

# STANDARDS IN GOLF RISING, SAYS PERRIN

## Newly Installed President of U. S. G. A. Thinks Both Spirit and Skill of Players Reach Constantly Higher Levels

"As far as the U. S. G. A. is concerned," said the recently elected President of that body, leaning forward in his chair in an office on the fourteenth floor of the Commercial Trust Building in Philadelphia, and addressing a New York Times interviewer, "the millennium will be reached when each and every golf club in the country is an active voting member of the association, and though he stopped short at this point he seemed to be making a silent addition, "and every man, woman, and child a golf player." It was plain that Howard W. Perrin, moving spirit in the Pine Valley Golf Club, former Lesley Cup player and present chief executive of the United States Golf Association was speaking on a subject in which he was vitally interested and to which he had given much thought.

"It has been estimated that there are nearly 2,000 golf clubs in this country," he continued. "Of this number 470 are members of the U. S. G. A., a ratio of less than one club in every four a member of the association. And to carry the point further still, there were only 117 active clubs with voting privileges in the association at the time of the drawing up of the last report of the Executive Committee to the delegates at the annual meeting held in New York recently. It has always been a hope of mine that all these clubs would someday manifest enough interest in the association and its aims to join as active members. It is a plan that I shall do all I can to further, officially and unofficially."

### Not a High Hurdle to Leap.

He reached forward to his desk and took up the red-covered Year Book of the U. S. G. A., which was lying cheek by jowl with the inkwell. Turning quickly over the pages he read the definition of an active club—"Any regularly organized club in the United States, supporting and maintaining a golf course of at least nine holes, and whose reputation and general policy are in accord with the best traditions and the high ideals of the game, shall be eligible to election as an active member." He closed the book with a snap and replaced it on the desk. Turning to the interviewer with that smile of his which is a pleasant personal characteristic—a botanist would call it a "hardy perennial, perfect specimen"—he said, "There! Nothing very terrible about that. There is no reason so far as I know why every club should not take advantage of this privilege—for it is a privilege.

"Why keep the distinction between allied and active clubs? I think that the answer to that lies in the figures that show the proportion of the allied to the active clubs in the association. Obviously the great majority of clubs prefer the allied membership with its lower dues, since it gives them all the privileges that they desire. Without doubt they get all they need from the U. S. G. A.—but does the U. S. G. A. get all it needs from them? They get the year books, the rule books, the privilege of asking for, and getting, decisions on rules and other moot points. Their members are allowed to play in the association tournaments, and they themselves have evidently no desire to hold one of the national tournaments over their own links. They believe that it is worth their while to pay the \$10 annual dues as allied members for these privileges.

### Zeal That Accompanies Ballot.

"On the other hand, a payment of an additional \$20 a year—the dues of active clubs are \$30 a year—would entitle them to the privilege of voting and applying for the national championship tournaments if they so desired. The voting privilege alone should draw them into active membership, because, as a duty as well as a privilege, the casting of a ballot on questions that come up at the annual meeting arouses a genuine and intelligent interest in the questions under consideration. It is only natural that a man should take more interest in a discussion in which he must help render a decision than in one where he plays the part of a mere spectator.

"If all clubs held active membership and the voting privilege, there would have been no opportunity for the cry of discrimination which was raised here and there in the Quimet case. As a matter of fact, the discussion of this particular case awakened some of the clubs to the realization that they were negligent in not taking more interest in the proceedings of the association, and not a few applications for active membership, all of which were acted upon favorably, were received in New York at the time of the meeting. I myself carried the applications of three clubs, Stenton Country Club, Overbrook Golf Club, and North Hills Country Club. These clubs were allied members of the association, but they evidently realized that they might play a bigger and a better part as active members, and they asked me to carry their applications to New York. I did not know how they were going to vote, it was not a matter that I inquired about—but I was gratified by the interest which they were showing in a matter that was certainly important in the future of the game.

"The Woodland Club itself discovered that it wished to become an active member after having remained an allied member since 1897. I hope that all clubs will come to the same conclusion. In spite of all the warm discussion over the various golf problems within the last year or so, I am perfectly well aware that we are all striving for the same end—the best interests of the game of golf, and hearty support for its high ideals—and this is one of the best ways to attain that end."

### His Keen Fondness for the Game.

Mr. Perrin sat back in his chair and laughed. The subject in hand was getting too serious. On occasions the President of the U. S. G. A. can be very serious, but he is delighted by the fact that comparatively few occasions demand the deportment of an undertaker or the gravity of an executioner. He loves the game of golf because he gets enjoyment out of it, and knows that thousands of other players get like enjoyment—even more, if that is possible. But he refuses to frown when he can smile, and, somehow, he finds an opportunity to smile at least five times in every ordinary minute. The fact that he is a natural diplomat—a man with whom it seems impossible to have a quarrel—especially fits him for the post of President of the U. S. G. A. during these troublous times.

"Golf," he continued, "has grown wonderfully in this country. Some twenty years ago it was a fad; now it is a necessity—and a necessity with the hardest people in the world to please, the American business men. Back in the '90s no golfer had a complete outfit unless it contained a fine assortment of red coats, with a high crowned hat to add to the dignity of the round of the links. In those days, golf was a

social diversion; now it is a national sport of great and increasing popularity. All the biggest men in the country—well, yes, that kind of big man plays it, too, but I mean men of prominence in all the various professions and business—are as regular in their rounds of the links as they are in their visits to the office. Not quite as often nor as long at one as at the other perhaps, but I have heard it whispered that as a man progresses toward success, he is a more familiar figure at the first tee than at the desk. Of course, this is heresy from the viewpoint of a business man; but a business man is only human after all, while golf is, at least, at times, divine. I know that the missing of a short putt, or a bad bounce that puts a ball into a Sahara of sand often inspires the player to describe it otherwise, but I am sure this comes under the head of temporary aberration and will not be admitted as evidence.

### Declines to Guess at Statistics.

"As to the number of players in this country at present, the amount of money invested in golf clubs, the money represented by golf sticks, golf balls, and accessories of all kinds, I am perfectly frank in saying that I have no idea of the total.

"In this connection it might be said that the estimates run all the way from nothing at all worth while up to \$20,000,000 invested in golf in this country, depending on the person who makes it and his attitude toward the game. By enthusiastic welders of the mangle and miblick, it is stated that over a million men, women and children play at least one shot a year on American courses, while confirmed pessimists are equally positive in asserting that the practice is confined to invalids and mentally irresponsible people. Jerry Travers, former national open and national amateur champion, puts the investment figures at \$232,000,000 and the number of players at 350,000. Mr. Perrin wisely refused to commit himself on the question, however, and passed to the spreading of the game through the South and West.

"Certainly I think that there is a great future for golf in the South," he said. "In the first place, they have this advantage over us here in the North—they can play golf all year. I know they have difficulties to overcome, especially with regard to the turf; but might not the very difficulties make them keener on the game? In any case, the same amount of fun can be found on a poor course as on a good one; sometimes, indeed, the balance is in favor of the less perfect links. I think that golf is a game in which the best player does not reap the most benefit. A lost touch in putting or a hook on the end of iron shots may nearly drive a low handicap player frantic, while the happy duffer pursues his way to bliss, unconscious of anything except that he is out in the open and swinging a long, steady, too; but it is impossible to specify at just what places the growth is most manifest, for it is general and nationwide to any part of the United States, within halting distance of a city or a town of any size at all, and there you will find at least one golf course and probably more."

### The Question of Amateurism.

Interrogated on the vexed amateur question, the President of the U. S. G. A. was silent for a few moments. This is a sore spot with all those who have the interests of golf deeply at heart, for there has been much bitterness in the discussion which is not yet closed, and a great deal of criticism has been leveled at men whose only fault in the matter was that they were striving for what they thought to be the best interests of the royal and ancient game. The smile disappeared temporarily, and in a calm but determined voice Mr. Perrin continued:

"Golf must be kept clear and free from all taint. In this matter of clearing up the amateur status of its players it has pointed the way for all other amateur sports. In 1915 it was the first sport to enact decisive regulations against the growing evil of professionalism, and in 1916 and 1917 it has gone ahead with the good work.

"As I say, it has taken the lead and it must not relinquish it. For above all other games there is an atmosphere of something more than the physical in golf—there is a spirit which is the essence of the game and which must be absorbed by the player before he becomes a real golfer in the best sense of the word. It is this inner lure, the fineness of quality which appeals to the mental and the moral faculties of a man, which demands a firm and determined stand on all questions that threaten the future of the game. There is no game which requires such a highly developed sense of honor as the pastime of the links. Here, if anywhere, a man must be true to himself. There are countless opportunities for cheating or taking advantage of an opponent, but to the real golfer these are not even temptations. Since the spirit of the game is such an essential part of golf, it behooves us to guard and cherish that spirit as if it were a sacred flame."

### Case of Francis Ouimet.

Coming right to the point, he took up the case of Francis Ouimet, former national open and amateur champion, the foremost figure affected by the recent rulings of the U. S. G. A. on the amateur question.

"It is unfortunate, but it is inevitable," he said, "that when reforms are begun some one must be on the dividing line, and in this case it happens to be Francis Ouimet. It is impossible not to like Ouimet personally; he is one of the most attractive characters that I have ever met. When I was up at Belmont Spring for the women's national championship I was refereeing one of the semi-final matches when I was called away. I could have selected half a dozen men prominent in golf to continue as referee in my place, but I selected Francis instead, and I made it a point in doing so to show him how high he stood in my estimation.

"But golf is beyond the stage where the sacrifice of an individual can stop its progress. The Executive Committee of the U. S. G. A. is empowered to act in all cases of this kind. It is carrying out the wishes of the delegates of the association, and it must be upheld, or the future of the game—well, there simply will be no future of golf as an amateur sport, unless the work of the Executive Committee is helped instead of hindered.

The last vestige of a smile had disappeared. Without a gesture of any kind, without raising his voice in the slightest degree, but expressing unbounded determination in the quiet emphasis that he put upon his words, Mr. Perrin took up the amateur question as it affects the future. He said:

"Golf is making thousands of converts annually. It is easy for them to learn the game, and it is possible for them to learn the rules, but it is vitally necessary for them to absorb the spirit with the rules, the atmosphere with the ability to play the game itself. The high ideals must be maintained that the newcomers may steer their course by the fixed star of rigid amateurism. It was suggested by some that we adopt the British views on this subject, implying that Ouimet might be still re-

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Howard W. Perrin  
President of the United States  
Golf Association.



# PERRIN DISCUSSES GOLF CONDITIONS

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garded as an amateur under the British rules, but I have advices from abroad that the English golfers agree with our stand in this matter, and furthermore, they will take up the question and adopt more stringent amateur regulations as soon as the war is over."

## Air Cleared by Discussion.

Then once more the smile appeared. "You know," he said, "I'm sure that something good will come of the recent discussion in New York. It sort of cleared the air. We are all working toward the same end, but we may debate the details by which the end can be accomplished. We want to be fair and just to every individual, every club, and every association. We want them all to be a part of our association, an integral part, in working out the problems that confront amateur golf."

"What do I think of the players themselves? First of all, I think that the standard of play for our amateurs and professionals is improving; and secondly, I think that the professional and the amateur standards of play are drawing closer every year. For instance, three young amateurs have won the national open championship in the last four years. I do not mean to say that the play of the professionals as a whole is not as good as it might be, for I hold just the reverse, but I do believe that amateurs—that is, our really good amateurs—are fast becoming the equal of the average professional golfer. And why not, indeed? A great many of our prominent amateurs play more golf than the average professional. They need not be bothered with the drudgery of making clubs or teaching duffers as the pros are, and can devote themselves to the perfection of their own games entirely."

## Pros Now Primarily Teachers.

"Of course, I do not hold that the victories of Ouimet, Travers, and Evans in the open championship have any special significance along these lines, for I understand that Ouimet and Travers did little playing prior to winning their open titles, and I also heard that Evans was

in particularly poor form just before the Minakahda tournament. But I merely state the results of my own personal observation when I say that I see no reason why many of our amateur golfers should not equal the feats of most of the professionals on the links. I think that the standard for professionals is changing. By this I mean that the various golf clubs are now demanding teachers, clubmakers, and greenkeepers, rather than famous players."

Asked his opinion of the recently organized Professional Golfers Association of America, Mr. Perrin replied: "I think this a fine move on the part of the professionals. It gives them an esprit de corps and a feeling of general responsibility that, would otherwise be missing. The professional golfers of this country are a particularly fine set of fellows, as I find them. They are keen on the game, and thorough sportsmen. This association can do much to help the game in this country, and they will receive the hearty co-operation of the U. S. G. A."

He fairly beamed when speaking of the improvement in women's golf, for he was present at the national championship at Belmont Spring, and found particular pleasure in the fine performances of Miss Mildred Caverly and Miss Alexa Stirling, present national champion. "I never enjoyed anything better than that final match at Belmont Spring between Miss Caverly and Miss Stirling," he said. "It was wonderful play for women, and they were both such thorough sportsmen that it was a privilege to watch their work. The work of all the women at the tournament, especially the younger set, is promise of great things for women's golf in this country. One thing that struck me as remarkable was the exactness with which Miss Stirling copied the swing and the action of Stewart Maiden, the little professional who instructed her in the rudiments of the game and brought her to such perfection that she was able to win the national championship at the age of 19. Stewart Maiden has a fine idea in training his players from their earliest youth. The results speak for themselves with Perry Adair, Bobby Jones, and Miss Stirling as examples."

## Quaker City's Dearth of Stars.

There was one fly in Mr. Perrin's ointment, however, and it was the fact that there are so few young golfers of ability around Philadelphia as compared with other golf centres of the country. "Probably this is due," he explained, "to the popularity of cricket here. You know, many of our prominent golf clubs started as cricket clubs. Not to go any further, I might mention the Merion Cricket Club and the Philadelphia Cricket Club, both of which have already

held national golf championships as part of their change of front, as one might say. Many of the youngsters still cling to cricket, however, and thus Philadelphia is forced to rely on its veterans for such events as the Lesley Cup match, while the metropolitan district and the New England section are represented by much new blood. Young Howard Maxwell has improved very much within the last season, but, off-hand, I do not recall any other young Philadelphian who has come to the fore.

"As for the coming season and the future years, I must admit that I do not feel myself able to forecast or prophesy in any specific way. Golf is tremendously popular, but it is going to be more so in the future. As an aid to health, as a relaxation from business, as a competitive sport, as an art, and as a science, it contains so much for the average man, woman, or child, that I look for it to become an institution instead of a sport—if it has not reached that state already," and with that the interviewer mercifully left him to take up the steady flow of business which the caller had interrupted for so long.

## From the Court to the Course.

The peculiar feature about Howard W. Perrin and his devotion to the game of golf is that he is a convert from the tennis ranks, and like most converts, he has outstripped those who were practically born to the game in his zeal for its service. Some two decades ago he thought that no sport surpassed tennis as an exercise for all kinds of people. However, he was enticed upon a golf course one day, and thereupon embraced his fate. One swing at the white ball that nestled close to the grass, and he was a devotee of the game for life. He immediately set to work to atone for the lost time of his past career, and a putting green acts upon him as does a magnet upon a needle. He was much interested in the construction of the St. Davids Golf Club near Philadelphia, and became also one of the active golf members of the Merion Cricket Club. He has taken an active part in the construction of the new Pine Valley course, accounted by some experts the finest course in the country. As a player he was of sufficient ability to make the Lesley Cup team, and he still can force any of the front rank amateurs to play their best if they are to defeat him.

He has done much to develop golf in the vicinity of Philadelphia and now that he is called upon to shoulder a heavier burden for a larger area, he is doing it with the good-will characteristic of him. Golf has him in its toils, but he is its willing servitor, for he admits that he long ago saw the futility of resisting the charms of the royal and ancient game.