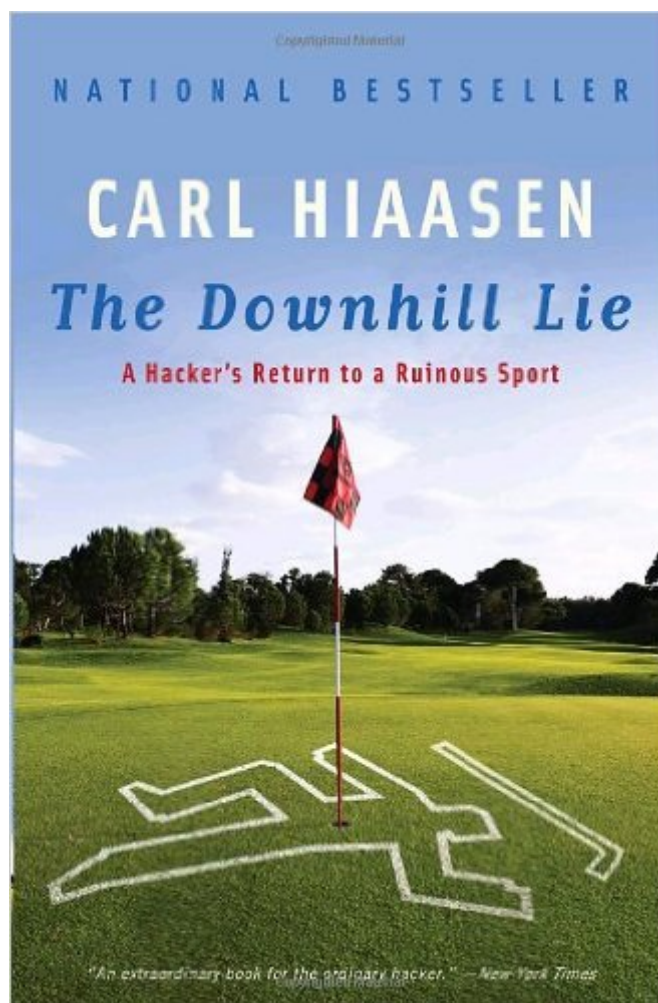


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# The Downhill Lie: A Hacker's Return To A Ruinous Sport



## Synopsis

Bestselling author Carl Hiaasen wisely quit golfing in 1973. But some ambitions refuse to die, and as the years passed and the memories of slices and hooks faded, it dawned on Carl that there might be one thing in life he could do better in middle age than he could as a youth. So gradually he ventured back to the rolling, frustrating green hills of the golf course, where he ultimately "and foolishly" agreed to compete in a country-club tournament against players who can actually hit the ball. Filled with harrowing divots, deadly doglegs, and excruciating sandtraps, *The Downhill Lie* is a hilarious chronicle of mis-adventure that will have you rolling with laughter.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Returning to golf thirty-two years after he gave it up, Carl Hiaasen, author of hilarious mysteries, shares his struggles to relearn the game of golf and maybe, even, learn to have fun with it. Golf is not a natural "fit" for Hiaasen--"I was just as restless, consumed, unreflective, fatalistic, and emotionally unequipped to play golf in my fifties as I was in my teens," he admits. He starts "on the path to perdition" in November, 2002, when *Sports Illustrated* asks him to go to Barbados to write a humorous piece about the photo shoot for the swimsuit issue, and he ends up playing golf with his editor during the downtime. Unfortunately, for Hiaasen, he plays well enough that he decides to play golf (with second-hand clubs) back home with friends, and soon gets caught up in the golf-mania of finding the perfect equipment, reading books by gurus like Bob Rotella, David Leadbetter, and legend Harvey Penick, subscribing to golf magazines, and buying anything that may improve his game--from pendants to wear around his neck (to reduce stress) to capsules of herbal supplements

(to improve concentration). Describing himself as a "reclusive, neurotic, doubt-plagued duffer," he keeps a diary for almost six hundred days, obsessively recording, often in salty language and off-the-wall imagery, the rounds he plays with his friends, including Mike Lupica and CBS's David Feherty. Admitting that he suffers from "Wildly Unrealistic Expectations," he reflects the fears and frustrations of all beginning golfers when he 1) has to play in front of strangers, 2) has to play a new course for the first time, and 3) agrees to play in his first tournament.

Downhill Lie has some very funny parts to it: Hiaasen has a wonderful self-deprecating sense of humor. You'll find tales of toad-wedging: golf practice that consists of chipping toads onto neighbors' houses. You'll find that golf clubs make effective rat bashers. I suspect that the ASPCA will find some things to offend them here. You'll read about the time he lost a golf cart--it slipped into a pond. But I found myself scratching my head in wonderment at times. Hiaasen is not, to be sure, a scratch golfer, but he has a voracious appetite to improve his game--as most golfers do. But we see him resorting to buying things--pendants with wonder powers to hang around your neck (only 75% as effective if kept in your pocket), herbal pills to improve "muscle memory", RadarGolf devices to help you locate lost balls, and the like. I'm at a loss here. Didn't we see Hiaasen regularly poking fun at the people who bought such devices in many of his novels? In Double Whammy, for instance, there's the unforgettable image of a cheap skiff hauled by a garbage truck to a tournament, and fishing with cheap equipment, when everyone else arrives with massive gadgetry--fish radar, gimmicks galore, etc. Hiaasen had always seemed to be fond of satirizing those who shell out large amounts of money for the kinds of devices he happily buys in Downhill Lie. There's almost an element of Eliot Spitzer here. I would guess that Hiaasen describes parts of perhaps 200 rounds of golf. Some of this is a pleasure and a delight to read. Some of it is, well....have you ever heard a golfer tell you about one of his rounds, shot by shot, hole by hole? It's never actually that bad or that detailed--but there are times when you feel as if half your mind was on other things.

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