

# Why a 36-Hole Windup in the Open?

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Why are the last two rounds of the Open Championship played in one day rather than two days?

Suggestions for a change have recently come from several quarters—suggestions that the four-round Championship be played over four days rather than three.

Today this is the most popular form for open events, and there is much to be said in favor of it.

This idea has been considered in the past by the USGA Executive Committee. However,

there are two main reasons for favoring the long-used system of four rounds in three days:

1. The man who would be champion must sustain a champion's game over an intensive stretch. His mental stamina must be comparable with his shot-making skill. The essential idea of the tournament is to determine a champion. The ability to play championship golf over 36 holes on the last day is a hallmark of a champion.

2. The system tends to equalize conditions of course and weather. With a field of approximately 50 players competing in two rounds on the final day, the chance for wide differences in playing conditions is much less than if two rounds were played in two days with perhaps a larger field, some starting in the morning and some in the afternoon each day. Two rounds a day tends to serve fair play better.

Critics say the present system now places undue premium on youth and physical stamina. They say golf is essentially a game of skill, and that veterans don't have a fair chance in the 36 holes on the final day. They say

this is particularly true in these days of slow play.

It is admitted that physical stamina is a factor in playing 36 holes a day. But it is not required to a degree which excludes older players from a fair chance to win. The average age of the last ten winners of the Open Championship was 30 years. Taking at random the period 1919-1928, the average age of the ten Champions was 29.3 years. If this proves anything, it is that youth has *not* been served unduly in recent years.

The last two match rounds in the Amateur Championship are at 36 holes each. Several match rounds in the Professional Golfers' Association Championship are at 36 holes. The final of the Women's Amateur Championship is at 36 holes. These come at the windup of week-long tournaments. Surely it is not expecting too much to ask the Open Champion to play 36 holes of championship golf on the final day of a three-day tournament.

We believe the present form tends to stimulate maximum competition from start to finish among the entire field. Most competitors regard it as something of an honor to qualify for the final day's play. The last 36 holes involves the low 50 and ties of the first two rounds. Thirty money prizes are available for professionals, and symbolic prizes are available for amateurs finishing in the low 30. Further, the low 20 and ties become automatically eligible for the next year's Open. All these elements tend to make the competition unusually keen, without a let-up, throughout the 36 holes of the final day.

The merits of the round-a-day-system are recognized. Perhaps the USGA some day will adopt it for the Open. But for the present, 72 holes in three days is considered the best test for all concerned and is most productive of Championship golf.



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