

A SENSE OF VALUES IN AMATEUR SPORT

by

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WHENEVER I associate with a group of golfers in an important tournament, there is one fact that impresses itself upon me with great force. What I have in mind is a situation of such significance and at the same time so important and so obvious that it is surprising to me it is very seldom mentioned.

Now, in case you think I have in mind the very high quality of golf which you all play, I am afraid that I must disappoint you. Nor am I thinking of the prodigious distances you strike the ball. I do not even have in mind the depressing fact that on Saturday night there will be only one undefeated player among you.

Inescapable Responsibility

These things are impressive, but what I want to call to your attention is the fact that what you do and what you say, because you are the leading golfers in your home communities, will largely determine what kind of a game golf is to be in the future. This is a responsibility which you cannot escape, and since you have it, I hope that you will wish to fulfill it with the same earnestness that has brought you to the top in the competitive field. Golf has meant more to you than to most golfers, and there is no better way for you to square the account than by serving the best interests of the game.

Now, there are many ways in which you can be of service to the game of golf, and I know that as time goes on you will each find some particular activity that will be of special interest to you. Being active in the administration of your club or district, helping the junior program, taking an active interest in greenkeeping, conducting

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tournaments and so forth. But my present interest is in connection with something in which we need your immediate assistance.

Commercialization Of Amateur Sport

The United States is a big and prosperous nation. More people have more money and more leisure time to spend it in than ever before in the history of man. We do not always make use of these blessings too wisely and too frequently we spend our money on our leisure time in a bad way. One way in which this is often done is in what might be called the commercialization of amateur sport.

This injurious mixture of money and sport shows up in many ways which it seems scarcely necessary for me to mention. Bribery of amateur athletes, organized gambling in connection with sporting events, the payment of all sorts of expenses,

scholarships to those whose only qualification to receive them is their athletic ability. These things do not belong in amateur sport. It has been said that one of the first steps in the decline of the Roman Empire was the commercialization of her amateur sports.

Trend Is General

Unfortunately, this trend is general in all amateur sports in this country today. In golf it gives us the very gravest concern and we are fighting it to the best of our ability.

One of the most heartening developments has been the recent, very favorable acceptance of our stand on gambling in connection with golf tournaments. The voluntary action of the leading players, led by Bill Campbell, was an inspiring experience and should serve as a wonderful example to all sports. It appears that for the first time we have really rolled back the tide of gambling in golf and that the players in all but a few tournaments may enjoy clean honest sport instead of being human race horses.

But if we are winning this battle, we are at best gaining no ground in another. There is a common conviction that just because a young golfer has ability he is entitled to participate in all sorts of competitions. If the player has the means, he may of course do so without violation of the USGA Rules of Amateur Status. If he does not have the means, he is undoubtedly fortunate since he must then apply himself to more useful pursuits than playing golf.

Unfortunately, some misguided individuals think it is smart to encourage a young man to cheat by using all sorts of subterfuges to violate the Rules of Amateur Status. Such individuals have more money than morals. They completely overlook the unfortunate effect which their acts may have on their young protege. Golf should not be that important to him.

The Position of Golf

The position of golf with the individual must always be secondary to the more important things in life. Golf is a relaxation,

a tonic to be taken after the fulfillment of more serious obligations. To fit himself for life, the responsibilities of making a success of his job, his obligations to his family, his duties in the community in which he lives—these things, at least, must come ahead of golf. To teach a young man otherwise is to do him a serious injury.

Now, I do not mean by this that I am not in favor of a young man playing all the golf that he can. In fact, I am very much in favor of it. Golf is a wonderful pastime. It teaches restraint. It is played under the highest code of honor. We meet and make some of our best friends on the golf course. It is just because the game is such a great amateur sport that I feel it is of the utmost importance to keep it that way.

USGA's Position

Aside from eliciting your support, I have another purpose in giving you this brief outline of the USGA's interest in the maintenance of amateurism. I think it is well for those in competitive golf to understand the why and the wherefore of the things that we do. We do not wish to be arbitrary and cold blooded. We do not wish to enforce rules, but rather to have them serve as a guide. As a matter of fact, we are anxious to do everything we can for every individual golfer that will enable him to get more from his golf. However, we do firmly believe in serving the interests of the game of golf ahead of the selfish interests of any individual golfer.

When the time comes for you to use wood where you once used irons, and when the urge for competition turns into the deeper satisfaction of playing golf for fun, I do hope you will be able to look back and know that your proudest accomplishment has not been in your victories, but rather in the way that you have played the game.

Golf is like love. If you don't take it seriously it is no fun, and if you do take it seriously it breaks your heart.

*From introduction to
"Great Golfers In the Making,"
by H. B. Martin*