

TALKIN' GOLF

with Charlie Epps



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The Charlie Epps Golf Hour

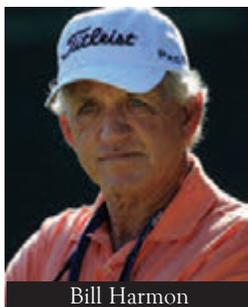
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Why I left Champions

Many of you have followed my career since the days at Houston Country Club in the late 1970s. When news of my recent departure from Champions Golf Club was made public, I'm sure there were questions as to what happened. Rather than let rumors swirl, I'd like to clear the air on the subject.

After four short months of working at Champions, it became apparent that it wasn't a good fit for me. As much as I loved the club, at the age of 68, it was the wrong time for me to take on a new challenge of that magnitude. I couldn't be the head pro at Champions and also devote the time necessary to coach Angel Cabrera on the PGA Tour in our pursuit of more major championships. Being the head pro at Champions and coaching a world-class major winner are two big jobs, and I thought I could do both successfully at the same time.

But I was wrong. I found out there weren't enough hours in the day, week and month for me to do both jobs the right way.

So it came down to this: I had to choose between Angel Cabrera and Champions Golf Club. It was a difficult decision, but my bond with Angel won out in the end. He and I have ties that go all the way back to Cordoba, Argentina, where we both grew up 20 years apart. I helped him start the Angel Cabrera Golf Club in Cordoba, and I travel there three times a year to oversee it and help it grow. Cordoba is in my blood, just as it is for Angel.

My personal commitment to him started six years ago when his manager asked me to become his short game coach. Four months later he outlasted Tiger Woods and Jim Furyk at Oakmont to win the 2007 U.S. Open. In 2009 he won the Masters.

Angel and I have more than a player-coach relationship. We're *familia*. He's a dear friend and someone I enjoy helping.

So in August, I sat down with Jackie and Robin Burke and said, "It's time for you to hire a young, eager golf pro to help you take Champions into the next era."

Jackie could not have been nicer. He said, "Epsy, I want the best for you. If you want to do this, I've got no problem with it whatsoever."

It was not easy for me to leave Champions, but I had to follow my heart. When I was offered that job, I was honored and excited about the opportunity. Along with Colonial Country Club, Champions is one of the two most historic clubs in Texas and one of the most iconic in the country. I thought it was the perfect setting for me to end my career.

Jackie called me and offered the job right when the Redstone sale went through with Escalante Golf. That phone call meant the world to me. Jackie Burke, who founded Champions with Jimmy Demaret, is someone I've admired and respected since my first days in Houston some 30 years ago. In the golf world, there aren't many bona fide living legends, but Jackie is one of them.

The gentlemen who run Escalante couldn't have been nicer. They wanted me to stay at Redstone, a place I love and called home for 11 years. The Escalante owners asked me to write my own job description and made me feel wanted. But it just so happened my dream job—at least what I thought was my dream job—was waiting across town.

As much as I love Redstone, the members, staff and those courses, and as highly as I regard it with its long history of hosting the Shell Houston Open, it's tough to compete historically with Champions. Established in 1957, it's been the site of the 1967 Ryder Cup, 1969 U.S. Open, 1993 U.S. Amateur and PGA Tour Championship four times.

Ben Hogan played his final competitive round at Champions. It's just a special, special place.

At the end of the day, I'll always love Redstone and Champions. I hold both clubs close to my heart. But the truth is I've had my dream job since 2007. My heart has always been in teaching the game. And with Angel Cabrera, I get to teach and work with one of the most talented players in the world. **TL**



CHARLIE EPPS

Known as "The Golf Doctor," Charlie Epps has been one of Houston's most respected PGA golf professionals for more than 30 years. In 2012, Charlie was inducted into the Texas Golf Hall of Fame and recently joined Arnold Palmer and Jim Nantz as an official spokesman for Insperty. Listen to "The Charlie Epps Golf Show" 8-9 a.m. Saturday mornings on 1560 AM in Houston and YahooSportsRadio.com everywhere else.