

The Tragedy of John Smith, Esq.

By RICHARD S. TUFTS

USGA SECRETARY AND CHAIRMAN OF GREEN SECTION COMMITTEE

It is a beautiful Saturday in September, and Mr. John Smith, Chairman of the Green Committee of the Fairway Country Club, has arrived at his club, full of anticipation for a day's relaxation and pleasure.

Mr. Smith has been afflicted with an unfortunate slice of late and he feels his enjoyment of the afternoon's sport would be greatly enhanced through the elimination of said slice by means of a half-hour lesson from Bill Jones, the club professional.

Bill prescribes a firmer use of the left arm and Mr. Smith repairs to the grill for lunch, full of confidence that all is now well with his game. His happy progress is slightly checked by picking up a soiled plate for the buffet, but he has the satisfaction of telling the Chairman of the House Committee that he had better replace that dish machine the club bought four years ago.

It seems cruel to report that after such thorough and cheerful preparation, Mr. Smith did not enjoy his afternoon of golf. In spite of supreme confidence in the stiff-left-arm procedure and an adherence to it that almost resulted in a sprained wrist, Mr. Smith's slice was as active as ever.

A Bad Lie

But it was not the slice that Mr. Smith held responsible for the loss of three bucks and an afternoon's pleasure. On the fifteenth hole Mr. Smith's drive, which by great good fortune had terminated in the fairway, actually came to rest in a bad lie. This, aside from costing Mr. Smith the match, was, you will realize, a very awkward situation for the Chairman of the Green Committee.

Therefore Mr. Smith called Golf Course Superintendent Charlie Brown on the telephone and expressed a very low opinion of poor Charlie's education, in-



Richard S. Tufts

dustriousness, and acceptance of his responsibilities.

It did not occur to Mr. Smith that Charlie's request for an extra application of fertilizer on this particular fairway had been arbitrarily rejected by himself as Chairman of the Green Committee. Nor did it occur to Mr. Smith that in his thorough preparation for the enjoyment of his golf, he had neglected Charlie Brown's frequent requests to spend a few hours with him on the course. The judgment of the club professional could be law to Mr. Smith, but his superintendent's opinion he held in very low esteem. It was easy to understand that a four-year-old dish machine could not be repaired; but, of course, a fertilizer spreader should be expected to last twenty years if second-hand, longer if new.

In all fairness to Mr. Smith, we must confess that he was serving his first year as Green Committee Chairman and had not wanted the job, anyhow. However, it was customary to rotate committee assignments around in the Fairway Country Club, and it had been the feeling

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able lie and I have to take it out for a penalty of two strokes and then putt it into the hole.' We sent a description of the incident to the USGA and my ruling was upheld."

Mr. Kennedy beamed, a somewhat chronic condition.

"I liked that better than an ordinary hole-in-one," he said pleasedly.

At Indian Run, near Grand Rapids, Mich., as he addressed his ball on a 110-yard hole, he proclaimed: "Have any of you fellows ever seen a hole-in-one? If not, stand back and watch."

He thereupon knocked the ball into the hole.

Mr. Kennedy was introduced to golf in 1910 by a neighbor whose brother had been a college mate at Amherst. Against his wishes he was persuaded to go up and play Van Cortlandt Park.

"I got around in 146," he said. "After that I played there quite often. It was a fine course in those days and it didn't cost you a cent to play it. I became fascinated by the game."

Mr. Kennedy has played golf ever since. He introduced Mrs. Kennedy to it the very next week. She has played more than 600 courses, and was several times champion of Dunwoodie, the club at Yonkers where they used to play.

How It Started

Charles Fletcher, an English music hall actor, started Mr. Kennedy on his hobby of collecting courses. He heard Fletcher saying that he held the world record with 240 in 1919. Mr. Kennedy reflected that he had played quite a few courses himself and had attested cards to show for them. He dug them up and discovered they represented 176 different layouts.

From that point, he really went in for variety. He passed Fletcher a few years later at 445. He played his 1,000th course on his 50th birthday in 1932; his 2,000th in 1940; his 2,500th was Pebble Beach in 1946, and in September this year he made it 3,000.

Mr. Kennedy's record is completely authenticated, for he always made it a point to have his card at every course

dated and attested by an official of the club. He has this collection of cards in a safe deposit box. He intends to present the St. Andrews card for his 3,000th course to the USGA.

Mr. Kennedy finds a pronounced difference in architecture between courses in the United States and Great Britain.

"Over here, our courses are comparatively easy until we are within 75 to 100 yards of the greens," he said. "Then they are severely trapped and it takes a well-played shot to get home. The British courses are terrific until you are within about the same distance of the green. Then they are relatively easy; you can roll the ball up to the pin."

No matter how many courses he sees, however, he remains loyal to Winged Foot.

"I don't know any course less taxing for the man of advancing age," he explained. "There are no hills to climb. Yet, nobody ever murders our par."



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that even though the former chairman of the committee had done an excellent job and was willing to continue to serve, it was more efficient to follow the well-established policy of making frequent changes.

Fortunately, Mr. Smith's Saturday at the Fairway Country Club is not typical of what happens at the majority of clubs; unfortunately, however, it is no more than a slight exaggeration of the conditions that exist in many. And the lesson, which save for the sake of emphasis could have been expressed in far fewer words, is simply this:

No club can afford to neglect its golf course superintendent. His is a hard job requiring considerable technical knowledge and a wide variety of skills. Support him with the best equipment and all the supplies that the club can afford. Back him up with a strong chairman, and if they make a strong team, don't change horses. Under such a policy, Mr. Smith and his fellow-members will find far greater enjoyment in their play.