

AGE RETREATS BEFORE THE YOUNG IN HEART

by

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AT AGE 42, Blake Shepard is touched with the normal hopefulness which blesses most week-end golfers. But he received a new charge of it while gallerying the USGA's second Senior Amateur Championship last month at his home course, Somerset Country Club in St. Paul, Minn.

"I can't wait to be a Senior," Mr. Shepard finally concluded, in total disdain of the 13 years he would accumulate in the process.

It was, in fact, an inspiring occasion. It gave a lift not just to youngbeards like Blake Shepard, but most especially to elder citizens who are contemporaries of the Senior Championship players but whose higher handicaps made them ineligible for the tournament. After the final, one super-Senior remarked fervently to the new Champion, Frederick J. Wright, of Boston:

"You've given me something to work for."

This Senior Championship, the "baby" of USGA competitions, was a happy occasion at a delightful club. It is always heart-warming to see golfers from all over the country renew old friendships and make new ones at a national championship. When Seniors gather, it is especially so. Underneath the dignity which their years have brought, you can always detect a charming boyish delight in playing, a beguilement with sheer fun.

Quality Belies Age

When you saw the quality of the golf at Somerset, it was difficult to realize that they were Seniors. Take the 18-hole qualifying round, for example. The medal-winning score was 72, turned in by Weller Noble, a 65-year-old youngster from Berkeley, Cal. There were 32 qualifiers' places,

and ten scores of 79 tied for the last four places.

This was over a good test of golf. Somerset played at nearly 6,400 yards, with a hard par of 70; it required accuracy, the rough was punitive, and the greens were keen and in fine condition—all told, a Championship examination.

Freddie Wright, now 58, with four grandchildren, passed the test like the thorough-going Champion he became. The Boston securities broker played 93 holes in the six days—one qualifying round and five matches—and he was only three over par for the duration. In one match he played out the bye holes for a 67; in his semi-final, he was out in 31; in the final, he was out in 33.

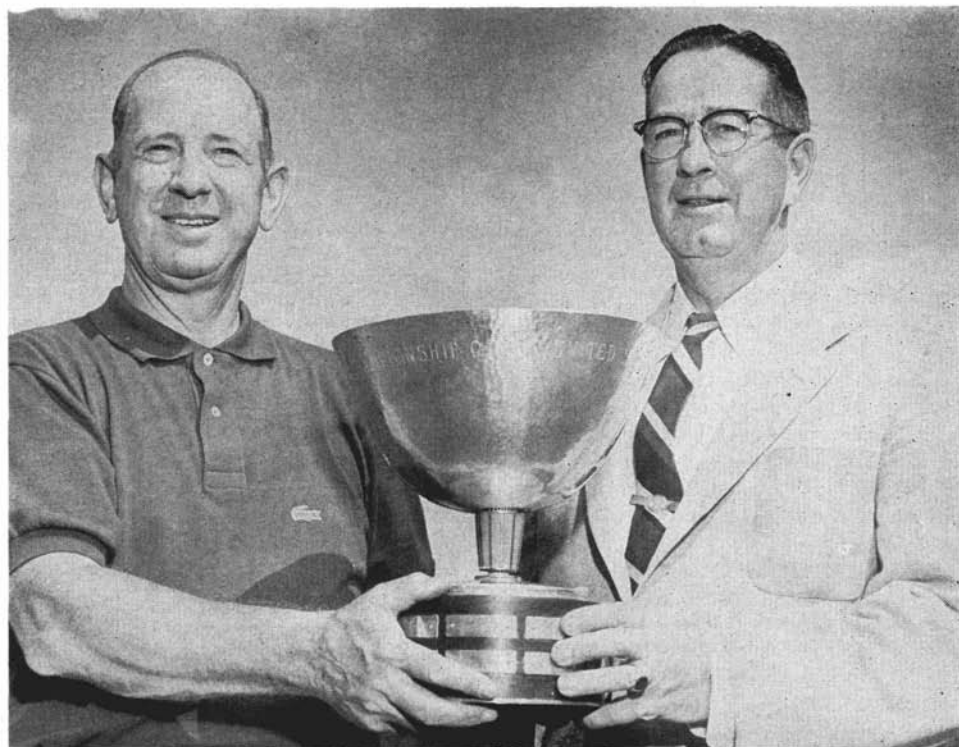
It required golf of high quality to eliminate the defending Champion, J. Wood Platt, of Philadelphia. Wright was his conqueror by 1 up in a third-round match that was worthy of any tournament anywhere. Wright holed the course in 73 and Platt in 74.

Wright, like Platt, has been a skilled golfer for many years, of the same vintage as his fellow-Bostonians, Francis Ouimet and Jesse Guilford. In 1916, at the age of 18, he first played in the Massachusetts Amateur Championship and reached the semi-finals. Just last month—40 years later—he was runner-up in that same Massachusetts Amateur Championship. In between, he won his State title seven times, and has also been the New England Champion.

Walker Cup Player

Yes, he is the same Fred Wright who was a member of the American Walker Cup Team in 1923. He won his singles at St. Andrews and contributed to a hair-

Just A Couple Of Kids



Minneapolis Star & Tribune photo

J. Clark Espie, left, of Indianapolis, Ind., the runner-up, and Frederick J. Wright, Jr., of Watertown, Mass., the 1956 USGA Senior Champion, pose with the Senior Championship Trophy which Mr. Wright won at the Somerset Country Club, St. Paul, Minn., last month. The 58-year-old champion, seven times the Massachusetts Amateur Champion and a member of the 1923 Walker Cup Team, was never behind as he scored a 4 and 3 victory in the final match.

line victory for his Team, 6 to 5, with one match halved.

After all these years, what a deep satisfaction it is to Fred Wright to win a gold medal symbolic of a USGA Championship!

Wright's game is, of course, thoroughly polished. He is a particularly long driver, and he has a delicate putting touch which holed birdie after birdie at Somerset. Of the 93 holes he played, he had 24 3s and two 2s.

The runner-up was J. Clark Espie, of Indianapolis, aged 57. He came to the Championship with a solid record in Mid-Western golf. He had won the Western Seniors' Championship twice, the Indiana

Senior title four times, and was Indianapolis district champion in 1939. Some time before that he represented Indianapolis in the USGA Amateur Public Links Championship.

Espie started to play golf in 1924, the year after Fred Wright was on the Walker Cup Team. He, like Wright, has four grandchildren. But he looked like a teenager as he whipped around Somerset in 73 to be second in the qualifying round and then won matches from Eugene Bellville, of Kansas City, Mo.; Col. C. D. McAllister, of Orlando, Fla.; Paul W. Horn, of Chalfont, Pa., and Col. Forrest Andrews, of DeKalb, Ill. Col. Andrews was a group commander of the U. S. field forces, tank

armament division, overseas in World War II. Col Andrews won in the third round from the 1955 runner-up, George Studinger, of San Francisco.

Wright's victims before the final were Frank Justin, Sr., of Fontana, Wis.; Martin M. Issler, of Short Hills, N. J., who was medalist last year; Platt, and James S. Manion, of St. Louis, who has long been prominent in Mid-Western golf. Except for the match with Platt, Wright never had to go past the 15th hole. He won from Espie in the final by 4 and 3.

For those who failed to qualify, there was an 18-hole stroke competition on the second day of the tournament. First prize went to Don Lambert, of St. Louis, with a 74. He was followed by four with 75s—Alfred C. Ulmer, Jacksonville, Fla.; A. L. (Jim) Miller, Chicago; Glen M. Bronson, Minneapolis, and Louis D. Davis, of Jenkintown, Pa.

Another 18-hole stroke competition was held the next day for all players not still in the Championship. Low score this time was a 73 by Dr. Millard S. Rosenblatt, of Portland, Ore. Four 77s were next, by George H. Treadwell, Memphis; Robert U. Davidson, Kansas City, Mo.; Llewellyn Power, Bellevue, Wash., and Edward F. Brady, Sr., San Benito, Texas.

The field of 120 for the Championship proper was determined by 18-hole sectional qualifying rounds in 25 locations. The total entry was 282. Last year the entry was 370. The handicap limit of 10 no doubt exerts considerable influence on the size of the entry.

The system assures a Championship field of high quality. The main objective of the event is to provide a national competition for senior golfers of skill, as determined by handicaps, and who are members of USGA Regular Member Clubs. Unlike many senior events, the USGA Championship is not primarily for social purposes, although the Association naturally hopes to foster the good fellowship of golf.

At the USGA's Players' Dinner preceding the tournament, a 40th anniversary was marked for Charles Evans, Jr.—back in 1916 he won both the Open and Amateur Championships.

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Another player of that era who competed in the Senior Championship was Dudley Mudge, of St. Paul. He was medalist in the Amateur Championship of 1915.

Somerset provided excellent facilities and a most happy atmosphere. Especial thanks are due to the club's committees, under the general chairmanship of Daniel H. Ridder, and to the president, Henry H. Cowie.

A survey concerning the form of the championship is now being conducted by the USGA Senior Championship Committee, under the Chairmanship of John G. Clock, of Long Beach, Cal., a Vice-President of the USGA.