

# JOANNE GUNDERSON A JOYOUS CHAMPION

*At Age 18, is Second Youngest  
to Win USGA Women's Title*

**T**O watch some golfers in amateur tournaments, you'd hardly imagine they were engaged in a game for fun and recreation. Good golf requires such concentration as to make it seem sometimes a life-or-death matter. It is not always easy to balance seriousness of purpose with a happy outlook.

With JoAnne Gunderson, there's no doubt that she plays for the sheer joy of playing. She concentrates well enough to wear the national title of Women's Amateur Champion very deservedly. But she is a truly happy golfer—a refreshingly natural young lady of 18 with almost a won't-come-off smile. JoAnne instinctively applauds her opponent's good shots—literally claps her hands along with the gallery. She roots for the opponent's less good shots—"One big bounce over," she'll say to a ball headed for a bunker. With her own game she's somewhat more severe: a putt stops short of the cup, and she mumbles to herself "Chicken!" When her caddie neglects to replace a divot, she'll go out of her way to do it, be it first round or final.

Miss Gunderson's competitive record is fully as compelling as her sunny disposition. She is, mind you, only 18 years old—just a few months out of high school in Kirkland, Wash. But in the last three seasons she has both won and been runner-up in both the USGA Women's Amateur Championship and the USGA Girls' Junior Championship—two gold medals and two silver medals in five USGA starts.

In winning the Women's Amateur last month at the Del Paso Country Club in Sacramento, Cal., Miss Gunderson became the second youngest Champion in history. Back in 1896 Miss Beatrix Hoyt at age 16 won the second women's tournament conducted by the USGA.



**Miss Anne Richardson, of Columbus, Ohio, a semifinalist, extricates herself from a ticklish spot.**

### *Lesson from the Ladies*

Ever since Glenna Vare and her generation opened to women the new world of shooting for the pin instead of generally for the green, the calibre of play among ladies has steadily improved. Today the better players swing increasingly like men.

JoAnne Gunderson has a short backswing with a pronounced pause at the top, and she drives the ball amazing distances.

By comparison with strong men, ladies get results which are hard to believe unless seen. Del Paso's professional, Frank Minch, expressed the following insight to Ed Burt of the SACRAMENTO BEE:

"Women do not have the strength to hit long shots, so they are very careful to learn and execute correct form. All of the players in this tournament pay careful attention to their stance and grip and use a grooved swing and perfect timing to get control and distance.

"Most men never take this much trouble to correct their faults and keep trying to overpower the ball with sheer strength. Sometimes they get distance but only rarely do they also achieve the control of the women and the low handicapped men players."

Sacramento's large galleries were charmed not only by the skill of the players but by their general loveliness of manner. Youngsters were especially prominent—three of the four semi-finalists were 21 or under. Watching the new generation, one was soon drawn to conclude that all the good things for which golf stands are entirely safe in the good hands of these fine young ladies. They do honor to themselves and to the game.

A measure of credit for this is due to sponsors of junior programs throughout the country. The USGA has conducted a Girls' Junior Championship since 1949, for a trophy presented by Mrs. Edwin H. (Glenna Collett) Vare, Jr.

This year it was held the week before the Women's Amateur, and the Chairman of the Girls' Junior Committee was Mrs. John Pennington, of Buffalo. Mrs. Pennington thereafter played at Sacramento and reached the quarter-finals (in 1956 she was in the last sixteen). On the way she eliminated the 1955 Women's Champion, Miss Patricia Lesser (now Mrs. John Harbottle).

In the quarter-finals Mrs. Pennington was called to play JoAnne Gunderson. Before the match she received a telegram from Buffalo friends to remind her that "This is not Be-Kind-to-Juniors-Week." She took JoAnne to the 16th hole.

### *Mrs. Johnstone's Comeback*

At Del Paso, Miss Gunderson played 128 holes in eight over women's par. Her closest match was against the new Girls' Junior Champion, 16-year-old Judy Eller, of Old Hickory, Tenn.; they went 20 holes.

Mrs. Ann Casey Johnstone, of Mason City, Iowa, was four under par for 72 holes before the final. She unfortunately lost her touch in the title match, at 36 holes, and Miss Gunderson's margin was 8 and 6.

Mrs. Johnstone, mother of a four-year-old girl, was runner-up in the Women's Western Amateur and the North and South this year.

Mrs. Johnstone lost her amateur status for a while due to teaching golf along with other duties at Stevens College, Columbia, Mo. She was a school-teacher rather than a golf professional in the usual sense. After several years out of competition, she has made a splendid return in the last two seasons. A year ago she was a semi-finalist in the USGA Women's Amateur, losing to Miss Gunderson, 1 down. Now 34, she is a jolly and popular player.

One of the most improved players of the year is 21-year-old Anne Richardson, of Columbus, Ohio. She was a semi-finalist, losing 3 and 1 to Miss Gunderson.

In the quarter-finals Miss Richardson won a classic match, 1 up, from her roommate, Miss Anne Quast, of Marysville, Wash.; they were around in 74 and 73, respectively, against par of 74. This was the third year in a row for Miss Quast to reach at least the quarter-finals; in 1956 she was a semi-finalist. The Sacramento tournament was her first competition in more than four months after a siege of sickness. Another victim of Miss Richardson was Miss Barbara McIntire, low amateur in the Women's Opens of 1956 and 1957.

The fourth semi-finalist at Sacramento was the Pacific Northwest Champion, Carole Jo Kabler, of Sutherlin, Ore., aged 19. She lost to Mrs. Johnstone by 7 and 6, but in the previous round eliminated the defending Champion, Mrs. Marlene Stewart Streit, of Toronto, with a sub-par performance. Miss Kabler was USGA Girls' Junior Champion two years ago and played



Miss JoAnne Gunderson, of Seattle, Wash., receives the congratulations of Mrs. Ann Casey Johnstone, of Mason City, Iowa, the runner-up, after winning the Women's Amateur Championship. Miss Gunderson, with the exuberance of youth, has reached the pinnacle of women's amateur golf in two bounds. She jumped halfway up the ladder last year when she won the Girls' Junior title.

this year on the University of Oregon freshman team.

Young ladies from the Northwest have played striking parts in women's golf in recent years—Pat Lesser, JoAnne Gunderson, Carole Jo Kabler, Anne Quast, Grace DeMoss. Miss Lesser took the Championship trophy to the Sand Point Country Club, Seattle, in 1955, and Miss Gunderson has now returned it to the same club.

Mrs. Barbara Romack Porter, Champion of 1954, had three extra-hole matches, and

the last one, against Mrs. Johnstone, proved her undoing in the quarter-finals. Del Paso is her home club, and she had a considerable hand in arranging for the event to be played there.

Del Paso's committees did a superlative job under the General Chairmanship of Dr. Robert Wallis. The Club encountered unusual problems of maintenance of the putting greens during a particularly hot spell earlier in the summer, but the 93 players took them in their stride.