

A Final Won, Not Lost

By JOHN P. ENGLISH.

USGA ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It often happens that the final of a Championship is an anti-climax. Players who emerge from a week of gruelling matches in summer heat sometimes have progressive difficulty in keeping their swings sharp and their concentration keen. As a result, a final is as often lost as won.

The final of the 53rd Amateur Championship at the Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club had none of that quality, however. It was a thrilling duel between two great craftsmen and sportsmen, and it was clearly won by Gene Littler, of San Diego, Cal., but not lost, in the real sense of the word, by Dale Morey, of Indianapolis, Ind. As Totton P. Heffelfinger, President of the USGA, told Littler and Morey during the presentation of prizes, "There is glory enough for both of you."

The glory came toward the finish, as it should when champions compete. The clock-like Littler had worked his way into a two-hole lead with three holes to play and was running off solid pars one after the other. Standing on the sixteenth tee (the thirty-fourth of the match), Morey seemed to be playing Damocles to Littler's Dionysus.

On the 502-yard sixteenth, however, Morey plumped his approach close enough to make a birdie 4 and take the hole from Littler's orthodox 5.

On the 389-yard seventeenth, he holed an unlikely putt over a slippery mound for a birdie 3. The match suddenly was square again even though Littler had played both holes according to the card.

On the 441-yard eighteenth, both hit superb tee shots. Morey played the odd and his iron failed to draw in quite its usual fashion, the ball catching only the right rim of the green and rolling off into a mean lie in a shallow bunker. Littler hit his iron to the back of the green. Morey played his difficult third stroke well and was left with a longish but in the cir-

cumstances thoroughly makeable putt for his 4.

Littler then rose to Championship stature by running his twenty-footer directly into the hole for a birdie 3.

So the match ended with three successive birdies and Littler the new Champion by a margin of a single hole, after playing the 36 holes in level par with two 71s. The 23-year-old Navy Airman, first class, will be a real Champion, too—as if he had not already proved it by his stunningly brilliant and consistent play in the Walker Cup Match and in the Amateur, as well as by his modest and sportsman-like demeanor. He is one of our most formful champions, with strong hands, a compact, modern style that rarely gets out of kilter and a great sense of touch and range on the greens.

In addition to Littler, other young players attracted particular attention. They were two college boys, Don Albert, of Alliance, Ohio, and Bruce Cudd, of Portland, Ore. Albert is 21 and a junior at Purdue University. He won three matches in the Championship the previous year. Cudd is 20 and a sophomore at Portland University. While the galleries were concentrating on the better-known golfers, these two moved all the way to the semi-final round, where Albert lost to Morey, 5 and 4, and Cudd bowed to Littler's one-under-par play, 10 and 8.

Spectators made much of the fact that only one member of the United States Walker Cup Team, Littler, went as far as the quarter-finals. Yet we cannot but wonder how many, selecting a Team last spring, would have named a substantial number of the other quarter-finalists who proved themselves at Oklahoma City: Robert W. Kuntz, of Larchmont, N. Y., Albert, Morey, Angelo Santilli, of East Greenwich, R. I., Ted Richards, Jr., of Los Angeles, Cal., who won the Amateur Public Links Championship last July;

Raymond Palmer, of Grosse Ile, Mich., and Cudd.

Actually, of the eight Walker Cup players who entered in addition to Littler, three, William C. Campbell, of Huntington, W. Va., James G. Jackson, of Kirkwood, Mo., and Sam Urzetta, of Rochester, N. Y., played in the fifth round and lost only there to Morey, Palmer and Santilli, respectively, in the closest sort of matches. Two others, Kenneth P. Venturi, of San Francisco, Cal., and Harvie Ward, of Atlanta, Ga., stayed into the fourth round, where they bowed to Arnold Palmer, of Wickliffe, Ohio, and Kuntz, respectively, in two other tight matches.

Ward and Charles R. Coe, a member of the entertaining club, came together in the third round on Wednesday morning and engaged in one of the most stirring matches in the Championship. The scoreboard showed that Ward won on the fifth extra hole, but as a practical matter neither won. Ward did not have enough left after his victory to handle such a strong player as Kuntz and lost by a hole himself before the sun had set.

In the Ward-Coe match, both players, good friends and past winners of British and USGA Amateur Championships, respectively, were at the tops of their games. Ward started with a par, a birdie and a par to gain one hole. He became entangled in an unplayable lie at the fourth and the match was even. Then, starting at the fifth hole, he made eighteen consecutive pars and, playing the 576-yard fifth hole for the second time, a birdie 4 to win. The finish was typical of the whole match, which Coe had squared after being 3 down with six to play. Both balls were about ten feet from the hole in three, and they had to measure to determine that Coe was away. His sidehill putt hit the lip of the cup and turned but did not drop. Ward holed, and that was the difference.

The defending champion, Congressman Jack Westland, now 48, of Everett, Wash., fell with Coe in that third round. Arnold Palmer, who was to eliminate Venturi the same afternoon, beat him by a hole. Don Cherry, of Wichita Falls, Texas, recent winner of the Canadian Amateur, lost in

the first round to Curtis Person, of Memphis, Tenn.

The British Walker Cup Team fared little better, although only four of its members were able to remain in this country for the Championship. John L. Morgan, of Streetly, England, who had won in both foursomes and singles at the Kittansett Club and had mastered the fearsome Pine Valley Golf Club course, in Clementon, N. J., by making a 70 after starting with a 7, went farthest. He was subdued finally by Littler in the fifth round. Joseph B. Carr, of Sutton, Eire, the British Amateur Champion, won a match and then lost to Edward Merrins, of Meridian, Miss., by two holes.

The elimination of the better-known players, which started slowly and reached a crescendo in the two rounds on Wednesday, may have been abetted somewhat by calm, hot weather on the first days of play. The Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club course measures 6,852 yards, but its perfect and close-cut bermuda fairways play shorter than that would indicate, particularly when long hitters gamble successfully on the short routes offered by its six dog-leg holes. It is not severely tight on a windless day, either. It apparently was designed by the late Perry Maxwell to accommodate play when the strong south wind sweeps across the flats. On the early, windless days, all men were more nearly equal. The survivors learned plenty about wind on Thursday and Friday, however, when the course put up its more customary, vigorous defense.

Once again at the Amateur, the hospitality and good-fellowship were outstanding. The thrill and honor of winning undoubtedly is an important factor in attracting top-notch players to this Championship, but this growing tradition of sociability must also play an intangible role in luring many of the 1,284 who attempted to qualify this year. When a Championship is conducted in the spirit with which Harrison Smith, the Club's General Chairman, and Kent B. Hayes, the Club's President, imbued this one, a player may be beaten but he can hardly lose.