 18 Holes Courses. As we all know, usually City Golf Courses don't have much lands

and they are not as good compare to golf courses in the suburbs. So I ended up playing in number of Municipal golf courses because of my criteria to play 'only' in the 'Capital'.

Toward the End

I would say starting about 35th Capital, I started to feel that I could do it. Golf Club staff and Club Members were very interested and very welcoming in different capitals. They would take my picture at the tee box, during lunch at the clubhouse, at the course and post them in their websites. Most of them would have similar comment or ask similar question. What a great idea! How did you come up this unique/great idea?

Best Courses

Better Country Clubs: Honolulu Country Club (HI), Frankfort CC (KY), Wolferts Roost CC (NY), Trenton CC (NJ), Berry Hills CC (WV), Montpelier Elks CC (VT), Concord CC (NH)

Better Golf Courses: Hawktree GC, Bismarck, North Dakota; Mendalhall GC, Juneau, Alaska; Fox Ridge GC, Helena Montana; Silver Oak GC, Carson City Nevada; The Legacy GC, Phoenix, Arizona; Lincoln Park GC, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and Oak Hills GC, Columbia, South Carolina.

Note: Most of these Golf Courses I said better CC/GC based on condition of the course. Some of them I also picked because of scenic views around the golf courses, their clubhouses and the facilities.

Golf Scores

Under par to over my handicap. I would have loved to play better in every golf course in every Capital. But long driving and playing in new courses, I knew I would have a challenge to keep my score lower. I had some great rounds and some were not so great. But I enjoyed all 50 rounds playing in 50 Capitals with great group of people.

As we all know we, golfers, like to complement other golfers. Here are few comments from the players who I played in different capitals:

- I was playing with twosome in Atlanta, GA. I was hitting long and in the middle of the fairways most of the afternoon. Harry said, 'Ben probably put something in the golf ball that's why he is not missing anything.'
- I was playing with three players in Harrisburg, PA. I was fairly consistent hitting my driver and irons that morning. Cord was supposed to be a very good player, but that particular morning he was not having his usual great game. One point when Cord said, 'I am really struggling today', one of his friends told him 'Playing with Ben is not helping either' (sometimes if a player plays consistently, it puts a lot of pressure to the other players)
- I was playing with threesome in Phoenix, AR. I told them that I have been traveling and playing in different Capitals. I was not playing great but scrambling and saving pars. In one hole, I missed the green and my golf ball was in the fringe. About 50 feet long double breaking putt - I made the putt. Tony said, 'Ben is playing too much golf.'
- I was playing with 'John' at Glenwood GC in Richmond in back nine. Either it was Hole # 12 or 13, I drove over 300 yards. John looked at me and smile...then said great driving! That was my first 300+ drive! Felt good and I saved the golf ball.

Harry, Cord, and Tony were great guys. Whenever they had some great shots, I obviously complemented their games.

Last Capital

- My wife is not interested in golf so she didn't come in any of my trips except for Hawaii. Hawaii was my last Capital to play golf so her coming to Hawaii was special for me.
- I played at Honolulu CC on Sunday. As we all know that it is not easy to make tee times especially on the weekend in any Country Clubs. I had a little difficulty making the tee time first, but after explaining why I was in Hawaii and in their Golf Club, they were happy and I was able to join three other members to play golf. Great people!
(Our Club and I had also coordinated with the HCC in advance and I had received a voice message from the GM as well, but I was in Nepal and I couldn't reach back to the HCC.)
- The best golf course I played in 50 Capitals - because course was well maintained and nice view around the golf course. It was also the most expensive course I had played – but playing with great group of people, being my last golf course - it worth every bit of it! After I was done playing there, my wife said, 'You did it!'

50K SRGC Golf Shirt

I brought our Club's white logo golf shirt to all 50 Capitals. After playing with players, I would ask them for their autographs. Everybody wrote their name, course name, Capital, State and the Date we played. Very special and valuable shirt for me and I will be framing this shirt. It's not really 50K Golf Shirt 😊, since it is extremely valuable to me, I call 50K Golf Shirt. See attached picture.

Driving Record

Clean! 😊

Before I started taking these trips, I told myself whenever I start going on these cross country trips and driving thousands of miles, I also wanted to avoid getting any tickets on the road. When I told my wife about this, she said you don't get tickets anyways. I didn't get any tickets during these trips...so I was happy.

Events & Stories?

North Dakota – Driving in the countryside, my Garmin GPS didn't work and I had no 3G reception so no Waze or Google Maps, so I was kind of stuck in one of the cross roads kind of middle of nowhere and didn't know which way to go. I waited for about 15 minutes and another car came to the stop sign and I asked for directions to this gentleman. But I always print out hard copies of my trips just in case. With the direction of this gentleman and me following the directions from the print out, I was able to get out of that area and found the route I was looking for in about 20 minutes.

South Dakota – On one of the Highways, I saw sign with next service 108 miles. For next two hours I didn't see houses or anything except Cattle Farms. I didn't even see a single car coming from my direction for about 2 hours (not even police cars) ...but I did see few cars coming from the opposite directions. While I was driving, first thing came in my mind was what happens if there is an emergency or something and I am in nowhere.

Missouri - I always keep hard copies/soft copies of my itinerary – with GC name & address, tee time, Capitol Bldg., Hotel and other places I would like to visit. By mistake, I had played in the wrong golf course. Instead of playing in Jefferson City, Capital of Missouri, I had played in Holts Summit, just outside of Jefferson City. I always check the GC scorecard even before paying the green fees, but obviously I didn't check this one. So all along, I thought I was playing in the Jefferson City. So the next morning when I was trying to go to the Capitol & the city, I realized about my mistake playing golf outside of the Capital. Then I had to reschedule some of my plans to play in Jefferson City – so I did play in Jefferson City that morning.

But I met Chris and Joey at Railwood GC in Holts Summit – they are great people and now we text and email to each other– good friendship! Probably playing in this wrong GC was meant to be! **Virginia** – At Glenwood GC in Richmond, I had to drive there twice because I forgot to have my Golf Shirt signed when I played there the first time. I was happy that it happened in Virginia, not in Alaska or Hawaii.

Amazing Places & Views

- Beautiful green mountains and crystal clear lakes in Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire
- Beautiful Port of Greater Baton Rouge, Louisiana and great fireworks display on July 4th
- Driving from Portland, Oregon to Idaho on I-84 alongside the Columbia/Snake River
- Seeing miles and miles of beautiful farms in Idaho
- Seeing gorgeous mountains of Montana
- Seeing part of Standing Rock Indian Reservation and crossing the Pipeline in Dakotas
- Driving in Wyoming
- Visiting Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota
- Breathtaking view of Mendenhall glacier in Alaska
- Gorgeous water views in Hawaii

Lesson Learned!

I was driving from Jacksonville to Tallahassee, Florida around 8 in the evening on I-10 West. I was about an hour away to Tallahassee and all of a sudden, my car started to make a noise and I had to pull over side of the Hwy. As soon as car made that sound and car was shaking, I knew car ran out of gas. First I was thinking of calling AAA for road assistance, but since it was dark and busy Hwy, I called 911 for safety reason (mine & other cars). Then I called AAA for help. Unfortunately I couldn't see any Mile Markers .20 miles both ways – finally I saw an exit sign the other side of the road that helped me to give info to the AAA (my phone was not giving me my location for some reason). Police officer also came by and asked me to make sure I was ok. AAA came later and put some gas in my car and I was able to drive to next gas station. I was stranded for over 2 hours on a busy highway in dark.

Lesson learned – Don't wait to fill up the car until we see the light! Fill up the car as soon as we have ¼ tank left in the car especially if we are driving out of state. (As a matter of fact, I was not waiting the gas tank to be that low...I was driving in a rental SUV and didn't see that warning light – or maybe I overlooked)

These were few of my highlights. Definitely I would like to visit some states (Alaska, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Idaho, Maine, Hawaii...) in the future with my family to see absolutely amazing scenic views of the countryside.

My golf Bucket List #1 was to play golf in all Seven Continents. I played in Egypt, Africa; Prospect Point, Antarctica [My Quest for the Antarctic Circle](#); Nepal, Asia; Sydney, Australia; Spain, Europe; U.S., North America; & Argentina, South America, see few Photos especially the Photo Collage with lots of pictures. This Collage was organized horizontally & vertically with Golf Playing, Birds/Animals, Cities, people who I played golf with etc. from all seven continents.

I buy souvenirs items everywhere I travel. I have golf shirts, hats, winter clothes, ball markers (anything with clubs' logo) from all 50 Capital Golf Courses. But I also buy some other souvenirs items from every state, like - t-shirts, coffee mugs, refrigerator magnets, shot glasses etc.

All my Seven Continents and Fifty States items (clubs, golf bags, 50 golf shirts, 50 hats etc.) are my retired items now. I will convert one basement room to golf room. I have plenty of golf items from different regions and different parts of the World to fill this room.

I travelled a quite a bit from October 2008 – October 2018 and now I am done with my personal travels. I have plenty of interesting stories and experiences from all of these trips. I will be writing about my 50 Capitals trips journey this winter (2018) in short version. But when I have time or after I retire, probably I will write a book about my adventures of - both Seven Continents & 50 Capitals travels.

(For documentation purpose, I keep everything - contact info (name, number, email of those who I played with), scorecards, golf course receipts or any receipts, pictures, posting scores etc.)

I am a member at South Riding Golf Club (SRGC) in South Riding, Virginia and I also run Friday Night League Golf (FNL) at my Club. I have won 7 golf tournaments at SRGC, in Virginia, and in Maryland – one of the tournaments was the ‘Club Championship’ at our Club. I also played in our Club’s Ryder Cup Annual Tournaments against another Club in last four years and our Club has won 3 out of 4 Ryder Cups. As a golfer, these tournaments are important to me. But I travelled and played golf in “All U.S. 50 Capitals and Seven Continents” which is far more important, significant and bigger milestones for me than winning few golf tournaments. Also, golfers have similar bucket list but playing in ‘State’ instead of in ‘Capital’. I played in 50 Capitals and played in Seven Continents (*) both combinations are very unique.

Although the combination of playing golf in all 50 U.S. Capitals and playing in all Seven Continents are unique & rare and most likely there is nobody in the U.S. or elsewhere, but I am not trying to break a some sort of record...Golf is my passion and I am simply playing golf in different regions and different parts of the World.

“My golf trips were more than just golf trips or cross-country trips. For me these trips were also very helpful in terms of understanding people and the culture of different regions. During these trips, I also met so many wonderful people from different regions and I am keeping in touch with them. I have invited them here in DC/Virginia. When they come here, my family will get opportunities to meet them. I am also planning to bring some of them at our Golf Club to play golf, so some of our club members also can meet them here at our club.”

I would to thank families and friends for their encouragement and support! If anyone likes to pursue similar bucket lists/goals, this might be helpful.

Binod (Ben) Thapa