

# The People Speak on Amateur Status

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Last winter we asked thirty-five golfers to study the 1952 Rules of Amateur Status and send us their suggestions for constructive change. In an attempt to get a variety of informed opinion, we sent our request to some leading amateur and professional golfers, both men and women, to some club presidents, to some association presidents, to some golf equipment manufacturers and to some former Presidents of this Association. The golfers selected represented many segments of golf and many sections of the country.

Twenty-three replied, and their opinions were of great assistance in preparing the revisions which have been made effective in the 1953 Rules of Amateur Status.

Of this number, nine endorsed in principle the code as then written and indicated that a relaxation of any of its basic features would only weaken it. Views in this category were expressed by C. W. Benedict, 1952 president of the Westchester County (N.Y.) Golf Association; Dr. Arthur E. Billings, president of the Merion Golf Club, Ardmore, Pa.; George W. Blossom, Jr., 1942-43 president of the USGA; Bing Crosby, honorary vice-president of the Western Golf Association; John G. Jackson, 1936-37 president of the USGA; Herbert Jaques, 1933-34 president of the USGA; Miss Pat O'Sullivan, a member of the 1952 Curtis Cup Team; Lee S. Read, 1952 president of the Southern Golf Association, and one sectional association president who asked that his name be held in confidence.

## For the Code

Mr. Blossom expressed a common view when he wrote: "I believe we all realize that our Rules of Amateur Status are anything but perfect, but on the other hand I think the people interested in the USGA and the general sportsmen feel that our amateur status results are the

best of any sport. It would be too easy to change the rules and wake up to find we are in the same position that so many other sports are in."

Mr. Jaques pointed out: "Our Rules of Amateur Status have stood the test of time. Granted they impose certain hardships and financial inequalities, team matches, for instance, still go on. If they prevent many younger men from participating, they also produce the incentive for financial success in business. After years of study and thought, I cannot find any compromises or easing of the Rules that will avoid abuse when administered by enthusiastic, inexperienced, local committees or individuals.

Dr. Billings believes: "The only reason that amateur golf has been maintained on its present high level of amateurism is because of the existence and enforcement of the rather strict code. We have had in the other sports many regrettable infractions as a result of both laxity in rules and lack of proper enforcement. I think a tribute should be paid to the members of the USGA Executive Committee, past and present, for their wonderful understanding of the true spirit of amateurism and for their creation and execution of the rules and regulations which exemplify this spirit in its broadest concept."

Miss O'Sullivan wrote: "I feel that the Rules are strict. I do not feel, however, that they are unreasonable in any way. Possibly from the viewpoint of certain individuals, they are harsh, but when it is considered how many individuals are concerned, it is obvious that the rules must be adopted for the group, not for individuals therein.

"A very good example of this was my own problem in the 1949 Eastern Amateur Championship. I had too many clubs in my bag and discovered it after I had hit only one shot. I was disqualified under

the Rules at the time, and it seemed hard. Yet after I thought about it, I realized that the Rules of Golf were set up for the collective group and not for individual cases. I had no intent to use the extra clubs, but there could be others who would take advantage of such a situation."

Mr. Crosby suggested: "I think it might be a good idea if all the top amateurs were to be closely scrutinized and any of them who have no visible means of support other than golf should be screened closely with a view to determining just how they are supporting themselves . . . Perhaps the task of eliminating 'hustlers' from golf could best be accomplished by the people in charge at the private clubs."

Mr. Benedict felt the Definition of an Amateur Golfer could be tightened. (This provides that "An amateur golfer is one who plays the game solely as a non-remunerative or non-profit-making sport.") "The words 'non-remunerative' and 'non-profit-making' mean substantially the same thing. They both definitely imply that the person derives a profit . . . It would seem to me that the definition of an amateur should stipulate that he 'plays the game solely as a non-remunerative or non-profit-making sport, and entirely at his own expense.'"

Col. Read, in recommending support and publicity for the rules, asked himself what was the basic cause of most cases of questionable amateur status: "The answer which bounces back to me every time is either the desire of an individual or institution to do some youngster a favor or to develop the game of golf to the point of commercialism, at the sacrifice of the player. The greatest sin here is that the boy's honesty is concurrently impaired. He is encouraged to cheat, and the practice weakens the basic character on which the game is built."

#### Other Views

Fourteen of the twenty-three individuals who replied recommended liberalizations. The interesting features of these replies were, however, that at least ten of the fourteen apparently still endorsed the gen-

eral principles of the code and that recommendations for liberalizations were scattered over eight separate clauses.

The ten who appeared to endorse the general principles of the code in the course of suggesting one or two specific liberalizations were Miss Patty Berg, the 1938 Women's Amateur Champion and now a professional; William C. Chapin, vice-president of the Oak Hill Country Club, Rochester, N. Y.; George Dawson, a semi-finalist in the 1926 Amateur Championship and now vice-president of A. G. Spalding & Bros., Inc.; John W. Dawson, a member of the 1949 Walker Cup team; Miss Pat Lesser, a semi-finalist in the 1952 Women's Amateur Championship; Charles B. Lindeman, president of the Seattle Golf Club, Seattle, Wash.; Miss Barbara Romack, a quarter-finalist in the 1952 Women's Amateur Championship; Robert R. Walker, chairman of the Rules Committee, Western Golf Association; Jack Westland, the 1952 Amateur Champion; and one president of a state association who asked that his name be held confidential.

#### The Expense Rule

The principal target was the rule prohibiting the acceptance of expenses in connection with the general run of golf tournaments after the 18th birthday, except from one on whom the player is normally dependent.

This is the clause which, more than any other, distinguishes the USGA Rules of Amateur Status from the codes of most other sports, and eight respondents recommended that it be liberalized. They were Mrs. Charles F. Spalding, an entrant in the 1952 Women's Amateur Championship; Ellsworth Vines, former amateur and professional tennis champion and now golf professional at the Wilshire Country Club, Los Angeles, Cal.; E. Harvie Ward, Jr., 1952 British Amateur Champion, and Mr. Chapin, Miss Lesser, Mr. Lindeman, Mr. Westland and the president of the state association who asked that his name be held in confidence.

Mr. Chapin and Miss Lesser would restrict the acceptance of expenses to those

incurred in connection with the Amateur and Women's Amateur Championships, respectively. Mr. Westland believed that recognized golf associations should be allowed to pay the expenses of teams which represent them. Four of the others favored a general liberalization of the clause, and the fifth recommended that it be either more rigidly enforced or changed.

The Association did not, however, consider it advisable to relax this clause because it fears the creation of a class of players to whom golf would become a primary pursuit and who would compete, ostensibly as amateurs but actually as subsidized players. The creation of such a class is deemed undesirable because it would be unfair to true amateurs who play for pleasure and to whom the game is a secondary pursuit. Also, the hypocrisy can only weaken the characters of the individuals involved. One or two exceptions to the present rule might not create such a class, but they would establish precedents which would make further exceptions inevitable.

#### **The Faculty Member**

The second most popular target was the clause which prohibited faculty members or other employees of institutions of learning from receiving compensation for giving instruction in golf. Five individuals favored a relaxation of this clause, the majority to permit instructors of physical training to give instruction in golf. They were George M. Thompson, president of the Southern California Golf Association, whose letter represented the opinions of that association; and Miss Berg, Miss Lesser, Miss Romack and Mrs. Spalding. Mrs. Spalding favored a general broadening of the jobs girls may hold and still play as amateurs.

This clause was relaxed by the addition of the following exception, but this excepts only: "Faculty members of recognized educational institutions who are not primarily teachers of physical training or athletic sports and whose golf instruction is given to students and is incidental to their academic duties." It was believed

that to except also regular instructors of physical training and coaches would open the way to considerable abuse and that such instruction is properly the function of a professional.

#### **Value of Prizes**

Four respondents proposed that, in view of the declining value of the dollar, the limit on the retail value of a prize for an amateur should be raised, and the limit was increased from \$100 to \$150. Those who suggested a change of this nature were John Dawson; Mr. Lindeman, Mr. Thompson and Mr. Walker.

#### **Scholarships**

The president of the state association, a member of Mr. Thompson's board and Mr. Ward expressed the belief that the prohibition against scholarships granted because of golf skill or golf reputation should be relaxed, and this clause, too, underwent some rephrasing to bring it more closely into conformity with the amateur status codes of the leading college athletic conferences, all of which were carefully studied by the Association last winter.

The new clause cites as an example of an act which violates the Definition of an Amateur Golfer when committed after the 18th birthday: "Because of golf skill or golf reputation, accepting any consideration as an inducement to be a student in an educational institution. However, a student may accept a scholarship approved by a regular authority of the institution awarding all scholarships."

Suggestions for relaxation in other phases of the Rules were widely scattered, and only one was incorporated into the revised code.

#### **Shop Boys**

Mr. Walker proposed that the age limit on employees engaged in making, repairing or cleaning clubs in a golf shop at a golf course be increased from the 18th birthday to the 21st birthday, and this was done. As Mr. Walker pointed out: "A youngster is hardly in a position at the age of 17 to make a decision as to

whether or not he wishes to become a professional. Extension of the age at which this decision must be made to 20 years would provide the boy with an opportunity to make a more mature decision and in the meantime to take advantage of the highly desirable type of employment."

#### Reinstatement

Mr. Vines and Mr. Walker both proposed relaxations of the reinstatement procedure. Mr. Vines favored abolition of the requirement that an individual can have been a professional not more than five years in order to be eligible normally for reinstatement. Mr. Walker suggested making exceptions to the stipulation that an individual may be reinstated only once. In each case, the objective was to make it possible for older men, who might have been professionals more than five years or who might have been reinstated once in their youth, to enjoy their later years in club and senior competitions.

Actually, the Executive Committee already is empowered to waive the five-year rule and does when circumstances warrant. It considers, however, that allowing individuals to change their minds more than once would be dangerous.

#### Golf Equipment

Mr. Ward further suggested that amateurs be allowed to accept golf equipment from manufacturers, but he added: "I don't think the equipment should be accepted without some sort of payment . . . It is my firm belief that some rule could be written to allow amateurs to accept equipment at a reasonable discount."

The clause governing this subject has been slightly rephrased to prohibit the acceptance of golf equipment from any dealer after the 18th birthday "without payment of current market price." The subsidizing of amateurs by golf equipment dealers, however, is considered on exactly the same basis as the subsidizing of amateurs through the payment of other golf expenses, and the Association is not disposed to lower the first bar.

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