

# From 'Gutty' to Golden Jubilee

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The Women's Amateur Championship in Atlanta this month is the third and last of the USGA's Golden Anniversary tournaments. It is an appropriate occasion to consider how the game has progressed since the Newport Golf Club and the Meadow Brook Club entertained the first Championships in 1895.

In the early days of American golf the fascination of playing a course in the least number of strokes was sometimes difficult to explain to potential devotees. Humorists offered an oversimplified version by saying the purpose of the game was to hit the ball. If you found it the same day, they explained, you won. Nowadays comedians spend hours perfecting their golf games instead of their golf jokes.

Originally the appeal of chasing the "little white pill" was confined to special groups. In its infancy, golf was a "society" sport, limited to those who played on a handful of private courses. Equipment was scarce and most of those who became interested in playing golf learned of it while visiting the British Isles or had heard about it from those who had journeyed abroad.

The teachers were chiefly Scots and Englishmen, and the Rules were set down by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland. It was little wonder, then, that as far as early competitive honors went, the foreign-born men carried them off with few interruptions. The American women fared better in this respect than the men.

Since those days, golf has become a national pastime. The golf bug has bitten indiscriminately. Doctors, lawyers and even chiefs on our Indian reservations have joined the ranks of players from every walk of life. Most of the current professional experts are former caddies who learned the fundamentals of the game anywhere from the eastern seaboard to the plains of Texas.

"Mac" or "Jock" who once presided in

the golf shop is now almost conspicuous by his absence. Gone with them, too, are the clubs with spliced heads and hickory shafts. The pride of turning out a suitable club by which you could master the game was in the early days reserved for the professional with the Scottish or English accent who had learned club-making as part of his trade.

With thousands and gradually millions playing the game, instead of hundreds, the demand for golf paraphernalia exceeded the meager supply that trickled from homemade suppliers. Streamlining was applied to the production of golf equipment, as to other industries. The solid gutta percha ball with which Mrs. Charles S. Brown, Charles B. Macdonald and Horace Rawlins made history by winning the first Championships gave way to the rubber-cored and then to the liquid-center ball.

The "gutty" now has a place in the USGA Golf Museum. Steel shafts supplanted hickory and then whole sets of matched, numbered clubs appeared.

That was a sad day for the locker-room hero who used to relate his sterling play with the mashie niblick. He was forced thereafter to use less colorful language. He was playing those same shots now with a No. 8 iron, and his favorite spoon became, instead, a No. 4 wood.

As one disgruntled veteran instructor of the old school said to a somewhat bewildered pupil, "If you know how to count, I guess I can teach you the right club to use."

## Ball Is Regulated

The increased speed of the golf ball was responsible for a drastic development. Longer-flight balls raised a perplexing question. If the ball could be hit farther and farther, courses would have to be lengthened and lengthened. This would mean more expenditures to buy more and more acreage. Golf-club

Members were haunted by the financial nightmare.

Finally the USGA adopted, for the protection of its member clubs, a rule to limit the flight of the ball. A machine under the supervision of the USGA now provides a test to insure that the velocity of all brands does not exceed 250 feet per second at impact.

While the clubs and ball were undergoing experimentation, other technical improvements were introduced, such as deep markings on the faces of iron clubs to help stop the ball. When these markings became extreme, the USGA was forced to regulate them to restore personal skill to the game. Even sand, which once was taken from boxes on tees and used to tee up the ball, became obsolete with the introduction of the peg tee.

Perhaps the most significant change during the fifty USGA Championships has been the improvement in golf courses. Probably few present-day golfers appreciate the pastures and orchards that were first used in this country. Courses sometimes were laid out with the aid of eighteen stakes on a Sunday afternoon, says Robert Trent Jones, the golf course

architect. Distances were stepped off and stakes were driven into the ground to denote the location of the greens.

#### Turf Science

The care now given to course maintenance and particularly to putting greens, where championships are often won or lost, has been the basis for much study and research. The USGA employs scientists in its Green Section to develop better turf for the nation's courses. Brooks, streams and trees are utilized in an over-all plan of course design. Somewhat like pieces of putty in a sculptor's hand, they are fitted into the pattern that creates the golfers' playground.

A few holes could be added to a course in the 1890s for \$100. Constructing an 18-hole layout now costs from \$125,000 to \$500,000, depending upon the topography. Yearly expenditures of \$35,000 to \$40,000 are made now by many clubs for course upkeep. Few clubs allow unsightly obstacles or remnants of what was called "bush country" to remain near their fairways.

Bob Jones often tells of an experience with rough in the 1926 Open when Jock Hutchison, the good-humored Scot, was



Probably few present-day golfers appreciate the pastures and orchards that were first used for golf courses in this country. This is the course of the St. Andrew's Golf Club, which was organized in Yonkers, N. Y., in 1888.

his playing companion. Hutchison drove into the heavy grass bordering one fairway, and his caddie put down the bag in the rough. After the allotted time for retrieving the ball had expired, the caddie went back for the bag. "But the rough was so high," Jones relates, "he couldn't even find the bag."

Because of the widespread interest in golf, tournaments are held at every club and major ones in every sector of the land. A group of playing specialists among the professionals has sprung up so that there are year 'round circuits for men and women that follow the sun, from East to West, summer through winter. If the pros are not so hilarious as some of their predecessors, one reason is that competition is keener and they are on a continuous tournament grind. In the early days, when a pro went off to a tournament, it was in the nature of a holiday.

The champions in some of the old photographs not only bring a chuckle but they look as though they usually played in cold weather. The heavy jackets, hats and long trousers, held up by braces, are relics of the past. The age of knickers has been followed by

colorful slacks and shirts. Jimmy Demaret, of course, is the outstanding example. Although his outfits would startle pros of the bygone era, as well as Paris designers, galleries have become accustomed to his chartreuse slacks, pink and green sweaters and green suede shoes.

#### Game Still "Humblin' "

Conservatism has been tossed aside, too, in the swing. The Carnoustie style of swinging has been altered and more emphasis has been placed on hitting. "Power golf" is a term widely used in advocating the new principles that call also for a simple, abbreviated swing.

Many changes and the tremendous growth in the last half century have made golf an international sport, and the only interruptions in the Championship program have been due to wars that have caused six cancellations. An indication of the growth is the fact that there were only 56 entrants all told in the first USGA Amateur, Women's and Open Championships. There were approximately 2,500 entrants for the same Championships this year.

But for all its changes, golf remains "a humblin' game."



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