

GOLF LOOKS EASY OR HOW JUNIORS DO IT

by

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IN AN attractive old New England village in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts, 128 young men of 17 years or less gathered last month from 42 states to compete for the Junior Amateur Championship.

They represented the proven cream of an original entry of 997 boys, by far the largest in history, who had competed in sectional qualifying rounds throughout the country.

The site was Williamstown, Mass., seat of Williams College, which entertained the Championship, and of the college course, the Taconic Golf Club, where the shooting took place.

Stunning Exhibition

From the words "play away," the boys staged a stunning exhibition of shot-making skill and gratifying good sportsmanship, thoroughly in keeping with the golfing traditions of the college which was their host.

In the first four days of play, just for example, four boys made holes-in-one and another broke the course record. One boy after another rose to temporary prominence through such achievements and then fell back in defeat, until finally only two were left to battle for the Championship in the 18-hole final.

One was Harlan Stevenson, of Long Beach, Cal.

The other was Jack D. Rule, Jr., of Waterloo, Iowa.

Each was 17 and would go over the age limit before the next Championship. Each was about to enter his senior year in high school. Each was a public-course player—Stevenson at the Recreation Park Golf Course, in Long Beach, and Rule at the Byrnes Park Golf Course, in Waterloo.

Stevenson progressed to the fifth round of the Junior two years ago but lost in the first round last year. He qualified also for the USGA Amateur Public Links Championship last year. However, if he had not made a birdie 4 at the final hole of his very first match, he too would have dropped into obscurity once again. The birdie enabled him to draw even with James H. Hooper, of West Point, Va., and he stayed in the tournament by making three straight pars in extra holes.

Rule, in the Junior for the first time, played slightly better golf in the preceding six rounds of match play. Over the Taconic course, a hard one but well conditioned, he had been 18 above par for 100 holes. Stevenson had been 26 above for 104 holes.

Stevenson had more left for the climax, however, and, after an erratic start, pulled into the lead when Rule took three from the edge of the sixth green and drew steadily away to win, 3 and 1, with five-over-par golf.

There is no question that Stevenson is a worthy and deserving Champion. It is probably equally true that Rule lost some of his effectiveness by playing the giant-killer to bring down Jack D. Nicklaus, a member of the Scioto Country Club, in Columbus, Ohio.

Nicklaus A Junior Veteran

At 16, Nicklaus is a veteran of the Junior, having qualified for four straight years. He appeared first in 1953, at the age of 13, and went to the fourth round. He lost in the second round in 1954 and in the quarter-finals last year. Just before the Junior, he had won the Ohio Open Championship, making a 64 in the third round and compiling a total of 282.

Junior Champion Will Not Be Ruled



The 1956 USGA Junior Champion, Harlan Stevenson, of Long Beach, Cal., center, accepts the championship trophy at presentation ceremonies at the Taconic Golf Club, Williamstown, Mass. Stevenson defeated Jack D. Rule, Jr., of Waterloo, Iowa, second from right, in the final match by a score of 3 and 1. From left to right are: C. W. Benedict, Member of the USGA Executive Committee; Ralph W. Miller, Member of the USGA Junior Championship Committee; Stevenson Rule, and John P. English, USGA Assistant Executive Director.

Nicklaus' golf appeared to be the best in the first five rounds, as he went only seven over par for the 74 holes he was required to play. He made a 70, even par, in winning his quarter-final.

However, Rule threw a 70 right back at him in the semi-final to win by a hole in probably the best played and most thrilling match of the Championship. It turned on the eighteenth where Rule made a birdie 4 while Nicklaus pulled his drive too close to the out-of-bounds fence to make an effective second shot. A liberal coating of poison ivy which appeared on Nicklaus' arms and legs on the final day must have handicapped him, but he refused to admit that it did and he did play the course in 71, good enough to win most matches.

Subsequently Rule defeated Nicklaus again to win the Junior Chamber of Commerce junior tournament at Fargo, N. D. The two boys tied there at 288, but Rule won the play-off, 69 to 71.

The semi-final between Stevenson and Edward T. Pfister, of Buffalo, N. Y., also

ended 1 up, but both boys were off their customary form. Even off form, however, Stevenson displayed a knack for summoning up a good shot or a good putt when he needed it most.

The only 16 year old other than Nicklaus to reach the quarter-finals was Theodore Weiss, of the Audubon Golf Club, in New Orleans, La., who is entering Yale this fall. Teddy bowed there to Stevenson, but he, like Nicklaus, will have another chance next year at the Manor Country Club, near Washington, D. C.

Incidentally, the youngest to qualify was a 13 year old named Robert R. Kirouac, of Sharon, Mass., whose father is professional at the Sharon Country Club. Bobby played two practice rounds in the 70s but lost in the first round, 2 and 1. A poised, polite youngster with a fine little swing, he was tabbed by spectators as one to remember for the future.

Pence Sets Unofficial Record

The new course record came in the third round when Wayne A. Pence, Jr., of Kan-

sas City, Mo., 17 and a sophomore at Notre Dame, went around in 67. It was technically unofficial, however, because he accepted the concession of one short putt at the fifteenth hole. Pence, playing for the fourth and last time in the Junior, made the turn in 31, three under par, and picked up a lead of four holes on Larry Beck, 16, of Kinston, N. C., whose father had been runner-up in the USGA Amateur Public Links Championship back in 1947. Undismayed, Beck still made a fight of it. He won back the tenth with a birdie and the eleventh when Pence missed par for the only time. He halved the fourteenth with a 2 and won the fifteenth with another birdie to stand only 1 down to three-under-par golf. However, Pence made two more pars to end the match, 2 and 1, and they played out the eighteenth for scores of 67 and 71.

Holes-in-one were almost commonplace in the early days of the week.

Robert Walter, of Hutchinson, Kan., who is 16, holed a No. 6 iron shot on the 190-yard ninth hole on the first practice day.

Not to be outdone, Gene Axelrod, of West Lafayette, Ind., 17, dropped in a No. 7 iron shot on the same hole, and Jack Nicklaus sank a No. 8 iron shot on the 175-yard fourteenth the next day to bring the total in practice rounds to three.

Lloyd S. Monroe, 17, of North Caldwell, N. J., capped the climax by making the fourth of the week on the 175-yard fifth hole in his fourth-round match against William Warner, of Spokane, Wash. Incidentally, Warner looked the ace right in the eye, and won the match, 1 up.

This performance surpassed the one at Tulsa, Okla., in 1953, when Tod Morrow, of Pittsburgh, Pa., scored a hole-in-one in practice and Terry Thomas, of Canandaigua, N. Y., made another in the third round.

Prater Wins Longest Match

In the second round, Virgil J. Prater, of Fountain City, Tenn., made history by winning the longest match ever played in

the Championship. He defeated Charles F. Lewis, Jr., of Little Rock, Ark., at the twenty-fourth hole. Until then, the longest had been a 23-hole affair in 1953. Prater, who was inside the age limit by only four days, also had gone 20 holes in his first match.

Robert F. Boughner, 17, of Glen Gardens, Cal., who subsequently won the Hearst junior title for Southern California, lost 1 down in the second round to a 70 by Billy Martindale, of Jacksonville, Texas. In the Hearst event at the Olympia Fields Country Club, near Chicago, Boughner scored 70-68-69-69-276.

The boys who lost in the first round had a particularly enjoyable day following at the famous old Ekwanok Country Club, in Manchester, Vt., where Francis Ouimet won his first Amateur Championship, in 1914. Forty-nine availed themselves of the opportunity to play there in a consolation stroke-play event and to enjoy a buffet lunch tendered by the Club on the lawn. David Owens, of Pittsburgh, Pa., led the scorers with a 71, and Joseph Camillo, of Port Chester, N. Y., was second with a 74. Frank Beard, of Louisville, Ky., Lawrence H. Burd, Jr., of Bethesda, Md., and David B. Lawrence, Jr., of New Orleans, La., tied for third at 75; and Beard won the one-hole play-off by making a par 4.

Gene Sarazen, the former USGA and British Open Champion, graciously returned to the Junior and gave another shot-making clinic which was clear, interesting and enlightening. Sarazen performed the same role in 1952 and, if anything, improves as the years go by. His bunker shots were eye-opening.

Once again the USGA was fortunate in having the benefit of excellent advance preparations by the staff of Williams College, under the direction of Charles A. Foehl, Jr., the General Chairman, and Dick Baxter, professional and golf-course superintendent at the Taconic Golf Club. And it was also fortunate in having fifteen loyal members of the Junior Championship Committee on hand from far and near to assist in the conduct of the play.