

Golf and Happiness

By R. C. ROBERTSON-GLASGOW

The height of frustration must be a Grade One American golf tournament professional who hands in a card of over 70. Conversely, the happiest games-player on earth must be the fellow who wins the big pot with 89—20—69. And, if you reckon that's a fanciful score, I can tell you I played 22 years ago in an Open Amateur Meeting on a South of Scotland course where the handicap event was won by 75—18—57. I ought to remember, because I had handed in 69—9—60, and was already mentally spending the sweep-money.

The last truly happy big-time golfer I saw was Walter Hagen. Walter enjoyed it all, win or lose; and his fat smile wasn't just face deep. Mark you, anyone who chipped from the rough and holed the putt as often as Walter did—well, he had cause to smile.

But for perambulating advertisements of misery, give me the field in a big tournament. A year or two ago, on a lovely summer's day, I sat in a convenient and comfortable spot, watching the entrants in the Open pass. Iron shot after iron shot went whizzing to the distant green, but their players, almost without exception, looked as if iron shots were a felony for which they would shortly be sentenced to imprisonment. And, high above them, the larks sang.

Of course, they've got the idea of the Open all wrong in these days. There is a general impression that if a competitor doesn't win it, he might just as well not have entered.

Having watched a good many different sports and pastimes, I have concluded that golf knocks all the others in its power of giving happiness to its less effectual practitioners.

At golf, the dub has that happiness which only Hope can give. He can live for a week on a spoon shot which, unexpectedly elevated, bounces between two bunkers and runs on to the side of the

hole. Better still, he can pretend that he meant it so. At no other game could he thus enjoy the sweet indulgence of hypocrisy. He follows this stroke with others of a varied and complex futility. But he knows his moment will come again.



Soon, unknown, unknowable golfers will be hurrying from office to play, for the first time since last spring, those six or nine or twelve holes after tea. During the darkness of winter they have pondered over a new sort of interlock in the grip, is more open stance of the tee, another and yet more infallible system of holing the four-yarders. These are the happy ones.

My memory floats back to the exponents of hope and happiness at a club where I played for many years. In sight of his own bungalow by the second hole, Mr. A. will be playing mashie shots at his hat. It will be an old hat, and an old deception; for he plays these shots in a valley whose sloping sides convey the ball, almost automatically, to the same spot. Mr. B. will be doing that well-known 94 of his, which would have been a 89 but for the entirely needless top-dressing on the 15th green and a huge footmark in the bunker by the ninth, left by Major C., whose ignorance of the game's etiquette is notorious and inexcusable. On the putting green by the clubhouse, Mr. D. will be scooping away in his inimitable egg-and-spoon style.

And the Secretary, who believes nothing impossible, will be pinning up a notice requesting the world at large not to remove the monthly magazines from the members' lounge.