

# A Lesson from Hogan in the Open

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A victory such as Ben Hogan scored in the Open Championship last month doesn't bear much resemblance to the golf which most of us play. Have you ever done the last six holes of any course in 20 strokes? Did you ever do 138 for 36 holes on a giant like Oakland Hills, near Detroit, with about 13,000 persons breathing down your neck? — with the Open Championship depending upon it?

Those are experiences which come only to the great players. They are the mountain-top episodes which set the champions apart from the rest. They are so far removed from the game at which we mere mortals dally down here on earth that there seems no affinity whatever between Ben Hogan and Felix McCackletackle.

But even if Felix can't play strokes such as Ben's he still can learn from the Champion. Hogan's victory in this 51st Open was a great lesson in concentration and intelligent determination. Those are qualities which all of us can develop through practice, even if we can't fade a midiron to within five feet of a flag 200 yards away.

Few games require mental concentration to the degree which golf does. Few golfers concentrate on the shot at hand to the degree of which they are capable. Thus, most of us don't get as much out of our games as we might.

## Wiping Out Bad Memories

To show you how Ben Hogan focused his attention on his work at Oakland Hills, note these examples:

ITEM 1: The seventh hole is a drive-and-pitch par-4, with an arm of a brook on the right. In the third round Hogan's tee shot went into the brook. The penalty stroke he incurred in dropping out caused him to take 5 for the hole.

When he came to that hole in the fourth round, about four and a half hours later. Little Ben hugged the left side

with his tee shot, planted his approach two feet from the hole, smiled when the gallery applauded but said "Wait 'til I make it," and then proceeded to hole a birdie 3.

*He had wiped out the memory of the morning 5.*

ITEM 2: On the 15th hole, 392 yards, near the middle of the fairway in the drive zone there is a bunker which forces you to place your tee shot with great accuracy. Hogan in the third round went too far to the left, became entangled with the rough, and took 6, losing two precious strokes to par.

Later in the day he came to the 15th in the final round knowing that it was touch-and-go as to whether he would retain his Championship. Off the tee he placed a beautiful spoon shot to the left side of the fairway, approached to within six feet, and downed the putt for a birdie 3.

*He had wiped out the memory of the morning 6.*

ITEM 3: The Champion has just finished. He is checking his score card of his final round. He is plainly excited, because he has just holed out in 67, yet he takes his time as he checks the score hole by hole. Three times he goes over it, and each time he stumbles mentally as he comes to the fifth hole. He asks the kind lady, Mrs. Mrs., who scored for him: "Are you sure I had a 4 there? Did I make that putt?"

She replies that, yes, he had a 4.

He checks the card once more. Again he stumbles at the fifth hole. Then he calls for the referee who accompanied him. He verifies Hogan's score on the fifth as 4. Hogan, playing his second from a close lie, had been short of the green, played a pitch-and-run, and then holed the putt.

The simple fact is that he then con-

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centrated so intensely on the next hole that he *wiped out of the memory* of a hole played in a fashion which, for him, was unorthodox and not particularly gratifying.

### An Uphill Struggle

As for Hogan's determination, note these facts:

After the first round he was far down the list with a 76, six over par. He followed with a second round of 73, which tied him with ten others for 16th place, five strokes from the leader.

The final day was clear, warm and delightful. "Texas day," Hogan smiled as he warmed up on the first tee. Then he went out in 32 on his third round. It put him right up among the leaders. But he was 39 coming home, due in part to that 6 on the 15th. His 71 was a grand round, but it left him tied at 220 for fifth place; Bobby Locke and Jimmy Demaret were leading with 218. All told, there were seven players with 220 or better for 54 holes.

His 39 on the second nine had aroused Hogan. "I'm going to burn it up this afternoon," he said to Isaac B. Grainger, USGA Rules Committee Chairman, who had refereed his third round.

He said it with no show of swagger — just with the great, invincible determination which has marked the whole life of this man — the same unshakeable faith which kept him alive just two short years ago when he was near death after a motor accident.

He had a fighting par 35 going out on his last round. And then he came home in 32. In his last nine holes he had four 3s and one 2, four birdies during the stretch. He had played the first nine in 32 in the morning; now he had 32 coming home.

When you're considering Hogan's great determination, his remarkable concentration, you should know that he also knows how to relax at the right moment. During a round he sometimes will give himself a short mental break by chatting briefly on some subject not connected with his own play. Often, nowadays,

it's about the welfare of somebody else. At Oakland Hills during his round of 67 he philosophized a bit on the sacrifices which golf spectators make in order to watch a tournament like the Open. But then, when he stepped up to his shot, he was back in his trance of seeing only that one shot at hand. Nothing else in the world existed for him at that moment.

### Three Starts — Three Wins

And now Ben Hogan has won the Open the last three times he has played in it — 1948 at Riviera in Los Angeles, where he set the all-time record of 276; 1950 at Merion near Philadelphia, where he tied at 287 with Lloyd Mangrum and George Fazio and won the playoff with a 69, one below par; and now 287 again at Oakland Hills. His accident kept him out of the 1949 Open, though his faith prompted him to file a secret entry, in the hope of a miracle.

In case you've forgotten, he also won the 1942 "Hale America National Open Golf Tournament," a war-time substitute for the Championship, which the USGA co-sponsored with the Chicago District Golf Association and the Professional Golfers' Association of America, for benefit of Navy Relief Society and United Service Organizations. Hogan had 72-62-69-68-271 at Ridgemoor, Chicago, to win that one. Yes, it was 62 in the second round.

Ben will tell you, though, that his closing 67 at Oakland Hills was his greatest round, under all the circumstances. Certainly it was one of the greatest finishes in the long history of the Open. It takes rank with such epics as Gene Sarazen's feat of playing the last 28 holes in 100 strokes in 1932 at Fresh Meadow, New York.

But the most memorable thing about Ben Hogan is not his stroke-making ability, marvelous though it is. The example which this great Champion gives us is the more nearly human one of pouring all one's energies into the job at hand, of great courage in the face of adversity, of great faith.

Genuine consideration of others is a marked trait in the inspiring character of

**Hogan's Four Rounds**

Hole	Yards	Par	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1	440	4	5	3	3	4
2	510	5	4	4	4	5
3	200	3	4	3	3	4
4	448	4	5	5	4	4
5	437	4	4	5	3	4
6	350	4	5	4	4	4
7	381	4	4	4	5	3
8	458	4	5	5	3	4
9	216	3	3	4	3	3
Out	3,440	35	39	37	32	35
10	448	4	4	4	4	3
11	407	4	4	5	4	4
12	566	5	5	5	5	5
13	169	3	2	3	3	2
14	447	4	5	4	5	5
15	392	4	4	5	6	3
16	405	4	4	3	4	4
17	194	3	3	3	4	3
18	459	4	6	4	4	3
In	3,487	35	37	36	39	32
Total	6,927	70	76	73	71	67

Ben Hogan. During the presentation of prizes at Oakland Hills, Hogan said his victory would not have been possible if it had not been for help which other people had given him, and he devoted most of his remarks to thanking those other people. His first thanks went to his caddie, a young teen-ager, whose face beamed when his hero mentioned him to the assembled crowd. Ben Hogan, you see, used to be a caddie.

These lessons which the Champion teaches can be useful to us in whatever we may do, for they have a depth and a breadth which come not just from the little game of golf but the greater game of life. They are the real message which speaks out from the life of Ben Hogan.

**The Course**

Clayton Heafner might be the Open Champion today if it were not for Hogan. Heafner was the runner-up with 289. He had a great closing round of 69 which almost overtook Ben. It was the only other sub-par round of about 430 full rounds played by the entire field. Heafner two years ago tied for second, just a stroke behind Cary Middlecoff.

Bobby Locke made a valiant effort to add the USGA Open title to the British Championship which he had won the last two years. He was third, with 291. Going into the last day's play, Locke was

the leader with 144 for 36 holes, and Hogan was five strokes behind him. Locke has been quite close to the USGA Championship several times, and says he intends to be back next year. He is always a most welcome visitor.

No course over which the Open has been played ever provoked more discussion than did Oakland Hills. It had been tightened under a program mapped by Robert Trent Jones, golf course architect, and John Oswald, Chairman of the Club's Green Committee. Many new bunkers had been created, both in drive zones and to guard putting greens.

The drive zones were particularly tight. Besides the new bunkers, the rough before the tournament encroached deep into the normal fairway and was quite thick on some holes. The USGA Championship Committee, headed by John D. Ames, tempered these conditions somewhat by having the rough trimmed in spots, both as to height and to reduce the narrowness of some fairways. It was not possible at that hour, however, to produce the uniform USGA Championship conditions prescribed in part as follows in the USGA Golf Championship Manual, which guides clubs in preparing for USGA events:

"It is desired to require greater accuracy from the tees by making all rough deeper and by narrowing the fairways between 240 and 300 yards. The narrowing should be gradual, commencing perhaps at 230 and reaching the narrowest part of from 35 to 40 yards at about 280 yards from the tee."

The fact that a number of fairways were not that wide in the drive zone, due to the ingrown rough as well as new bunkers, was a cause for dismay to many players.

Hogan, both before and after the event, said the course was the hardest he ever played, as did Locke. Ben referred to it as "the monster." But he characterized his 67 as his greatest round.

Gene Sarazen, on the other hand, took the trouble after the tournament to write us as follows: "The golf course was a

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into the middle of his forehead." Both ACCURACY and FORCE are here. What kind of force? Why, centrifugal force, the greatest force for the least amount of power expended.

This force—What was its nature? What did it do? If true, then all my theories of arm, pivot, cocking, and so on must take a radical reversal. Did the sun go round the earth? Did those lines meet in the distance? Did the sun really rise and set? According to my science books—no.

Then what was I seeing? Only an optical illusion? Yes. Then maybe what I had taken for granted for CAUSE was in reality nothing but EFFECT.

The workman with his can of hot tea swung it in a circle, but none of the tea fell out of the can. That was centrifugal force. The longer the arc of his swing, the faster the can moved. Oh, no, this could not be, for how about that short controlled swing to hit it straighter and farther? Yet, here was irrefutable proof that the pendulum took the same length of time to cover a short swing as a long

swing; hence the longer the swing, the faster it must move.

Summing up, the properties of the SWING motion are ACCURACY, TIMING, and FORCE. The motion was the CAUSE of the straight arm, the free pivot, the cocked wrists, and so on. All players, being slightly different physically, respond a little differently. In other words, the EFFECT upon each one of us might vary somewhat though not greatly.

Thus a law was seen to exist in the swinging clubhead and the swinging pen-knife, in that each time it passed the hands' dead center at its highest speed and possessed force.

Need more be said? Yes.

How was this motion created? Then I was reminded that the sun did not rise and the rail lines did not meet, though it looked that way. In other words, not through sense of sight, but through sense of FEEL at the point of contact with my instrument, my HANDS and FINGERS.

So we have arrived. CAUSE lay in our sense of feel in our hands to create a

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masterpiece. It was a challenge to the player. The best players finished on top."

John O'Hara, who did a superb job as Oakland Hills' General Chairman, wrote us: "Much controversy has been raised by the treatment of the course, and it looks as if it is a subject that will be continued far into the future. The reception given Robert Trent Jones at the presentation ceremony showed that the public regards him as a hero. I am wondering whether the general rank and file of golfers, as well as spectators, feel that golf is difficult for them and they would like to see some of their obstacles placed in the paths of the stars."

Jones, who designed the course revisions, saw it in retrospect as follows: "The quality of the players who led the field gave conclusive proof to the belief that Oakland Hills was a great test.

"So did the manner of scoring. There was no one hole—no trick hole—where all players did badly.

"If I had the alterations to make all over again, I would do exactly what has been done, with the exceptions of two places, on the fourth and the eighteenth holes."

Oakland Hills was a very severe test. But it produced a field of unusual ability for the final 36 holes. It required Ben Hogan to use practically every club in his bag during his two great rounds of the last day. And in that respect it recalled a remark which the late William C. Fownes, Jr., the spirit behind Oakland near Pittsburgh, made to Walter Hagen.

"Walter," he said, "surely it isn't asking too much of the Champion to require him to play every shot."