

# How I Got Started in Golf

By SAM SNEAD

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Many people ask how I got started playing golf.

Well, recently my sister and I were reminiscing on this very subject and recalled how every Sunday my uncle would come by and make me go out and pitch horse shoes.

He was a foreman at Hot Springs, Va., and he used to play golf occasionally. I had a lot of empty cans put in our yard, so we started chipping and putting.

When I got into high school, I played on the school golf team and finally our coach arranged to have all the classes A, B, C and D in all the schools compete in a tournament.

The first time, I remember, we played on sand greens. If you pitch on a sand green the ball bounces over, and I never was able to cope with those greens.

Finally, I cracked one down the middle one day and, to my surprise, I won the driving test. Fortunately, I won it the next two years also.

After finishing school, I started working in a drug store, and from there went to work for my uncle in a restaurant, where my hours were from 8 until 2 in the morning. Several small colleges offered me a scholarship if I wanted to play a little golf and football. So I went to the coach and asked him what he thought about my going to school.

"Well, Sam," he says, "after looking over your record here, I think if you would take up golf you would be better off in future years than going to college."

## \$20 A Month

At that time there was an opening at Hot Springs for a club-maker at \$20 a month, so I finally got the inside track and got the job.

I was only around there two weeks when an old lady came down and said, "I'd like a golf lesson."

I told her I was sorry but the pros were busy and probably they could give her

one in the afternoon. But this lady insisted that she must have one immediately and finally asked me what I did.

"I'm just a club-maker — the boy in the shop, 'Ma'am."

"Can you teach?" she asked. And the boys in the shop told her I could.

I had learned a few tricks, so I got a bag of clubs, and within a half-hour she was puffing like a steam engine, and she says, "Young man, I think you should have a club of your own." I tried to tell her that I had only been in the business two weeks, but she insisted I see a Mr. Ingals for a job of my own.

Of course, I didn't do anything about it, but the fourth day the athletic director said, "Snead, come upstairs, I want to talk with you."

Well, I knew I was going to get fired as I sat down in his office, so you can imagine my surprise when he asked me how I would like to go to Cascades as pro.

I was to start the next morning, so I picked out a set of clubs. You should have seen the conglomeration! Also, the bag I had was one a man had left at the club, and the whole side was worn off. The pro asked me what I was going to do with the bag. He gave me a new one and told me he might be able to use my old one.

Well, that's how I got my start. Actually, at that time I hadn't seen many of the top-notch players, only possibly Bob Cruickshank, Vic Ghezzi, Ray Mangrum and Henry Picard — and they were lords to me. I remember I ran over to meet them when they came in on the train. It was about two miles from home, but I think I made it in 15 minutes.

## The Tournament Trail

Starting in my first tournament, I was paired with Johnny Farrell. I was so nervous I couldn't hold the ball to tee it. By the time the fourth round came up I was still mighty scared but finally fin-

ished with an 80 in the last round and won \$358.66.

From there I played in the Miami Open. I couldn't use a driver, so I used a brassie to drive with. Well, I didn't win the tournament, but I didn't do too badly, either.

I went back home for the winter, and the next year started off in the Hershey Open. I played with Craig Wood in the afternoon, and on the eleventh hole I was lucky. I got on the green and I think it was about 300 and something. So Craig says, "Look, I'll send you a letter within a week or so."

I waited a month and finally went to Florida and met Ray Mangrum. I didn't finish in the money down there but I asked Henry Picard and Craig Wood about my chances of going on to the West Coast. Picard was against it, but Wood, after asking me how much money I had saved, which amounted to \$300, said he'd give me enough money to come back home if I couldn't make it.

While out on the Coast, I picked up a driver of Picard's and he asked me if I liked it. When I told him yes, he gave it to me. My driving started to improve with this new club.

I heard Johnny Revolta split his winnings, so I asked Johnny Bulla, whom I had gone out to the Coast with in his Model A Ford, to split with me. "No," he said. "You can't play a lick." I told him I would play him for \$5 every time, and he said that was plenty.

#### Could This be Advice?

At the Los Angeles Open, I hit a drive down the middle and Bulla came up and said, "Now, Jackson, you got a Number 6 iron?"

"It looks like a 7," I said, "'cause if you go over that green you are out."

"I just played it," said Bulla. But when I asked him what he had, he walked away and said, "That's all right — don't bother."

I took a seven iron and then turned to Bulla to see if he still thought it was a six. "You just forced it," he came back.

But I didn't do too badly in the tournament, for I won \$600.



Sam Snead

Well, that was the start, and from the L. A. Open we went on to Oakland, where I won my first tournament with 270.

Actually, when I look back on it, the success I have had in golf I more or less owe to other people. I have been very fortunate and lucky in winning as much as I have.

One of the finest men I ever knew, who always steered me on the right path, was the late L. B. Icely, former President of the Wilson Sporting Goods Co. I always called him the "Boss" for he was just like a dad to me.

Another person I have to give a lot of credit to is J. Victor East, who recently retired from Wilson. Victor once told me:

"Never get steamed up about your putting, as only one of two things can happen . . . you either make it or miss it!"

Pretty good philosophy, isn't it? Well, frankly, I've tried never to forget it.

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#### Golden Anniversary

Congratulations to the Middle Atlantic Golf Association, which has just held its Fiftieth Anniversary Meeting.

Dr. Robert A. Keilty has long been a devoted spearhead in the Middle Atlantic and is Executive Secretary-Treasurer.