

# WHEN IS A SENIOR REALLY OLD?

by

FRANK C. TRUE

*USGA Executive Assistant*

WHEN a man reaches his 55th birthday he becomes a senior as far as many golf competitions are concerned. What does this mean literally, insofar as his physical status and playing ability are concerned? Frankly, nothing.

It is simple enough to handicap golfers on a basis of strokes, but it can't be done by years. Some men actually should be seniors at 45, while others are "masquerading" as seniors at the age of 65.

Age is the only yardstick available for classifying seniors. Could the job be done more adequately, for instance, if each entrant in a tournament were rated according to his physical condition, as attested by his doctor? No doctor in a routine examination can detect the youthful spirit of a golfer, his eagerness for competition and his adherence to the rules of sportsmanship. What, then, is the barometer?

Suppose we have a look at a 45-year-old "senior" leaving the first tee. He prefers to play alone. After making his drive, he looks around cautiously to be sure there's no one in sight who might ask to play with him. As far as he is concerned, the Rules of Golf are for youngsters who aspire to win cups and such things. He long since has abandoned the practice of playing the ball as it lies, even with the course in excellent condition. He counts his strokes carelessly. If he misses a short putt for a 5 he tells himself he could have sunk it if he had bothered to line it up. So he concedes himself a 5. He recalls, with sadness, the distant day he once had a 3 on the same hole.

His gait is slower than that of most men at 60. He stubbornly refuses to let players

behind him go through. Finally, at the conclusion of the round, he slips quietly into the locker room, hoping that "noisy crowd" in his row won't be there. Golf, he long ago concluded, should serve only as a necessary physical exercise. The sociable phases of the game and its competitive zest to him are just "juvenile foolishness." He's well past all that "nonsense."

## *A Look at the "Junior"*

Now let's have a look at a 65-year-old "junior." In his four-ball group may be a man of 25 and another of 75. Each has much in common with the others. None is satisfied with his game as it is. All are looking forward to that day of the "perfect round." If the 65-year-old "junior" were playing alone on a desert he wouldn't improve his lie. He observes the Rules of Golf to the letter and yearns for the date of the next club tournament.

At the conclusion of the round, the locker room echoes with healthy laughter as some of the incidents of the day are recalled.

Next day our figurative "junior" probably can be found on the practice tee, still striving for perfection.

It would seem the basic factor in determining whether or not a senior is really old depends upon the direction in which he is looking—forward or backward.

**Treat your caddie as you would  
your son.**