

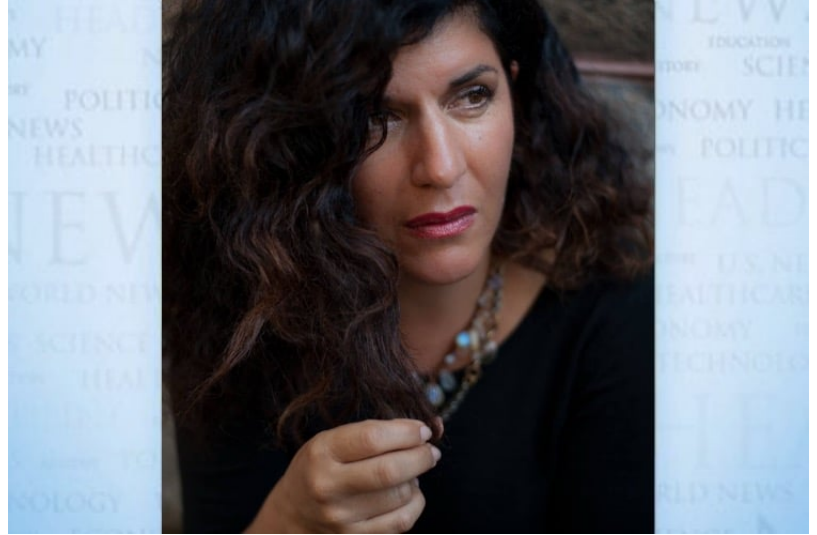


Written by [Salena Zito](#) on May 30, 2023

Stories That Inspire Always Begin With an Everyman Never Giving Up

This past Saturday, Michael Block, golf's 46-year-old everyman, was playing shoulder-to-shoulder with the world's top players at the PGA Championship in New York state. Against all odds, he was holding his own so well that by Sunday, he was paired with arguably the greatest golfer of his generation, Rory McIlroy, a four-time major champion.

Block's reaction to that pairing was pretty much the same one most of us would have if we were paired with someone who we've admired from afar: disbelief.



Salena Zito

"You serious?" Block said, spinning around in a circle when he got the news. "Wow. That should be fun. We'll have a good time," he added, "Really?" Then spun around again in disbelief.

It hadn't dawned on Block yet, that he had *earned* that opportunity, but what had dawned on him was that he was having a moment he wanted to hold on to for the rest of his life, so he wisely savored it with amazing clarity.

"Before you know it, you're 60 years old and retired and look back at the videos and remember that was the best week of my life. So I'm going to sit back as much as I can with my friends and my family at the house we rented and watch the videos tonight and see all my new followers on Instagram. It's been crazy."

Block went to bed that night before the final round on Sunday believing he had hit the bucket list of all bucket lists, and he was good with that. Then came Sunday morning and a whole new adventure for him — and the rest of the country following his ascent — one he never saw coming.

And when it did, Block didn't even believe it.

Block began the day on the first fairway with the crowds chanting, "Let's go, Block." However, it was at the 15th hole that the peak of his journey crystallized when he knocked his tee shot into the hole on the fly.

McIlroy strode over and gave him a bear hug. Yet Block wasn't completely sure what happened, and he was caught on TV saying, "That didn't go in, did it? No, no. No way. No way."

Way.

Block is one of 29,000 certified club professionals in the United States. The tournament he was playing in is the only of the four "major" competitions that reserves 20 spots for members of the PGA, the organization that conducts the tournament. Block's day job is teaching golf lessons at the Arroyo Trabuco Golf Club, a public-access course in Mission Viejo, California.

Golf has often been referred to as the game for the elite, yet the game originated by bored Scottish



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shepherds using their staffs to shoot sheep dung into cups. Or so the legend goes. The game exploded in popularity in the United States during the Industrial Revolution thanks to the development of railways, which allowed people to venture outside of their communities and into the countryside. It was during that era that golf clubs began a burst of growth all over the countryside. Automation also allowed the mass production of golf clubs, making the game more affordable than it was previously.

To put Block's achievement in perspective, there are nearly 30,000 other Michael Blocks in this country toiling at courses, carving out a living, but never getting "called up" to the big game.

Block not only got called up, or qualified; he crushed it.

His is a story about hope, a story that can be applied to just about anything. Nearly every one of us has gone through hard times in either our personal or professional lives and felt stuck or trapped by our situation. Block's story inspires us to consider that we can power through setbacks or adversity and be rewarded through hard work, humbleness and endurance.

How Americans reacted to Block's series of unexpected highlights defines the unchanging veracity about the human condition: In short, we are more aspirational than our politics and culture evoke. We are weary of news that focuses only on tragedy while strictly rationing reports of our aspirations and successes.

We reacted to Block in living rooms, sports bars and family picnics last Sunday with an outpouring of support, elation and joy because what Block achieved wasn't a fairy tale come true but a reminder to be ourselves, work hard, and believe in our dreams.

In the end, the 46-year-old club pro finished tied for 15th, just enough to qualify for next year's PGA Championship without needing to work his way through nerve-wracking qualifying tournaments. His performance also earned him a sponsor's exemption into next week's Charles Schwab Challenge at Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas, and another to the Canadian Open in June.

He summed the moment in only the way a true champion would — with emotion, gratitude and humility.

"I'm living the dream," Block said through tears in the clubhouse after the weekend came to a close.

"I'm making sure I enjoy this moment. I've learned in my 46 years it's not going to get better than this."

"I can't thank everyone enough for being so great to me."

Salena Zito is a CNN political analyst, and a staff reporter and columnist for the Washington Examiner. She reaches the Everyman and Everywoman through shoe-leather journalism, traveling from Main Street to the beltway and all places in between. To find out more about Salena and read her past columns, please visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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