

DUAL NATURE OF APPEAL EXPLAINS GAME'S GROWTH

By

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When Gene Littler underwent the agonies of a 7 on a par-3 hole in a television match last winter, millions were able to recognize the 1961 Open Champion's plight instantly and recall, with shudders, a personal horror at their own courses.

This is the magic of golf. The casual weekend player can identify himself readily with the greatest of players. Moreover, the high handicap golfer can actually outplay the Open Champion on a given hole.

Success at play hinges more on determination, concentration and timing, elements within the reach of everyone who picks up a golf club.

This singular appeal of golf largely explains the rapid growth of the game in recent years—both in numbers of participants and numbers of spectators.

We live in an era of increased leisure time, and the American citizen turns more and more to sports as a healthy preoccupation. Manufacturers of equipment and the headquarters of professional sports leagues proudly announce new highs almost annually.

These announcements center around statistics telling of more spectators or more participants. It is usually one or the other, seldom both.

Game is Unique

Golf appears unique in that it is experiencing a remarkable combination of increase both in players and in people who go out to watch the major competitions.

The major spectator sports—football, baseball and basketball—show a sharp rise in the number of spectators since the end of World War II. The number of adult participants in these sports, however, does not rise sharply.

On the other hand, sports such as bowling, fishing and hunting reveal sizeable annual increases in the active number of participants. Of late, bowling has

begun a movement to interest the spectator as well as the participant.

Other contributing factors in golf's popularity are that it is a leisurely game (but don't dawdle!), one that can be participated in by all age groups and is conducive to sociability. Golf is one of the few sports that can be enjoyed by mixed foursomes.

Golf's expansion is striking, especially in view of the fact that as American games go it is young. From a handful of golfers in 1888, when the first permanent American golf club was founded, the game has grown to some 4,530,000 who now play 15 or more rounds annually.

Boost by Ouimet's Win

One of golf's biggest single boosts resulted from amateur Francis Ouimet's victory in the 1913 Open. Fewer than 350,000 played golf that year, but 10 years later, in 1923, the number was 2,000,000.

There was a total of only 43 entries for the first USGA Open and Amateur Championships in 1895. The total for the same two events last year was 4,444.

Consider also that at the turn of this century there were somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,000 golf courses in this country, while today we enjoy an estimated 6,623, including 436 par-3 courses. This means that almost 60 per cent of the estimated 11,249 golf courses in the world are in the USA.

Another view of golf's brisk growth is seen in the number of golf balls sold. It was estimated that 24,000,000 were sold in 1939; 22 years later, in 1961, the figure had risen to 51,062,088.

Golf's differences from other sports extends to the attitude toward Rules. Did you ever see a runner in baseball, on a close play at third base, turn to the umpire and declare himself out? Can you imagine a football tackle telling the referee that his team should be penalized because he had been holding the opposing player?



There is no doubting golf's appeal for Dan Kao. He sleeps in his car outside Ala Wai Golf Course in Honolulu, awaiting opportunity to obtain starting time.

—Photo Courtesy The Honolulu Advertiser

But think of the numerous occasions where a golfer has called an infraction of the Rules on himself. There are few sports in which this type of sportsmanship is so prevalent—in which the player is usually his own referee. Self-policing on Rules is at the very heart of the game of golf.

Appeals to Spectators

Golf has spectator appeal despite inherent handicaps. Most other popular sports lend themselves readily to production for the gallery—there are standard layouts for the playing fields in baseball, football, hockey, basketball, track, bowling, swimming and most others.

But when a spectator buys a ticket for a golf tournament, all he receives is the right of entrance to some 125 to 150 acres. He has no specific seat. He moves about the course with huge crowds, up and down hills, sometimes in inclement weather, just with the chance he may get to see the play of the leaders. And it may turn out that the decisive stroke of the tournament is at that moment being hit on a fairway seven holes away.

In spite of these obstacles, however, golf tournaments continue to flourish and attract large galleries. As an example, last year's Open at Oakland Hills near Detroit had a total three-day attendance of 47,975, surpassing the record set only the previous year by 4,000. Further, 20,439 attended the final day of the Open last year, an increase of almost 25 per cent over the record, also set the previous year.

Look at figures from the Professional Golfers' Association tour. In 1938, for example, it was estimated that approximately 200,000 viewed the PGA tournaments. In 1941 it stood at 350,000 and went to 600,000 after the war in 1946. It was estimated that 1,021,000 attended PGA tournaments during 1959, a 9 per cent increase over the previous year.

Look to the Future

What lies ahead for golf? From every indication it seems that interest in all directions can only continue to expand, in both active participation and spectator appeal. With new courses being added every year and more public interest

through television and wider newspaper coverage of golf, it apparently can only go in one direction—up.

As for tournament golf, one futurist suggests that some day there will be mobile bleachers on track following the various groups around the course. An-

other predicts bleachers for the galleries will be set up along the sides of each fairway. It is now difficult to visualize that it will ever come to this. It is certain that more people will play golf and more people will be spectators at golf events each year.

USGA "GOLF HOUSE" FILM LIBRARY

Films are available for rental at \$20 each (group units less) from the United States Golf Association, 40 East 38th Street, New York 16, N. Y.

Rules of Golf Dramatizations

"THE RULES OF GOLF—ETIQUETTE"

A family four-ball match stresses the importance of right relations to other players and to the course. Ben Hogan appears in several scenes. Romert T. Jones, Jr., makes the introductory statement. A "must" for every golfer.

17½ minutes

"PLAY THEM AS THEY LIE"

The Rules of Golf for fairway and rough. Johnny Farrell, the 1928 U. S. Open Champion, acts as intermediary between Wilbur Mulligan, a beginner of unimpeachable integrity, and Joshua P. Slye, a past master in the art of breaking the Rules. Filmed at Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N. J.

16½ minutes

"ON THE GREEN"

The Rules governing situations on the putting green. Photographed at the Mid-Ocean Club, Bermuda.

17 minutes

Entertainment, History, Travel

"GREAT MOMENTS IN GOLF"

Eight Champions are seen with the many interesting exhibits in "Golf House," home of the USGA Golf Museum and Library, and in flashbacks of their playing days. Robert T. Jones, Jr., during his "Grand Slam" . . . Ben Hogan . . . Francis Ouimet . . . Gene Sarazen . . . Charles Evans, Jr. . . . Findlay S. Douglas . . . Mrs. Glenna Collett Vare . . . Miss Margaret Curtis. Black and white.

28 minutes

"WALKER CUP HIGHLIGHTS"

Historic events in golf's oldest team competition between Great Britain and the United States. Robert T. Jones, Jr., Francis Ouimet and

other great players are shown. First half, black and white; second half, beautiful color sequences of the 1959 Match at Muirfield, Scotland.

16 minutes

"FIRST WORLD AMATEUR TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP FOR EISENHOWER TROPHY"

Twenty-nine countries compete in golf's newest major event at St. Andrews, Scotland. Climaxed by play-off in which Australia defeats the United States to become the first winner of the Eisenhower Trophy.

14 minutes

"SECOND WORLD AMATEUR TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP FOR EISENHOWER TROPHY"

International friendships are furthered as 32 countries play at the Merion Golf Club, near Philadelphia. The United States is the winner, paced by remarkable play by Jack Nicklaus. American and the Australian teams at the White House.

17 minutes

"GOLF'S LONGEST HOUR"

Cary Middlecoff sets a target at which Ben Hogan, Julius Boros and Ted Kroll aim in vain, as Dr. Middlecoff wins the 1956 U. S. Open Championship at Oak Hill Country Club, Rochester, N. Y.

17½ minutes

"ST. ANDREWS, CRADLE OF GOLF"

Beautiful scenes of the historic town of St. Andrews in Scotland and its Old Course, with unusual interior scenes of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club. An award winner for 1959.

"FAMOUS GOLF COURSES: SCOTLAND"

Picturesque and famous holes on the great courses at Troon, Prestwick, Carnoustie, St. Andrews, North Berwick and Muirfield. The distinctive aspects of Scottish linksland are seen at their finest.

18 minutes