

WILL CALCUTTAS EVENTUALLY LET SCANDAL INFEST GOLF?

by

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ANY day now, golf may find itself infested with big-time gamblers.

News that the Calcutta pool ran to \$202,500 in the 1955 Tournament of Champions at Las Vegas, Nev., must have read like an engraved invitation to fast-buck boys from Los Angeles to New York and from Chicago to Miami. That, to "the boys in the white hats," puts golf in the same financial bracket with the sport of kings, the manly art of self defense and some other alleged sports.

When amateur wagerers lay \$205,000 on the line in one golf tournament, no one can be so naive as to expect the professional gamblers to lay off. And when the hoodlums move in, can the "fix" be far behind? The history of horse racing or boxing or baseball or basketball says, "No!"

Nobody knows the total "take" for the season-long series of Calcuttas. Such statistics aren't available, since the pools are illegal in almost all states and municipalities. However, some figures — interesting to most people, but embarrassing to some — may be divulged soon. The Bureau of Internal Revenue is reported to be investigating the Calcuttas for suspected income tax violations. That could scare off the hoodlums who have their eyes on the game and their hearts set on all that loose cash. It would be mighty unwise, however, for the people in golf to wait for any outside agency to clean up what is getting to be quite a mess.

Both the United States Golf Association and the Ladies' Professional Golf Association have taken strong stands against golf's version of the floating crap game. So has the Metropolitan Golf Association of New York. Its energetic past president, Earl A. Ross, is high on the list of Calcutta-fighters.

In most cases, the suckers those organizations have tried to protect have rendered the same sort of thanks you'd get from a narcotics addict if you took away his needle.

The Professional Golfers' Association has voiced no formal opposition to Calcuttas, probably because its tournament-playing members have been neatly mouse-trapped by amateur gamblers in pro-amateur events. That could be all the opening wedge the hoodlums need.

Of course, there's always a possibility that golf is above the "fix." However, that's what everyone used to think about college athletics. Then the gamblers got to some eager, but unwise, youths at Kentucky, Bradley, City College of New York and other basketball citadels. The result was the worst sports scandal since the infamous "Black Sox." It took the basketball "fixers" to force a clean-up of some conditions in basketball. There may still be time for golf to fumigate without a scandal. But the time is growing short.

When the vermin move in, it's better to call the exterminators than to wait for the house to fall down. It's still better to keep them out in the first place.

But maybe the hoods aren't interested in golf. If that's the case, they've changed in the last four years. Remember the anonymous phone call that ordered no less a name than Lloyd Mangrum to lose the 1951 St. Paul Open "or else?" Of course, Lloyd won just the same, but he played the All-American and the World Championship the next two weeks with as many policemen as spectators in the gallery. That could be a preview of things to come in tournament golf.

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