

golflife

IT'S MORE THAN A GAME



HONORS

Peter Kessler

VOICE OF GOLF SILENCED—FOR NOW

// IT SEEMS THAT MOST golf nuts know I'm no longer hosting *Academy Live* and *Golf Talk Live* on the Golf Channel, but few people know the whole story. Contrary to some reports, I'm not bitter. Why would I be? I had an incredible seven-year run. I'm still emotional about leaving the Golf Channel, but in the happiest way. The outpouring of support for me from the media, the golf industry and the fans has not only been flattering but also incredibly staggering. And that support has taught me a lesson. In the past, when someone I knew had a job-altering event like a career switch or an

Changing channels: Kessler at Inverloch Country Club

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KYLE COOPER

illness, I was always reluctant to call them or write a letter because I thought they'd want to have their space. But I've changed my ways: From now on, I'll always make that call or write that letter.

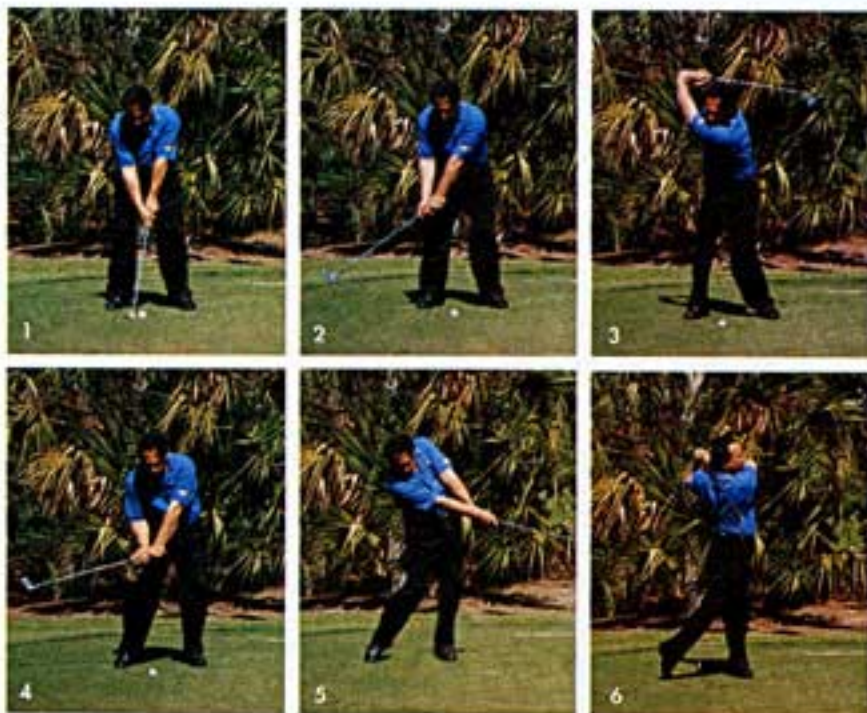
"My television career started by happy accident. From 1978 to 1994 I worked in the securities industry and found it boring. So I enrolled in voice-over classes. I was eventually hired to narrate the HBO Sports baseball documentary *When It Was a*

Game, which despite my participation was a huge success. HBO Sports made me its Voice; three years later Michael J. Whelan recruited me for the Golf Channel.

"Hosting *Academy Live* and *Golf Talk Live* was a dream job for me. I was seven or eight years old when I started playing golf at Cedar Hill Country Club in Livingston, New Jersey. When I was thirteen, somebody gave me a copy of Bobby Jones's autobiography *Down the Fairway*, and I fell in love with Jones and with golf history. Inspired in part by Jones, I came to take writing

seriously, and I wrote all 1,400 shows I hosted at the Golf Channel.

"In the fall of 2000, I began to sense that there was a problem. For my first five years there, I had been on the air four nights a week. In year six, it was three nights. By the end of year seven, I was down to one night a week. Then the network's managers told me they had formed a committee to write



Golf Swing Live ANALYSIS BY CLAUDE HARMON III

Peter Kessler shows he is a student of the game with a throwback swing: he could use a dose of modernity. He begins with a good setup (1), with his head behind the ball in a strong position. But as he starts the club back (2), his right leg begins to straighten. At the top (3), his hands and arms are too close to his head and he has too much of his weight on the left side—two symptoms of the reverse pivot. From that position he must either come over the top or drop the club too far inside, using his hands and arms to square the club on the downswing (4). Peter still looks good at impact (5) and his finish (6) is strong and balanced. But until he gets more modern, with more weight on his right side and his hands farther from his head at the top, he'll fight inconsistency.

my shows. If they felt the shows would be more informative and entertaining written by committee, that was their right. But I didn't agree.

"Now I'm examining my options. Mark McCormack flattered me by asking if his company, IMG, which handles notables from Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus to Tiger Woods, could help me in planning my future. Having Mark offer to guide your career is a little like trying to work your way up through the Catholic church and suddenly having the pope take a personal interest in you. It's an honor, and it gives me confidence. As for my dealings with Arnold, who cofounded the Golf Channel, if he and I have any problems, they're the kind that will simply result in my getting fewer shots the next time I play with him, and he might bear down harder to take my \$20—which, incidentally, he asks for on

the eighteenth green so he won't have to go looking for you later.

"Technically, I'm still employed by the Golf Channel, but now I have a little time to work on my own game. Since I began hosting *Academy Live*, I've had on-air lessons from about 600 different teaching pros, and I've had 39,412 tips, all of which I seem to remember right before the moment of impact. I used to be a legitimate two handicap; in 1976 I won the club championship at La Costa in Carlsbad, California. But now I'm the worst eight handicap you ever saw. Some days I have trouble breaking a hundred. Then I get home, remember a tip I got from somebody and run out to the backyard to try it. I hope that by the time you read this I'll be shooting in the low seventies again—and announcing where I can be found hosting a chat show, talking about the greatest game of all." •

Scorecard PETER KESSLER

AGE
50

HANDICAP
8

BEST
TOURNAMENT
Club champion, La
Costa Country Club,
Carlsbad,
California, 1976

CLUBS
Hogan Apex Plus
irons, Callaway
Big Bertha driver,
Adams Tight Lies
three-wood, Never
Compromise putter

BALL
Stratix Tour
Professional 100

MEMBERSHIP
Interlachen Country
Club, Winter Park,
Florida