

TURNING BACK THE CLOCK ON USGA WORK FOR GOLF

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There's always danger in looking backward. You may become so enchanted with where you've come from that you forget where you're headed for. All of us sometimes sigh for "the good old days," and that can keep us from taking deep breaths in the fresh air of the present.

But a view of history can be profitable. There is real value in stock-taking, in recalling what was good and useful, and what was not, with a view to handling the future properly.

Let's first take a look at the USGA's past through some rather distorted glasses—by imagining what might be the case today if the USGA had been radically different or if there had never been a USGA. Let's do this by looking in on one hole of an imaginary round in the National Open Championship involving Jack and Gene (any resemblance to Jack Nicklaus or Gene Littler is purely coincidental).

Jack arrives at the first tee in his midget helicopter. He pulls out a gauge that tells him he should allow for a 5-degree wind drift from the right. He tees his ball—it is 1.5 inches in diameter—and he drives 396 yards down the fairway (the hole was recently lengthened from 550 to 635 yards because the boys had been reaching the green with wedge seconds).

"Nice shot," says Gene. "By the way, I'm playing 18 clubs today."

"I've got 20," Jack answers. "Our company is just bringing out a new 9¾ iron, and I want to use it in the Open so it'll be known when I defend my National Amateur Championship next month. I'll get a 10% royalty on each one. The other amateurs will go for it strong, especially if I win the National Amateur again."

Gene drives 15 yards short of Jack.

"Those new built-in gyroscopes in this ball surely keep it on line, don't they?" he remarks. He plays a medium iron whose shaft is attached to the head right in the middle, behind the sweet spot—"Gives more power and reduces torque," he explains, as the ball sits down four feet from the cup.

Jack, in the fairway, picks up his ball and places it on a little tuft of grass. "I hate cuppy lies," he says. He plays the new club, and the ball does a little jig before snuggling down two feet from the hole.

As Jack gets out of his midget helicopter at the parking space alongside the green, he finds Gene moaning: "I'd understood that the cups were going to be 10 inches wide. They look to be only about 7 inches to me."

Jack explains: "They are 10 inches on the back nine. Most clubs around here have 9 or 10-inch cups on the back nine and 7-inchers on the first nine, but there's no real rule about it."

And so on . . .

If that seems a fantastic account of what golf might have been today, let's look at some of the influences which have made the game what it actually is. The entire history of the USGA is directly related to those influences.

The principal purpose of the USGA is simply this: to promote and to conserve "the best interests and the true spirit of the game of golf"—so says the USGA Constitution.

You can best tell history by recounting actions. The USGA's actions occur in a wide variety of fields. Let's confine this sketchy discussion to three broad fields:

- First, Competitions
- Second, General Services
- Third, Regulations

COMPETITIONS

A mix-up involving championships was the direct reason for the creation of the USGA. In 1894, before there was a USGA, two different clubs in the East each held what purported to be the Amateur Championship of the United States. They were the Newport Golf Club in Rhode Island and the St. Andrew's Golf Club of Yonkers, N. Y. W. G. Lawrence won at Newport in September, with a score of 188 for 36 holes stroke play—8 over even 5s. In October, L. B. Stoddard won at St. Andrews, at match play. Here there were two so-called National Amateur Champions.

To avoid such an embarrassing condition thereafter, Henry O. Tallmadge, Secretary of the St. Andrew's Club, conceived the idea of a national association of clubs to establish uniform rules and to conduct future championships. He invited representatives of five clubs to a dinner in New York on December 22, 1894. (Some 20 clubs were then in existence.) Those five clubs formed the Amateur Golf Association of the United States. The name was soon changed, first to American Golf Association and finally to United States Golf Association. The five clubs thus banded together were:

Newport Golf Club, Newport, R. I.

Shinnecock Hills Golf Club,
Southampton, N. Y.

The Country Club, Brookline, Mass.
St. Andrew's Golf Club,

Yonkers-on-Hudson, N. Y.

Chicago Golf Club, Chicago, Ill.

Some early Committee meetings were held just two blocks from the present location of the USGA's "Golf House," in the New York home of the USGA's first President, Theodore A. Havemeyer.

The first USGA Championships were conducted at Newport in 1895. Originally scheduled for September, they were postponed to the first week of October on account of the America's Cup yacht races.

Thirty-two players started in the Amateur Championship, entirely at match play, and the winner was Charles B. Macdonald, a Chicago Scotsman. One player, Richard Peters, carried a billiard cue and putted with it, in all seriousness. He went out in the first round before the more righteous play of a clergyman, the Rev. William Rainsford.

From a newspaper point of view, the social aspects of the Championship were perhaps more important than the golf, for the New York Herald published these thrilling accounts:

"At three o'clock society began to appear and fully 100 of the spectators were soon tramping over the hills. It was a bright scene; the ladies in their silks and the men in their red golfing coats made a scene of color seldom witnessed in outdoor sports. The game of the morning was C. B. Macdonald, the probable champion, against Laurence Curtis. The latter was not in any way in the game with Macdonald, for he has a low short drive compared to a long well directed drive of his opponent . . ."

A bit later:

"The sun was well down in the western horizon and the moon had risen high in the heavens when it was announced at the pretty little clubhouse that the National Amateur Championship had narrowed down to a contest between New York and Chicago."

The first U. S. Open was played the day after the Amateur ended, also at Newport. It was at 36 holes, and the winner was the 19-year-old assistant pro at Newport, Horace Rawlins, still the youngest Champion in Open history. He scored 91-82—173 for the two rounds in a day—7 under even 5s. Ten professionals and one amateur competed. Horace Rawlins' prizes were a \$50 gold medal and \$150 cash.

In November of the same year—1895—the USGA held its first women's championship at Meadowbrook on Long Island. The winner, Mrs. Charles Brown, had 69 before lunch and 63 after lunch, and her 18-hole score of 132 made her the Champion.

Thus, with the Amateur, the Open and the Women's Championships, the USGA was fully launched.

Rapid Growth

The game grew rapidly. In 1895 there were some 75 clubs in the United States; in 1900 there were more than 1,000.

An early first was recorded in the 1896 Open when a 16-year-old colored caddie competed.

Much of the history of the Championships can be seen through the records of the great players. One of the early greats

was Willie Anderson, whose record of winning four Open Championships from 1901 through 1905 has never been beaten, though twice tied. Johnny McDermott, who could pitch a mashie shot onto a handkerchief, was the first American homebred to win the Open, in 1911. Walter J. Travis and Jerome D. Travers had become leading amateurs.

Then, in 1913, came the bombshell that literally put golf on page 1 in America. A 20-year-old amateur, a former caddie, Francis Ouimet, defeated the great British professionals, Harry Vardon and Ted Ray, in a play-off for the Open Championship, and thus became the first amateur to win the Open. This did worlds toward popularizing the game.

Amateurs won two of the next three Opens: Charles Evans in 1916 won both the Open and the Amateur.

In 1917-18, because the nation was at war, the USGA did not conduct championships. When they were resumed in 1919 Walter Hagen ended the streak of the amateurs. Three years later Gene Sarazen, 20 years old, burst upon the scene and won the Open.

The Bob Jones Era

The year of Sarazen's first victory, 1922, was notable for several golfing events. The Walker Cup Match came into being, between British and American amateur teams. The USGA started the National Amateur Public Links Championship. In 1922 for the first time, admission fees were charged to spectators at the Open. This resulted partly from the need for controlling curiosity seekers at the Amateur the previous year.

The next year, 1923, brought Bob Jones his first national title, the Open. When he retired at age 28 at the end of 1930, he had won 13 national Championships in Great Britain and the United States, crowned by his Grand Slam of the British and the American Opens and Amateurs—all four of them—in the same year. Seven of Jones' 13 Championships were Opens—three in Britain and four here. His skill is pointed up most sharply by the fact that in eight out of nine straight United States Opens he was first or second—he won four and was runner-up in four. And he retired at age 28.

By the time of the 1924 Open there had been such growth in interest that

the elements of sectional qualifying were introduced. First there were just two try-outs—one in Worcester, Mass., and one in Oak Park, Ill. In 1925 there were three—East, Mid-West and Pacific Coast. The next year 17 sectional qualifying rounds were held, and the system was firmly established. Entries for the Open that year zoomed to a record of 694.

Women's golf of that period had its greatest champion, Glenna Collett Vare, who won the National six times. The Curtis Cup Match for British and American ladies was started in 1932.

After World War II the USGA doubled its competitive program by adding a boys' Junior Amateur Championship, a Girls' Junior, a Women's Open and a Senior Amateur (besides, a Women's Senior Amateur will soon be started). The international match program also was doubled—besides the Walker Cup and the Curtis Cup we now have the Americas Cup, involving amateurs of Canada, Mexico and the United States, and the Eisenhower Trophy for the World Amateur Team Championship. The USGA was instrumental in starting the World Championship three years ago. Now 43 countries belong to the World Amateur Golf Council, which sponsors the Championship.

In the post-war Opens, the central figure has been Ben Hogan. He was to this era what Francis Ouimet, Walter Hagen, Gene Sarazen and Bob Jones were to their day. Ben Hogan tied the record of Jones and Willie Anderson by winning four United States Opens. He was twice runner-up. His victories were triumphs not only of golf but of the spirit, after his nearly fatal motor accident before he won his second Open. In the same period Sam Snead won everything but the Open.

It is arresting to compare the scope of championship golf today with the beginnings in 1895. From 11 entries in the first Open, last year there were 2,449. From \$150 prize money for the winner, last year it was \$14,000; and there was a prize money total of \$60,500 in last year's Championship proper plus \$7,800 in Sectional Qualifying events—a grand total of \$68,300 in prize money for the Open. (In 1962 the total will be \$77,800.) From a handful of spectators, last year at Oakland Hills there were by actual

count 20,439 on final last day. From 5 member clubs the USGA now has 2,548.

This year for the eight USGA Championships there was a grand total of 230 sectional qualifying competitions and entries of 9,480—all-time records.

GENERAL SERVICES

A second main category of USGA work is General Services. For so-called glamour and popular appeal, they stand at the opposite pole from the competitions. For their usefulness to golf, their value cannot be calculated.

In all the history of the USGA, one of the most constructive steps was establishment of the USGA Green Section in 1920. At that time there was no impartial scientific agency to which clubs could turn for information and advice about golf course maintenance. The clubs were at the mercy of ignorance and quackery. The USGA enlisted the co-operation of the United States Department of Agriculture and created the Green Section.

Today, there are five USGA Green Section offices, in California, Texas, Illinois, Georgia and New Jersey. Eight USGA agronomists devote themselves to assisting USGA Member Clubs, principally through personal advisory visits to golf courses. In addition, the Green Section sponsors research, which is helped considerably by funds from National Golf Day tournaments conducted by the PGA.

In the 41 years of its existence, the Green Section has invested some \$1,600,000 in improving the maintenance of golf courses.

An important part of the USGA's functions is provision of information on almost all phases of golf. To supplement correspondence, press releases and the like, the USGA JOURNAL was started in 1948. It contains much official news and background of the USGA including decisions on the Rules of Golf and handicapping and a section on Turf Management.

Ten motion pictures, of both educational and entertainment nature, have been produced by the USGA in the last seven years.

In the early 30s the late George Blossom, of Chicago, thought the Association should preserve visible evidences of golf development, so he proposed a Golf Mu-

seum and Library. It was instituted in 1936 and outgrew its quarters rather rapidly. This resulted in the acquisition in 1950 of a modest five-story dwelling in midtown New York, now "Golf House." The Library is constantly used for references by writers and others in public information work, as well as by plain golf addicts, such as a frequent visitor who spends many lunch hours poring over books on how to putt.

"Golf House" has become a symbol of American golf to many foreign visitors. We have a rather surprising range of international correspondence. In one recent week we dealt with such matters as motion pictures for South Africa, turfgrass for Mexico, letters of introduction for an American in Italy, a Rules decision for Japan, championship information for England, and arrangements for a young European to play golf in New York.

The USGA has been involved in such widely diverse enterprises as conducting an educational campaign against organized gambling in golf and seeking a reduction in the Federal tax on club dues.

With 2,548 member clubs, the scope of the Association's General Services is rather broad.

REGULATIONS

The USGA's third principal work for golf is in regulations—making and interpreting rules for amateur status, for implements and the ball, for handicapping, and for the play of the game. This is perhaps the most distinctive work which the golf clubs of the country perform through their national Association.

Amateur Status

From the beginning, amateur status has been a deep concern of the USGA. If you think the present code is strict, read the rule that applied in the first Championship in 1895:

"An Amateur Golfer shall be a Golfer who has never made for sale golf clubs, balls, or any other article connected with the game, who has never carried clubs for hire after attaining the age of 15 years, and who has not carried clubs for hire at any time within six years of the date on which the competition begins, who has never received any consideration for playing in a match, or for giving lessons in the game, and who, for a period of five years prior to the first of

September, 1890, has never received a money prize in any open competition."

Amateur Status Code

Down through the years the details have changed, but fundamentally the code has always drawn a sharp line between the amateur and the non-amateur or the professional.

It may seem a paradox but, also from the very beginning, the amateur and the professional have competed together in open tournaments without so-called contamination of each other's status—a condition almost non-existent elsewhere in sports. But this open, wholesome relation between amateur and professional is actually part of the reason why amateurism in golf has been generally healthy and not sickened and vitiated by shamateurism.

Of course, golf is not lily-white. But a sincere effort is made to carry out the amateur ideal.

There were problems of amateurism even in the early days. In 1901 Walter Travis was accused by a magazine of violating the rules by accepting free golf and board at Southern resort hotels in exchange for the advertising value of his presence. He was cleared. Later, golf course architects as a class were declared non-amateurs, although this was soon seen to be a mistake and was changed. Over the years several Amateur Championships—popular people—have been deprived of amateur status. Just last fall the USGA looked into the status of a recent National Amateur Champion; he was cleared. Historically, the Association has not hesitated to act in this sphere when there was reason to do so.

One result of such a policy is reflected in a telegram we received from a lady who said:

"Our women's golf association has just become aware of your disapproval of pari-mutuel betting. Our low handicap golfers are awaiting your approval of our 25-cent bets which we hold once a month during the summer. Please wire your answer."

Although this is an extreme case, it reflects something basic. In these days of commercialized sport, the amateurism of golf is conspicuous. But it has always been so. Why?

One reason is that golf is distinctively different because it is a lifetime game—you can make a match with your grandmother, through handicapping. It is not a game just for strong young people, as is true of many other popular sports. Therefore, golf takes a long-range view of amateurism. In the long run this is best for the **individual, for it helps sharpen his sense of values and obliges him to make a pretty clear-cut decision.**

At the heart of the amateur code is the rule prohibiting expenses generally. Its observance starts with the USGA Executive Committee members—they pay their own expenses to meetings and competitions, and do not receive any remuneration for their work.

If you doubt whether the expense rule in amateur golf is observed, consider this question: Of the 200 players in the National Amateur Championship at Pebble Beach last September, how many do you suppose played in the Championship the year before? You're probably wrong, whatever you say. Of the 200 at Pebble Beach, only 53 were at St. Louis in 1960. Of those same 53, only 23 were at Colorado Springs in 1959. In other words, in this whole big country, only 23 players have competed in all of the last three National Amateur Championships. This seems a healthy state of affairs.

It is a state of affairs in which all golfers are vitally concerned. What kind of a game do you want? Suppose the USGA long ago had given in to a loose policy regarding amateurism: What kind of a game would we have today? How would it affect you?

This is an area in which the USGA has been very consistent throughout its history. The professional has always helped the USGA to keep golf thus—a clean and honorable game, clean and honorable for both amateur and professional.

Implements and the Ball

If you would have a quick lesson in the history of the golf clubs and the golf ball, come to "Golf House." Exhibits there trace the developments from the days of the feather ball.

You'll see how the club evolved from a long, tapering head attached to a hickory shaft, laboriously hand-crafted, to the present machine-tooled precision instruments. You'll see an early steel

shaft—it was perforated, and whistled when swung. There is a model of the Schenectady putter, the almost center-shafted club with which Walter Travis won the British Amateur in 1904 and whose revolutionary concept has affected putters to the present day. You'll see Bob Jones' famous putter, "Calamity Jane."

There is a sort of chamber of illegal horrors—a club with a set of mirrors for lining up putts—several clubs with spirit levels in the head to show the tilt of the green—all sorts of directional gadgets attached to clubheads—screw-type heads for adjustability during play—a putter with a shaft attached at the toe—and a Rube Goldberg sort of contraption with an intricate angle-and-distance device, plus a directional pointer with a degree dial, and an adjustable clubhead.

Many golfers will remember the problems in the late 40s concerning markings on iron clubs.

Can you imagine what the game would be without controls on such things? It is all very noble for people to want to make golf easier, but without controls a different game might well arise from the ashes of golf.

The golf ball has long been a subject of USGA regulation. Many years ago, after the gutta percha ball had vanished and the rubber-cored ball was being constantly improved, it was foreseen that every course in the land could be put out of date if the distance qualities of the ball were not limited. This led to controls on size and weight.

USGA experimentation produced a "larger and lighter" or "balloon" ball in 1931—not less than 1.68 inches diameter and not more than 1.55 ounces weight. The next year the permissible weight was increased back to 1.62 ounces, but the minimum diameter was kept 1.68 inches. This is still the standard ball in the United States.

In 1942 a third specification—velocity of the ball immediately after the club's impact—was added to those of size and weight.

The Association is still deeply concerned about the ball. Of course, we all like to get as much distance as we can;

and it is apparent that there is more to distance than the ball's qualities—for example, club shafts are an important element. But the ball is an immediately controllable item, and so the USGA has three types of ball test machines. One was developed in recent years and measures a ball's coefficient of restitution, or its innate resilience. The USGA is presently working on the possibility of a new rule based on this factor.

Last season samples of 10 brands of ball did not conform with USGA specifications, for one reason or another. Fortunately, the manufacturers have all since cooperated and the balls now conform, according to the last tests.

Our British friends are now extensively testing the American size ball, and it is possible that they may abandon the small ball of 1.62 inches minimum diameter and permit only the American size of 1.68 inches minimum diameter.

Handicapping

Handicapping has been a major work of the USGA in the field of regulations. Proper handicapping is at the heart of enjoyment of the game for the rank and file of players.

In the first decade of this century a member of the USGA Executive Committee, Leighton Calkins, developed a handicap system that was the standard for many years.

Later, the USGA borrowed the idea of course rating from the Massachusetts Golf Association—this is a method of rating a hole in decimals, rather than in a round number, as used for par, and it gives a more refined base for computing handicaps.

Now, with course rating and use of the best 10 of the last 25 scores, there exists a national handicap system that produces equitable results no matter where scores are made or how far afield the golfer roams.

Rules of Golf

Finally, as to the Rules of Golf:

In the first Year Book of the USGA, in 1895, there is the following items under the heading "Etiquette of Golf":

"Players who have holed out should not try their putts over again when other players are following them."

"A player should not putt at the hole when the flag is in it."

With the gutta percha ball then in use in the 90s, there was a problem we don't have today, as evidenced by this old Rule:

"If a ball split into separate pieces, another ball may be put down where the largest portion lies, and if two pieces are apparently of equal size, it may be put where either piece lies, at the option of the player."

Among the special rules for medal play was this little gem:

"The penalty for a breach of any Rule shall be disqualification."

Down the years, the course of Rules-making has not been a path of roses. Wars have broken out over such matters as the stymie; in fact, in the early 1920s, feelings about the stymie ran so high that they almost led to formation of a second national association. Even now, brother may fight brother over the momentous question of the penalty for a ball out of bounds. Some golfers take their Rules seriously.

There was a case a year or so ago of two ladies who were so engrossed in conversation that they neglected to play two holes of the course, then wondered why their scores were so low. The question of what to do next almost became a Federal court case.

There was another lady who swung at a ball, whiffed it, discovered it was a wrong ball, and was astounded to learn that she was penalized two strokes—and the ball had not progressed an inch.

The USGA has the Rules under constant daily study. Hundreds of questions are received every year, and a surprising number are new. Some of them lead to changes in the Rules.

Method of Changing Rules

How are changes made?

First, a flaw or a gap in the Rules may be revealed through a new question for a decision, or through a suggestion made by an individual golfer or a USGA Member Club or one of the several hundred golf associations in the United States. The USGA Rules of Golf Committee studies each new matter, first by correspondence and then at meetings. This results in a recommendation to the USGA Executive Committee.

The next step is to transmit the Executive Committee's decision to our

British friends of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews for consideration at the USGA's next joint conference with them. The British likewise send us their suggestions for changes. It has become customary to have a joint conference every four years since the present code was adopted in 1951. The conference then produces final recommendations. They are referred back for final action to the USGA Executive Committee, on the one hand, and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club membership, on the other hand.

Before the last joint meeting with the British in 1959, the USGA Negotiating Committee had a special meeting with three PGA representatives — Harold Sargent, then PGA President; Tom Crane and Harvey Raynor. Valuable comments were received, and some were incorporated in the Rules. It has become a practice for PGA representatives to meet with the USGA at least once a year to discuss the Rules.

The process of amending Rules is tedious, but that very process tends to insure that the final product is pretty well tested. Even so, slips do occur. But two things are worth remembering:

First, the Rules of golf are a living code, the evolutionary product of long experience; quick isolated changes can be dangerous, for the Rules are closely dove-tailed.

Second, for all the changes of detail which the Rules of Golf have undergone, the game is fundamentally the same glorious sport it has always been.

Nourishing the Spirit of Golf

From these very sketchy notes on USGA history, perhaps you have caught the idea that practically all of the USGA's work centers in just one thing—the nourishing of the wonderful spirit of golf.

In this work, the professional golfer has played a significant part. On the firing line at his club, or on the tournament circuit, day by day he unconsciously exerts an influence in ways far beyond the matter of swinging a club.

And now that we have had our look backward, it would be appropriate to ask ourselves one question as we look forward: "What sort of history are we writing today?"