

Why Trial Form of Open Was Abandoned

The system of double qualifying for the Open Championship which was used on a trial basis this year will not be repeated because of strong objections voiced by a substantial number of players.

The Open will revert for the foreseeable future to 36-hole Sectional Qualifying Rounds followed only by the 72-hole Championship proper for 162 qualifiers and exempt entrants. The 1954 Championship will be held over the Lower Course of the Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N. J., next June.

Before reaching this decision to return to the form which had been used for many years prior to 1953, the USGA Executive Committee polled 1,762 entrants, former Open Champions and members of the Sectional Affairs Committee by mail after the 1953 Championship.

The 520 who replied actually favored, by a ratio of approximately five to three, the 1953 plan under which a more generous quota of 299 sectional qualifiers and exempt entrants was allowed to go to the scene of the Championship and there engage in a second qualifying round over two courses during which their number was reduced by approximately one half.

A substantial number of the minority, however, took occasion not only to object to the 1953 plan but to present compelling reasons for their objections. It was, they wrote, unusually expensive in both time and money, requiring as it did two extra days of play plus extra practice over a second course. Club professionals found an added financial sacrifice in having to be away from their shops over two week ends in a busy season.

What They Said

Pat Abbott, professional, of Memphis, Tenn., said: "Takes too much time away from the club to learn two courses and then qualify."

Jim Barfield, professional, of Grand Rapids, Mich., said: "The expense and

time element of the 36-hole qualifying at the site of the tournament is too great for the average golfer. To travel and practice, the time involved is over ten days, more nearly two weeks."

Bobby Cruickshank, professional, of Pittsburgh, Pa., wrote: "In many cases entrants had to travel great distances, with added expense, and it seemed like quite a gamble to take when they had to qualify another 36 holes to get in the 72-hole Championship."

Henry Lindner, professional, of Augusta, Ga., offered: "The expense of this trip is too great to risk not qualifying upon arrival at the tournament site."

Ted Luther, professional, of Pittsburgh, Pa., commented: "As a club pro, I feel the 1952 plan is more desirable as it is not necessary to be away from the job quite as long as under the 1953 plan."

Cary Middlecoff, professional, of Memphis, Tenn., believed: "Six consecutive rounds make the tournament too much of an endurance contest. A club pro must miss two week ends from his club."

Two amateurs also made telling points.

Billy Joe Patton, of Morgantown, N. C., pointed out: "Some good golfers are not going to qualify under either system. However, the 1952 plan does let you play in the Open, whereas the 1953 plan had one half the field spending their money and never participating in the Open."

Robert T. Jones, Jr., of Atlanta, Ga., one of nine former Champions who favored the 1952 form, added: "I do not believe it at all possible that the extra sectional qualifying places provided by the new system could include a winner. I see no reason to expand hotel, transportation and club facilities to take care of people who have little if any chance to win."

The objective of the Association is to preserve the best interests of the game, and acceding to these objections after a fair trial would seem to carry out that objective.