

# eighteen:

## a golfing epic for sorcerer

As many have observed, golf is a game where your only real opponent is yourself; whether you have a good game or a bad game, the fact of the matter is there is only you and the ball out on that green, green grass, and if you blow it – well, it wasn't the ball that beat you.

*"It's the greatest game there is. Ask anybody. It's fun, it's hard. You stand out there on that green, green grass and it's just you and the ball. And there ain't nobody to beat up on but yourself. This is the only game I know of where you can call a penalty on yourself, if you're honest, which most people are. There just ain't no other game like it."*

*A golf course puts folks through a lot of punishment. It lives and breathes just like us.*

In **eighteen**, we take this conceit a step further and explore a single round of golf as viewed through the lens of Sorcerer. In this setting, the inner demons that keep you from concentrating aren't metaphors.

### Demons

For all intents and purposes, the 'demons' within **eighteen** are all Possessors (in that the desires and needs of the character possess them from time to time).

*Competitive golf is played mainly on a five-and-a-half-inch course; the space between your ears.*  
- Bobby Jones

There is, however, one main difference: the demons do not have full control over their hosts. Traditional Possessor demons in **Sorcerer** control the bodies of their hosts, suppressing the original personality. The inner demon focused on The Game cannot attempt to exert direct control, instead pressuring them to succumb to the desire to Win. They can make this seem very attractive, but the characters have control over their own bodies.

Even though the Game is functionally a Possessor demon, **eighteen** does not concern itself with the details of possession. These are inner demons – in essence, they are the secret, unlovely desires of the character – as such, they cannot be banished.

Making a character in **eighteen** involves the following steps.

1. Create a name and background.
2. Choose scores to total 10 (divided between Stamina, Will, and Game).
3. Choose descriptions for your scores.
4. Decide on a Need for your character.
5. Choose your Game abilities (one ability per point of Game).
6. Set Humanity at the level of the higher score between Stamina or Will.
7. Set a Price for your character. (Identical to Sorcerer)
8. Write the Kicker.

### Stamina

Stamina, like in **Sorcerer**, is a measure of your strength of body, as well as your general fitness, health, and ability to withstand physical fatigue. It is used when performing any task of physical exertion.

- **Big Hitter** – A monster in the tee box.
- **Leader** – Your one of media darlings, always on camera.
- **Tricky** -- Doesn't matter how difficult the lie is, she'll play.
- **Tiger** – Your game isn't strong, it's titanium.
- **Sickly** – You're still trying to get them to let you ride a cart in competition.
- **Tomboy** – Time to play with the big boys...

## Will

Will is a character's force of mind, as well as the ability to resist temptation. In **eighteen** Will is the buffer between you and the Need of your Game. The Will descriptions below describe not just what drives you mentally, but what quality resides in you that prevents you from entirely succumbing to your Game's Need. Will amounts to knowing the ins and outs of the world inside your head, where you really play the game.

- **Always Reading:** Self-help, diet books, guides to a better marriage, sometimes even golfing guides, whatever... books are where you get your inspiration.
- **Ballsy... Stupid, but Ballsy:** You like to go for the big hit. Glory invites defeat without fear. Sometimes winning isn't as important as being able to say that you tried something no one else dared.
- **Beaten:** You've lost before you even play.
- **Calm:** Nothing ruffles you. Sometimes, you might frown, but it's a thoughtful frown.
- **Cowardly:** "Better just lay up and play it safe."
- **Environmentalist:** You play the game to be outside..
- **Hellraiser:** Win big, lose big, work hard, play harder.
- **Master's Apprentice:** You learned from one of the best.
- **The Natural:** You've played since you were old enough to walk – nothing in this game scares you – it's the *real* world that's tough.
- **Perfect:** Master. Champion. Role model. Pressure.
- **Prettyboy:** Charming, considerate, and well-behaved.
- **Shrined:** Professional golfers are under a lot of pressure... how was therapy last week?

"Thirteen years on the driving range and you still think this game is about your testosterone count."  
-- Dave Simms, *Tin Cup*

"Fifteen years on the tour and you're still a fuckin' pussy."  
-- Roy McAvoy, *Tin Cup*

**Game**, which replaces Lore in **eighteen**, is a score not afforded to normal people: it measures the strength of the desire to win inside you and your connection to the Game itself. It may seem like the most important score, but as your instinct to win grows stronger, your control over it weakens.

*It's the game that cant be won, only played. So I play. I play on. I play for the moments yet to come.*

- **Course Pro**
- **Lucky Amateur**
- **Pro**
- **Star of the Fairway**
- **Loser**
- **Eccentric**

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## Game Abilities

- **Attraction.** People find you strangely charismatic on a Game vs. Will roll.
- **Boost.** You can add your Game score to Stamina or Will for one action (decide at the time you select this ability). Repeated uses of Boost for successive actions will result in 1 lasting damage per round.
- **Empathy.** On a successful Game vs. Will roll, you can determine the overwhelming thought on one person's mind. The "overwhelming thought" is defined as whatever is most occupying that person's mind at the moment.
- **Perception.** You may add your Game score to whatever score you are using for perception-based rolls. Exactly what you perceive must be defined when taking this power—hearing, sight, or something else. When you would not normally be afforded a perception roll, you may roll only Game.

- **Sneak.** Your Game is subtracted from the Perception dice of any one who might perceive you (to a minimum of 1). This power can be turned on and off, but the character must have some sort of cover, however minimal, for it to work.
  - **Vitality.** Dice of lasting damage up to your Game score are removed after each conflict, as opposed to half the damage. As both conflicts within the golf game itself (versus the course or other players, depending on the type of match) and with other PCs and NPCs can all take their toll on the player from hole to hole, this can be a very useful talent.
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## Need

In addition to your scores, your character also has a Need – the darker reason their character has for wanting to play (and Win) the game. Your Need helps to both determine the nature of your Game (which, if you hadn't noticed, is a score that works very much like a Demon in Sorcerer) and define your character. Your Need is not the only thing you're interested in, but it is what your inner demons really want from Winning the game. For example, a character with the Need for Wealth might enjoy sex, but only as an expression of the Wealth they wield by being a Winner. Note: this isn't necessarily what the character really wants -- it's what the demon inside the character wants, which provides the main struggle in *eighteen*. Some examples of your Game's Need include:

- **Glory.** This is the need to be respected, admired, and even worshipped. The inner-demon is the ultimate predator, and that fact should be respected and heeded by the less gifted.
- **Pleasure.** This descriptor hoards pleasurable items—hot baths, silk shirts, fine art, and the like. It is a glutton.
- **Sex.**
- **Wealth.**

Need reminds a character that the Game takes a toll. The key is to make your Need something that will interfere or contrast with aspects of the Kicker in interesting ways: if your character is dirt poor and trying to make their way into the Tour, envisioning a better life, their Need might be Wealth and their kicker might be "My girlfriend just told me she's pregnant -- she wants me to settle down and provide for her and the baby."

Need will manifest when Stamina or Will has been reduced to 0 sometime during that that day or you have failed in a Humanity versus Game contest that day. If Need manifests, the *player* is obliged to get their character to immediately seek some way to satisfy Need.

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## Humanity

In *eighteen*, Humanity is Playing the Game You Were Meant to Play – which means being true to yourself instead of focusing on Winning. (After all, you're playing a game against yourself.):

- Setting-specific Humanity loss check: making a play to 'win', breaking set rules, teaching someone new to the game good ways to 'enhance your game'.
- Setting-specific Humanity gain roll: calling a penalty on yourself when it is inconvenient to do so, showing someone how to enjoy playing the game, winning while playing 'your game'.
- All the original rules for Sorcerer Humanity gain and loss checks are in effect.

*"The meaning of it all is that there is no meaning."  
-- Walter Hagen, Legend of Bagger Vance*

If you reach 0 Humanity you lose all joy for the game. You might become a 'club pro' somewhere far away from The Tour or give up the game entirely, or (worse) you might stay in the game, doomed to play only for the money.

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## ***How to Play the Game***

The setup for *eighteen* is simple: the characters are all players participating in a competitive round of golf with other professional golfers (the Sorcerers of this setting). Each hole is a technical challenge that must be overcome, but more importantly the Golfer must address the challenge presented in their Kicker during the course of the match:

- Your girlfriend (of *eight years?*) just told you she's pregnant.
- Your wife wants a divorce.
- If you don't finish in the top three for this tournament, you're out of the Tour (or you lose your main sponsor).
- This is your first match after:
  - A horrible car accident.
  - Your father's death.
  - Getting out of rehab.

*Golf is assuredly a mystifying game. It would seem that if a person has hit a golf ball correctly a thousand times, he should be able to duplicate the performance at will. But this is certainly not the case.*

- Bobby Jones

... and so forth. Like many of the classic "golf films", the point of the story is not the game, but the demons that the character has to try to face down before they can be at peace.

### ***Example of character creation:***

I want to make a character for ***eighteen*** that centers on physical strength and moral weakness. Donald Gale is a rough-edged player with little finesse on the course but a tremendous physical presence and strength that generally makes up for it.

For his scores, I place 5 in Stamina, 2 in Will, and 3 in Game. Donald's a very physical player, but he succumbs to the stresses of the game a little too easily.

- I'll give Stamina the descriptor of Big Hitter, making further note in the character's background that while Don's not fantastic on the short game, he holds both tee-box and fairway distance records on all but one of the courses that he's ever played on.
- For Will, I choose "Ballsy... Stupid, but Ballsy"; Don is the sort of player who tries to carry a 250-yard water hazard... from the rough... simply because no one ever has. Don's had some run-ins with overzealous members of the British media and likes his black-and-tans after the game, so Hellraiser might work as well, but Ballsy makes him (to my mind) a more likeable character, and it's possible I'm going to need the likeability in the future.
- Finally, for his Game descriptor, I opt against "Loser" (although he does have trouble "closing the deal" and winning tournaments) and choose "Star of the Fairway" – people love a big hitter (especially those American fans), and Don is always good for a few highlight shots on ESPN every season.

Game-based Abilities should be easy as well. Donald's Game is 3, so I pick three: Boost Stamina (for those record-setting Drives), Vitality, and Attraction (he's something of a fan favorite, despite being a somewhat unattractive man with a face not unlike a potato).

For Donald's Need, I think for a while – with what I'm looking for, the temptations of the Game You Try to Win should be antithetical to the Game You Want to Play. I end up choosing Wealth, which means Donald may have problems with using his abilities in a way that focuses on "Winning" over "Playing the Game His Way" -- all the hype from the press on Why He Hasn't Won a Big One sometimes gets inside Don's head too much.

Donald's Humanity starts at 5, equal to his Stamina.

His Price is Arrogant (-1 to Perception rolls). Donald's not a subtle player and tends to gloss over elements of both the Game and his personal relationships, trying to bull through everything by force of will and brute strength.

For the Kicker, I'm going to put Don's Need in direct opposition to his Humanity (which I'm currently re-writing in my head to read "Playing the Game You Were Meant to Play"): Don's father tells him that his mother has been diagnosed with cancer and the doctor's feel her best chance of survival is a bone-marrow transplant -- the procedure is expensive and his parent's have little in the way of insurance -- Don needs to pull out a big win to save his mother.