

# CAN YOU SCORE YOUR AGE?

*The Remarkable Story  
of the Conquest of Age*

OF all the difficult feats in which golf abounds, one of the rarest accomplishments is scoring one's age. Holes-in-one and albatrosses (three under par) may come and go, but the golfer who requires only one stroke for each year of his life still belongs in a select group.

The number of such achievements which have come to our attention totals only twenty-five. The scores range from two brilliant 64s to a fantastic 91. We would, of course, be delighted to have the facts concerning other similar triumphs over age.

In the springtime of life when drives are long and putts are bold, an 18-hole score necessary to equal one's years lies beyond all reasonable hope. Even at the half-century mark, such an accomplishment still is well outside the realm of probability on the average course.

Only at about three score and five years does opportunity beckon ever so slightly for the majority of golfers. Then, fortified by decades of experience and a still vigorous body, a few—very few—have an outside chance.

From a viewpoint of age alone, perhaps the most remarkable record unearthed is that of the late Nathaniel Vickers, who was a member of the Queens Valley Golf Club, Forest Hills, N. Y., which no longer exists. He didn't start playing golf until he was 50. At the age of 84 it was agreed that he was "qualified" to join the United States Seniors' Golf Association. The following year he won Class A in the Association's annual tournament with a 96. Dissatisfied with his score, he spent many hours on the practice fairway in addition to playing nine holes almost daily. At the age of 91 he accomplished the minor

miracle of shooting his age on his home course, where he once was club champion.

Vickers competed in his last Seniors' tournament when he was 96, turning in a score of 131, which greatly distressed him. Just before the Association's tournament the following year he sprained his knee and was unable to play. This, however, didn't prevent him from attending the tournament and sitting by the first tee throughout play at the Apawamis Club, in Rye, N. Y.

## *Weather Didn't Stop Him*

In his 98th year Vickers showed up at Apawamis, determined to compete in the tournament, despite the fact the weather was bad. His daughter, who accompanied him to the club, insisted he shouldn't play in the rain. After a prolonged debate, in which he argued he was physically fit to play in any weather, Vickers finally acceded to his daughter's wishes.

His lifetime goal, according to friends was to shoot 100 on his 100th birthday but he failed to accomplish this. When he reached the century mark, he apologized to companions for being able to play only nine holes. He died on October 10, 1949, at the age of 103. Friends remember him as a cheerful, humorous golfer who always walked briskly about the course. During the gasoline shortage of World War II he drove an old-fashioned surrey to and from his club. Born in Moulton, Lincolnshire, England, he was an architect and designed several buildings at Yale and Lehigh Universities.

One of the 64s was achieved by Weller Noble, of Berkeley, Cal., on the Claremont Country Club course in Oakland, Cal., a year ago. Playing with Dr. Sumner Evringham, Don and Hazel Rice, he had

a five-under-par 30 going out and a par 34 coming in. The course measures 5,735 yards. Noble was the senior champion of Northern California in 1955 and California Senior Champion in 1951.

The other 64 was turned in by J. Barton Bridgefurd, of San Francisco, at the Villa d'Este Country Club, Italy, in 1954. Incidentally, being 64 didn't prevent Bridgefurd from competing in the British Amateur Championship, too, that year.

Close to the feats of Noble and Bridgefurd is the 65 scored by Lee Davis, of the Los Angeles Country Club, on the South Course there when he was 65. Davis had fifteen holes-in-one to his credit at that time.

Several members of the Los Angeles Country Club have scored their age or better. Willard Salisbury scored his age with a 67 on the O'Donnell Course at Palm Springs, Cal. W. P. Reid duplicated the feat with a 73 on the same course. Fred Barrows scored a 73 on the South Course of his home club when he was 77. On the same course James Byrnes shot a 70 when he was 71, and the late J. J. Quinn matched his years in strokes with a 75 on the South Course.



FRED BARROWS

Barrows had never seen a golf ball or

club until he was 44 years old. At the age of 53, he won the Arizona Amateur Championship.

### *An Old Story To Him*

"At least six times—and I honestly believe it's eight—I have succeeded in scoring my age or better," wrote Barrows.

Roy E. Campbell, of Seattle, Wash., a member of the USGA Senior Championship Committee, bettered his age by one stroke with a five-under-par 68 from the back tees of the Seattle Golf Club on September 24, 1954. Playing with W. H. Bean, Stuart Hood and James Marshall, he resorted to no preferred lies and holed out on every hole.

To anyone who ever has played the Oakmont Country Club course at Oakmont, Pa., the difficulties to be encountered on that par 72 course need not be explained. It was there that Gabinus A. Gill, a member of the Club who now is 82, scored a 37-38—75 when he was 75 years old.

Dr. H. D. Smith, of Cadiz, Ohio, has turned the trick twice thus far on the par-73 course, at the Williams Country Club, Weirton, W. Va., plus a round of par in the club championship. He had a 71 three years ago, then a year ago last July he turned in a 72.

E. N. Wright, of the Brookside Golf Club, Pasadena, Cal., scored his age annually from 78 to 82 when he was a member of the Annandale Golf Club, in Pasadena. A. K. Bourne, a member of the latter club, turned in a 71 at the Reno (Nevada) Golf Club.

### *As They Like It*

Most of the seniors expressed the opinion that playing against their age was a far more intriguing type of competition than trying to match par. And not, it might be added, because par necessarily is the lower figure in all cases. Take George Welch, of Port Townsend, Wash., for example. He scored a three-under-par 69 at the Townsend Golf and Country Club when he was 72. A year ago he turned in a 79, shaking his head sadly over three

missed putts that denied him the opportunity of equaling his age.

Scoring his age is an old story to J. K. Wadley, of the Texarkana (Arkansas-Texas) Country Club and the Los Angeles Country Club. Now 79 years old, he has equalled or bettered his age each year since



**J. K. WADLEY**

reaching the age of 70. Perhaps the most difficult of his stroke-a-year rounds occurred in 1953, when he deliberately set out on his seventy-sixth birthday to shoot his age on the South Course of the Los Angeles Country Club. For ten birthdays he had been shooting at this mark.

After an encouraging start, his game faltered, but he refused to abandon his goal. Finally, as he stood on the eighteenth tee, he had taken 73 strokes. The eighteenth is a long and difficult par 4 hole, yet he dropped a putt for a birdie 3.

Findlay S. Douglas, of New York City, former President of the USGA, who won the USGA Amateur Championship back in 1898, believes that records should not be recognized unless they are made in stroke play competition.

"I have not competed in any tournaments for the last fifteen years, but I know that in friendly matches I have

scored my age or better," he said. "The last such occasion I remember was a 76 at the Blind Brook Club, Port Chester, N. Y., six years ago, when I was 76."

Eugene G. Grace, of the Saucon Valley Country Club, Bethlehem, Pa., has never had time for serious tournament golf, but in 1949, at the age of 67, he scored his age on his home course.

For the distinction of being the most rugged golfer, Ben S. Williams, of the Richland Golf Club, Nashville, Tenn.—age, 88; height, 5 feet, 5 inches; weight, 102 pounds—appears to be one of the foremost candidates. A few days before his seventy-second birthday he celebrated the coming event by playing seventy-two holes in one day. He has scored lower than his age so many times he has lost track of the count. In July, 1955, he had a 72 at the Edgewood Golf Club, Canton, Ohio, where he was visiting relatives and where he plays much of his golf. In the summer of 1954 he played thirty-six holes in one day and had a 75 and 76. He turned in a better-than-age round of 85 on the Richland course in August, 1955. Incidentally, it was his eighty-sixth birthday. He was 57 when he played his first round of golf.

It was an eventful vacation in Florida in 1954 for 71-year-old Walter Kennedy, of the Woodland Golf Club, Carmel, Ind. At the Daytona Beach Country Club he scored a 72 on the par 72 course. Then he turned in a 70 on the par 71 Ellinor Village Country Club course at Ormond Beach. Three days later he duplicated this score.

### *Two Years In Succession*

For two of the past three years Dr. George T. Gregg, of Oakmont, Pa., who is 82 years old, has scored his age. An 80 was scored at the Riverside Golf Club, Cambridge Springs, Pa. An 81 was scored in a seniors four-ball tournament at Pinehurst, N. C. He was playing with J. H. Manning, of Englewood, N. J., against Donald Parson and Alec Roberts, of Pinehurst. This summer he scored a hole-in-one on the sixth hole at Oakmont.

One of the most remarkable scores, from a viewpoint of years and strokes involved, is an 82 scored in 1954 by



**DR. A. W. HOLCOMBE**

88-year-old Dr. A. W. Holcombe, of Kokomo, Ind., on the No. 3 Course at Pinehurst, N. C. He was playing with his daughter, Mrs. Harold Parke, of Hamilton, Ont., Canada, and Dr. Dennis Jordan and C. S. Robertson, both of Toronto.

Not satisfied with scoring six strokes under his age, Dr. Holcombe went out a few days later on the No. 4 Course at Pinehurst, but the best he could do was an 86.

Among professionals, scoring his age virtually has become an annual event on a multiple scale for that old master, Jock Hutchison, of the Glen View Club, Golf, Ill., who was 73 years old last June 6. Recently the former British Open and PGA Champion had two 71s over his home course, which measures 6,417 yards for a par of 72. His last ten games have all been played in 73 and under!

Jock, born in St. Andrews, Scotland, has matched or scored lower than his age

one or more times each year at Glen View since he was 66 years old. One of his most memorable rounds occurred when he was 68. Playing with Norman Naylor, who then was a member of Glen View but now lives in Biltmore, N. C., he turned in a 66, which included five 3's on the first nine, along with three putts for a par 5 on the 476-yard eighth hole. Incidentally, Jock's best all-time score on each hole of the course over a period of thirty-eight years is:

Out—322	223	232—21
In—322	313	222—20—41

In reminiscing over some of his recent accomplishments, Jock recalled he had "some" 70s and a 69 at the Plantation Golf Club, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., four winters ago. Upon his retirement as professional at Glen View in 1953 he was elected an honorary associate member of the club.

Benjamin F. Courtright, of Dover, Del., who believes there should be more of an "equalizer" for senior tournaments, has decided to do something about it. Courtright, who eight years ago organized a senior tournament for the Delmarva Golf Association of eight clubs, has instituted a trophy for the senior who scores nearest his age.



**JOCK HUTCHISON**