

IT'S YOUR HONOR

Three Cheers for Luck, Good and Bad

TO THE USGA:

"It is impossible to eliminate all elements of chance from the game." I quote this most thought-provoking statement from page 25 of the June issue of your JOURNAL.

Will you allow a duffer (who has struggled with golf for half a century on both sides of the Atlantic for about equal periods) to remark that herein would seem to lie most or all of the desire to modify certain Rules.

Some of us think it is highly *undesirable* to try to eliminate any of the luck element incorporated in this ancient and honorable game played on a surface exposed to the elements and to the damage of man and animals, beyond playing it on a well-kept course perfected a great deal beyond the seaside stretches on which the game started.

The view of this school of thought is that all of the most popular games and sports which come readily to mind contain a large element of luck with the underlying theory that in the long pull good and bad luck tend to balance. Chess may be presumed as a game with no luck element, but it is certainly not as popular as contract bridge, poker, or gin rummy with their large luck factors which often prevent the victory of players with the greater skill. And one of our most popular sports, baseball, appears to have a considerable and most fascinating element of luck.

There are apparently two irreconcilable schools of golf thought, pro-luck and anti-luck groups. The finest golf players appear to have as an ideal the reduction of the luck element to a minimum (say as in the best billiards) so that they can get low stroke-scores.

But it is suggested that perhaps 80 to 90% of golfers would get far more fun if they played hole-by-hole, or match play, in which the Rules recognized the desirability of a large and delightful element of luck in deciding the outcome.

Golf has often been likened to life itself where one must take the good luck and the bad with a smile.

The original or Scottish conception of the ancient game is that if one's ball hap-

pens to rest in a divot hole, the good player has a club and a shot which should allow a good recovery. But if that difficult shot does not always turn out to be just as good as it might have been from a perfect fairway lie, so what?

Further, one must not forget that mud is not always sticking to one's own ball. And that an unrepaired heel mark in a sand trap will always be a bad lie until perchance the Rules are further "sissified" and we are deprived of that unholy glow which permeates certain wicked golfers when, in a tight match, they see their competitor's ball so placed.

So here are three rousing cheers for good and bad luck and lots of both.

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Ben Hogan's Open Record

TO THE USGA:

I had a wonderful time watching the Open Championship at Riviera in June and was really pleased when Ben Hogan set a new Championship record of 276—one stroke more than his winning score in the Los Angeles Open last winter on the same course.

In the Championship, cleaning the ball on the green was not permitted, the 14-club limit was observed, and the course was more exacting than for the Los Angeles Open.

Ben's score indicates to me that the desire to clean the ball and the number of clubs used are not important to low scoring by a real golfer.

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Easier Reading

TO THE USGA:

I think the improvement in the new Rules of Golf is remarkable, and the placing of the rule number on each page is a great help. I used to feel I was in an open sea when I had to go through five pages of Rule 7 and without knowing whether to look forward or backward.

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Editor's Note: The USGA JOURNAL invites comments on matters relating to the welfare of the game and will publish them as space permits.

