

9 ½ sprint in, limp out of 2001 Veggy Open

The fun started Wednesday as Gil and Dexter were there greeting everyone coming into the Tropicana. Ronny was also there early, but spent most of the afternoon searching the pool area for the Veggy Open members. Redneck, Scooter, Freckles, and T Wally made their presence known a little later that evening. The final 2 scholars, Derf and Roar, came in Thursday. So where does the ½ come from? Travy Partelow took time out from his Bud drinking meeting to join us for the Thursday night activities.

We ate some wonderful buffets and didn't even have to wait in line. Its nice to be with high rollers Gil and Dexter. With their Trop gold cards, that badge has more power than a police officer, we were escorted to the front of the long lines.

The weather was perfect everyday. Thursday golf was at the Las Vegas National and Redneck had a strong back nine to dominate the field. It appeared that Red was the favorite to be the first 2-time Veggy Open winner. The next day, 9 guys were picked up @ 5:45 am, and headed towards a very tough Badlands course. The competition was brutal. Ronny, Freck, Redneck and Scooter had a "take no prisoners" approach as they virtually ignored the thousands of spectators watching, waving, cheering, even flashing the Veggy Open leaders. Ronny and Freck succumbed to the pressure and faded on the back nine. Red and Scooter grew stronger. Red was waving the WIU flag, as Scooter countered with the Wildcat banner. The Wheeling fans went ballistic, as Scooter birdied the 18th and finished the round with an 85. Red needed par on the last hole to win. As Red strolled towards the pin on the 18th, the excitement was greater than the 1985 Chicago Bears Super bowl victory. Every golfer on the course stopped playing and hurried over to see the final hole of the 2001 Veggy Open. Tiger Woods heard about the final hole excitement and flew in to watch the spectacular finish. Then it was over, Redneck took a double bogey on the 18th and Scooter was crowned champion. Champagne and tears were flowing as millions across the world witnessed a very exciting finish to probably the most prestigious golf tournament in the United States, if not the world. ESPN and Fox Sports West made millions off the coverage as the Veggy Open members took pride in giving the golf world another year of unparallel athleticism.

On Saturday, it was difficult catching the third 5:45 am limo pick up, especially after an average of 3 hours of sleep per night. We played the Wildhorse, which has been blackballed for future Veggy Open events, and enjoyed a great lasagna lunch at Gloria Wilson's place in Henderson. Most members were smart and took a nap after lunch, but Gil and T Wally tried some community money action that turned out to be fruitless. Where was Dexter when we needed him the most!

We had some tough competition at the water volley ball tourney at the Trop. The first day we played a bunch of in shape 20-30 old guys that took it to us. If we were only 10-15 years younger, we would of showed them a thing or two. Because of Ronny's age, the next day we entered the senior division tourney. We played as a unit and dominated. It was great to see the confidence Captain Scooter had in all his teammates, as he barely moved out of his position to hit(hog) the ball. The other team did have a pretty tough 73 year old spiker, but we were able to outlast them and took home the 1st place trophy for the 5th consecutive year.

The euchre games, gilligans, cold ones, and a few cigars were thoroughly enjoyed at the Trop pool during the afternoons. The gambling pretty much broke us, except for a 1 hour, community 3 card stud poker game. Gil, Scooter, Dexter and T Wally started with \$400 and 1 hour later cashed in over \$1600. We must give credit to the Dex man, who was unconscionable as he was pulling straight flushes and 3 of a kind to all of our amazement. Then there was Kima serving cocktails. She definitely distracted the Veggy Open members at the black jack table, as Scooter kept splitting 10's and Roar doubled down on 20 as they ordered another round.

We took a walk to New York, New York (We were still banned from riding the monorail due to Red's clearing out the railcar last year. That poor petite Asian lady is still trying to recover from that horrific odor) and several members took in the Folies Bergere show with front row seats. We enjoyed relaxing in the lounge watching Frank, Dean and Sammy impersonators every night.

A good time was had by all. Members started out early Sunday morning and by early evening, only Gil and T Wally were left. Gil and T Wally hung out with Gloria throughout the evening, holding their own in Pai Gow at Sunset Station and blackjack at Barley's brewery/casino. It appears that next years Veggy Open will remain at the Trop, July 31st – August 4th. However,

before this event, Smithers and Codo are hosting a weekend at Western October 19-21. This weekend includes mandatory participation in the 4 mile alumni fun run. The suite at Club Olsen has been reserved, get to Dr. Joe Smithers before September 22nd if you are attending. We have Saturday night out in the city of Chicago on November 3rd. To be a part of this, contact Ronny Henricks or Freckles Cunningham for a night of cold beer and pizza. We also have the annual super bowl ski bash in Lake Tahoe January 23rd – 28th. Contact Scooter before September 29th to reserve your accommodations and super bowl party ticket.

In the wake of the World Trade Center atrocity, we must be grateful for our time spent with family and friends. I am very fortunate to have all of you in my life, some more than others, but still a part of my life. A final thought from the words of C.S. Lewis, British scholar and writer in the 20th century. “ Affection is responsible for nine tenths of whatever solid and durable happiness there is in our natural lives.”

Veggy Open members aren't shy about hugging one another (They've even been known to pinch once in a while) Hugging your spouse, kids, parents, siblings, relatives, friends is what this world needs more of. Tomorrow is not promised to anyone, as we keep our thoughts and prayers on those suffering from this US tragedy. May the Good Lord bless you all the days of your life.