

How It Feels To Be a Horse

How does a player feel when he knows that someone has a heavy bet riding on him? What is the attitude of leading amateurs toward organized gambling in golf?

We polled the 1949 Walker Cup Team about it. Those who replied were unanimous in holding organized gambling to be detrimental to the best interests of the game.

Some tournament sponsors feel that Calcutta pools, for example, are a stimulus to golf. If that be so, it is only a part-truth. The other part is that golf has flourished because of its own innate charm, and it will decline if it becomes merely a vehicle for gambling. More important than all this, of course, are the moral considerations.

The game is the thing, and always has been. It is the players' game. Here, then, are what some members of the last Walker Cup Team think about it:

Ray Billows, Poughkeepsie, N. Y.:

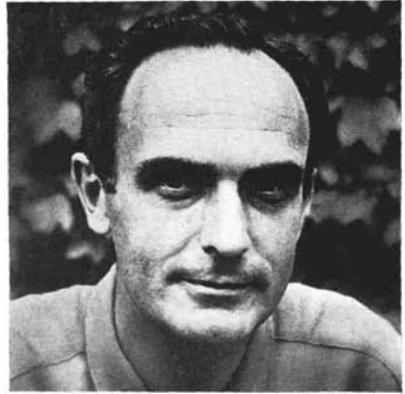
I feel that Calcutta pools are detrimental to golf. They can't help but injure the good fellowship and sportsmanship which are the finest aspects of amateur golf. A ticket-holder usually can't refrain from advising his player, and the player finds it difficult to ignore such a person.

I was a finalist in a tournament in which the referee of the final held the ticket of my opponent. I knew of this situation and, believe me, that match was difficult to play. I felt, and justifiably so, that a couple of decisions were definitely unfair to me.

Ted Bishop, Boston:

I have felt for some time that gambling in golf, particularly Calcutta pools, is detrimental to a player's concentration.

I can't think of any tournament in which I have ever played that has put my game under greater pressure than those in which Calcutta pools, or similar



Boston Herald

Ted Bishop

types of pools, were involved. The fact that a friend or friends of mine bet on my ability to win takes a lot of the competitive feeling out of the play.

In many cases, as a player nears the semi-finals or final, the person who has bet on him approaches him on the course with a reminder that he has money involved, and seems to expect the player to try that much harder—the result being that concentration disappears, and play is impaired.

John W. Dawson, Los Angeles:

This is rather a ticklish subject, as most sponsors of Calcuttas argue that the pool stimulates interest in the tournament.

I am heartily against gambling in any sports and especially when it applies in any way to golf. However, I am not against the \$1 or \$2 Nassau game that most everyone plays. I would consider this in the category of a friendly wager instead of gambling. When the betting gets over \$2 Nassau then it gets into the gambling class, and I have seen many friendships lost because of heavy losses.

Calcutta pools are put on for the entertainment and the interest of the investors. They are most unfair to the player because of the pressure that it puts on

him to try to save his sponsor from losing money. I have seen instances where the "owners" of players have offered advice on wind, clubs, fastness of greens, etc.; also instances where the player was under terrific pressure not from the other players but because of the large sum of money depending upon his every shot.

Most friends who purchase players in Calcutta pools are very fair and do not bother their players. However, now and then I have seen owners plague the player to see that he trained just right. In a few instances they have even accused the player of being yellow and giving up.

In Calcutta pools the player has everything to lose and nothing to gain. I am very much against them.

It is embarrassing to have people bidding on you as if you were a horse.

Charles Kocsis, Detroit:

Frankly, I cannot say that I have ever been disturbed over any wager made on my behalf while playing in a tournament. I can recall a few instances when I was advised that so-and-so had a few dollars on me to win. Such remarks either before or during a match have no influence one way or the other in my method of play or determination to win, and they might just as well be left unsaid.

I have never been a gambler in any sense of the word. My stakes are a dollar Nassau whenever the occasion demands it. Neither \$1 nor \$100 would increase my desire to win. I happen to be one of those individuals who don't like to lose at any time. My efforts to win are every bit as great when there is no money at stake.

To consider gambling as a whole and its influence on the game, it could become a serious detriment if left unchecked. The USGA should be highly commended for its stand regarding this issue.

"Little sins lead to big sins." If some controls are not instituted in local events to regulate the evils, they are bound to multiply and eventually creep into national events. The game of golf as a pastime

would soon lose its great popularity and high esteem were big-time gambling ever allowed to gain a hold.

The saddest part of gambling, in my opinion, is that those who cannot afford it are usually the ones to get hurt, and it is a very poor influence on young players.

Bruce McCormick, Los Angeles:

The matter of the Calcuttas is quite a heavy question. From my own view, I would rather see them not held.

There is a very heavy impost on you when you know someone has paid \$4,000 or some such amount for you. Then they watch you pretty closely. If you do happen to play badly, you are apt to be accused of being out drunk, or any number of other things. It really isn't fair to the player, and it isn't any pleasure for him.

People will come up to you and ask if you are playing well. I always say "no," and ask them not to buy me. Of course, during the auction someone always bids and the sale goes on.

Once a friend and I were tied for first in a medal play tournament with one hole to go. My friend drove the last green and had a fifteen-foot putt for an eagle. I drove short of the green and chipped up about four feet from the hole. My friend missed, and I had to hole the putt to tie, which meant \$4,000 to my ticket-holder. That surely was a long putt.

Of course, there is increased interest in a tournament for some people by having a Calcutta. I don't like to see them get so large, though.

I would rather play and enjoy the fun of competition without having such a heavy feeling on my mind of losing so much money for someone if I play badly or miss a few putts.

James B. McHale, Jr., Philadelphia:

During my participation in amateur tournaments there have been few occasions when I have been involved in Calcutta pools, and then only out of town, where the owner of my "ticket" was a total stranger, hence it had no effect on me.

Winning a championship involves such concentration that I would not relish the added pressure of knowing large stakes were wholly dependent on my golf. The disappointment in losing a tournament is keen enough without the feeling that it has been an expense to an unknown party or perhaps a friend.

It is my sincere hope that the disastrous effects of gambling never infiltrate this ancient and time-honored game.

Skee Riegel, Tulsa:

I have had little or no contact with persons who might have "bought" me in pools. I have, however, been approached by persons who have made individual bets on me against certain players in both amateur and open tournaments, both as an amateur and now as a professional.

The first few times this happened, it did have a detrimental bearing on my play. I took it very much to heart when I lost, and brooded over how the individual must have felt about me, until I heard a spectator approach a top tournament pro one day and say to him, "Play hard, I've got a bundle riding on you."

The player snapped back, "If you're stupid enough to bet, you worry about it. Don't tell me your troubles."

The pro then turned to me and said, "There's a fellow who probably has got ten bucks bet, and I've got a championship at stake."

Then and there I stopped worrying about the gamblers.

There is, however, an incident in which I believe a Calcutta pool had a detrimental effect on a player. In the 1946 Trans-Mississippi at Denver, a player sold for a large sum and was defeated in the first round. Although he never said so, I know, as did everyone else, that it influenced his play. The ticket-holder was his boss.

William P. Turnesa, New York:

My attitude as a player toward gambling in general on golf can best be brought out by summarizing an incident that took place comparatively early in my competitive career.



Okada Studio
James B. McHale, Jr.

I was busily immersed in the hard job of matching par in one of our Westchester tournaments when a spectator approached me as I was about to play a difficult bunker shot.

"Concentrate on this one, Willie," he said very grimly. "You've got to put this shot up close. I've got five hundred bucks in the Calcutta riding on you."

I was quite upset by the tone of his interruption, and walked out of the trap. I handed him my wedge and said rather testily, I admit, "Here's the club. Why don't *you* play the shot? I'll bet on you."

As this incident infers, there is enough pressure on the tournament golfer without adding to his burden the knowledge that someone stands to win or lose large sums of money on his performance. There is no logic to it, but I know that other amateur "horses" are also overcome by a feeling of guilt when a man who has lost by betting on us plaintively laments the thousands he would have won if we had come through.

Since a professional is disposed to a financial assessment of his golf, I would consider him a "horse" of a different color.