

What Southern Hills Did for the Juniors

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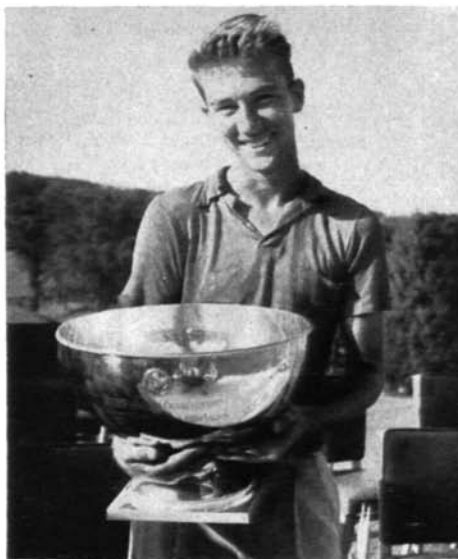
For many reasons the sixth USGA Junior Amateur Championship will be long remembered by all who took part in it as outstanding in every way.

Not the least of these reasons was the people of Tulsa, Okla., where the matches were played over the beautiful course of the Southern Hills Country Club. These people thought of everything to make our splendid group of 128 qualifiers from 36 states and Canada happy.

They put Robert M. Siegfried in charge of the Club committee; and Bobby, the Junior Championship Committeeman in Tulsa, justified their faith and affection by doing a magnificent job.

They provided excellent golf-course and clubhouse facilities. The course, which measured 6,675 yards, is situated in the rolling, wooded foothills of the Ozarks; and a stream running through nearly every hole adds to its beauty and provides a fine and sometimes difficult water hazard.

The quality of play throughout the Championship was high, in keeping with the quality of the surroundings. There were lapses, of course, but there were also flashes of real brilliance. Two holes-in-one were scored on the 165-yard fourteenth hole, one by Tod Morrow, of Pittsburgh, Pa., in a practice round, the other by Terry Thomas, of Canandaigua, N. Y., even as he was losing in the third round. The case of the boy whose ball came to rest too close to a tree to permit a proper backswing for his stroke to the green also comes to mind. Without a moment's hesitation he faced away from the hole, played a carom against the tree to the green and seemed somewhat annoyed that a piece of bark somewhat deflected the ball from its intended line.



Rex Baxter, Jr.

1953 Junior Amateur Champion

It is always hard to pick a winner in advance. The boys are so good that anything can happen. Yet Rex Baxter, Jr., 17, a member of the Amarillo (Texas) Country Club, demonstrated from the start that he was going to be hard to beat in his fourth attempt to win. A tall, strong boy with a sound swing, full of concentration and the will to win, he eventually defeated George Warren, III, 16 and a member of the Hampton County (S.C.) Country Club, 2 and 1, in the final. Warren has many of the same qualities wrapped up in a smaller package; and he, too, will be heard from again and often. Baxter is entering the University of Houston, Texas, and will be over-age next year. Warren is a senior in Hampton High School, and will be eligible to play again at The Los Angeles Country Club next year.

In one semi-final, Warren defeated James H. Lucius, 17, of Northfield, Minn., 3 and 2. Jimmy was penalized two holes for replacing his No. 2 wood with a putter in the course of the round, in violation of Rule 3. The penalty normally is disqualification, but the Committee saw fit to modify the disqualification penalty because of the youth and inexperience of the boy. Jimmy took his penalty with the spirit that makes us so proud of our juniors and which we hope will stay with them through the years.

William H. McLean, 17, of Mobile, Ala., who lost to Baxter, 8 and 7, in the other semi-final, is another strong youngster from whom more will be heard. Those of us who were privileged to see it will long remember Billy's quarter-final victory over Joseph M. Grace, also 17, of Detroit, Mich., at the nineteenth hole. The friendship formed between these two boys during this match was just another of the many intangible wonders of this great Championship.

There was another record entry of 713, representing 41 states, the District of Columbia and Canada. Charles P. Stevenson's entry of thirty-nine for the Buffalo, N. Y. Sectional Qualifying Round barely beat out Ralph Miller's thirty-eight for the Los Angeles, Cal., Round.

Frank Emmet had eight members of Ontario's Simpson Cup Team in his Round at Washington, D. C., and three of them qualified: Jack Lowery, of St. Catherines; Hugh Paterson, of Toronto; and George Shorer, of Aldershot. These Canadians added an international flavor to the Championship, even though all three lost in the first round.

Also, there were three 13 year olds, all of whom advanced all the way to the fourth round. Jack Nicklaus, who turned 13 last January and was the youngest, won his first two matches by 6 and 5, his third by 1 up and was even par in the latter. John P. Konsek, of Lancaster, N. Y., and Verner Stanley, of Charlotte, N. C., were the other amazing 13 year olds. Incidentally, Stanley was the youngest qualifier last year, at the age of 12.

Leo H. Jordan, Jr., of Overland, Kan., set a new record in the Sectional Qualifying when he played the Santa Fe Hills Country Club course, in Kansas City, Mo., in 60, the lowest score ever recorded in a USGA stroke-play competition. The record is, perhaps, more technical than real, however, for the Santa Fe Hills course has a par of 58.

The boys were comfortably housed in the dormitories of the University of Tulsa. James P. Dunn, Siegfried's right-hand man, handled these arrangements along with many others and proved himself the nearest thing to the indispensable man. Mrs. James Morris, of the University staff, who mothered the boys, stole everyone's heart.

After two days of practice, Jimmy Thomson conducted an instructive and entertaining shot-making clinic and the boys and committeemen were entertained by the USGA at a buffet dinner at the Club. Charles R. Coe, 1949 Amateur Champion and three-time Walker Cup Team member, was the principal speaker at the dinner and left just the right message with the boys: "The loser is the only one who learns anything in a golf match so don't be afraid to lose."

All but two of the 128 boys who qualified and said they would play were on hand. The problem of obtaining alternates was not difficult this time. Lee S. Read, of Louisville, Ky., did his usual splendid job of starting the boys from the first tee with well-chosen words calculated to put them at their ease and at the same time give them last minute information of importance.

For those boys who were beaten in the first round, there was a stroke-play consolation event and a luncheon at the Tulsa Country Club, another fine course.

We cannot close without recording herewith our thanks to the eleven unselfish Committeemen who came with their boys; to the people of Tulsa for their hospitality and cooperation; to Richard S. Tufts, first Chairman of the Junior Championship Committee, for his inspiration and to the boys for justifying our pride in them.