

Uniformity in the Rules

RECENT decisions by the Professional Golfers' Association of America to play its tournaments under the established Rules of Golf are a splendid thing for golf. They mark a highly important step toward one unified game in the United States.

Early this year the PGA offered the USGA a number of suggestions regarding the play of the game and the USGA Open Championship. Later, but before receiving the USGA's reply, the PGA announced that its competitions would henceforth be played under USGA Rules except for the number of clubs a player might carry; more recently, the PGA adopted a policy of full uniformity.

The PGA's action was especially gratifying because it had been made voluntarily.

The PGA's original suggestions were signed by Mr. Ed Dudley, its President. The USGA reply was made by Mr. Fielding Wallace, its President. Normally, when Messrs. Wallace and Dudley have any mutual golf affairs, they handle them by conversation in the clubhouse and on the golf course of the Augusta National Golf Club, Augusta, Ga., of which Mr. Wallace is Secretary and Mr. Dudley the Professional. They are good friends and occasional golf companions—symbolic of the fine relations which have always existed between amateurs and professionals in golf.

The USGA's reply covered in detail some basic views of the Association. Certain points are sometimes little understood by golfers generally. The USGA believes it to be in the interests of the game for its attitude to be known by golfers generally.

Therefore, the USGA's answer to the PGA is published below—but we emphasize that the PGA has independently settled most of the questions raised. Thus, the USGA letter should be read not in the sense that it is still directed to the PGA but only in the sense of information for all golfers.

Following is Mr. Wallace's letter to Mr. Dudley:

WE have given consideration to the suggestions in your letter of January 8. Our Execu-

tive Committee is highly desirous of promoting uniformity in the play of the game and observance of the Rules, and we therefore appreciate any effort toward that end.

However, our Executive Committee believes that it would not be to the best interests of golf to adopt your particular suggestions.

Perhaps our divergence from your views is accounted for by a difference in general approach to the game. Golf to us is essentially a recreation and a sporting test of skill for the nearly 3,000,000 amateur players in the United States. On the other hand, your Association sponsors a program of intensive competition among professionals for money prizes.

In general, your suggestions would tend to "soften" the game, in our opinion, and to make for artificially low scoring. We, too, are interested in promoting interest in golf. However, we do not believe that this is the way to do it. Our observation has been that a game is not necessarily improved by "softening" it. To the contrary, we believe that the challenge which golf affords as essentially a test of skill is one of its greatest charms and one of the reasons why it has thrived. It appeals deeply to that quality in people which inspires them to exert their best efforts in the face of difficulty.

Most if not all of your suggestions doubtless come from the small group of professionals who are your tournament circuit players. They are the greatest players in the game. It seems to us that, since they possess the ultimate in skill, they are the ones who should least feel a need for a "softer" code of Rules. If they do feel such a need, then you will doubtless recognize that their interests are quite special in that they are constantly competing for money prizes. In that case, we cannot agree that their special interests necessarily represent the best interests of the game as a whole.

14-Club Rule

You have suggested that the Rules of Golf be amended to permit the use of 15 or 16 clubs, rather than the present limit of 14.

Our Executive Committee is unanimous in the belief that 14 clubs are enough to play the game pleasurablely or to provide a demonstration of skill.

You have said that the vast majority of those with whom you have discussed the subject are very strongly in favor of 16 clubs. You imply that failure to amend the 14-club limitation would constitute failure to give cognizance to the wishes and interests of what you call "the golfers of the Nation."

Although the USGA represents the members of some 1,100 clubs, we have not received any suggestions for increasing the number of clubs except from some of the professionals on the tournament circuit sponsored by the PGA.

If the Rules were amended to permit 16 clubs, many amateurs would feel a compulsion to add two clubs to their sets—an increase of 14 per cent. The cost of a set would increase proportionately. If for no other reason, we feel this would be a disservice to the vast body of amateur golfers.

Decision to limit the number of clubs to 14 was made by our Executive Committee in November, 1936 after an extensive survey of sentiment throughout the United States and after conference with the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland. The effective date of our Rule was deferred to January 1, 1938 in order to give players and manufacturers ample opportunity to make necessary adjustments. The Rule was well received and we have not heard of serious objection in the intervening decade except for the suggestions in very recent years by your Association.

In announcing the 14-club limitation in January, 1937, our Executive Committee issued the following statement:

"The Executive Committee has noted with concern a growing increase in the number of clubs. Its inquiries supported its conclusion that limiting the number of clubs would tend to restore to the game individual shot-making skill lost through the introduction of an excessive number of clubs in finely graduated and matched sets. The Committee felt that a multiplicity of clubs tended toward mechanization of a game one of whose virtues lies in the opportunity it affords for full individual skill. In earlier days players sometimes changed their swings to execute varied shots. The tendency in recent years has been to change only the club. It was felt that, as a former President of the Association said, players should not buy their shots in the professional's shop but should develop skill by their own effort.

"The Executive Committee believes that limitation of the number of clubs will accomplish other desirable objectives, namely:

1. "Relief to caddies from unfair burdens;
2. "Reduction of delays in play, as the players will spend less time in deciding what club to use;
3. "Give players who cannot afford an unlimited supply of clubs an opportunity to compete with others on a more equal basis."

Markings on Iron Clubs

You have suggested that we adopt one standard design with which the faces of iron clubs may be marked (rather than the specifications we now have).

A similar request was made by a committee representing the PGA during the Open Championship last year. The USGA representatives at that time stated that the feature of the Rules which permits some latitude in the character of markings was adopted at the request of manufacturers in order to give them an opportunity for some individuality of design. Your representatives then expressed the opinion that the manufacturers would accept a standard design, to which we replied that our Executive Committee would probably approve such a design if the manufacturers were agreeable.

It was therefore determined that we would approach the manufacturers to obtain their opinion, which we did, and we advised Mr. George Schneider, Chairman of your Tournament Committee, of the results. The final vote of the manufacturers was that seven were opposed to or preferred not to make such a change and that three were willing. Since the action of our Executive Committee was contingent upon a favorable reply, this concluded the matter.

We note your feeling that a standard design would make it easier to inspect clubs and eliminate confusion. A standard design doubtless would be simpler to interpret than the present specifications, but the checking of scoring of iron clubs is at best not an easy job for the layman since it deals with very fine measurements. We therefore feel that we should depend on the manufacturers to make clubs in conformity with our present specifications, and a change to a standard design would be of no assistance in this respect. Most of the confusion in the last year was caused by either deliberate or careless manufacture of clubs in violation of our specifications. Such a situation would not have been helped by the adoption of a standard design and, since we rely on the manufacturers for their cooperation, we think it far better to provide them with a set of specifications which is to their liking rather than force the adoption of a standard design which they do not want.

We are receiving the cooperation of all the manufacturers. If the professionals will give similar support, we believe that the matter of club face markings will not be a problem.

Prize Money for Open Championship

You have suggested that the prize money for professionals in the Open Championship be increased by an amount equal to the entry fees received from the competitors.

We regret to say that we feel it inadvisable to do so. We have many other activities which would be adversely affected if we were to increase the Open prize money. Further, we feel that the prize money now offered is adequate under existing circumstances.



Fielding Wallace (left) and Ed Dudley, USGA and PGA Presidents, respectively.

The Open Championship prize money has twice been increased in the last two years—by \$2,000 in 1946 and by \$2,000 again in 1947. The total scheduled prizes in 1947 amounted to \$10,000. In addition, in both 1946 and 1947 we awarded special prizes of \$1,000 for equal division among the competitors in playoffs which became necessary after ties for the Championship.

Thus, in 1947 all prizes for professionals amounted to \$11,000, as compared with \$6,000 in the last pre-war Championship in 1941. The USGA's income has not increased correspondingly and its expenses have grown much greater.

In connection with entry fees, the fee for the Open Championship has remained at \$5 for a great many years. Further, 42 per cent of the entrants in the last two years have been amateur golfers—the two-year total of 2,532 entrants consisted of 1,467 professionals and 1,065 amateurs. That proportion has been constant in both of the post-war Open Championships held thus far.

I am sure you know that we should like to make the Open Championship as interesting as possible for the competitors, consistent with our other commitments, and that we should like to be as helpful as reasonably possible to the professional golfers. The USGA's attitude has been expressed in numerous ways throughout the years. The Open Championship, for instance, inaugurated in 1895, was the first regular competition with money prizes for professionals. Then, too, in the early years of your Association's Ryder Cup Match series with British professionals, the USGA made cash contributions toward the PGA's expenses. I think you must know that it has always been the USGA's intention to be as useful as possible to the game of golf.

Our desire to serve the best interests of the game as a whole is precisely one main reason why we feel unable to increase the Open Championship prize money. If we were to do so, we should have to make a corresponding decrease in allotments for other activities, all of which ultimately benefit the game and therefore benefit the professional who makes

his livelihood from the game. To give you but a few examples:

1. Last year the USGA allotted to its Green Section a budget equivalent to 125 per cent of all income from USGA membership dues. To reduce the Green Section's budget would retard its work for the good of all golf courses.

2. Our Walker Cup and Curtis Cup Matches with the British are very expensive and produce no income whatever for the USGA when held abroad. Last year the Walker Cup Match expenditures were nearly \$16,000, which accounted in large measure for the USGA's net loss of nearly \$9,400 in our over-all activities. But the international matches serve a real purpose both here and abroad and in generally furthering international sportsmanship and understanding. We should not like to have them affected adversely.

3. Our Amateur Public Links Championship has always entailed a financial loss to the USGA. We feel it is a boon to golf, and we should not like to impair it.

All USGA revenue eventually goes back into the game. Since the professionals stand to gain most from those things which aid the development of golf, it would seem to us short-sighted for your Association to advocate the diversion of funds from broadly useful purposes in order to increase the prizes for the 30 lowest professionals in the Open Championship.

The financial success of the Open Championship, like all other events of which we are aware, depends in large measure upon the generosity of several hundred amateur golfers who give freely of their time and energy to conduct it, without compensation whatever. Our Executive Committee, like the members of the host club, not only contribute their efforts but pay all of their own expenses in connection with all of their USGA work. If everyone connected with a competition were to be paid for his efforts and his personal expenses, it is doubtful whether any competition would be a financial success, and that in turn would probably mean a reduction in money prizes.

Finally, you may be correct in your statement that the Open Championship has diminished in importance because its prize money is no longer of an unusual amount. We, however, do not consider that the amount of prize money is the sole important test of the worth of a competition. The Open Championship is intended to be essentially a sporting event and a Championship test. It is not a commercial event for advertising purposes.

Suggestions for Changes in the Rules of Golf

Your several suggestions for changes in the Rules of Golf were considered by the Executive Committee when the forthcoming

1948 Rules were adopted. We had also received numerous suggestions from other sources. A number of changes are being made in the Rules, but the Committee did not adopt any of the proposals you advanced. Your same suggestions had been fully considered more than a year ago.

Among the most compelling reasons against your proposals are:

1. **PROPOSAL TO PERMIT CLEANING BALL ON PUTTING GREEN:** One of the basic principles of golf has always been to play the ball as it lies without touching it. To permit cleaning the ball indiscriminately, regardless of conditions, could easily lead to lifting the ball following a majority of strokes, and that, in turn, could easily lead to unfair tactics. We do, however, adopt a local rule to permit cleaning the ball on particular days when adverse playing conditions justify. It is never possible to provide uniform conditions for an entire field, and a basic idea of the game is to take the course as you find it.

2. **PROPOSAL TO PERMIT LIFTING, CLEANING AND PLACING BALL EMBEDDED ON PUTTING SURFACE:** Same considerations as in item 1 above, and same procedure on special days in USGA competitions.

3. **PROPOSAL TO PROHIBIT BRUSHING LINE OF PUTT WITH A CLUB:** Removal of loose impediments from the line of putt has long been permitted. We feel it is more practical to permit a club to be used for the purpose rather than to require that it be done by hand. We feel also that Rule 18 of the 1947 code provides sufficient protection against improving the line of putt otherwise.

4. **PROPOSAL TO PERMIT AND REQUIRE REPAIR OF BALL MARKS ON PUTTING SURFACE BEFORE PUTTING:** We feel that players themselves should not be allowed to do this or to order that it be done, as it could definitely allow improvement of the putting surface and testing of the grass; but in our competitions we direct the club's greenkeeping staff to do so. As far as players are concerned, we revised Section 6 of Etiquette of the Game of Golf last year to provide as follows: "A player should see that any turf cut or displaced by him is at once replaced and pressed down, and after the play of the hole is completed should see that any ball hole made by him in the putting green is eradicated." You cannot eliminate all luck from the game. There are a great many irregularities of lie in the fairway, such as in divot holes and natural depressions, which might also be considered as unfair as ball marks on the putting green, and possibly even more so because they are not made by the player affected. See also general consideration in item 1 above.

5. **PROPOSAL TO REDUCE PENALTIES TO DISTANCE ONLY FOR LOST OR UNPLAYABLE BALL:** To do so would be to allow any shot to be replayed for loss of distance only, and that would change the very nature of the game,

would be a great time-consumer, and would create grave inconsistency among the Rules. We do not agree that the matter of a lost or unplayable ball is exactly parallel with that of a ball out of bounds. Boundaries are a necessary evil and in a great many instances are unfair in location. Although in theory it might seem incorrect to have a lesser penalty for a ball out of bounds than for a lost or unplayable ball, in actual practice there are relatively few lost and unplayable balls in comparison with out-of-bounds shots. For many years the Rules of Golf sanctioned remission of the penalty stroke for a ball out of bounds by local rule, and most clubs had such a local rule. When the change to loss of distance only was made in the Rules of Golf proper last year, it was merely making uniform what had previously been optional and what had already been common practice, even in USGA competitions where there were many boundaries close to the line of play.

We realize that there can never be unanimity of opinion among all golfers as to certain Rules of Golf, and we do not pretend that our committees are always unanimous. But we do consider these two factors very important:

First, that all opinions be informed opinions, based on full knowledge of the facts and with the best, long-range interest of the whole game in mind.

Second, that there be unanimous observance of the Rules once they have been fixed.

Tournament golf is not quite the same sort of spectacle as many professional sports. Golf is primarily a game for amateurs to play. One of its distinctive features is that it is played as a sport in which everybody competes on equal terms. Unlike most professional spectator sports, the gallery at golf tournaments is constituted of golfers who play the game and understand it and who walk around the course with the competitors. One of the features that makes the vocation of golf professionalism attractive is the close association between the amateur and the professional. Many of us feel that the PGA's adoption of a different code of playing rules is creating a break which can only result in injury not only to the game itself but to those who have made the decision to take up the game as a means of earning their livelihood.

The professional golfer is constantly setting a powerful example. He has a real responsibility.

In view of all these considerations, and in view of the long history of cordial relations between the professional and the amateur and between their respective representative bodies, we request your Association to give serious consideration to abandoning its special rules and to return to uniform observance of the established Rules of Golf.