

IT'S YOUR HONOR

Integrity in Golf

TO THE USGA:

In the USGA JOURNAL of November, 1955, I read "The Integrity of Golf is at Stake," and as a golfer and newspaper editor I commend your attitude.

I have none but reading information on the operation of such gambling as the Calcutta betting pools, but I can readily appreciate how this may help undermine the integrity of golf. I have, however, personally observed some of the other afflictions, such as attempts by players to keep their handicaps high and soft local rules, to which you refer.

I do not profess to know the answers, but I do feel that they lie deep in the attitudes of those who play, or try to play, the game. And, in this respect, I also feel, in the light of my own experience, that an attitude is a sort of indoctrination which must begin early in the life of a golfer.

I believe I was fortunate in learning the game as a young boy, and a caddie, in the days when the Rules of Golf and its etiquette really stood for something. It became almost a passion, for instance, to stand immobile when a shot was being played, never to stand back of but at the side of a player, to hold the pin with the flag touching the ground, never to play out of turn, never to play ahead of the tee markers or farther behind than the Rules permit, and never to sole a club in a bunker.

But, today, I observe many a golfer violates all of these Rules. Years ago, I played in Hudson River Golf Association tournaments, and any player who violated one of these Rules would be out of the tournament or would take or have imposed upon him a fitting penalty.

In my own case, for example, I never

knew "winter rules" (except actually in winter) until I played golf in this area. When I first played the game, at least forty years ago, we played the ball where it lay, at times even blasting it out of the middle of the fairway when it was in deep due to soft condition of the turf. Actually, we had no other attitude toward the game. As most of us know, today that philosophy in many respects either has deteriorated or does not exist.

As for handicaps, there was keen rivalry for the lowest. Playing out of the Dutchess Golf and Country Club, I once had an MGA rating of eight. That I viewed with pride. I never played in an MGA tournament to test the rating, but I still have among my souvenirs that handicap rating card.

It is possible, it seems to me, that clubs do not inform their members as much as they should about the Rules and etiquette, which latter is important, too. I feel sure that in many instances there is ignorance of these Rules and that, if the players were better informed, they would be glad to comply with them.

In many cases, too, I believe, there is a total absence of knowledge of the real philosophy of golf, but this may present a more difficult problem. Such a philosophy, I feel, can come only from long years of playing the game, together with at least some knowledge of the game's historical background.

At any rate, I hope your article has come to the attention of many players and others interested in the game. If it has, I am sure it will be helpful. I have always contended that golf, perhaps of all sports, is one which scandal ought not to touch. I hope that my contention is on a firm basis.

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