

SIKES' HASTE NOT WASTE IN PUBLIC LINKS VICTORY

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Golf-lovers who are concerned about increasingly slow play would have been heartened had they attended the 1961 USGA Amateur Public Links Championship at Rackham Golf Course, Royal Oak, Mich. Public links golfers usually resign themselves to the fact that it may take five to six hours to play a round. Consequently the players at Rackham were rarin' to go when they had the use of a course on which there were at most 150 players, all of championship calibre.

An outstanding example of the fast pace of play exhibited in this Championship was shown in the second round of qualifying. The first group of three finished in 3 hours 26 minutes; the last group finished in 3 hours 58 minutes. This is comparatively good time when you consider that in some match play events two players may take considerably more time to play 18 holes, without holing out at every hole.

Another prime example was the time required to play the semi-finals. The match between John Molenda, 22-year-old Detroit Tech junior, who was the eventual runner-up, and Lt. Commander Lou Gifford, Navy pilot from Jacksonville, Fla., started at 9:45 A. M. The morning round of the match was completed at 12:30 P. M., only 2 hours 45 minutes later.

Sikes Carried His Bag

Even at that pace, this pair could not keep up with John Schlee, Memphis State University student from Memphis, Tenn., and Dick Sikes, the new Champion from Wichita, Kans. It was said of Sikes that even though he carried his own bag throughout the event, he would play an iron shot, retrieve the divot, replace it, and have his bag on his shoulder heading for the green before the ball landed. This may be a slight exaggeration, but the lanky native of Arkansas most certainly did get to the business at hand with no waste of time, and, it certainly did not affect his game adversely.

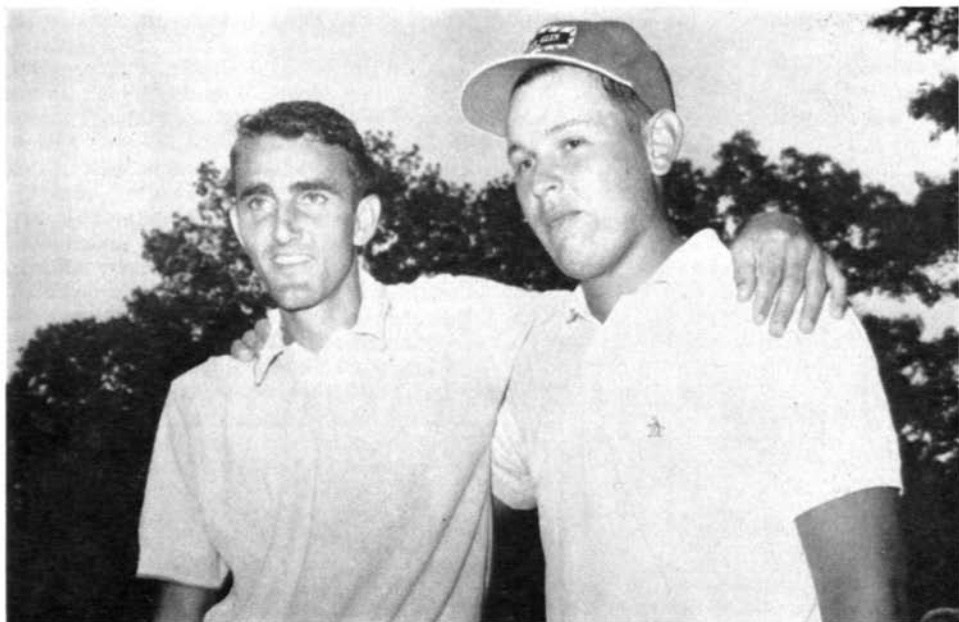
Sikes is a 21-year-old University of Arkansas physical education major. He is a native of Springdale, Ark., but is working this summer in an aircraft factory in Wichita, Kans. He played fine golf all week. He captured the qualifying medal with a five-under-par 70-65-135, two strokes better than second-place David Bettencourt, Honolulu, Hawaii. Sikes then played through 130 holes of match play in four under par. His closest match was the 36-hole semi-final against Schlee, which he won by 2 and 1. In this match, Sikes shot a 2-under-par 68 in the morning round to lead by two holes, a margin which he maintained throughout the afternoon with even par golf.

In the final match, it appeared that Sikes' putter, hot all week, might have finally cooled. In the early stages he could not get a putt up to the hole, and found himself 3 down after 14 holes to Molenda, the young Detroiter who has been playing golf only seven years. At this point, however, Molenda's putter cooled and he missed three-footers at the 15th and the 16th to lose most of his lead. He lost it all when, at the 18th, his second shot was bunkered and he dropped the hole to Sikes' par.

It seemed that winning three of the last four holes of the morning round to get even was all that Sikes needed to regain his confidence. He played the first nine of the second round in 33 for a 3-up advantage. He gained an additional hole in the first six holes of the last nine to win by 4 and 3. For the 33 holes of the match Sikes was 2 over par; Molenda was 7 over.

In advancing to the final Sikes defeated Forrest T. Jones, Bloomington, Ind.; Owen T. Douglass, Jr., Honolulu; Leonard Pietras, Toledo; William B. Kelley, Jr., Coraopolis, Pa.; and Schlee.

Molenda advanced at the expense of Woodrow Gray, Oklahoma City; Wallace Smith, Pontiac, Mich.; William A. Wright,



Dick Sikes (left), the medalist in the 36th Amateur Public Links Championship, continued his fine golf throughout the tournament. He is pictured here with the runner-up, John Molenda, before the final match which Sikes won 4 and 3.

the 1959 Champion from Seattle; Bob Lunn, 16 year-old high school student from San Francisco; and Gifford.

Sikes, who resembles Hillman Robbins, Jr., the 1957 National Amateur Champion, became the third medalist to win the Championship. The only others to turn this trick were the late Carl Kauffmann, Pittsburgh, Pa., in 1929 and Wilfred Crossley, Atlanta, Ga., in 1947. Sikes' 65 in the second qualifying round was only one stroke above the lowest score ever made in the Championship qualifying. His medal-winning 135 was only one stroke higher than the record qualifying score made by James C. Clark, Jr., Long Beach, Calif., in scoring 134 in the 1946 event at Wellshire Golf Course, Denver, Colo.

The 65 shot by Sikes in the second qualifying round was equaled by Jim Ferriell, Jr., Louisville, Ky., who led the qualifiers in the first round, and Bettencourt, who added a 65 to his first-round score of 72.

The defending Champion, Verne Callison, Sacramento, Calif., failed to qualify for match play.

There were exactly 64 scores at 150 or

better; thus a play-off for the 64th qualifier's place was not necessary. The records do not show when this oddity last occurred, but a senior member of the USGA Public Links Committee stated that a play-off had been necessary every year since 1931.

The Harding Cup, symbolic of the Team Championship, was won by a team representing Honolulu, Hawaii, with a score of 428; this was only three strokes higher than the record established by a team representing Dallas, Texas at Denver in 1959. Members of the winning team are: Owen T. Douglass, Jr.; Hung Soo Ahn; and David Bettencourt. All of them were defeated in the second round in the individual Championship. The Wichita team, led by Sikes, was second with a total of 431.

In addition to Sikes, Schlee, Gifford, and Molenda, the following advanced to the quarter-finals: William B. Kelley, Jr., Coraopolis, Pa.; Frank W. Campbell, Birmingham, Ala., 1959 runner-up; Bob Lunn, San Francisco; and Mike Andonian, Pontiac, Mich., a semi-finalist in 1960.

The USGA's sincere gratitude goes to Harold Rutledge, General Chairman, and

to all the members of his local committees. They left no stone unturned toward making the event a pleasure for all.

Despite heavy play by the public prior to the Championship, the Rackham course which played at 6,538 yards for the Championship was in excellent condition. The fairways were good and the greens nearly perfect. A special tribute is due Bob Holma and Gene Treppa, the golf course superintendents, who worked so hard to have the course in Championship condition.

Nineteen members of the USGA Public Links Committee were on hand to assist in the conduct of the Championship.

They were: Fred Brand, Jr., Chairman, Pittsburgh; Ray O. Fischer, Greendale, Wis.; Ralph C. Ghioto, Sr., Jacksonville, Fla.; Eddie Irwin, Wichita, Kans.; Judge John L. Niblack, Indianapolis; Thomas A. T. Ching, Honolulu; John J. Morse, Tonawanda, N. Y.; Denmark Miller, Des Moines; Jim H. Obert, Peoria; John W. Riggle, Phoenix; Henry J. Sawicki, Sr., Toledo; C. Allen Ducker, Charleston, S. C.; Mark A. Greer, Sr., Long Beach, Calif.; Alfred W. Wareham, Minneapolis; Edward C. Knuth, Cleveland; Joseph S. Dickson, Louisville; W. Gordon Young, Dallas; Earl Shock, Dayton; and Edward A. Atlas, the host committeeman, Detroit.

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