

What Wins the Open

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What makes an Open Champion?

Skill? Yes, but sometimes skill alone isn't enough.

Breaks of the game? Occasionally.

When a player has the requisite skill and gets the breaks, he usually is the winner—but always provided his skill and his luck are undergirded by self-control, the power of mastering his emotions instead of being a slave to them.

That is a vivid impression we received during this year's Open Championship at the Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles. To appreciate it, you have to realize the situation:

When Tension Mounts

Here are great players competing for a prize dearly desired. The urge for victory is strong. Every shot counts; one slip can be fatal. Although golf is a game and the fate of nations does not depend upon it, it is the livelihood of the professional—and every man's livelihood is important. So the Open is an intense competition.

In that situation, the self-control and the sportsmanship of leading players were memorable. For example:

Ben Hogan and Lew Worsham were leading with 67s on opening day. On the first tee of the second round, Hogan hooked his drive badly. "Out of bounds," everybody thought, probably including Hogan. Though his share in the lead was apparently vanishing, Ben just shrugged and quietly asked his caddie for another ball. No dramatics. No temperamental flailing of the ground with his club. Just "Give me another ball." Self-control.

As it developed, Hogan's first drive was in bounds by an inch or less. The ball was precariously perched, way above his feet. He played a small safety shot short of a barranca just beyond the drive zone, sent his third toward the green, and scored a par 5. On the next hole—Riviera's hardest par 4,466 yards long—he had a birdie 3.

There, perhaps, is a clue to what makes

Ben Hogan tick. He has the forward look—the ability to put the last shot out of mind and to work on the next one. He is his own master. There is the Open Championship of 1948.

Let's go back two years to the 1946 Open at Canterbury in Cleveland. Ben sent his approach shot to the green of the last hole, about 25 feet from the cup. He had two putts for 284, which would have tied for the Championship; one to win.

His approach putt was a bold attempt for victory. It slipped some three feet beyond the cup. His next putt—the one which would have tied—did not drop.

But Ben Hogan was smiling as he signed his card and returned his score of 285. He was smiling the smile of a man who is a champion inside himself.

You could go on and on about things like this . . . how Lew Worsham this year on the 28th hole at Riviera flubbed two shots off the green, took a 6 for the 315-yard par 4 hole, and continued calmly about his business even though he had lost his first-round lead if not his Championship . . . how Jimmy Demaret in the last round holed four birdies in five holes from the 62nd through the 66th, then missed a 4-foot putt for another bird which might have changed the complexion of the tournament, and continued as debonair as ever . . . how Jim Turnesa became the first player in history to score 280 in the Open, only to have Hogan and Demaret surpass his score, yet Jim continued his usual, self-possessed self . . . how Bobby Locke, Sam Snead, Herman Barron and other contenders took the bitter with the sweet and remained sportsmen and gentlemen.

There is nothing meek and mild about the leading players. When occasion requires, they stand up for their rights firmly. But it is an inescapable impression that their control is not confined to the play of a golf ball.

Solomon put it this way in his Proverbs: "He that is slow to anger is better than

Club-Testing



Photo by Les Silvera

John D. Ames (background), Chairman of USGA Implements and Ball Committee, measuring markings on iron clubs at the Open Championship with the USGA's new micrometer-microscope device

the mighty : and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

For that quality, among others, we salute Ben Hogan and most of his fellows.

Markings on Iron Clubs

All was not sweetness and light at the Open. Just before the tournament, about 35 players learned that markings on their iron clubs did not conform with USGA specifications. Many players buffed their club grooves down on an emery wheel in Willie Hunter's pro shop.

USGA policy is this: Every player is presumed to use clubs and balls which conform with USGA rules. No attempt is made by the USGA to ferret out implements which may not meet the standards. Golf's code of honor applies here just as it applies to a player's certification of his score. Instead of having a police system.

the USGA posts a notice somewhat as follows at its Championships: "Players in doubt about markings on iron clubs may consult the CSGA Committee."

As a result, many players submitted clubs for checking prior to the 1947 and 1948 Opens. Last year many clubs were outside the specifications when measured with a finely graduated steel ruler and magnifying glass.

Realizing that this method of measurement was not perfect, the USGA in 1948 purchased a new device combining a micrometer and a microscope which enabled measurement by anyone within 1/2,000 of an inch.

On March 3, 1948, John D. Ames, Chairman of the USGA Implements and Ball Committee, requested manufacturers to submit current iron clubheads for checking, "in order that there may not be under any circumstances a repetition of what occurred at the 1947 Open." Mr. Ames advised the manufacturers of the results of his tests. The majority of the 1948 iron heads were within limits; a few were not.

It is difficult for the USGA to understand why all new clubheads do not conform with the rules. The present specifications were agreed to by leading manufacturers in 1940. To allow ample time for club-makers to change dies, the effective date of the specifications was deferred to January 1, 1942. There has been no change in them in the interim.

Yet at this year's Open, many clubs were outside the rules. The clubs had not been tampered with. Their faultiness was not caused by the players (whose disposition to observe the Rules of Golf was noteworthy) but by club-makers.

On the other hand, a few borderline clubs which were passed at the 1947 Open, after being tested by the devices then used, did not measure up to standard on the USGA's new instrument in 1948.

Ben Hogan, among others, apparently felt that the non-conformity of his and others' clubs, when tested at Riviera, created the impression that players were trying to evade the rule. The USGA is convinced that the players had no such intention. Rather, manufacturers of improper clubs had apparently failed to tell players

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about results of USGA tests made earlier in the year. Had the manufacturers done so, they would have obviated pre-tournament problems at Riviera.

Several of the top finishers at Riviera, including Hogan, Demaret, and Barron, use clubs made by the same manufacturer. All voluntarily asked Mr. Ames to check their clubs just before the Open. Their clubs were found faulty. Yet early in April, 1948, Mr. Ames had advised the manufacturer that his products "do not meet the specifications."

It is true, as Hogan pointed out, that the USGA has a measuring device this year different from the one used last year. It is accurate to a finer degree. But we daresay it is no more accurate than the means used by manufacturers to measure their club-stamping dies and to check the results.

The basic rule from which the specifications spring is older than the specifications. The rule has long been: "Club faces shall . . . not bear any lines, dots, or other markings with sharp or rough edges made for the obvious purpose of putting a cut on the ball."

Pursuant to that, the specifications provide in part, with respect to grooves:

1. The angle formed by the walls of grooves shall be at least 90 degrees.
2. Width of grooves shall not exceed 35/1,000 of an inch.
3. The flat surface between grooves shall be at least three times the width of the grooves ; if grooves are less than 25/1,000 of an inch wide, the flat surface between their nearer edges must be at least 75/1,000 of an inch.

Players in doubt about their clubs should have them tested before attending competitions. As manufacturers agreed to produce only clubs conforming with USGA specifications after January 1, 1941, they doubtless would be willing to test players' clubs and, if necessary, correct them.

Mr. Ames met with representatives of six leading manufacturers on May 18, 1948. It was the consensus that there was no need to change the specifications.

Hogan's Record 276

| Hole | Yards | Par | 1st | 2d | 3d | 4th |
|----------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | | | Rd. | Rd. | Rd. | Rd. |
| 1..... | 313 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| 2..... | 466 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| 3..... | 415 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 4..... | 245 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 5..... | 432 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| 6..... | 166 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 7..... | 40% | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| 8..... | 385 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| 9..... | 422 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Total out.. | 3,446 | 35 | 31 | 36 | 33 | 33 |
| 10..... | 3 1 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| 11..... | 569 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 12..... | 445 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 13..... | 440 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| 14..... | 160 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 15..... | 440 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| 16..... | 145 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| 17..... | 585 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 18..... | 455 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Total in.. | 3,574 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 35 | 36 |
| Grand Total.. | 7,020 | 71 | 67 | 72 | 66 | 69 |

Record Scores in Open

The Open at Riviera was remarkable for record scoring, especially as Riviera is one of the most testing courses on which the Open has ever been played. Not only is it the longest in Open history, measuring 7,020 yards with a par of 71, but it is exacting, especially in placement of drives.

A chief reason for the low scoring was the superior quality of the putting greens, which, thanks to the care of Lloyd Monahan, course superintendent, provided a splendid stage for Hogan and others to capitalize on their remarkable skill. The fine architecture of the course also deserves credit. A properly designed course should yield itself to low scores when well played.

Hogan's winning score of 276 was five strokes lower than the former Open record set by Ralph Guldahl in 1937 at Oakland Hills, Detroit. Demaret, who finished second with 278, and Jim Turnesa, third with 280, also surpassed the previous record of 281.

Sam Snead established a new Open record for the first 36 holes with 69 - 69 - 138. The old mark was originally set in 1916 by Charles Evans, Jr., with 70 - 69 - 139; it was later tied by Snead in 1939 and Chick Harbert and Dick Metz in 1947.

Evans used seven clubs in 1916.