

## Pass It On®...

### **Gary Player, One of the World's Greatest Golfers, is Grateful for ... Adversity.**

*Young Gary Player lost his mother when he was a child. His older brother left for the war, and his older sister was in boarding school, leaving Gary alone and often deeply sad after school. He decided then that he would make something of himself and create a way for other kids to find their path out of challenging conditions.*

Gary Player, born on November 1, 1935, in Johannesburg, South Africa, is widely regarded as one of the greatest golfers in the history of the sport. Known as "The Black Knight," Player's career is marked by extraordinary achievements and a relentless dedication to the game and to his fitness regimen.

Beneath his affable smile and handshake that affectionately draws you into his circle, Player's drive to perfection made him a three-time Masters champion, three-time Open champion and U.S. Open winner. He is also the only competitor to win the Grand Slam on both tours. When the golf icon was asked what he is most grateful for after such an amazing career, Player offered a surprising answer: "Adversity. The best thing to happen to you is to have adversity."

Coming of age during World War II presented many challenges for Player. The uncertainty of the future weighed heavily on every household. To offset the stress, Player spent more time on the golf course.

"Waking up and being on a golf course is one of the greatest gifts in the world. To hear the birds, to see the mist that is coming out of the ground or out of the sky, the beautiful rainbow from the lakes, the fish jumping ... it maintains the sanity."

Gary Player turned professional in 1953 at the age of 18. Despite coming from South Africa, far from golf's traditional power centers, he quickly established himself on the international stage. Player's first significant win came in 1955 at the East Rand Open in South Africa, and he soon began competing successfully in Europe and the United States. Player is one of only five men to achieve golf's career Grand Slam, winning all four major championships: The Masters, the U.S. Open, The Open Championship and the PGA

Championship. Over his career, he captured nine major titles and more than 160 professional tournaments on six continents, making him one of the most prolific winners in golf history. He has been inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame and honored with the PGA Tour Lifetime Achievement Award and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Asked where his passion is today, he grows reflective. "We've got to learn to live together. There's so much hate and so much revenge on the planet, and we've got to overcome that by love and by faith. These are traits we need to instill in our children."

This sense of obligation to his fellow human beings, and the love of his life, inspired the formation of the Gary and Vivienne Player Foundation. Together, they wanted to create after-school programs for underserved kids facing many of the same challenges Player faced as a child.

In their life together, Vivienne Player was the consummate mother, often taking their children on tour so the family could be together. The foundation honors her effort to create a nurturing environment that promotes the growth and self-confidence that comes from overcoming adversity.

In addition to these mentoring programs, the Gary and Vivienne Player Foundation partners with local organizations to provide temporary housing for families in desperate need and health care to vulnerable communities. The efforts stretch from South Africa to the United States, from golf course fundraisers to inner-city street corners.

"When I was nine years of age, I lay in bed crying, wishing I wasn't alone, wishing my mother wasn't dead and my father wasn't working in a gold mine 8,000 feet under the ground," he recalls. "That's when I determined I must do something to help change the world."

The foundation is now improving thousands of lives every year by teaching the skills that provide opportunity. True to form, Gary Player wants to do more. At age 90, he formed PLAE, the Player Academy of Excellence, focused on building future leaders and mentors.

“Adversity can make you highly successful,” Gary says. “From the first tee and beyond, you can accomplish anything you set your mind to.”

**Overcome Adversity...**[PassItOn.com](https://www.passiton.com)

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

*The Foundation for a Better Life® promotes positive values to live by and pass along to others.*

Copyright © 2026 | The Foundation for a Better Life®  
All rights reserved. | [www.passiton.com](https://www.passiton.com)

Available under a Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 License (international):  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>