



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

Boy, has this been one amazing week! Over and over again, it has been about the numbers...

Here are the current stats: each is a crucial factor in a much larger story. I mean, after all, the numbers don't lie. Quick, catch the digits: the string is 8/62, 153,997, and 7,100,000,000. That pretty much tells the story of the last week of January, 2008...

If you're into golf, that "8" is special. Amidst wind and rain at Torrey Pines - with a Master's Program DreamMaster Weekend happening just around the corner! - Tiger Woods operated like a Cyborg on steroids to humble the field as he coasted to a 19-under-par finish for the four day Buick Invitational, setting an eight-stroke gap between his tally and second-place finisher Ryuki Imada. The other number that rattled the PGA faithful: at age 32, he has matched the legendary Arnold Palmer at 62 career tournament wins, with only Sam Snead (82), Jack Nicklaus (73) and Ben Hogan (64) posting higher lifetime victories. Yep, "8/62" are some of the numbers of the week...

Then, there was 153,997. No one would have guessed that count, for sure. Beans in a jar? People hoping to catch a scalped ticket next Sunday at the Super Bowl? Number of foreclosures on the market



in Stockton, California? Not even close: that number emerged from the polls in South Carolina, on Sunday. It was 153,997 Democrats who marked the "Obama" bubble instead of the "Hillary" bubble, giving him a 2/1 edge over Ms. Senator Presidential Hopeful Former First Lady Clinton. Super Tuesday may have everyone gushing, but the talking heads are squeezing Overthrow Saturday for all the speculation they can eke out. When an ex-Pres and a sitting Senator double-up on a first-termer in his first national sweepstakes - and, lose - it's like Mighty Casey at bat, going down for the count. The numbers tell the story...

Then, there's that pesky 7,100,000,000. There weren't that many range balls at Torrey Pines, so it had no presence at Tiger's win. There aren't that many alligators in South Carolina - let alone, voters - so all those zeros didn't register in the Palmetto Primary. That's a bunch of digits, when

you get right down to it. There aren't that many people alive on the planet, for heaven's sake. How did 7,100,000,000 get in the news?

Think Jerome Kerviel. You know, ol' Jerome Kerviel. What, *you don't know Jerome?* O.J. is more famous, sure; but Jerome is likely to have his day in the sun, soon. I mean, Societe Generale - France's second-biggest bank - never expected their obscure stock trader to become a world figure. He may have missed Vegas and Macau, but since January 1st he has had quite an exciting run. At point, he had bet \$ 73.5 billion - more than the bank's market worth - on positions in the Eurostoxx index, the DAX in Germany and the FTSE in London. Things soured before he could get his portfolios cleaned up... and he managed to lose a cool \$ 7.1 Billion - that's "Billion," with a "B" - in the biggest single clock-cleaning in the history of the markets. The reverberations are still echoing through the world's markets...

They're all just numbers. For Tiger, it was 8 and 62 - and a payoff of \$ 936,000. For Mr. Obama, it meant 25 of the 2,025 Democratic delegates he'll need to be his party's nominee for the 2008 presidential campaign. For Mr. Kerviel - at the ripe old age of 31 - the loss of \$7.1 billion is just a number. He could pledge to pay it back; if he could earn \$1,000/day and devote it all to the debt, he would be out-of-hock in just 19,452 years (that is, if he plowed through the weekends and stayed focused). *It's all just numbers...*

Funny how many people live in this number-charged world, and think that God has no interest in numbers. Even as he articulated the theological certainties of the Christian faith, Paul recognized this fact:

"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in." (Romans 11:25) The Business Plan of the Kingdom of God has a target number - people from outside the tribes of the Chosen People - whose membership count in the ranks of the redeemed will signal the end of this era and the transition into Glory. *Now, THAT'S a number that will make the headlines!*

Bob Shank

Bob Shank is Founder and Chief Mentoring Officer of The Master's Program (TMP).

To learn more about TMP visit:

www.mastersprogram.org

To read prior issues of the Point of View visit:

www.mastersprogram.net