

# Dame Van Winkle's Eyes Are Opened

By MRS. W. G. FRASER

USGA WOMEN'S AMATEUR CHAMPION 1916-19-20

After having witnessed the 50th USGA Women's Amateur Championship at East Lake, I have the feeling of being a feminine Rip Van Winkle who has awakened to find in the women's golfing world fabulous and wondrous changes. It is a strange feeling, and I should like to give here a few impressions of what I found.

First and foremost are the size and the quality of the field of players, any one of whom could be classed as of championship caliber. Gone are the days of the domination of a small group among whom almost certainly the winner would be found. Gone are the players of better than middle age who used to qualify regularly in the first 32.

It is a young person's day — and youth is doing wonderful things with it.

Puzzled as I was, more than once I asked why the distance of the shots and the power shown by women golfers came to be, and invariably the answer was



Alex Bremner photo

Mrs. Fraser during the presentation of prizes at this year's Women's Amateur Championship.

## 23 Years After

Not since 1927 had Mrs. W. G. Fraser played in the Women's Championship until this year at Atlanta.

As Miss Alexa Stirling, she was pre-eminent before and after World War I. She reached the Championship final six times in eight consecutive tournaments, winning three.

She grew up, golf-wise, at the East Lake Course, scene of this year's Championship.

the same — better implements and balls. This may be so, to some degree, but it is my impression that it is the women behind the implements and balls who have shown the greatest improvement.

There seems to be a uniformity in teaching methods, with a consequent similarity in the swings which was most notable. The time was when, from a good distance, a player could be recognized by her swing due to some peculiarity which stamped it as belonging to that particular individual. Not so today. From a distance they all look alike. Close up, of course, the details could be seen and the reasons for more distance or greater accuracy noted.

Even the stances taken for putting were almost without exception so similar as to be noteworthy. The grip on the putter seemed to be a point where personal preference was given full play, but the swings were all of one type. Good putters they were, too, many of them with a fine sense of touch and timing.

I hesitate to make a flat-footed statement about the swings of today; to do so is not only difficult but dangerous. But a change which impressed itself upon me was a tremendous downward drive at the ball from a backswing which entailed a completely straight left arm and almost no wrist action until the very top of the swing, with hands and forearms having moved together as a unit up to that point. This, of course, called for wrists

(Continued on Page 20)

# What Are Winter Rules?

That weather-beaten sign "WINTER RULES" is now making its annual appearance at many first tees. But beware of it—the fact is that there are no winter rules, either in the Rules of Golf booklet or anywhere else, unless each club which wants them takes the trouble to adopt some.

If a club feels it must have "Winter Rules," the following statement of the USGA's position may be helpful:

The USGA does not recognize "winter rules" or "preferred lies" in the established Rules of Golf. The Association recommends that the Rules of Golf be observed uniformly. Attention is invited to the fact that Rule 7(5) provides for ground under repair, and it is recommended that *occasional* unusual conditions which operate against fair or pleasurable play and which are not widespread be so defined accurately as ground under repair.

The Association recognizes, however, that such adverse conditions are sometimes general throughout a golf course, and that local committees sometimes adopt local rules called "winter rules" for such conditions. Any such local rules, like all other local rules, should be stated in detail and interpreted by the local committee, as there is no established code of "winter rules." Without detailed local rules, it is meaningless for a local committee to post a notice which merely says "Winter Rules Today."

From our observation, the following local rule would seem appropriate for the conditions in question, and it is suggested simply for the purpose of standardization:

"A ball lying in a 'fairway' or on a putting surface may be lifted and cleaned, without penalty, and placed within six inches of where it originally lay, not nearer the hole, and so as to preserve as nearly as possible the stance required to play from the original lie. After the ball has been so placed, it is in play, and if it move after the player has addressed it, the penalty shall be one stroke—see Rule 12(1b)."

It is emphasized that such a local rule is in conflict with the established Rules of Golf and the fundamental principle of playing the ball as it lies, and the USGA therefore does not endorse and will not interpret it.

Scores made in competitions where such a local rule is in force should not be used for handicapping.

The section in the Rules of Golf entitled "Recommendations for Local Rules" provides in part that "When necessary, local rules should be made . . . for the preservation of the course." That is not to be confused with the local rule discussed above. All too frequently "winter rules" have been adopted under the guise of protecting the course when, in fact, the practical effect was just the opposite—they condoned moving balls to the best-conditioned parts of the course, from which divots were promptly taken and the course injured. Further, such local rules have invariably been permissive, rather than obligatory, so that a player was under no compulsion to move his ball if he did not want to do so. A local rule "for preservation of the course" must be mandatory and must be specific as to details in order to be effective.

## Dame Van Winkle's Eyes Are Opened

(Continued from Page 7)

and hands which had been held a little on the high side, with the club held very noticeably in the fingers with no semblance of a palm grip. At any rate, whatever the reasons, the results were highly satisfactory.

Another point which impressed me was the very high standard of play. There was little inaccuracy in direction. While I was not able to watch all the matches, I can recall having seen only three badly missed shots in the whole week's play. This seems to emphasize the high degree of perfection to which the top women

golfers of today have attained. Scores of 71, 72 and the like do not allow of many mistakes. And in this wide awakening to which I was subjected, I found that such scores, rather than being something to marvel at, were almost as commonplace as 81s and 82s in years gone by.

To write about these girls (and they are for the most part in their early 20s or younger) as though they were Amazons, of terrific strength, would be misleading and wholly incorrect. True, there are some of more powerful build than others. But taken as a whole, they are just slight, well-dressed, attractive girls who, as one man expressed it, would be "knockouts" on a ball-room floor.