

BILL WRIGHT BREAKS THROUGH IN PUBLIC LINKS

BY

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The new Amateur Public Links Champion of the United States Golf Association is William A. Wright, of Seattle, Wash., a Negro and the first of his race to win a national championship in golf.

The gallery of 2,000 which followed the final at the Wellshire Golf Course, Denver, Colo., was favorably impressed by Bill Wright's modest bearing and good sportsmanship—as well as his flaming putter—and the title clearly is in good hands.

Bill was born in Kansas City, Mo., twenty-three years ago but now lives with his parents in Seattle and is a senior at Western Washington College of Education, in Bellingham, Wash. He expects to become an elementary school teacher.

All through high school and college Bill has been a basketball player of solid ability, and he has played on AAU basketball teams. About seven years ago, his father, an avid golfer, introduced him to golf and, with his natural grace and athletic background, he came easily by his present skill. He plays at the Jefferson and West Seattle public courses, carrying the lightest and tiniest kind of a canvas bag and twelve clubs: two woods, nine irons and a putter.

These simple tools, carried incongruously by a caddie, were enough to enable Bill to dispose of Frank H. Campbell, of Jacksonville, Fla., 3 and 2, in the 36-hole final. Bill won the first two holes and led all the way against his more experienced opponent, who was 33 and had been a professional in Alabama and Mississippi for four years until 1951, when he turned to the insurance business. Time and again, Bill got down in two from the rough surrounding the greens to keep Campbell in check.

The final produced a series of dramatic climaxes and was noteworthy, too, for the sportsmanship and personal consideration each finalist displayed toward his opponent.

NEW MEMBERS OF THE USGA

REGULAR

Coconino Country Club	Ariz.
Arbuckle Golf Club	Cal.
Glendora Country Club	Cal.
Andrews Air Force Base Golf Course	D. C.
Key West Golf Club	Fla.
Green Hills Country Club	Ga.
Lincoln Greens Golf Club	Ill.
Elks Country Club	Iowa
Golf and Country Club	Iowa
Bridgton Highlands Golf Club	Me.
Cedar Point Golf Course	Md.
Cohasset Golf Club	Mass.
Mount Pleasant Country Club	Mass.
Cleveland Country Club	Miss.
Lake Mohawk Golf Club	N. J.
Mount Tabor Country Club	N. J.
Orchard Hills Country Club	N. J.
Bethlehem Management Club	N. Y.
Mohawk Valley Country Club	N. Y.
Montauk Downs Golf Club	N. Y.
Spring Rock Country Club	N. Y.
Tryon Country Club	N. C.
Arrowhead Country Club	Ohio
Corry Country Club	Pa.
Flourtown Country Club	Pa.
Canyon Creek Country Club	Pa.
Jacksboro Golf and Country Club	Texas

ASSOCIATE

Red Stone Arsenal Golf Course	Ala.
Poland Spring Golf Club	Me.
Truth or Consequences Municipal Golf Course	N. M.
The Tides Inn Country Club	Va.

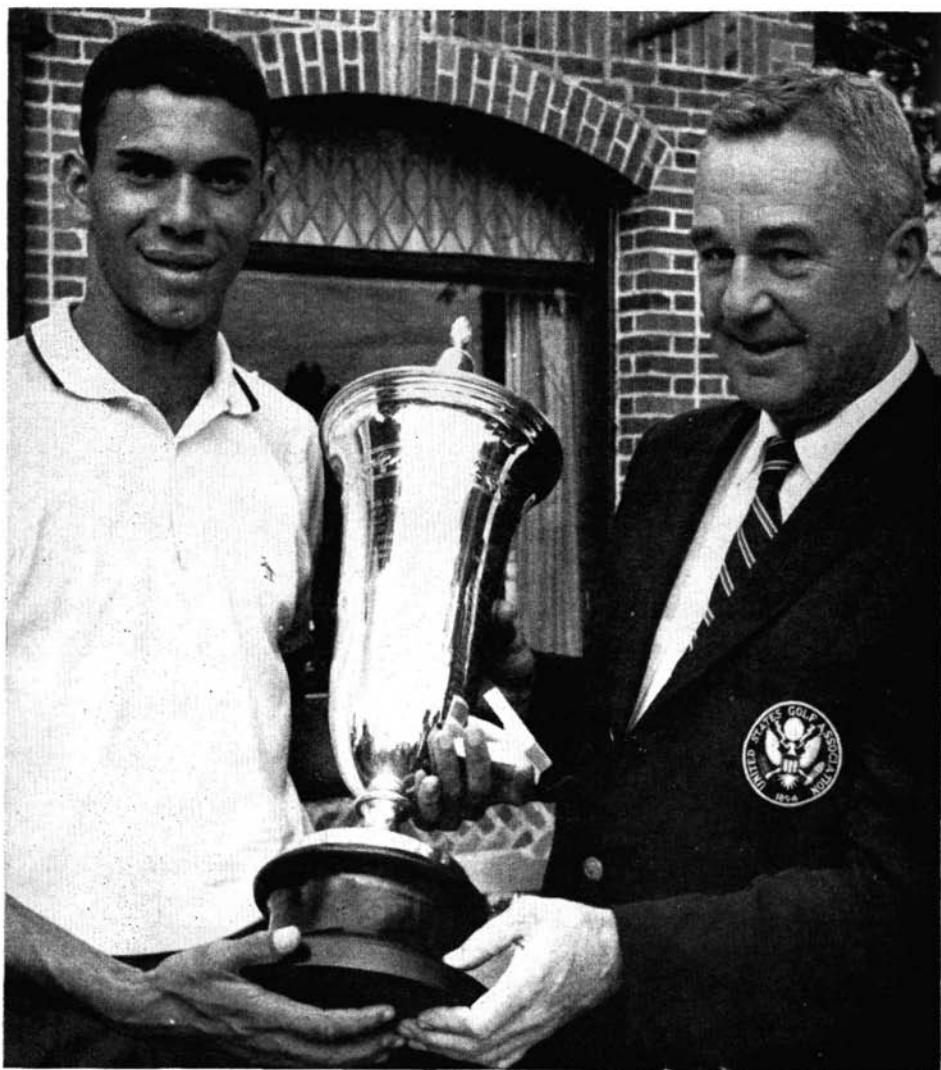
Although as an athlete Wright is accustomed to tight competition, he has played in relatively few golf tournaments and appeared at times ill at ease because of his lack of familiarity with championship procedures. Nevertheless, his innate fairness always showed through.

Good Sportsmanship

On the sixth hole of his semi-final match against Don Essig, of Indianapolis, Ind., for example, Essig overshot the green and had to play back from a mean lie. A knot of thoughtless spectators walked behind Essig, intent on their conversations, as he was playing and he fluffed the stroke.

Wright walked to the rear of the green and said politely to the gallery:

WINNER AND NEW CHAMPION . . .



William A. Wright, of Seattle, Wash., the new USGA Amateur Public Links Champion, receives the trophy from Emerson Carey, Jr., Chairman of the USGA Public Links Committee, after the final at the Wellshire Golf Course, Denver, Colo.

"Some of you folks bothered him on that shot. It was very unfair. Please give him a better break so he can play his regular game."

Wright edged into the final past Essig, the 1957 Champion and a 20-year-old senior at Louisiana State University, 1 up, after 36 holes. Wright's chipping and

putting were again the dominant factor throughout the match, which he also led all the way.

Campbell joined him by outlasting William H. McCool, of San Francisco, Cal., a 39-year-old policeman who patrols a downtown beat in the vicinity of the St. Francis Hotel. The score was 3 and 1.

McCool, who was raised in Memphis and came to appreciate San Francisco during World War II, was playing for the fifth time and reached the fourth round in 1953. He was San Francisco City Champion in 1958.

All four semi-finalists were invited, in accordance with USGA policy, to play in the Amateur Championship at the Broadmoor Golf Club, Colorado Springs, Colo., in September. Normally, filing an entry for the Amateur Public Links Championship renders the player ineligible for the Amateur Championship in the same year, but an exception is made for the four semi-finalists. The winner is exempt from sectional qualifying; the other three must qualify sectionally.

Additionally, of course, Wright and Campbell by gaining the final earned the highly prized exemptions from sectional qualifying for the 1960 Amateur Public Links Championship at the Ala Wai Golf Course, Honolulu, Hawaii, next July.

Sikes Medalist

The only previous winner in the tournament, in addition to Essig, was Daniel D. Sikes, Jr., also of Jacksonville, Fla., the defending champion.

A 28-year-old senior at the University of Florida Law School, Sikes opened his defense by winning the medal with a 69-68-137, five under par. It was the third lowest qualifying score in the history of the Championship. James C. Clark, Jr., of Long Beach, Cal., now a professional, scored 64-70-134 in the first Championship at Wellshire in 1946 after having done 135 in the previous Championship at the Indian Canyon Golf Course, Spokane, Wash., in 1941.

The finish of the qualifying was thrilling. Sikes' playing companions were Dr. Donald J. Keith, of San Diego, Cal., a dentist, and Rick Casabella, 18, of Louisville, Ky. As they approached the finish, they bore the knowledge that Mat Palacio, Jr., of San Rafael, Cal., an automobile salesman, had posted 69-69-138 and was in the lead.

Casabella, fresh out of high school and junior golf, holed out from 200 yards with his No. 2 iron for a double-eagle 2 on the 477-yard finishing hole to complete a 69-69-138. Casabella had also birdied the thirty-fifth, so that his finish was 3-2 where par is 4.5.

Dr. Keith got down in a par 5 for a 67-71-138.

Sikes then ran in a solid 10-foot putt for a birdie 4, a score of 137 and the medal by one stroke.

It was the second year in succession that the defending champion won the medal. Essig did the same thing last year at the Silver Lake Golf Club, Orland, Park, Ill., but lost to Sikes in the third round.

Sikes suffered a like fate, losing to Leonard Pietras, of Toledo, Ohio, once national caddie champion, 2 down, in the third round.

After the four leaders came two at 139: Gene V. Dahlbender, Jr., of Atlanta, Ga., and Hal McCommas of Dallas, Texas. Essig and Gene Dixon, of Memphis, Tenn., were 141. Raymond H. Patak, of Dallas, Texas; Donald Stickney, of Columbus, Ohio; Rolf Deming, of Minneapolis, Minn., and Alvin Benefiel, of Denver, Colo., were 142, even par.

The qualifying deadline for the sixty-four places in match play fell on eight players tied for the last four places at 150, the second lowest cut-off on record. There was a playoff at 149 at the Rackham Golf Course, Detroit, Mich., in 1940. Scores up to 152 made the play-off at Wellshire in 1946.

It took five holes to resolve the play-off. Jack E. Zimmerman, of Dayton, Ohio, and Hugh Farmer, of Toledo, Ohio, got in on the first hole, a 510-yard par 5, with birdie 4s. Harold Kotwitz, of Janesville, Wis., made it by playing the first three holes in par, 5-3-4. Manuel Palos, of Bethlehem, Pa., took the fourth and last place from Willard L. Todd, of Austell, Ga., on the fifth green in light which was fading so fast it would have been impossible to play another hole. He played the five in one over par, 5-3-5-4-4. The remaining three players had been dropped off at the second hole, where they could not make their par 3s.

Zimmerman, still only 31, is the only man who qualified at Wellshire in 1946 and again this year.

Dallas Team Winner

Dallas, employing three tiny Texans, won the sectional team championship and the Warren G. Harding Cup for the second time with a three-man, 36-hole score of 425, an all-time record. Their margin

PUBLIC LINKS TEAM CHAMPIONS



Dallas, Texas, won the sectional team championship and the Warren G. Harding Trophy in the Amateur Public Links Championship with an all-time-record score of 425 at the Wellshire Golf Course, Denver, Colo. Contrary to Texas tradition, all three were little men who spoke softly, but they carried great big golf clubs. Left to right, they are: Hal McCommas, Raymond H. Patak and Gene Towry.

was six strokes over San Francisco and twelve strokes over Jacksonville and Louisville, which tied for third at 437. The previous low in this form of competition was 431, compiled by Long Beach, Cal., at Wellshire in 1946 and by Atlanta, Ga., at the Meadowbrook Golf Club, Minneapolis, Minn., in 1947. There were thirty teams in the competition, which is held in conjunction with the qualifying.

The three tiny Texans representing Dallas were McCommas, with 67-72—139; Patak, a member of the Notre Dame golf team, with 68-74—142; and Gene Towry, the runner-up in 1957, with 72-72—144.

In the qualifying rounds, where all putts had to be in the hole, the best rounds were 67s by Dr. Keith and McCommas. They shared the first-day lead

at that figure. There were, all told, fifteen scores in the sixties, and eight men were under par for the 36 holes.

This was a reflection both of good play on the part of the golfers, well-conditioned fairways and greens and a disposition of the USGA not to set up the course too rigorously. Wellshire is attractive to the eye, interesting to play and a very fair test for a championship. The players obviously enjoyed it and the tournament as a whole.

Members of the USGA Public Links Committee, attended, eighteen strong, and conducted the competition with efficiency and tact, in cooperation with the Denver Department of Parks and Recreation, a most able and experienced organization, and the local committee.