

THE BACK NINE

IT'S TIME TO TAKE YOUR SHOT

"A fascinating chronicle of drive, determination and 'never say never'... pure nirvana ... a richly satisfying film ..."

PETE HAMMOND, BOXOFFICE.COM

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DECEMBER 14



PRESS KIT

FILM FESTIVALS

US

Newport Beach Film Festival

Waterfront Film Festival

Delray Beach Film Festival

Iowa Independent Film Festival
(Winner – Innovative Filmmaker Award)

Albuquerque Film Festival
(Winner – Best Documentary)

Naples International Film Festival

Gasparilla Film Festival

CANADA

Atlantic Film Festival

CARRIBBEAN

Bahamas International Film Festival

ONE LINE

Upon turning 40, confronted with his own *back nine*, a man begins his quest to play professional golf. Armed with determination, a competitive spirit and a longing to “become what he always wanted to be”, he embarks on a journey that will change his life forever.

SYNOPSIS

Upon turning 40, an above-average golfer accepts the challenge to chase his dream of playing professional golf. With his passion for the sport, the right team, training schedule and commitment, will he have his chance?

Armed with determination, Fitzgerald puts his team in place. He finds a swing coach, fitness and nutrition advisors, and develops a strategy. After researching the history of the game, reading numerous golf books, and talking to a wide range of experts, Fitzgerald sees his game improve substantially in the first year.

However, unlike professional golfers who earn a living on the course, Fitzgerald must find a way to balance this new goal with his family life, while earning a living to pay the bills. His day job as a filmmaker and film festival consultant demands long hours. His hardest challenge is finding enough time to bring his game to the highest level.

Over the course of this journey, Fitzgerald must also come to terms with who he is, balancing the experience and guidance of his two father figures – polar opposites as people and influences in his life. Now with children of his own, Fitzgerald senses an opportunity. Recognizing where his life’s mentors have fallen short, Fitzgerald sees his turn at fatherhood as a chance to “break the cycle” and establish a new approach to life, family and golf. *THE BACK NINE* presents the challenges inherent with finding the right balance between Fitzgerald’s personal and professional goals.

With a daughter in elementary school, and new son on the way, Fitzgerald continues to improve his game. Eventually, in order to put his new game to the test, he joins The Golf Channel’s *Amateur Tour*, and competes in tournaments throughout the year. His goal is to reach the National Championships in Orlando, Florida.

Overcoming many obstacles, Fitzgerald secures enough points to earn an invitation to the National Championships. Unfortunately, his primary client at the time is in the Middle East and their event dates bookend the Championships. He doesn’t have much choice. He must delay his quest and fulfill his professional obligations.

Through triumph and disappointment, Fitzgerald develops a new understanding for his priorities. His golf has improved. There is hope for his future, success on every level; but playing professional golf will have to wait. His quest will take longer than anticipated.

Golf mirrors life, the need for patience and discipline, focus and imagination. Through it all, Fitzgerald learns that finding the right balance in life will only make him a better player, father, husband and person.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The concept for the film began as an opportunity to document the challenge of training to be a professional golfer, an opportunity to merge two of Fitzgerald's greatest passions, golf and filmmaking.

From the outset, the film poses the question – Would this be possible, starting at the age of 40, juggling a family, and a challenging day job? This quest dictates the production schedule, as the filmmakers aim to capture the relevance of assembling the right team. They needed a professional swing coach, and to make use of technological advances in training devices. A medical doctor, with elite training experience, would test the physiological boundaries. The fitness instructor would set out a golf-centric regimen. And with a new mental coach, Fitzgerald develops a stronger mind-body connection.

Both Vignone and Fitzgerald brought different strengths and experience to the project, hoping to balance the personal journey with elements of golf as a sport. While it was important to infuse the project with traditional aspects of storytelling and the human condition, it was equally important to uncover the history, training and competition related to the world of golf.

As with any successful documentary film, filmmakers had to begin with a story structure in mind, covering all facets of the lead and supporting characters, while incorporating the unpredictability of events and experiences to come. It was important to establish the ordinary world, the current life routine. At the same time, filmmakers embrace the surprises, and the discovery of familial wounds that have been buried for some time. In fact, *THE BACK NINE* becomes a vehicle to uncover deep seeded issues between father and son.

As part of the research of golf and Fitzgerald history, father and son embark on a trip to the UK. The Fitzgeralds have an opportunity to play the courses at the home of golf, from St Andrews to Prestwick, an experience they have trouble putting into words. From there, he and his father take the short trip to Ireland with, where they learn of their family's royalty during the early years of the country. The Fitzgeralds stay at the Carton House, where Lord Edward Fitzgerald was born, and where Stanley Kubrick shot *BARRY LYNDON*. Then it's a night at the Fitzgerald owned Glin Castle, yet another storied compound.

What started as an inspirational journey, the challenge to realize a dream, becomes a story about a person searching for identity, and balance. Over the course of production, experts reveal the time commitment necessary to achieve expert level of performance. Yet, the family faces its own challenges. Would it be possible to break the cycle of the broken homes from where Fitzgerald and his wife come? They have a wonderful daughter; but would it be possible to have more children? With their "predator" loan, and mounting debt, would the Fitzgeralds be able to keep their house and maintain a decent lifestyle? Pay for their daughter's ballet class and piano lessons and hopefully welcome and provide for a new member of the family?

During production, they get the most surprising and amazing answer of them all, when Cindy becomes pregnant with their second child. Halfway through the filming, Grayson Green Fitzgerald is born. This is a wonderful addition to the family, and to the production.

What the filmmakers have hoped to capture is the evolution of Fitzgerald's character, as he chases a dream of professional sports. What occurs is a shift in priorities. While the dream of playing professional golf is still very much alive, new goal takes center stage. No longer defined by career success, Fitzgerald develops a stronger conviction to provide the support he and his family need to find the right path and break the cycle of the broken and unstable homes they themselves came from.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Ron Vignone – Writer/Director/Producer

Award winning film director Ron Vignone attended the University of Southern California where he received a degree in Literature and Writing. Vignone's first venture into the film industry was at Universal Studios, where he met and worked with legendary film director Fred Schepisi (*Six Degrees of Separation*, *The Russia House*, *Plenty*, *Empire Falls*). He worked closely with Schepisi on numerous films, along with master editors Peter Honess and Jill Bilcock, receiving both immeasurable experience from both a director's and editor's perspective.

Ron wrote, directed, and acted in a short film, *Snooze*, which met with great success, earning festival nods worldwide. Vignone then took on his first feature film, *SAY I DO*, executive produced by Schepisi, which received numerous awards on the festival circuit, including five Best Picture awards and a Best Ensemble Cast Award.

He has just wrapped production on two feature films, *KATIE Q* starring actresses Tanna Frederick and Karen Black, and co-starring other veteran comedienne Paul Sand, Michael Emil, and Zach Norman; and Henry Jaglom's *QUEEN OF THE LOT*, which he has co-written and is editing with Mr. Jaglom.

Jon Fitzgerald – Writer/Director/Producer

Fitzgerald holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Film Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara. In 1994, Fitzgerald directed and produced *SELF PORTRAIT*, which was not accepted at Sundance. As a result, he and two other filmmakers launched the Slamdance Film Festival in 1995, the first-born alternative to Sundance, designed to generate an avenue of exposure for new talent. He would then become the Executive Director for the next two years.

From 1997-1999 Fitzgerald held the position of Director of Festivals at the American Film Institute. Highlights during his tenure include the US premiere of Oscar winner *LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL*, Lasse Hallstrom's *THE CIDER HOUSE RULES* and Pedro Almodovar's *ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER*.

In May of 2002, Fitzgerald became the Executive Director of the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, and was responsible for overseeing the programming, sponsorship, marketing, and artistic direction.

Most recently, in 2007 and 2008 Fitzgerald worked as the Festival Director and then as Director of Programming for the Abu Dhabi Film Festival.

Fitzgerald has over fifteen years of experience in the studio, independent film, and film festival communities. In May of 2008, parent company Right Angle Studios launched Right Angle Pictures, a production division that will produce socially relevant motion pictures. The first project for Right Angle Pictures is THE BACK NINE, a feature length documentary about an average golfer's quest to become a professional golfer, beginning his training after the age of 40. The project will be completed in 2009

PRODUCTION CREDITS

PRODUCED, WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
Ron Vignone and Jon Fitzgerald

EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY
Bobby Chang

EDITED BY
Kate Noonan

SUPERVISING EDITOR
Ron Vignone

MUSIC COMPOSED AND ARRANGED BY
Kevin Brough

THEME MUSIC (MEXICO) COMPOSED BY
Sidney Fitzgerald

THEME MUSIC (MEXICO) ARRANGED BY
Kevin Brough

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Ron Vignone

CINEMATOGRAPHY
Ron Vignone, Christopher Pearce, Michael Makins, Nik Ashjian

STILL PHOTOGRAPHERS
Emilia Barozzi, Cindy Fitzgerald