

The Integrity of Golf is at Stake

By Isaac B. Grainger

President

United States Golf Association

YOU probably recall press reports of a club's "invitation" four-ball golf tournament in September which was won by a visiting pair using handicaps of 17 and 18. The club later discovered that these were false handicaps, and that the members of the side actually had handicaps of 3 each at home.

One of the winners played under an assumed name.

A Calcutta betting pool was related to the tournament. It was reported that the total pool involved \$45,000, that the holder of the ticket on the winning side received approximately \$16,000, and that of this amount a member of the winning side received approximately \$4,000.

The club says it does not know how or by whom the winners were invited to the tournament. They were previously unknown to club officials.

The incident has disgraced the good name of golf. It emphasizes some of the many dangers inherent in organized gambling. It emphasizes reasons why the United States Golf Association for many years has expressed unqualified disapproval of organized gambling in golf.

Some clubs sponsoring gambling tournaments of various types have been inclined to feel that such things could not happen to them. The fact is that cheating can happen wherever there is a motive other than the play of the game for the game's sake.

Golf is being used for ulterior purposes in some quarters. This is often reflected by such things as:

- (a) The attempt by some persons to keep their handicaps high.
- (b) "Soft" local rules such as so-called "winter rules" when there is no justification.
- (c) Over-commercialization of the game.
- (d) Winking at violations of the Rules of Amateur Status.

These things all lower the standards of golf. Some seem innocent enough, some are actually evil, but all do violence to the concept that golf is a game of sportsmanship and should be an end in itself.

Every Governing Board of every club and association should carefully evaluate their programs and policies in the light of one simple question: What direction do you want golf to take?

When you answer that question, you answer such questions as to whether to eradicate organized gambling, to assign handicaps only when fairly earned, to play the ball as it lies under the Rules of Golf, to uphold the standards of amateurism and to report violations to the USGA.

We would like to hear from you as to your point of view and as to any steps you may take on any of these subjects. We would like to give other clubs the benefit of helpful experiences and opinions.

Let there be no minimizing of what is at stake. It is the integrity of the game of golf.

The game is in the keeping of the clubs and their members. We bespeak your whole-hearted cooperation.