

EMMET TAKES ISSUE

WITH U. S. G. A. RULE

Attacks Golf-Architect Provision and Draws Reply from Member of the Old Guard.

Devereux Emmet of the National Golf Links of America, winner of the Father and Son tournament at Sleepy Hollow last year with Devereux Emmet, Jr., as his partner, and a course architect, has written in Golf Illustrated a strong attack on the U. S. G. A. ruling that hereafter golf architects shall be debarred as amateurs in competitions. Devereux Emmet does lay out golf courses, and is even at present engaged in such work in the Metropolitan district, but it is considered doubtful whether he will come under the ban of the U. S. G. A. for his activities in this line.

If he were to be debarred it would be under the same section that bars out Francis Ouimet and Walter J. Travis—"engaging in any business connected with the game of golf wherein one's usefulness or profits arise because of skill or prominence in the game of golf." It is pointed out by several men who are in a position to know what was meant when that section was revised recently that only those who capitalize their fame will be banned under the present rule. Devereux Emmet, it is pointed out, never attained a high degree of skill as a player, certainly not to an extent that would place him in the same category with former national and international champions.

However, although it is admitted by unprejudiced golfers that he is not writing to defend his own position, it is still maintained by the defenders of the U. S. G. A. ruling that he is a biased critic. He says in the article that he considers himself an amateur golfer who has suddenly, and without warning, been declared a professional. He holds that golf courses must of necessity be planned and constructed by men of education and imagination. He further affirms that the majority of mistakes in course construction have been made by golf committees assisted by professionals. Lastly, he thinks that a new rule should be framed which would allow those who are amateurs in spirit to compete in amateur competition even although they engage in some business which is connected with the game of golf. He cites the case of Ouimet as an instance of the unjust working of the present amateur rule.

One of the "Old Guard," as the U. S. G. A. defenders are called, thus answers Emmet:

It is true that a golf course must be constructed or planned by a man of education and imagination if it is to be a real test of skill on the links, but that does not of necessity bar either amateurs or professionals from laying out courses. A professional may possess both these essential qualifications. An amateur who has them, combined with the ability to apply both his education and his imagination in the proper way, may still lay out golf courses provided he follows the example of Charles Blair Macdonald and takes no money for his services. That is the finest kind of amateurism, demanding not only disinterestedness, but even sacrifice.

Mr. Emmet asserts that a golf course architect is just as much an essential as a building architect in the raising of a skyscraper, but does he forget that the man who designs the skyscraper is a professional architect? Certainly he would not be allowed to compete in an architectural competition for an amateur prize. He would doubtless be insulted if the permission were granted him. No amateur golfer should seek or accept any monetary consideration for any time or trouble that he gives to the game of golf. If he is interested enough to spend time and money designing courses, he should no more expect to be paid for it than to receive a salary for the two hours that it takes him to play his eighteen holes in a friendly match. This talk of class distinction is foolish. A man must have a certain amount of money and leisure before he can play golf at all, even on a public course. An amateur is one who plays a game solely for the pleasure in it. An amateur course architect should be one who designs golf courses in the same spirit, for the pleasure he derives from the work. It may be that some golf course genius will be lost to the game through this ruling, but the case is entirely hypothetical and more a matter of economics than class distinction. Who knows how many geniuses have been kept from becoming great building architects through lack of means to pursue their vocation? The Executive Committee of the U. S. G. A. has drawn the line where it could. It seems to me that it is fair and just as far as any such fine distinction can be fair and just, and as such it should receive the unanimous support of all amateur golfers.

Incidentally, some of the professionals point out that if more in the course-designing line were required of them they would pay greater attention to that part of the business. If the golf committees and even many of the course architects could hear the comments on some of the holes and courses over which the professionals hold a port mortem debate, there would be a great deal of light cast upon a dark subject. It is often said that the finest golf-course architect in this country, if not in the world, is C. B. Macdonald. He is an amateur. But if a second and third choice were picked there would be at least one professional, if not two, chosen by the majority of votes. Many pros become so disgusted by the actions of the various greens committees that they become as communicative as a Little Neck clam when advice is asked of them. According to one of them, each succeeding greens committee merely fills up the holes dug by the preceding one and digs some more holes for future greens committees to fill up.

Apropos of golf architects and golf courses, it should be remembered that the finest course is the one that approaches nearest to natural conditions favorable for golf. If a course strikes a visitor as artificial, no matter how well constructed it may be, it is considered a failure by the real experts. An American golfer who had seen what money and engineering feats accomplished in this country toward the making of two golf courses where only one swamp was before played over one of the famous courses in Scotland. He was much disappointed. He admitted that it was a fine course, but he remarked to a friend that it seemed as if no one took any care of it, and the course just seemed to flourish as nature and the weather pleased. The Scotch Greens Committee took this as the highest compliment that the course had received during the whole season.

The North Jersey Country Club is out to increase its membership list. Last year three or four of the bottom holes became very soggy in the rainy season, and many members emigrated to higher and dryer clubs. Now, however, a drainage system has been installed at this point, and the course is much improved. It is not likely that the club will lack members for any considerable length of time, as the supply of links in the Metropolitan district is still equal to about half the demand for them.

President J. B. Coles Tappan of the Metropolitan Golf Association is in favor of two-day invitation tournaments, where the entrants will be grouped either into sixteens according to their handicaps or will play a qualifying round, with eight to qualify in each flight. Either method of conducting a tournament would bring it to an end in two days. It is probable that some Metropolitan clubs will make the experiment during the coming season, but while they are at it they might also adopt the suggestion of President Howard W. Parrin of the U. S. G. A. and hold the events at the beginning rather than at the end of the week. According to the U. S. G. A. leader, a man can get away from business just as well at the beginning as at the end of the week, and the inconvenience to the club members themselves is reduced to a minimum. This plan is popular in the Philadelphia district.