

## Book of the week: My Autobiography, by Bernhard Langer

DEREK CLEMENTS

**My Autobiography, by Bernhard Langer, Hodder & Stoughton, hb, £17.99**

BERNHARD LANGER is a survivor. Aged 45, he remains one of the most competitive players on both the European and US Tours. And yet, the German's name is synonymous with bad putting. By his own admission, Langer has suffered throughout his career, especially from 2-4ft. But each time he has battled back. When he began to struggle with the traditional putting grip, he tried holding the putter with his left hand below his right, and that worked for a while; then there was the grip that saw him clamp his right hand on to his left forearm, and that did the trick for a while, too; and, finally, he settled on the broomhandle putter, and that is still working.

One can only begin to imagine the mental torture he went through while all this was happening to him, how he felt when he stood over a tiddler. After reading his autobiography you are unlikely to be much the wiser. Sure, Langer, touches upon his putting woes, but he does so in a matter-of-fact way that does little to give us any sense of what he was going through, what he felt inside. This was surely the ideal vehicle to provide a unique and moving insight. Instead, we get: "This happened, so I tried that, and it worked."

He prefers to focus on the positive. As he says, nobody could have remained in the winners' enclosure for so long without being a good putter, and Langer's putting statistics are remarkably good.

He also misses a trick when discussing his relationship with Pete Coleman, his caddie. Players switch their caddies as often as they change their clubs, but Langer's relationship with Coleman has endured. They have been together for 20 years, through thick and thin, but if you want to know why then you will probably be left feeling disappointed.

He briefly turns his attention to the Ryder Cup —

Langer was, unfairly, vilified for missing a bit putt on the final green of the final match in the 1991 contest in Kiawah Island. Had it gone in, Europe would have retained the trophy. Langer admits that he was bitterly disappointed to miss, but says he was able to keep things in perspective; indeed, he won a tournament in Germany the following week. He also talks about the captains he has played for — maybe he's going to say something controversial here? No way. Langer gives the impression that everything in his life follows a routine, and that applies to his literary skills. "In 1989 I won this tournament, and finished third in that one, I could have won this event and should have won that one." It's like reading Janet and John.

The one thing he is prepared to discuss in depth is his faith. God plays an important part in his life, and Langer makes it clear it is his faith that has sustained him.

All in all, this is an unsatisfactory read that will leave most people asking why he bothered.