

TWICE TOLD TALE ABOUT A CADDIE

by

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THIS STORY IS dedicated to all golfers and to the little men, seldom noticed, who lug the clubs—the caddies.

The story has the usual first tee setting. Two players, one elderly and the other a young man of deep resolves, pride and impatience, embark for a round on a bright, wholesome afternoon.

The older man had all the qualities of a fine golfer, as defined by the rules of that noble and Scottish order—the Royal and Ancient Golf Club. To him golf was a game, an exercise, a means of companionship, a friendly joust with the score card and, at all times, a match as well with his fellows of the day.

The young man used fourteen clubs, the limit, jammed into a capacious leather bag, with a sack of practice balls, extra shoes and what-not to increase the burden.

On the first hole, the young man lost the ball in thick rough, and with a torrent of blasphemy blamed the caddie for his truant shot. He took an 8 on the hole.

On the second tee, he delivered a lecture about "watching the ball." Dubbing his drive, he snarled, dropped his driver on the ground at the boy's feet instead of handing it to him.

Missing a short putt, he yelled: "Stand off the green while I'm putting."

And so he went, abusing the caddie. Wrong club, chattering, shadow in line, rattling the clubs, all these accusations, and more, were fired at the boy until, at the ninth hole, the brash young man, fit to be tied, sent the lad back to the clubhouse.

"Tell the caddie-master you're no good. I'll carry my own bag," he was told.

To a caddie a rating is as valuable as it

is to a banker, and the poor kid was heart-broken. As he trudged off, the young man barked to his serene, elderly companion: "That kid don't like me, and that's mutual. Glad to be rid of him."

In the locker room the older player, patting the irascible young chap on the back, said:

"Let me tell you a story. Some years back a nice little kid got a job here as a caddie. Quick witted, fine nature, with a nose for golf. Everyone liked him. Name was Billy. He had a club foot, this Billy, but you'd never know it. He was a perfect caddie. A famous doctor in the club became interested in Billy; took him on a trip. When Billy returned, he resumed caddying. The doctor, suffering from an incurable malady, quit practice and golf.

"Early one spring morning I found Billy gathering flowers into quite a bouquet, and kiddingly I asked him who the girl was. He replied: "No girl, sir. My friend, the doctor, is dead. Twice each week I take flowers to his grave."

"To this the ill-tempered young man said: 'Now there's a caddie really worth having.'"

The elderly man went on: "At the doctor's funeral, there on the church steps was Billy, with six other caddies, each boy with a large bouquet of wild flowers that they placed on the coffin with tears—because they all loved him."

"What became of Billy?" was the husky query.

"He was your caddie today—until you sent him back."

"But you said he had a club foot?"

"So he did, until the doctor operated on that trip, and brought him back whole again. Yes, sir, no finer caddie exists today on earth than Billy."

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