

A PROFLIGACY RECORD, 19 ON AN OPEN HOLE

RAY AINSLEY
Set the mark
at Cherry Hills

The Open Championship will again be at Cherry Hills, Denver, Colo., from June 16-18.

What does that make you think of? Ralph Guldahl who won there in 1938? Dick Metz who finished second?

With all respects to those fine players, an Open Championship at Cherry Hills leaves many people thinking of Ray Ainsley—the man who took 19 strokes on one hole.

That happened at Cherry Hills on June 10, 1938, and here in a reprint of an old USGA Journal article, is how it came about

When the definitive history of the Open Championship is written, it will be concerned with many things besides such efficient performances as Ben Hogan gave at Riviera by making 16 birdies, 48 pars and going one over on only eight holes. His record 276 is only part of the saga.

Every duffer can take heart, too, from the fact that Ray Ainsley, of Santa Barbara, Calif., used 19 strokes—yes, 19—on a single hole to set the Open record for profligacy.

Had Ainsley holed out in one fewer, he would only have tied the record of 18 which Willie Chisholm made on the 185-yard 8th hole in the 1919 Championship at Brae Burn, Boston. The circumstances surrounding these two spectacular scores were quite different. Fortunately for the definitive historian, the two events have been appropriately recorded.

A National Hero

Henry McLemore, at the time a sports columnist, witnessed Ainsley's 19 and, tucking his tongue firmly in his cheek, filed a copyrighted story which the United Press permits us to reproduce. From the scene of the disaster, McLemore wrote:

"Ray Ainsley, Saturday was the most beloved man in the United States.

"Five million golf duffers recognized him as their beau ideal, hailed him as

their vindication, their excuse for living.

"Ainsley, an unknown until Friday, bounded into fame when, playing in the Open Championship at Cherry Hills, he scored a 19—15 strokes over par—on the 16th hole.

"For almost half an hour he stood in a swift-moving creek that borders the 16th green and belabored his ball with blows. It is recorded that a little girl who witnessed his efforts to knock the ball from the creek turned to her mother when Ainsley finally got it out and said:

"Mummy, it must be dead now, because the man has quit hitting at it."

"When he finally finished—with a sparkling 96—Ainsley was besieged on the clubhouse lawn. Hagen was forgotten. So was Jones. So was an assorted group of state governors, and so was Henry Picard, whose second consecutive 70 had given him the halfway lead.

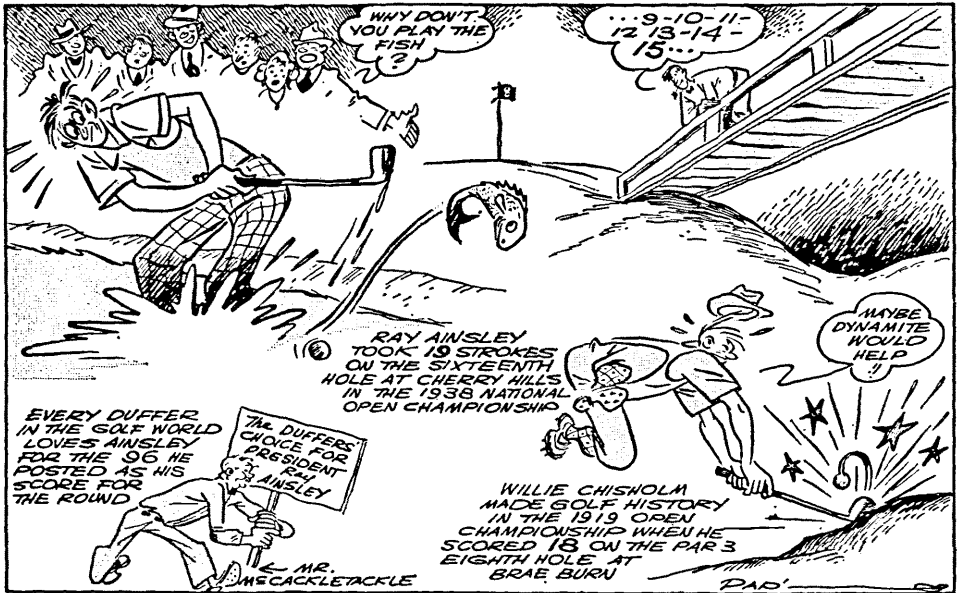
"The autograph hunters and the candid-camera filberts swarmed about him. It was obvious that the autograph hounds figured that the signature of any man who took a 19 on one hole in the Open would some day be worth more than the signature of Button Gwinnett or any other signer of the Declaration of Independence, and that the picture of a man who had perpetrated such a deed would outlive Gainsborough's Blue Boy.

"Ainsley's effort at the 16th will go down in sports history with the famed 'long count' of the second Dempsey-Turney fight at Chicago. Just as Dave Barry became confused after Jack's knockdown of Gene, so did the official scorer become lost in a maze of figures as Ainsley swatted at the ball. After many strokes, the scorer turned to Ainsley's playing companion, Bud McKinney, and called,

"Pick up the count. I'm through."

Battling the Current

"McKinney counted as high as he could, but, not having majored in mathematics, he quit after one of Ainsley's blows lifted a speckled trout high into the air. A



spectator suggested that Ainsley play the trout and not his ball, but as there is no USGA rule to cover such an emergency, the Californian took another notch in the pants of his diving bell and continued trying to hit the ball.

"He was a sad sight at this point. He was covered from head to foot with sand, and his clothes were soaking wet. Each time Ainsley missed the ball, the current would sweep it farther downstream, and he would have to run along behind it, trying to get in a decisive blow. No man ever showed more gameness.

"He scorned treacherous currents that swirled about him and threatened to sweep him into whirlpools. He ignored the dangers of boulders, seaweed and the incoming tide.

"Sharks nibbled at his ankles' but he kept whacking away.

"Passing ships sent out lifeboats, but he waved them aside.

"Finally, Ainsley backed the ball into a neutral eddy and caught it squarely on the head and it soared from the water.

"The spectators cheered—until they saw that it had landed beyond a tree on the far side of the green. An amphibian by now, Ainsley adapted himself to dry land with remarkable alacrity and strode

into the bush. After much thrashing, the Californian beat the ball onto the green "Saturday he was sought by the curious who wanted to see and touch the man who had taken the highest score on a hole in the history of the Open. and putted it into the cup.

"Ainsley, old fellow, give me a stroke a hole and I'll play you for 10 cents a hole. You sound like my meat."

Why Not a Lift?

As an epitaph, Morton G. Bogue, then chairman of the USGA Rules of Golf Committee, adds that he asked Ainsley why he had not availed himself of the privilege of lifting his ball from the water hazard under penalty of only one stroke.

"I thought I had to play the ball as it lay at all times," responded Ainsley, who at that point became a sadder but wiser man.

But as the USGA Executive Committee's annual report stated: "The fact that he holed out was an interesting commentary on the sportsmanship of the golf professionals of America."

Ball Runs Poorly for Willie

In one sense, Willie Chisholm perhaps should share equal honors with Ainsley. Each went 15 strokes over par on a single

hole. It might be argued that Ainsley was able to exceed Chisholm's score by a stroke only because he chose a par 4 hole and Willie a par 3.

The historian is again fortunate in the Chisholm case, because the man with the most remarkable memory in golf, Francis Ouimet, was a competitor at Brae Burn in 1919 and has contributed the following account of Chisholm's climatic mishap:

"In 1919 Walter Hagen defeated Mike Brady for the Open Championship after the two had tied at 301 at Brae Burn. Among the favorites was Jim Barnes, to say nothing of other fine players. Barnes had as his playing companion in the first round a Scot named Willie Chisholm.

"They were to start rather late, so Willie prepared for the ordeal by playing a few chip shots beforehand with Johnny Walker (Black Label).

"The ball was not running well for Willie, and he had more than his share of bad breaks over the first five holes. However, his courage was good, and when he made a 5 on the par-3 sixth, it seemed as though he had played himself back to his normal game. A steady 7 on the par-4 seventh more than confirmed this.

"There was much to look forward to on the eighth. It was only 185 yards long, and while the iron had to be played over a deep ravine, there were some 2s and many 3s made on the hole during the day.

"At the bottom of the ravine was a tiny brook, and in front of the brook were several large rocks, deposited there during the glacier period. As a matter of fact, that particular hole was a source of much annoyance to the members of Brae Burn because it was no easy climb from the brook up the steep bank—and it was steep—to the fairway and putting green. Therefore, the ever-obliging golf committee constructed a long wooden bridge which spanned the ravine, thus making the hole a more pleasant one to play. The bridge was completed for the Open that year.

"Barnes played a nice shot to the green and, gentleman that he was, stepped aside for Willie to do likewise. As Willie selected an iron, it could be seen he was full—of confidence—but as so often happens, he took a little too much turf, and while he carried the brook nicely, by two or three feet, his ball came to rest two

inches beyond a large boulder.

"After reaching his ball and surveying the situation carefully, he called for his niblick, possibly thinking that, if he was to break a club, it might just as well be the niblick. I may say now that such a procedure was common in 1919.

"Jim in the meantime took up a position in the middle of the bridge where he could look down at Willie and help him count his strokes.

Bleeding Niblick

"After a few practice swings, Willie took his stance, held a firm grip on the club and let go at the ball. Unfortunately, the clubhead met the boulder first and bounced over the ball, giving off a few sparks and a sharp ring. This was a novel experience for Willie Chisholm, so he tried it again with the same result.

"Now that he was sure it was no mistake and that he had not been hearing things, he settled down to blast his way to the ball through the rock. After a series of ineffectual efforts to cut his way through to the ball, he suddenly decided to shift his tactics. By this time the sole of the niblick was red-hot and dented badly, but the shaft, of real stout hickory, stood up magnificently.

"Barnes, as one of the favorites for the title, was, of course bearing up splendidly. He did not say how much he enjoyed the performance, but he never left his observation post.

"As I have said, Willie changed his tactics. Now instead of striving to play toward the green, he chose to chip the ball away from the rock. This he did after the second effort. After a little more hard luck, Willie reached the green, perspiring; and then, as always when things are not going well, needed three putts. I am not sure whether or not Jim got his 3, but I do know he was thoroughly chilled waiting for his turn to play.

"Now came the real test. Willie tried his best to count his strokes, but since he had been working in the bottom of the ravine for the greater part of 30 minutes, he was not sure how many he had taken. As he was exhausted, he turned to Jim for help.

"'Willie, you took 18 for the hole,' said Barnes.

"'Oh, Jim, that cannot be so,' was Chisholm's reply. 'You must have counted the echoes.'"