

Golfers, Dog Lovers and Motorboatmen Are Heard From Here

NEXT TO BASEBALL GOLF IS OUR NATIONAL SPORT, SAYS ROBERT W. LESLEY



ROBERT W. LESLEY

President of Philadelphia Association Is Man of Action Who Has Penchant for Doing Big Things in the Interest of the Royal and Ancient Game

GOLF in Philadelphia and Robert W. Lesley are so intimately associated one with the other that it is almost impossible to mention one unless the other suggests itself. In this state of affairs it is true when we get away from Philadelphia. Up to a few years ago when Howard W. Perrin first came into golfing limelight when you mentioned golf to an on-lander the first thing he thought of was "Bob" Lesley of Philadelphia, unfortunately, has never had a golfer of prominence. We are unique in that, so what golfers know we have comes to us not in the process on the links, but in other things just as intimately identified with it.

The two most important tournaments outside the national championships are those for the Lesley and Groscom Cups. Both are the gifts of Philadelphia prizes, the first by the present president of the Association of Philadelphia and the second by the late Clement B. Groscom, the father of the first Philadelphia woman to win a national championship at golf. Both of these events started as intercity affairs and while the Groscom Cup tournament is still run on that basis the Lesley Cup tourney is between the golfers of Pennsylvania, Massac sets and the metropolitan sections. It began originally as an intercity match between Philadelphia and New York and when the Philadelphia players began to realize that it was a hopeless task as New York included among its golfers those from New Jersey as well Mr. Lesley stepped to the front with his cup and the contest was broadened out.

Mr. Lesley has been the president of the local golf association so long that he has lost track of the stretch of time himself. He has been and still is one of the most successful business men in Philadelphia, but no matter how busy he is, he is never so much engaged that he cannot find time to talk golf. It is his greatest hobby. He does not pretend to be one of our leading players. His tastes run more along the lines of the business end of golf. He gets a great deal of pleasure out of golf paying but he goes in for doing things. For years there had been a lot of talk about a public course and year after year went by and nothing was done. Finally at one of the annual meetings about three years ago he appointed a committee made up of the presidents of the leading golf clubs and every man on the committee was a big, representative business or professional man. Then the committee got in touch with the Fairmount Park Commissioners and in slightly over a year we had what eventually will be the finest eighteen-hole public course in the country.

There was a feeling that it was time that Philadelphia had a national championship for men. The women's and the open had been played here, but Philadelphia wanted the blue ribbon event. So he and Howard Perrin got busy and largely due to their efforts the tournament came to Merion last year. As chairman of the Golf Committee at Merion he has done great things for the caddies. Merion, because of its two courses employs more caddies than any other Philadelphia club. Mr. Lesley decided a system by which the caddies would be given a list of the best caddies in the city and he went even further by compiling a list of these best boys, and many of them have obtained good paying positions elsewhere. Merion keeps its eyes on the caddies and as soon as the boys reach an age where it would be better for them to think of getting permanent work the club does the best, and it is due to Mr. Lesley that this has been possible.

He is very enthusiastic about the coming year in golf and here are some of his views about the year and about Philadelphia golf and golfers:

"Next to baseball it is our national sport. Americans are no longer content to watch others play. We are getting back to our boyhood days when we all played. Golfers get more enjoyment playing golf, irrespective of the quality of the golf, than they do watching baseball games, or cricket and tennis matches. We are a nation of outdoor men and women, and the more we get out into the open the better we are off. And for the man who has passed the mark where other sports are no longer possible there is no other sport comparable with golf. And just to show that it is not an old man's game nearly all our national champions have been those who won the title while in college or just after leaving it, and the present woman champion is a girl still in her teens.

There is every indication that the coming year will be the greatest year in the history of golf. A winter such as we are now having makes the average golfer restive, and when the season really opens in April our links will be fairly crowded with golfers. Golf is not an expensive sport unless the player makes it so. It is just like running an automobile. It all depends upon the owner. It costs more to play golf than tennis, but a player can keep his expenses well within reason. Fortunately,

most golfers do not worry about the money they spend on the game. And wherever you meet a real golfer you will find that he is satisfied that every cent he spends on golf gives him more real pleasure and health than any other sport. Golf is not measured in dollars and cents.

"Golfers in Philadelphia realize that we have the greatest list of events and that we have the greatest diversity of events of any golfing community in the country, but not until you begin to talk to golfers elsewhere do they realize how we offer in golf fare. In the first place our clubs are so conveniently located to the center of the city that many of them can be reached by trolley and none of our clubs is more than three-quarters of an hour away. It is easier for a New Yorker to come to our Philadelphia clubs than it is for him to reach some of the clubs in the Metropolitan district. Out near Chicago they have a dinner on some of the Saturday trains especially for golfers, so you can judge how far some of the clubs are distant from Chicago. Our dues are smaller, and it red costs a Philadelphian less to play golf than it does the average New York or Chicago golfer.

Many of our clubs are so close that it is possible in one day to play nine holes over four and even five separate and distinct courses. We begin the year with what is known as the Suburban Cup matches in which sixteen clubs put fourteen men in the field in a series of matches. There is nothing just like it anywhere else in the country. For the golfer who prefers the one-day tournament and medal play we have five or six fixtures. For the men who have reached or passed the 35-year mark we have a tournament and we have another for the youngsters who are not yet 21. We have our championship in which only those who have a handicap of ten strokes or less are eligible, and we have another for those whose handicaps range from eleven strokes upwards, and in order to make it more interesting we divide these golfers into three classes according to their handicaps, and in this way every golfer has an equal chance.

"We have a tournament in which a father and his son play against other fathers and sons. Each year we hold what we call a dinner tournament in which the golfers whether their handicaps be large or small can enter and which is played over two eighteen-hole golf courses. For those who have time to give the entire day we offer both courses and for those who have but the afternoon we offer one course. Then at the end of the day we get together for our dinner. Prizes are offered for every class of golfers, and when you realize that last year there were more than 300 men playing you have some idea of the popularity of this tournament. Needless to say there is no other tournament in any other section of the country comparable with it. For those golfers who have to stay in any sort of tournament that we have our midsummer handicap, and if there is any sort of tournament that we have not on our list of events I should like to hear about it.

"We propose shortly to publish a caddy book fully illustrated which can be distributed among the thirty-one clubs. And we intend to make this the best thing of its kind ever published."