

WHOSE GAME IS IT?

By

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THERE IS A disposition in some quarters to view with concern the alacrity with which outstanding young amateur golfers are chucking their amateur status for a plunge into the whirlpool of professionalism. The movement in that direction has in the past few years reached an all-time high throughout the long history of the game.

To this observer of the game and its development over a considerable period of years, two aspects of this situation appear worthy of consideration, as it concerns the welfare of the game. They are, first, the importance of amateur competitions and their place in the field of competitive sports, and, second, the scope of expansion and the probable point of saturation in the field of professionalism.

Golf is essentially a game for the player, as contrasted with certain other sports which lend themselves readily to production for the spectator. And even a hurried glance back over the history of its development in this country will show what an important part the chronicles of the doings of amateurs have had in building up interest in the game.

Quimet Started It

Francis Quimet's triumph over Harry Vardon and Ted Ray in their famous play-off for the Open Championship at Brookline, Mass., in 1913 put golf on the front pages of the newspapers of the country. Even so recently as the 1954 Masters Tournament at the Augusta National Golf Club, the play of Billy Joe Patton, who finished a stroke back of Ben Hogan and Sam Snead, featured practically all reports sent out on the tournament. Meanwhile,



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sectional, district, state and municipal championships for amateurs are being given numberless columns of publicity.

Who can say whether the movement has reached its zenith or how long it will continue? But in any event it seems fairly sure that the future popularity and prospects for this phase of the game depend in large measure on how golf as a whole continues to hold the interest and esteem of the public. Certainly those who are committing themselves to following the game in making a living have a personal stake in seeing that this interest and esteem are continued.

I wonder if it would be asking too much of the next youngster—and his successors—if it were suggested that an amateur champion continue his amateur status at least as long as his title is valid.