LEE ELDER

In Line To Set Another Precedent If He Accepts Invitation To Play In Celebrated British Open

By Sam Lacy
Sports Editor,
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There is this haunting melody of sometime back that comes to mind as Lee Elder returns to the Masters golf tournament.

Written in the fifties, its lyrics describe the pleasures and advantages of another chance. It goes in part:

"Love is lovelier, the second time around; love is beautiful with both feet on the ground . . . . Love's more comfortable, the second time you fall; like a friendly home the second time you call . . . ."

It is not to imply here that Lee Elder has a love affair going with the Augusta National Golf Club and its tradition-steeped, 18-hole layout. But there is small doubt that Lee, like every player on the professional tour, nurtures a passion for it.

And love and passion are said to travel hand in hand.

Lee was at Augusta in 1975. But, because he was a marked man, he didn't perform to his capability.

He was marked because, as the first black allowed in the tournament, he endured a fishbowl existence — plagued by the curious, the critical and the hopeful. His anxiety to answer the curious, slap down the critics and vindicate the hopeful destroyed his concentration and magnified the insecurity which accompanies all players facing Augusta for the first time.

Elder opened that initial try with a score of 74, but his second-round 78 left him four strokes over the 36-hole tally of 148, which was the cutoff point at which the field was reduced in order to give the top 44 scorers room to battle it out for the title.

Following the Masters of two years ago, the AFRO made point of the fact that there were a number of tour-hardened golfers who, like Lee, had failed to make the halfway cut. Among them were men who had been previously exposed to the electricity of Augusta, therefore had reason to expect to play better.

England's Tony Jacklin was one. Gay Brewer was another. And Bob Goalby and George Archer. Jacklin was a former U.S. and British Open champion. The others were past Masters winners.

Roberto de Vicenzo and Bruce Crampton had been runners-up. They missed, too.

So, Elder had no reason to feel shame or to be embarrassed because some of his fans may have felt he let them down. Think of the collection of outstanding veterans who accompanied him to the sidelines with high scores.

"It was nice of you to write that," said Lee, "but I'm not one to measure success by another man's failure."

Just the same, the diminutive D.C. stylist, barring unforeseen difficulties otherwise, should turn in a better performance this "second time around."

He should be able to avoid the mistake of trying to cut the second hole dogleg too close and finding his ball at the base of a tree as he did on the opening day in '75. It necessitated wasting a stroke by backhanding a 2-iron to the fairway.

He'll position better this time with his drive at No. 13, another dogleg on which the green is surrounded by a treacherous chain of ditches.

Both No. 2 and No. 13 are par-5 holes at Augusta National, and the pros thoroughly dislike spending strokes needlessly on the par-5's.

These holes and Elder's experiences with them are mentioned in order to make clear why Lee's return to the Masters should produce better results. Not victory perhaps, but more satisfaction for the little man who tallies success on what he does and not on what others fail to do.

This "second time around" will help Lee keep "both feet on the ground" as he walks the 530-yard 8th fairway with its Jekyll-Hyde personality — the tranquil path between red dogwood

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Lee's first Augusta appearance made him a marked man in fishbowl

Lee Elder, center, smiles as Four-Star General Daniel (Chappie) James greets George Paul, executive vice president, Southern Railway, at the Lee Elder Celebrity Pro-Am Tournament held in Winston-Salem last year. Below, Earl Monroe, basketball superstar of the New York Knicks, greets Rose Elder, Elder's wife.

'I'm not to measure success by another man's failure . . .' says Lee

Take it from Pearl.

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