

Super-Golf Among American Players

Professionals and Leading Amateurs Attain Perfection on Many Greens
Even the Casual Competitor Sometimes Gets a Record



Eddie Loos.



Bobby Jones.



Jock Hutchinson.

the exact number of strokes required and sinking his ball in par figures.

He drove well off the tee and over the little gully to a position close to the sloping green. With a mashie he pitched to the hazardous, hardened green and watched his ball come to a stop thirty feet from the cup. His approach putt rolled with just the proper momentum within six inches of the hole and stopped dead. The Justice smiled, patted his putter affectionately, and walked up to the ball to finish the perfect play by dropping the ball into the cup. He had measured up to the highest test, had reached perfection at that hole. What matter if he never missed a bunker or avoided a sand pit thereafter in the round? He knew his day was a success. He would remember that tenth hole with a personal pride. He was assured of a nineteenth-hole topic which might become irksome to some listeners, but never distasteful to the teller. Justice Pitney had proved that he could play perfect golf.

Since perfection—and even super-golf—is within reaching distance of players whose handicap is as great as, or possibly greater than, that of the eminent Supreme Court Justice, the astonishing performances supplied on the links during the last few weeks by men prominent in the professional and amateur ranks must be explainable.

James Barnes—Long Jim of Whitemarsh Valley—established a new 72-hole competitive record of 282 strokes in the recent Western Golf Association open championship. He made four rounds of

need to bow to that of any country. We have developed super-players on our links even without such courses as abound along the west coast of Scotland. We have several courses that compare favorably with most of the British links. On none is the turf equal to that along the Firth of Tay and Firth of Forth, but without turf we still have found a quality of play abundant with sterling results and ranking experts. Improvement of American courses has had a lot to do with the betterment of the American game. Such ideal tests of the sport as are provided at Baltusrol, Garden City, the National Links, Myopia, Merion, Braeburn, Wheaton, and Oakmont are bound to increase the ability of exponents of the sport.

It is an axiom among golfers that good courses make good golf. Sometimes a liberal expenditure of money will provide a good course, but not always. At any rate, American sportsmen have not placed much of a check on their bank rolls to bring about good golfing conditions. That the ever increasing number of links of championship rating, or links of 6,200 yards or more in length, has developed the American game to its present high standard must be admitted.

Many of the professionals of this country came from the Dundee section of Scotland, where a golf course is considered indispensable to the existence of the people. Along the foreshore and around the Firth to the Fifeshire coast, practically every foot of the shore line has been claimed for golf. Every village boy learns the talk of golf in his cradle, and as soon as he is old enough he takes to the links. It is no wonder that Great Britain has had the call on golf up to the present.

Recently a Scottish journalist was comparing American golf with that of his native land, and he was firm in his belief that America now had players of enough ability to invade England and take down the British amateur as well as the British open title. He opined that American golf as portrayed by Chick Evans, Francis Ouimet, Jerome D. Travers, Jock Hutchinson, Walter B. Hugen, and James Barnes need not ask for any handicap from the best Britain can offer.

"Give me plenty of money and full sway as to my selection of American golfers, and I promise to lift both British championships within three years," said he. "If I could take Ouimet, Evans, and Travers to England with the intention of winning the British all-comers amateur title and with the knowledge that if we failed this year we could come back the next, the mental attitude of the players would be vastly different from what it was on the last occasion the three entered the British amateur event. When Evans, Ouimet, and Travers journeyed to England the last time they were not in the best condition. They tried to do too much in a short time. The consequence was that each was eliminated in the early rounds. England has a lot of good amateurs, but none better than the trio of American leaders.

"My opinion is that America is rapidly gaining the upper hand in golf, and more through the constant improvement of the course than through the competitive play."

It is certain that there has been a vast improvement in the professional game in this country. Many of the amateurs, too, have developed rapidly. Probably Eddie Loos, the young professional of the Philadelphia Country Club, has climbed to the front rank more quickly than any other man. He was a caddie at Van Cortlandt Park before entering the ranks of instructors. At the Shawnee

eighteen holes in one stroke better than 71 for each round. He had a 67 for the first eighteen holes of this round, which supplied another record for Chicago enthusiasts to gasp at. He led a field of the finest artisans of the links and in doing so played super-golf. Barnes was a good golfer when he came from England to this country. He grew up on the links, learned to erase the faults of lost motion, dug deep into the knowledge of pitch and putt until he knew just what should be done and how to do it. During his years in America he has been on or near a course almost every daylight minute of the time. He practices daily. And best of all, he is quartered at one of America's sportiest courses, Whitemarsh Valley. He can be expected to play perfectly any time he starts around a course, and in fact it is unusual if he does not.

Every course in this or any other country is laid out similarly. That is, there are certain hazards placed between tee and cup. Only these obstacles can prevent perfect play. It is possible to learn the difficulties of every course and also to know where to play to and where not to play a ball. All details must be mastered, but they can be mastered. Once they are acquired, perfect golf results. Barnes is often perfect. Others are perfect only occasionally—perhaps only once in many years. But everybody has his chance. That's the fascination of the game.

American golf, just at present, does not

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open a few weeks ago. Loos led a field in which every professional of worth was entered. He did not play record golf, but he was perfect for 72 holes, which was enough to beat the field. At the national patriotic open tournament, held at White-marsh Valley a few months ago, Loos and Hutchinson were paired to play in the final eighteen holes, and, of course, attracted the gallery. Both had done exceptionally well for 54 holes, and headed for home on the final round, each with a chance to win the tournament. For seventeen holes they played at even 4s and drove for the eighteenth on exactly even terms. Loos was unfortunate in getting into a pit which guards the sloping eighteenth green, and, although his pitch out was remarkably accurate, he missed the putt for his 4 and had to be content with a 73 for the round. Hutchinson got his 4, and incidentally won the tournament, with 292 for the four trips around the course.

Hutchinson and Loos have made General Par and Colonel Bogey unhappy for the greater part of the year. They have displayed a brand of golf consistently

better than any others, and both in a way are American products of the links. Hutchinson was born in Scotland, but he learned the art of golf right here.

Outside of a few younger players, the American amateur game has not improved a great deal this Summer. Most observers believe that the lack of tournament competition can be blamed for this. Bobby Jones, the youthful Atlantan, who acquired the Southern amateur championship during the Summer, probably established himself as the most improved amateur. His game during the Professional Golfers' Association team matches stood out. He met and defeated on even terms Fred McLeod of Columbia, former national champion; Emmett French of York, and Cyril Walker of Shackamaxon, three professionals who have been near the top in America for some time. Jones, of course, made his big bid for fame last year, when he astonished a lot of experts in the national championship at Merion, but he never achieved such greatness as over the Baltusrol, Siwanoy, and Garden City courses during the team matches.

Had not the war prevented the national amateur championship, which was to

have been played at Oakmont in August, there would have been an assemblage of young golfers who would have awakened the golfing enthusiasm of the country. Besides Jones, Atlanta has three other youngsters who can get from tee to cup with an uncanny lack of waste strokes. Perry Adair, Dick Hickey, and Tom Prescott are not more than one stroke behind Jones in ability, and not one of them is 21 yet. Atlanta has been most fortunate in developing an interest in golf among its younger generation. Several of the residents of the Georgia city came to this country from Scotland, and they brought their Scottish love for golf with them. The result was the erection of several good courses and the advancement to the front ranks of the four boys mentioned, as well as of Miss Alexa Stirling, this year's woman champion.

American golf is improving and becoming a more popular sport every day. Courses are being built for public, semi-public, and private uses. The game already has lost its exclusiveness, and is daily attracting the bulk of the people. Maybe that is one of the reasons why such remarkable improvement in the play is being noted.

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