

MISS LESSER'S REACTIONS UNDER ADVERSITY

by

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IF YOU want to see what makes a Champion tick, watch him under adversity. And her, too.

Among the many reasons why Miss Patricia Lesser is the new USGA Women's Amateur Champion, one of the most revealing came during her worst fit of "hacking." It gave quite an insight into the temperament and the character which carried her through the week-long tournament at the Myers Park Country Club in Charlotte, N. C., last month.

The incident occurred in the morning round of Miss Lesser's final match against Miss Jane Nelson. Miss Lesser was 1 up playing the eighth, a par 5 hole of 494 yards with a wide, rugged creek immediately protecting the green.

Miss Nelson was over the green in 3. Miss Lesser faced a reasonably simple pitch to be home in 3. She plopped the ball into the water hazard, on the sheer far bank of the creek, in a very bad lie. She decided it would be unwise to play the ball as it lay, so she accepted a one-stroke penalty and dropped a ball behind the water hazard.

Again she plopped it into an unplayable lie in the creek bank—her fifth stroke. Would you have given up at that point? How about Pat Lesser?

"How many are you, Jane?" she called out to Miss Nelson, whose ball now lay on the green, some distance from the hole.

"Four," replied Miss Nelson.

"Do you think you can three-putt?" Miss Lesser asked. "I'm going to play another ball, and maybe I can hole it."

"If you do," warned Miss Nelson with mock seriousness, "I'll wring your neck."

Back across a long bridge Miss Lesser ran to the other side of the creek, dropped a ball, and played 7 to the green. She didn't come close to holing it, but the gallery ap-

plauded. Only then did she concede the hole to Miss Nelson.

Good Judgment Displayed

It was interesting to observe Miss Lesser through all this tedious and embarrassing procedure—and in the final of the national championship! She showed courage, persistence and good judgment, as well as remarkable mental balance in her light-hearted and friendly exchange with her opponent.

It hardly seems fair to dwell upon Miss Lesser's worst incident, yet it revealed important facets of the personality who has become Champion. The young lady from Seattle is a hard-working golfer and a great concentrator, but, withal, she is a most wholesome, happy golfer.

There were other occasions which were more crucial for Miss Lesser. She had two extra-hole matches, and very hard ones they were.

In the second round she was 2 down with ? to play against Mrs. Marge Mason, of Ridgewood, N. J. She squared with a par and a birdie, then won the 19th with a second straight bird.

Two rounds later Miss Lesser confronted Miss Mary Ann Downey, of Baltimore, second alternate for the 1954 Curtis Cup Team. They went 21 holes.

The five other matches which Miss Lesser won were by decisive margins. Her semifinal with Miss Polly Riley, four-time Curtis Cupper, promised to be close until Miss Lesser raced out in 34, three under par, and ended it on the 13th hole. The 36-hole final with Miss Nelson was decided by 7 and 6.

Although stroke play scores in match play are inconclusive, Miss Lesser's week-long record approximated only two over

The New Champion, Finalists and Semi-finalists



Left to right are Miss Pat Lesser, of Seattle, Wash., the new Women's Amateur Champion; Miss Jane Nelson, of Indianapolis, Ind., the runner-up; Miss Polly Riley, of Fort Worth, Tex., and Mrs. Scott Probasco, Jr., of Chattanooga, Tenn., the other semi-finalists.

par for 119 holes. The Myers Park course provided a rigorous test, stretching 6,413 yards with a par of 74.

From the long view, the story of Pat Lesser as a golfer is a simple and natural and nice story. As she has grown from girlhood to young womanhood, she has developed an increasingly consistent golf game.

She started tournament golf nine years ago as a girl of 13. She first appeared on the national scene in 1950 when, at Buffalo, she won the USGA Girls' Junior Championship.

The long hair which Pat Lesser wore then has given way to a young lady's bob. In the interim she has made a very fine record. She has played in the USGA Women's Amateur Championship six times and, in addition to winning this year, was a semi-finalist in 1952 and a quarter-finalist in 1951 and 1953.

In the three years of the USGA Women's Open Championship, Miss Lesser has never finished worse than eighth; she was low

amateur once. Before the USGA sponsored the tournament she was twice low amateur in the predecessor Women's Open.

She was National Collegiate Champion in 1953, won the Western Amateur earlier this year and has played on the men's golf team of Seattle University. In her one Curtis Cup appearance, she won in four-omes last year.

Above and beyond all records, golf never had a nicer young lady as Champion than Miss Patricia Lesser.

Teacher and Summer Golfer

In playing through the final, Miss Nelson did quite a remarkable job for she is almost exclusively a summer golfer. Miss Nelson is a history teacher of seventh and eighth graders in Indianapolis. Her victims at Myers Park included a former Champion, Mrs. Mark A. Porter, of Philadelphia, and the Southern Champion, Mrs. Scott Probasco, Jr., of Chattanooga, the former Betty Rowland, whom she defeated by 2 up in the semi-finals.

Women's amateur golf is subject to a fairly rapid change of cast. At Myers Park, for example, only two members of the 1954 Curtis Cup Team were in contention after the second round—Misses Lesser and Riley.

Three had been eliminated—Miss Barbara Romack, the defending Champion, who lost in the second round to Miss Downey; Miss Dorothy Kirby and Mrs. Grace DeMoss Smith. Of the other three members of the 1954 Curtis Cup Team, Miss Claire Doran recently became a bride, and Miss Mary Lena Faulk and Miss Joyce Ziske are professionals.

The other side of the coin is that there are some really remarkable youngsters coming along. Miss Anne Quast, of Everett, Wash., aged 17, went to the quarter-finals at Myers Park. So did Miss Margaret (Wiffin) Smith, now 18, of St. Clair, Mich. A little young lady weighing 104 pounds and aged 16, Miss Clifford Ann Creed, of Opelousas, La., was in the last sixteen and lost 1 down to Miss Nelson.

There are many other fine young girl players, so many, in fact, that some young ladies over 25 now refer to themselves as the "middle seniors."

The Championship was enriched by the presence of three English visitors—Miss Elizabeth Price, Miss Jacqueline Gordon and Mrs. Charles Abrahams—and by Misses Marlene Stewart and Rae Milligan of Canada. Miss Gordon was runner-up to Mrs. George Zaharias in the 1947 British Championship, and while at Charlotte she phoned a cheery message to Mrs. Zaharias' hospital bed in Galveston.

This was the first USGA Championship in North Carolina, and Myers Park was a splendid host. The club's committees were under the direction of John Owens, assisted by Bentley Madden.

It was the first USGA Women's Amateur Championship to be won by a player attired in shorts.

The USGA Women's Committee not only did its usual fine job but its Chairman, Mrs. Harrison Flippin, vanquished an illustrious opponent in the first round, Miss Marlene Stewart, who was British Champion two years ago.

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