

PROTECTING THE AMATEUR

By

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In a day when commercialism and the making of the fast dollar characterize a broad range of human activity, the United States Golf Association's code of amateur status sometimes seems out of place.

At least, we are told that it does.

"Why shouldn't promising young golfers be able to play in important tournaments, whether or not they happen to have money?" we are asked.

"Why shouldn't dealers encourage good young players by giving them free clubs and balls?"

"Why shouldn't tournament winners be able to accept automobiles, complete new wardrobes or a week at a golf resort?"

"What's the harm if a man makes a bet on a boy and shares part of the winnings with him?"

The answers to all these questions are the same.

If amateur golfers were allowed to do these things, they would tend to prostitute and destroy the most attractive quality in the game.

"Oh, come now!" you say. "What harm would it do if Jackie's expenses are paid to one little tournament?"

Specifically, it would do harm in these ways:

If Jackie's expenses were paid to "one little old tournament," then Billy's expenses could be paid, too. So could Tom's and Dick's and Harry's. And so could Jackie's to a second tournament.

If Jackie happened to be a very good player, sponsors might make him very generous offers.

Jackie, being a bright young man, would quickly discover that he had come upon a better way of making a living than going to the office every day. And so would Billy and Tom and Dick and Harry.

The creation of a class of Jackies would be no service to amateur golf, or even to Jackie in the long run. It would be a disservice.

Jackie would be secretly using the game for his own private gain.

He would be only masquerading as an "amateur." He should turn forthrightly to a career in professional golf, where the profit-motive is completely honorable. He wouldn't be playing for fun.

Isaac B. Grainger, a former USGA President, once asked:

"Is it a sporting thing to use one's fellow-amateurs as stepping stones?—to exploit one's friends who are playing the game for fun, as an avocation?"

A true amateur, who plays for fun when his business permits, should lose interest in at least the competitive aspects of a game which creates a privileged class of quasi-amateurs.

So the game would be hurt in two ways:

The masquerader would be subjecting it to the indignity of using it as a means to an end.

The true amateur would eventually find it tasteless as a competitive sport.

In the eyes of the USGA, the game itself is greater than any individual who plays it. The great majority of all who play it are true amateurs. The USGA is representative of more than 2,300 member clubs, and it is concerned with the interests of the individual amateur members of those clubs. The USGA thinks a healthy corporate body of amateur golf better than the development of a few super-stars without any status.

The Rules of Amateur Status are designed to protect the game as a whole, and particularly the rank and file of true amateurs.

An amateur golfer is one who plays for the fun and fair competition there is in it, at his own expense and without thought of material gain.

Ideally, an amateur golfer is one to whom the sport is a recreation, to be pursued as time permits after his primary responsibilities of earning a living and caring for a family have been discharged.

Amateurism is, in this concept, a state of mind.

As Eugene G. Grace said so aptly to players in the 1951 Amateur Championship at the Saucon Valley Country Club, Bethlehem, Pa.:

"The only way in which amateurism in sports can be defined is in the sportsman's own heart.

"If the player says to himself that the only reason he is playing (and putting up with the sacrifices and inconveniences of stiff amateur competition) is that he gets his full reward out of his enjoyment of the game, then he is a sure-enough amateur. If he expects direct or indirect cash reward, then he is a pro.

"It is certainly not dishonorable to be frankly a professional; but to lie to yourself, and pretend you are an amateur when you know in your heart you are lying, is just a ruinous habit. That's the real nub of the amateur problem in athletics. Schools that are supposed to train young men, yet warp their consciences by phony amateur standards, can't have much to brag about."

There is no way in which this intangible quality can be adequately defined by words. There is no code which can, in the final analysis, completely implement the amateur ideal, even though by continuous review we strive toward this goal. But the USGA Rules of Amateur Status do, we believe, prohibit the tangible actions which eventually must identify the person who plays for profit, not for fun.

If you are an amateur golfer under this code, you can compete in any amateur competition reasonably secure in the knowledge that you are engaging in fair competition against other amateurs. This is the only real way to determine an amateur champion.

We believe that, if the true amateurs are protected and allowed to flourish on their own initiative, the development of highly skilled amateur players will follow automatically—the American competitive instinct being what it is.

We do not believe that there is any advantage deriving from the development of a few super-stars which would warrant sacrificing the Rules of Amateur Status, even though we admit it is sometimes difficult to hold the line.

Now, sometimes it is said that the Rules

of Amateur Status discriminate against people who are poor.

To the extent that the Rules require a player to pay his way in amateur golf, this is true.

However, what is wrong with requiring a young man to pay his own way in life? This is a lesson which schools and churches teach from the beginning. It is a lesson which we all must learn if we are to achieve maturity and independence.

USGA FILM LIBRARY

"St. Andrews, Cradle Of Golf," a 14-minute, full color, 16m.m. travelogue of historic St. Andrews, Scotland, its Old Course and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club clubhouse.

"First World Amateur Team Championship for Eisenhower Trophy," a 14-minute, full color, 16m.m. film of the first World Amateur Team Championship at St. Andrews, Scotland. Twenty-nine countries compete for the Eisenhower Trophy.

"On the Green," a 17-minute, full color, 16 m.m. presentation filmed at the Mid-Ocean Club, Bermuda, illustrating correct procedures under the Rules of Golf governing situations arising on the putting green.

"Golf's Longest Hour," a 16 m.m. full color production, running for 17½ minutes, depicting the closing stages of the 1956 Open Championship. Filmed at the beautiful Oak Hill Country Club, Rochester, N.Y., it shows the eventual winner, Cary Middlecoff, set a target at which Ben Hogan, Julius Boros and Ted Kroll strive in vain to beat.

"Play Them As They Lie," a 16 m.m. color production, running for 16½ entertaining minutes, in which Johnny Farrell, the Open Champion of 1928, acts as intermediary between Wilbur Mulligan, a beginner of unimpeachable integrity, and Joshua P. Sive, a past master in the art of breaking the Rules. The film was made at the Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N. J., where Farrell is professional.

"Great Moments In Golf," gives the viewer an opportunity to see the many interesting exhibits in "Golf House," USGA headquarters in New York, and to re-live golf triumphs of the past with many of the game's immortals. The film is a 16 m.m. black and white production and runs 28 minutes.

"The Rules of Golf—Etiquette" also has proved popular. The film stresses the importance of etiquette by portrayal of various violations of the code in the course of a family four-ball match. Ben Hogan appears in several scenes, and Robert T. Jones, Jr., makes the introductory statement. A 16 m.m. color production, the film has a running time of 17½ minutes.

The distribution of all seven prints is handled by National Educational Films, Inc., 165 West 46th Street, New York 36, N. Y., which produced the films in cooperation with the USGA. The rental is \$20 per film; \$35 for two; \$50 for three, \$60 for four and \$70 for five, in combination at the same time, including the cost of shipping prints to the renter.