

PUBLIC LINKSMAN TO OPEN CHAMPION

by

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WHILE VISITING the Westwood Country Club in St. Louis last summer, we noticed a lesson in progress on the practice tee. The professional was a familiar figure, but to see him in a teaching role was new to us.

We had first known Ed Furgol in the late 1930s as a contestant in the Amateur Public Links Championship. Later, he had become a tournament professional touring the circuit. Now this next golfing incarnation was as a club pro.

So it seemed rather natural to say jokingly to him, "You're doing mighty well for a club pro" when he came out for the third round of the Open Championship last month at the Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N. J. He was then tied with Ben Hogan for second place with a thirty-six-hole score of 141, two strokes behind the leader, Gene Littler.

"Club pro?" Ed said. "I'm a club pro AND a playing pro! I have an average of 71.5 strokes for more than a thousand rounds of golf on the circuit in the last ten years."

Now that Ed Furgol is the Open Champion, it is fascinating to think back over his story, his rise to the peak of his profession. There are perhaps as many ways of becoming a champion as there are champions, but in golf they all have one great quality in common—determination.

That had to be so in Ed Furgol's case, for when he was 12 years old he shattered his left elbow in a fall from playground crossbars, and it never set right, with the result that the arm is permanently crooked at the elbow, and rather withered.

In a game which stresses the straight left arm, 37-year-old Ed Furgol proved that it's still the hands which swing the

clubhead, and it's still the spirit which can overcome the flesh.

The medal which Ed won at Baltusrol was his third USGA medal. He won the two others in the 1940 Amateur Public Links Championship at Detroit when he was representing Utica, N. Y. He tied for the qualifying medal with a then-record 138 for 36 holes and played through four matches to the semi-finals, where he lost on the thirty-eighth hole to the eventual Champion, Robert Clark, of St. Paul.

Two years before that, Ed had finished second for the medal, behind Walter Burkemo. Many graduates of the Public Links Championship have gone on to greater glory in golf: Burkemo was PGA Champion in 1953; Furgol is now Open Champion.

Before Baltusrol, Ed Furgol (no relation to Marty) had thrice qualified for the final thirty-six holes in the Open, the last time being in 1948. His best previous effort was a tie for 12th in 1946, when he had 77-69-74-69—289.

The Final Hole Decides

The thin line between winning and losing was dramatically illustrated many times in the last round over Baltusrol's great Lower Course, especially on the last hole.

This eighteenth hole is 545 yards long. The drive is downhill, with a brook, rough and trees at the left and goodly rough and more trees on the right. It is a tight tee shot. The second shot swings uphill to the left, across the curling brook, but the green is within range of the second shot for a good many players.

Dick Mayer came to the final hole needing a par 5 for a seventy-two-hole score of 284. Instead, his drive found an unplayable lie under an evergreen, and Dick took 7.

Next, Ed Furgol drove in among the trees on the left, played a safety shot onto the nearby eighteenth fairway of Baltusrol's other, or Upper, course, and pitched his third to the front apron of the green. He chipped six feet past the hole.

Had Ed not holed that putt for a par 5, the story might have been different. For later Gene Littler hit his second shot toward the eighteenth green and had the misfortune to have his ball catch a bunker at the left. His explosion was excellent but left him eight feet short. Had he holed the putt he would have tied Furgol's 284.

There were many other ifs, but these three are enough to serve the point. If Mayer had taken a par 5 or if Furgol had missed his six-foot putt or if Littler had holed his eight-footer, there might be a different name on the trophy for 1954. Such are the charming and vexing vagaries of golf.

It was that kind of an Open. Like so many of its predecessors, it was often lost. But it was also won very affirmatively by Ed Furgol's four rounds of 71-70-71-72—284, four above par.

Here were the leaders at the various stages:

18 Holes		36 Holes	
*William J. Patton	69	Gene Littler	139
Ted Kroll	70	Ed Furgol	141
Bob Toski	70	Ben Hogan	141
Gene Littler	70	Lloyd Mangrum	143
Al Mengert	71	Dick Mayer	143
Ben Hogan	71	Cary Middlecoff	143
Ed Furgol	71	Al Mengert	143
54 Holes		72 Holes	
Ed Furgol	212	Ed Furgol	284
Dick Mayer	213	Gene Littler	285
Cary Middlecoff	215	Dick Mayer	286
Lloyd Mangrum	215	Lloyd Mangrum	286
Gene Littler	215	Bobby Locke	288
Al Mengert	216	Tommy Bolt	289
*William J. Patton	216	Ben Hogan	289
		Shelley Mayfield	289
		Freddie Haas	289
*—amateur		*William J. Patton	289

When it was over, three names at the very top were new to that rarefied atmosphere: Ed Furgol, aged 37; Gene Littler, 23; Dick Mayer, 29.

Littler, Patton and Hogan

It was Littler's first Open. He turned professional only last January. In finishing second, just one putt away, he confirmed the promise he has shown in recent years

and especially in his victory in the Amateur Championship last September.

Littler's rounds at Baltusrol were 70-69-76-70—285.

Another player who captivated the gallery was William J. Patton, amateur from Morganton, N. C. His 69 led the first round, and he was very much in it until late in the day Saturday. Finally he finished five strokes off Ed Furgol's pace. His 289 not only won the low amateur medal but tied him for sixth place.

Billy Joe has qualified for the last 36 holes in the last three Opens and is the only amateur to win gold medals for so doing.

The Saturday before the Championship, Ben Hogan reeled off a 64 at Baltusrol on National Golf Day. He seemed to be at the peak of his greatness as he made ready to try for his fifth Open Championship. Only Ben, Bob Jones and Willie Anderson have won the Open four times.

The little Texan was in the thick of it for two rounds, being two strokes away from Littler after 36 holes. But he struggled through a bad third round of 76 and could not make up the ground.

The respect which his fellow-professionals hold for little Ben was evidenced in a remark by Ed Furgol at the prize presentation. "I can hardly believe I've won the National Open," said Ed, "and I know Ben here could give me two strokes a side."

Hogan could readily win the Open again if time and circumstance blend. Whether he does or not, he has enriched golf not only as a champion player but as a person.

New System of Gallery Control

A new system of gallery control was one of the most significant features of the Open. Nearly ten miles of rope and 2,100 iron stakes, permanently rigged, were used to protect every hole from tee to green. Spectators were marshalled completely off playing areas into the rough on the sides of the course, except for a few temporary walkways across fairways to facilitate travel between certain holes.

This innovation was tested by the largest galleries of which we have record for the

Open. Late on the first day the crowd following Ben Hogan got out of hand on the eighteenth hole, but Baltusrol's marshals, headed by John C. Smaltz, had things completely under control thereafter.

The result was that more spectators saw more golf than ever before without having to run, the contestants had eminently fair and uniform playing conditions and were not bothered in getting through crowds and after the first day the pace of play was unusually good for the Open.

Golf is the only popular sport in which players and spectators practically commingle, and sometimes this can be a great nuisance to players. Claude Harmon sums it up this way:

"Under the old system of gallery control, in trying to get through the crowds you had to break your stride numbers of times, and that is annoying when you are concentrating. Besides, spectators frequently came up and recalled the time you played their course back in 1941.

"The new system at Baltusrol was a joy for the players, and I know all of us felt that way. We had the playing area to ourselves, and the course was not pock-marked by thousands of foot-prints.

"It was really a great pleasure to play under such conditions."

Somewhat similar opinions were expressed by many spectators, who found they did not have to romp for vantage points as in other days and yet could see much more play than ever before.

Although the Open is afflicted by slow play in a sort of creeping paralysis that seems to defy a cure, the roping system, which was devised mainly by Robert Trent Jones, golf course architect, helped to improve things a bit after the first day.

For the first 18 holes, the last group of three players took 4 hours 41 minutes; this was the day when there were flaws in the gallery control system. In the 1953 Open at Oakmont, with a slightly smaller field, the last group finished in 4 hours 24 minutes.

The second day, with the field still playing in threes, the last group took 4 hours 5 minutes. This compares with 4 hours 48 minutes at Oakmont last year.

On Saturday, when play was by couples, the last pair started the fourth round at 3:17 P.M. and finished at 6:50 P.M.—an elapsed time of 3 hours 23 minutes, compared with 3 hours 26 minutes at Oakmont.

Every Club in the Bag

This was the ninth USGA Championship at hospitable Baltusrol, and the Lower Course never presented a sterner or fairer test. It was in glorious condition, thanks largely to Edward J. Casey, golf course superintendent, and his grand staff. Cary Middlecoff and Lloyd Mangrum, former Open Champions, were among many who volunteered that it was the finest course on which they had played in the Open.

The course stretched 7,027 yards, with a par of 70. There were several 69s and one 67, this lowest round being made by Richard D. Chapman, the amateur, with benefit of a hole-in-one.

Most players were called upon to use every club in the bag. Under normal conditions, the average contestant had to play long irons and woods—from a No. 3 iron up—six or eight times for approach shots in the course of a round.

The Two 18th Holes

After Ed Furgol played safely up the eighteenth fairway of the adjoining Upper Course in the last round, some persons wondered why the Upper Course was not out of bounds for the Championship.

Definition 21 in the Rules of Golf provides: "'Out of bounds' is ground on which play is prohibited." This leaves it up to the committee in charge of a tournament.

Where feasible, it is the USGA's general policy to recognize each club's natural and customary boundaries and to avoid creating artificial boundaries within club property. Occasionally it is advisable to have boundaries inside the property, as when a parking space or the clubhouse are so close to a line of play that things would be complicated if a ball were to fetch up among parked automobiles, or were to hole out in a soup tureen in the club dining room. But interior boundaries by themselves are

generally inadvisable. The idea is to permit play where golf can reasonably be played, to keep the ball in play, and not to force a player into the heavy penalty of stroke and distance on an artificial boundary.

USGA representatives inspected Baltusrol well in advance of the tournament, and as a result the boundaries were described on the USGA's official score card as follows (every player was given a copy before the tournament):

"Boundaries are defined by the inside line of the fence or a downward extension of the fence, at ground level."

The fence in question is Baltusrol's property line.

This is nothing new at Baltusrol. It is the custom there for the eighteenth hole of each course to be in bounds for the eighteenth hole of the other course, and the USGA has agreed with that custom for previous Championships there.

As a matter of fact, it is practically impossible to separate Baltusrol's two 18th holes by a boundary. As you approach the greens, there are a couple of bunkers between them which are common hazards for both holes. Gene Littler was in one such bunker on his last round. Have you ever seen a line of out-of-bounds stakes drawn through the middle of a bunker?

Pairings for Final 36 Holes

Rule 36-2a of the Rules of Golf provides:

"The Committee shall arrange the order and times of starting, which, when possible, shall be decided by lot."

Pursuant to this, pairings and starting times for the last 36 holes were arranged as follows:

1. The leaders after the first 36 holes (14 persons) were paired with one another by lot.

2. These leading couples were drawn by lot for starting times which were spaced well apart.

3. The remainder of the field was drawn by lot for the remaining starting times.

This is substantially the method which the USGA has long used for the final day of the Open and conforms with a long-standing Rule of Golf.

This was the last Open in which all former Champions were eligible for exemption from Sectional Qualifying Rounds. The premium on qualifiers' places has become so high (about 15 players for each place) that, effective in 1955, exemptions of former Champions will be limited to the last five *individuals* who have won the Championship.

Records

This 54th Open Championship was a record-breaker in several ways. First, there were 1,928 entries after all withdrawals, compared with the former record of 1,688 in 1952, an increase of 240.

The prize money, originally fixed at approximately \$20,000, was increased several days before play began by a 20 per cent bonus for each prize, for 1954 only. The total actually awarded was \$23,280, a new USGA record, with the winner receiving \$6,000, of which he gave his caddie \$1,050.

It was the first Open to be televised nationally, NBC doing a two-hour telecast on the last day.

The estimated attendance each day was the highest on record, the paid and complimentary admissions being approximately:

First day	12,500
Second day	13,400
Third day	13,700

Total 39,600

Above all else, the atmosphere was about as happy as is possible. For this, we have to thank a great many Baltusrol members and especially C. P. Burgess, the General Chairman. Baltusrol knows and appreciates golf, and did a superlative job in entertaining this 54th Open.

And now we have as Champion a courageous man who has come a long way since those early days of the Amateur Public Links Championship, a man who has overcome many adversities and who apparently realizes not only the privileges but also the responsibilities of his new position. American sports can ennoble many men, and many men have ennobled our sports. When he accepted his prize, Ed Furgol said:

"I only hope I can give something back to golf."