

PUTTING THE GOLF BEFORE THE CART

by

JOSEPH C. DEY, Jr.

USGA Executive Director

"CADDIE WILLIE" plied his trade at the Bruntsfield links in Edinburgh, Scotland, in the early 1800s. He carried his wardrobe on his back, wearing several suits of clothing at a time, with a golfer's old red coat outermost. He lived in a garret, never had a fire, subsisted entirely on cold milk and bread, paid his rent regularly, was very honest, and served the golfers well.

There was a caddie.

If the ghost of "Caddie Willie" could look in upon the doings on some American golf courses today, he might wonder whether it was he or golf who had expired.

He must at least be twisting a bit in his grave if he is aware of the modern development of striking a ball with a golf club, climbing into a little motorized cart or buggy, riding a couple of hundred comfortable yards, disembarking and playing another stroke, then climbing back into the conveyance for another ride.

If automotive golf were carried to its logical conclusion, we'd all wind up sitting on the clubhouse porch and firing all our shots out of a rifle—or so says J. Wood Platt, a leading Philadelphia amateur and official. Automotive golf might in turn be succeeded by pushbutton golf.

The subject of mechanized transportation for playing golf has evoked deep soul-searching by club boards throughout the land. It is a subject which must be dealt with, regardless of one's personal preferences.

A primary question is whether golf is golf when you don't navigate under your own steam. Most golfers we have sounded out informally feel that mechanical transportation should not be permitted except when a doctor certifies it is advisable for an individual.

A member of the USGA staff expressed his personal opinion as follows:

"I believe that golf is a great sport, and part of the game involves walking. If players physically capable of walking nine and 18 holes find it too tiresome, they shouldn't change the game; they should change their sport."

No Carts in USGA Events

The USGA does not permit the use of automotive transport in its competitions. The official position of the USGA is given in the following Rules of Golf decision:

USGA 54-32

Rule 36-7

Q.1: Do the Rules of Golf prohibit a player from using automotive transportation?

A.1: No. It is, however, contrary to the custom of the game.

Q.2: If a Committee wishes to prohibit the use of automotive transportation, how may it be done?

A.2: The Committee must adopt a regulation and announce it in advance. The USGA does this for USGA competitions.

Q.3: If the Committee has not adopted a regulation and if a player uses automotive transportation, does his opponent have any right of protest under the Rules of Golf?

A.3: No.

A point of view which deserves sincere attention was expressed by Thomas M. Quinn, of Long Island City, N. Y., in the following message to the periodical "Golf World":

"I have been a devotee of golf for 30 years. In recent years I have been suffering from a heart condition, and despite a fairly good recovery I have been ordered by my physician to limit my game to nine holes. This, with the medicine prescribed, is a bitter pill.