

THE PLACE OF INTENT IN AMATEUR GOLF

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THIS IS A boom period for spectator sports, which mainly means professional sports. A thriving economy, more leisure time and wide public interest in athletics contribute to make professional sports an attractive vocation for some young people. This is especially true in golf, in which successful professionalism can be practiced for one's lifetime, and is not limited to the few years of strong and fast young manhood.

This is also a boom period for participant sports, which mainly means amateur sports. As we all know, games are basically amateur, for the very nature of a game is that it is played for recreation and fun.

It is perfectly natural for some proficient amateurs to point toward professional careers.

In doing so, however, some of them continue to appear as amateurs long past the time when they have made a positive decision to turn professional. They try to develop skill and reputation by defeating other amateurs until their skill and reputation have reached the point of being salable professionally.

This may seem natural—but is it fair? Is it a sporting thing to use one's fellow-amateurs as stepping stones?—to seek to defeat them in order to advance closer to the financial rewards of professionalism?—in short, to exploit one's friends who are playing the game for fun, as an avocation?

In golf, the USGA Executive Committee considers that this is unfair.

In saying this, we speak only of the player who definitely intends to become a professional and is purposefully pointing his life to that end. We do not refer to the young man who wistfully eyes from



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afar the attractions of professionalism and mentally toys with the idea of a professional career but who has not come to a fixed decision. We speak, rather, of the player who, secretly within himself, has embraced professionalism as a career and carefully waits only for the ripe time to change over.

There is a Rule of Amateur Status which disqualifies as an amateur anyone for "taking any action which clearly indicates the intention of becoming a professional golfer."

But here we are speaking of the intention which precedes an overt action. Such an intention can scarcely be discerned by an outsider. Only the player knows it, in his heart.

Appeal to Sportsmanship

Thus, you can't have a precise rule in the code about it. You can only appeal to the sportsmanship which is within us all.

Why should such an appeal be made? Simply because amateur competitions are for people who are amateurs at heart.

Suppose you are the runner-up in an amateur championship. Shortly after the championship the winner turns professional. He disqualifies himself as an amateur and he disqualifies himself as champion. There is no champion.

Would you not feel rather put out? For once in your life you had reached the final, and then had lost to someone who didn't care enough about the title to remain eligible for it. That would be bitter for you. You might be the champion but for that other fellow.

This is not fantasy. It has happened rather frequently in late years. In the last five years, two USGA Amateur Champions and two USGA Women's Amateur Champions have turned professional long before their year's tenure as Champion expired. Combining both classes, seven of the last ten winners ultimately turned professional.

Let us quickly add that some of the non-defenders and some of the others probably did not intend to forsake amateurism when they entered the championships. Circumstances can alter cases, and some of the winners were attracted to professionalism after they had won. We understand their positions, and we shall always respect their decision and wish them well.

But the USGA Executive Committee takes a different view of those who, knowing they are definitely on their way to

professionalism, enter amateur events to build themselves up at the expense of true amateurs.

We take such a different view that we do not want them to enter as amateurs for USGA competitions.

If they want to be professionals, let them turn professional and enter the USGA Open Championship and other open tournaments as professionals.

To make the USGA's position clear, we are sending the following message to all entrants in this year's Amateur and Women's Amateur Championships:

"In accepting your entry, the USGA Executive Committee understands that it is your intention to continue to be an amateur golfer.

"If we are mistaken, and if you intend to become a professional within the next year, please inform us immediately so that your entry may be withdrawn. We feel that a champion should not disqualify himself before defending his title.

"USGA amateur competitions are for amateur golfers. An amateur is 'one who plays the game solely as a non-remunerative or non-profit-making sport.' The Championships should not be exploited as stepping stones to professionalism.

"There is a proper place for professionalism. But the line between amateur and professional must be clearly drawn, in fairness to both.

"The code of amateurism has helped golf to thrive. The game is in the keeping of the players. Your help in upholding golf's standards will be most welcome."

We'll always remember some wise remarks on amateurism by Eugene G. Grace, Honorary Chairman of the Saucon Valley Country Club's Executive Committee for the 1951 USGA Amateur Championship at Bethlehem, Pa. Mr. Grace, a leading industrialist, Chairman of the Bethlehem Steel Corp., has long

been deeply interested in athletics. Addressing the contestants in the 1951 Championship, he said in part:

"We felt that by holding the Amateur Golf Championship here we might be able to make a contribution to amateurism in golf, and to sport in general. That seems particularly vital at this time when the public has been disturbed by commercialism, and worse, in some of our sports.

"Don't misunderstand me — American sport is generally clean, but we must face the fact that there have been various exceptions and that there has been over-emphasis on the commercial end.

"Hence it is particularly important right now to emphasize that amateur golf is just that and completely that in the fullest spirit of the word. You contestants know better than anyone that you have paid your own way here, and that you are entirely on your own.

Answer Lies in Heart

"The only way in which amateurism in sports can be defined is in the sportsman's own heart.

"If the player says to himself that the only reason he is playing (and putting up with the sacrifices and inconveniences of stiff amateur competition) is that he gets his full reward out of his enjoyment of the game, then he is a sure-enough amateur. If he expects direct or indirect cash reward, then he is a pro.

"It is certainly not dishonorable to be frankly a professional; but to lie to yourself and pretend you are an amateur, when you know in your heart you are lying, is just a ruinous habit. That's the real nub of the amateur problem in athletics. Schools that are supposed to train young men, yet warp their consciences by phony amateur standards, can't have much to brag about.

"There is an honorable place, of course, for professional sport. Professional baseball is a great and constructive national institution. Professional golf is conducted on a high level. The players are a great credit to the sport.

AUDIENCE REACTION TO USGA FILM

There have been more than 385 bookings thus far of the USGA motion picture entitled "The Rules of Golf—Etiquette." Some of the comments from audiences are:

Fort Knox, Ky., — "Tremendous movie; enthusiastically received."

Dayton, Ohio — "Enjoyed it very much. Many wanted it to show at different golf clubs."

Seattle, Wash., — "Excellent."

The film, which recently was awarded a Recognition of Merit by the Film Council of America, is a 16 mm. Kodachrome with a running time of 17½ minutes. The importance of etiquette is emphasized visually through portrayal of various violations of the code in the course of a family four-ball match. Robert T. Jones, Jr., makes the introductory statement. Ben Hogan appears in several scenes.

The shipping of prints is handled by National Educational Films, Inc., 165 West 46th Street, New York 16, N. Y., which produced the film in cooperation with the USGA. The rental fee is \$15, which includes the cost of shipping the print to the renter.

"There is a place for the professional and a place for the amateur, but the point is to keep the distinction sharp and clear."

In 1947 Cary Middlecoff was invited to be a member of the United States Walker Cup Team which was going abroad to play the British. He declined. He said he intended to turn professional soon.

Cary Middlecoff could have taken that Walker Cup trip and could have turned professional after returning home. His reputation might have been enhanced by play in the Walker Cup Match and the British Amateur Championship.

But Cary Middlecoff had already given his heart over to professional golf. He declined one of the most desirable honors in amateur golf. He thereby made it possible for another amateur to take his place.

Cary Middlecoff, in that simple sporting act, thus honored the game of golf—and, indirectly, himself.