

# The Public Links Championship

By TOTTON P. HEFFELFINGER

USGA VICE-PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLIC LINKS COMMITTEE

To play a game for the sake of the game, rather than for material gain of any kind, is true amateur sport. One of the most refreshing golf events is, therefore, the Amateur Public Links Championship.

Hopeful players have for months been planning vacations so as to play in this year's tournament in latter July if they survive sectional qualifying tryouts. The successful ones will gather at the North Fulton Park Golf Course in Atlanta.

They will temporarily cease to be accountants, policemen, teachers, carpenters, students, salesmen, railroad workers. They will just be golfers and sportsmen.

There will be no vast galleries, no admission fee for spectators, no commercial aspects whatever. There will just be 210 fellows who love to play golf, competing with one another for a USGA Championship.

It will be a sports event in the best sense of the term.

Bill Korns and his Salt Lake City friends won't be there this year-Atlanta's a bit too far-but Bill wrote a letter recently:

"We are going ahead with plans to build up a fund to be used in the following years.

"I feel that it is a privilege to work toward this end. Friendships made and the fellowship that surrounds this tournament are an integral part of good sportsmanship, all things to be valued by any participant."

To encourage that sort of spirit, the USGA is delighted to spend the several thousand dollars which is its part of the championship costs, without any return other than 50¢ of each \$3 entry fee (the remaining \$2.50 is distributed locally among qualifiers for allowable expenses). Several thousand dollars more will be spent by the Atlanta Public Links Association on local arrangements.

Quality of play is high. Six times the Championship qualifying medal has been won with scores below 140 for 36 holes. Semi-finalists are invited to play in Sec-

tional Qualifying Rounds for the Amateur Championship.

This year the Public Links will be entirely at match play for the first time, beginning July 19. The Team Championship, on July 17, will be at 18 instead of 36 holes, and three-man teams will represent whole qualifying sections rather than individual cities, as formerly. There have been 2,729 entries.

Wilfred Crossley will defend the Individual Championship he won in last year's final with Avery Beck of Raleigh, N. C. Crossley then lived in Atlanta, but has since moved to New York. Atlanta won the 1947 Team Championship.

Although Atlanta is a city of golf champions, this will be the first USGA championship there. Georgia hospitality has already been evidenced by construction of a new clubhouse at North Fulton Park. As President of the Atlanta Public Links Association, Don Gavan is in charge of arrangements. Among those helping are Verne Murrah ; George Clayton ; Ed Miles, USGA Public Links Committee member ; Keith Conway of the USGA Sectional Affairs Committee; Robert T. Jones, Jr.; Charles R. Yates; Misses Louise Suggs and Dorothy Kirby; the Atlanta Women's Golf Association, of which Mrs. O. B. Keeler is president emeritus, and the Atlanta Junior Chamber of Commerce.

The "father" of the Public Links Championship is James D. Standish, Jr., of Detroit, chairman of the first USGA Public and Municipal Golf Courses Committee in 1922.

Mr. Standish was Chairman of the Public Links Committee 1922-27 and again 1945-47. He donated the Individual Championship Cup. He is now a Vice-President of the USGA and describes the beginnings of the championship as follows:

"At a meeting of the USGA Executive Committee on February 1, 1922, it was decided that a Public Links Championship

## Holder and Donor of Standish Cup



**As "father" of the USGA Amateur Public Links Championship, donor of the trophy and Chairman of the Public Links Committee last year, James D. Standish, Jr., (right) of Detroit, presented the cup to the winner, Wilfred Crossley, after the 1947 tournament in Minneapolis.**

should be held, and the event was awarded to the Ottawa Park Course in Toledo at the request of the late Sylvanus P. Jermain, president of the Toledo District Golf Association.

"The Committee had no way of anticipating how many entrants to expect, or how the entrants would raise their allowance of traveling expenses plus \$4 a day. It was a matter of great satisfaction when 140 entries were received.

"Less than half the players wore golf shoes. About one in three started by placing his sand tee on one of the flat metal tee markers then in use. They were, of course, dissuaded.

"The winner was Eddie Held, St. Louis, who defeated Dick Walsh, New York, 6 and 5, in the final. Walsh won the title the following year at Washington, and both of the first finalists developed into excellent competitors and members of private clubs. Held is now a professional.

"Although the Committee had to wink at several inadvertent infractions of rules, the first championship was a great success. So few really knew what the Rules of Golf meant that the foundation given in the rules was considered to be worth the whole undertaking.

"One of the most unusual incidents that ever took place during a golf match occurred during the event. Two players had just made their second shots on a hole near the finish when a pistol shot sounded in the rear rank of the gallery. A thoroughly disinterested spectator had chosen that particular moment to commit suicide. After the excitement quieted down, the match continued."

Before the second championship was held, the late Hon. Warren G. Harding, then President of the United States, kindly donated a trophy for team competition.

Prior to 1939, any community could be represented by four players, determined through local qualifying rounds, in the Individual and Team events. The event grew in popularity until a record entry of 248 appeared for the 1938 championship.

The field then was too large for proper handling. In order to control the size, a system of Sectional (not local) Qualifying Rounds was established in 1939. That year 2,401 players entered the Sectionals, held at 33 points, and 190 qualifying places were allotted for the championship. The entry in 1946 reached 3,586, a record for a USGA Championship and believed to be a world record.