

AFTER 60 YEARS— STATE OF THE USGA

by

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NEITHER TIME nor change have weakened the ideals of fair play and amateurism in golf, Isaac B. Grainger, President of the USGA, told delegates to the Association's sixty-first annual meeting in New York last month. Despite strong commercial influences, which are comparatively new, the amateur spirit prevails to the extent that amateur golf, which means the game at large, is as truly amateur as any other popular sport, Mr. Grainger said.

"We choose to believe that the inner standards of the game are the main reasons for the appeal which has caused golf to thrive outwardly," he said. "Your Association is charged with upholding those standards, and this it regards as its most important work."

Mr. Grainger, who was re-elected with all other officers for another term, expressed concern about amateur golfers who use the USGA Amateur Championship as a stepping stone to professionalism.

"We do not believe it fair that any young man who seeks a professional career should travel the amateur path," he said.

In endeavoring to emphasize the ideals of the game, the Association last year took the following steps:

Established the Bob Jones Award for distinguished sportsmanship in golf.

Helped produce a motion picture on the "Rules of Golf—Etiquette," the first of a series of educational pictures made in collaboration with National Educational Films, Inc.

Continued to inveigh against the use of golf for organized gambling, and noted further progress in clubs and other organizations giving up tournament pools.

Adopted a course rating system for women.

Prepared for conferences next May with the British, looking to a uniform code of amateur status and to an improvement of the present uniform code of playing rules.

Much Different Today

Reflecting upon the USGA's sixtieth birthday last December 22, Mr. Grainger pointed out that the game today bears no resemblance outwardly to its state when the USGA was born.

"Then, for example, the Association had five member clubs; today, 1,842," he said. "Golf course maintenance at that time was not much more than lawn-cutting and simple gardening. Today our Association has a staff of five agronomists located at strategic points over the country to serve the course superintendents of our member clubs in the scientific care of turfgrass.

"Some conception of how the game has grown may be seen in the fact that the first USGA Championships attracted 32 entries for the Amateur and only 11 for the Open. Last year there were 1,278 and 1,928, respectively.

"As the visible scope of the game has grown, what of its essential nature and ideals? This is an area in which your Association is especially concerned, being responsible as it is for administering basic codes such as rules for play and amateur status.

"In essence, golf today is the same game it was when the USGA was founded. The fundamental rules are practically the same. So are the ideals of the game."

The USGA's annual meeting is a time for stock-taking, and the reports of the Committees reflect the scope of the Association's work.

In his report for the Rules of Golf Committee, Richard S. Tufts, Chairman, noted that only 36 formal decisions on the Rules were rendered last year, as against 65 in 1953 and 102 in 1952, indicating that the code adopted in 1952 and revised in 1954 has been giving good results.

There is apt to be a long agenda, however, for the joint committee representing the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland, and the USGA, which will meet in Great Britain in May on proposals for changes in the Rules.

"We have in our files a substantial list of suggestions for consideration," said Mr. Tufts. "A majority are minor in character and, if accepted, probably wouldn't be noticed by most golfers. They are considered desirable only to clarify procedure, to eliminate possible ambiguity or conflict, or to improve the arrangement of the Rules.

"The remaining proposals, though, do concern definite changes in procedure. They are of two types. The first would simplify the operation of the Rules. The second would make the game less artificial, either by reducing the impact of penalties or by bringing the Rules into closer conformity with present playing practice. In the latter category fall such possibilities as a reduction in the penalty for a ball out of bounds. It must be recognized, however, that this particular modification, even if desirable, is surrounded by complications and dangers.

"The same may be said of many other proposals. No situation under the Rules can be isolated from its relationship with other parts of the code. Each Rule must be capable of application with parity to a multitude of conditions on golf courses all over the world. Thus it is obvious that the utmost caution must be exercised.

"Although the conference in 1951 resulted in a uniform code, now generally recognized as greatly improved, we hope the meetings in May will produce further improvements, particularly in those directions in which golfers have indicated an interest. We welcome suggestions and are anxious to represent the golfers of the

United States in providing a practical, well-balanced code of Rules."

New Gallery Control

The new system of gallery control used in the 1954 Open and Amateur Championships is to be continued, according to John D. Ames, Chairman of the Championship Committee.

In last year's Open at the Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N.J., nearly ten miles of rope and 2,100 iron stakes were set out to rim every hole from tee to green. Spectators were marshaled entirely 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.

"The experiment was so obviously successful that it was repeated in the USGA Amateur Championship and we plan to use the system wherever feasible in our major Championships of the future," said Mr. Ames.

"Effective in 1955, we will require that handicaps submitted by amateurs as a basis for eligibility for the Amateur and the Open Championships be computed under the USGA Golf Handicap System for Men (1953 edition). Either basic or current handicaps will be acceptable. While the USGA has long maintained a handicap qualification as a basis for eligibility for amateurs in these Championships, it has not previously specified the method by which it wanted these handicaps computed."

Amateur Status Code

Concerning the USGA Rules of Amateur Status, a number of interesting questions have arisen, John W. Fischer, Chairman of the Amateur Status and Conduct Committee, reported.

Some players with good competitive or administrative backgrounds in amateur golf have expressed a desire to work for golf equipment companies and retain their amateur status. In each case a careful investigation has been made to determine wheth-

er the proposed employment was in any way dependent upon golf ability or reputation. No violations were ascertained.

"Rather than adopt an uncompromising attitude against such employment, it was felt that a more elastic policy, consistent with the Rules and precedent, was advisable to enable those genuinely interested in the sales and administrative phases of the business to pursue it without foregoing their amateur status," said Mr. Fischer.

"Other questions still under consideration concern reinstatement when the period of violation exceeds five years, the total value of testimonials presented to amateurs, sales employees in golf shops, appearances of amateurs on radio, television or at other functions, and industrial golf."

As a result of a request from an industrial golf organization for an exception to the USGA Rule regarding expenses, a comprehensive survey was made, revealing a surprising growth in industrial golf. The ninth annual Mid-West industrial golf championship in Chicago last year, for example, attracted 98 teams comprising 392 players, representing 75 corporations in a ten-state area.

"To varying degrees, the USGA Rule concerning expenses has been violated by these organizations, primarily because of misinterpretation of the 'dependency clause' and because our Rules are generally more stringent than those of other sports in which these companies also compete," continued Mr. Fischer.

A golf glove which provided undue artificial aid in gripping the club and other devices designed to supplement a player's natural grip or swing were disapproved by the Implements and Ball Committee, Charles B. Grace, Chairman, reported. Also disapproved was an attachment designed to be placed on the face of a putter, which the Committee held was in violation of the traditional form of a club, whose face should be substantially plain. Although clubs susceptible to easy adjustment of weight by a player in the course of a round continue to come to the Committee for opinions, they are not approved.

Record Membership

Another high in USGA membership has been reached, according to John G. Clock, Chairman of the Membership Committee. Last year saw a net gain of 99 clubs, bringing the total membership to 1,842. This was the ninth consecutive year in which membership increased.

In this connection, T. R. Garlington, Chairman of the Green Section Committee, reported the USGA now is providing Regional Turf Service in 25 states through four offices.

The Green Section in 1954 established two new offices—the Northeastern Office at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., with Alexander M. Radko as Northeastern Director, and the Southeastern Office at the Georgia Coastal Plain Experiment Station, Tifton, Ga., with B. P. Robinson as Southeastern Director.

Approximately 100 gifts from nearly as many donors were received by the USGA Golf Museum and Library at "Golf House" during 1954, according to Edward E. Lowery, Chairman of the Museum Committee.

Even though no direct solicitation for contributions was made, the "Golf House" Fund was increased by \$1,592 last year, Daniel A. Freeman, Jr., Chairman of the "Golf House" Fund Committee, reported. Of the total amount, \$1,000 was received from 64 contributors; the balance of \$592 was realized from the sale of lithographed color prints of the Association's portrait of Robert T. Jones, Jr.

The Association still can supply prints at \$20 each from its limited issue, numbered serially. All proceeds go to the "Golf House" Fund for the purchase, equipment and maintenance of "Golf House."

A feature of the annual meeting in recent years has been personal reports by USGA representatives in women's golf. Mrs. Harrison Flippin, Chairman of the Women's Committee, and Mrs. John Pennington, Chairman of the Girls' Junior Committee, told of their work, which now covers four competitive events among other things—the Women's Amateur, Women's Open and Girls' Junior Championships and the Curtis Cup Match.