



## Green returns after crash tragedy

By Josh Ball

It will be with a mixture of curiosity and fear that professional golfer Ken Green travels to Bermuda to compete in the Gosling's Invitational later this month.

In the process of recovering following a road accident last year that killed his girlfriend, Jean Marie Hodgkin, his brother William, his dog, Nip, and saw him lose the lower part of his right leg, Green is still trying to discover if he will ever play golf properly again.

The death of his estranged son Hunter last January left a further void in his life that he is trying to fill by re-inventing himself as a

golfer, even if nerve problems in his amputated right leg mean he's unable to finish more than one round in any 12-day period because of the pain which he compares to being 'constantly electrocuted'.

"I never doubted that I wouldn't (recover)," said Green. "I never had that 'why me' attitude, or 'I'm not going to do anything' thought process. I always just assumed that I was going to do it. I didn't expect to run into the problems that I have run into, so I'm a little annoyed that I haven't done things faster, or better or quicker.

"It's like everything else, you've got to handle that setback also, and you just have to say 'ok, I'm going to fight it', and you keep fighting it. I don't have any quit in me at this moment.

"There are a couple of things that keep me going. That inner fight that some people have, and I just have that urge, that wonder 'can I do this, will I do it'. The other aspect is, do you really just want to sit around and look at the walls? Some bad things have happened in my life, but you've got to snap out of it, you've got to maybe cry for a few seconds but then you say 'ok, I've got to do something'.

"Right now I am using golf as my avenue to try to get something positive, to have a goal, you've got to have a purpose, a reason."

What he doesn't know though is if he'll even be able to play all four rounds of the Gosling's event, but that isn't going to stop him trying.

"I'm looking forward to it. It's been a while since I've been to Bermuda," said Green "I've been there numerous times, obviously, because of my friendship with (UBP leader) Kim Swan, and I just thought it would be . . . the timing was perfect because I'm trying to re-invent my golf game so to speak and see whether it's possible . . . how much I can improve my game on the one leg.

"And the more events you play, the more you'll learn whether you have a chance of accomplishing some goals, or whether you're spinning your wheels."

The nerve problem has set Green's rehabilitation back over the past two months and in many ways the man who has won five times on the PGA Tour is just trying to learn how to play again.

"I've had so many problems with my leg that it's hard to even tell where I am at, at this point," he said. "I've played so little, but my intent is still to



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come over, and play, and see if I can play some decent holes, and maybe [enough says McDowell](#): a decent 18, and maybe even farther.

"It's a standard cliché but, I've got to take one step at a time., I don't mean that in an ironic sense, but that's what I have to do because I'm basically re-inventing the idea of how to swing a golf club.

"It'll be an interesting test. Part of me is very curious, and part of me is still very scared. I've got to come in a little earlier and play my practice round and then take a couple of days off because four days in a row will be very difficult for me to pull off. I'd be lying if I told you I was even sure I could make four days in a row."

Green's disarming honesty is entirely in keeping with his character, and even with all that has happened in the past year and a half, he still retains some elements of the player who tried to smuggle some friends into the Masters, and drank beer while playing alongside Arnold Palmer at the same tournament in 1997.

"A good portion of me is still here," he said. "Obviously people change every decade anyway, just because of life experiences. I still believe I am basically the same person I was 25-30 years ago, during what were perceived as off-the-wall behaviours back in the day. I honestly didn't see this, because I thought it was normal.

"I've always been a firm believer that the PGA Tour has always looked to stifle individuals. They want them to display robot-like behaviour, and my belief is that you have to be who you are. Some people can be Jack Nicklaus and some people can't, and you have to have all of them. I believe golf would be better if the Tour wasn't so regimented in trying to control behaviour."

Now though there is apprehension and frustration to add into the mix. There is a wonder whether he will ever be able to play properly again, coupled with a frustration that while the mind is willing, the body isn't. For the time being at least.

"You wonder 'is this going to happen? (You think) Do you have it in you to put in the time and the effort that's going to be needed?," he said. "Literally it's been so hard for me two days in a row, that I'm averaging one round of golf every 11 or 12 days.

So you can imagine how difficult it is to try to play well when you're playing so little, and trying to come up with a way (to play). The old, scrambling aspect of golf has never been truer for me because ball striking will never be my forte any more. Even the short game is so difficult because you never realise how much you used to put your legs in different positions and different angles until all of a sudden you can't do it.

"It's hard to handle when the brain still works like you used to play the game, then all of a sudden you go out and hit some shots that are absolutely awful. They are just, and I don't mean this to offend, but just your basic golfer, they are awful.

"That's hard to handle, because your brain doesn't think you're going to do that, but the body just doesn't work. I have to learn to just accept that, that there are times that I am going to hit numerous awful golf shots, and sometimes you laugh about it, and sometimes you just shake your head and cringe."

