

THE RISE AND FALL OF PHILADELPHIA IN CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF

By PERRY LEWIS

THE scrivener knows not whom he is quoting when he repeats the truism "life has its ups and downs"; furthermore he is happily ignorant of whose stuff he may be stealing in presenting the thought that "life is just one darn thing after another."

It is patent, however, that the originators were philosophers and the chances are they were golfers, for to follow Scotia's popular pastime year after year is to become more and more convinced that golf is a mirror of life—which, incidentally, is one of the reasons it is a popular pastime.

Consider the case of the Philadelphia district where golf, that is to say golf in its championship phase, was at a very low ebb in 1921. The game is not losing its popularity here, as a matter of fact, we never heard of golf losing its popularity anywhere. During 1921 more Pennsylvania, cut a sorry figure in 1921 championship fields and right the same zest and enthusiasm nor the red-hot but friendly competition in the tournaments which developed in 1919 and 1920.

And there is a reason, an obvious reason. Philadelphia, yes, and Pennsylvania, cut a sorry figure in 1921 championship fields and right at a moment when critics everywhere expected to see the entries of Billy Penn produce achievements worth while. Local devotees had convinced themselves that several stars hereabouts were about due, and this time a year ago the rising sun of the 1921 season reflected some dazzlingly rosy hues on the Philadelphia links horizon. Consider the facts:

Feast Followed Famine

For years the Philadelphia golf world had suffered famine in the midst of a championship feast. The amateur title was a stranger in the district. Season after season came and was written in golf history. Occasionally a son of later Penn managed to qualify in the classic only to be promptly blotted out in match play, and the annals of golf did not tell of a Philadelphian progressing even as far as the semi-final round.

Came the 1919 championship at the Oakmont Country Club, near Pittsburgh, and with it much balsa for the devotees of Philadelphia. To that classic went seven youthful Quaker City golfers. One, Max Marston, was a veteran of championship play, but the others trekked westward, unheralded and unsung. Hope was in their hearts, however, and with it a determination to do or die.

Then, while the links world marvelled, four of the six qualified in the championship flight. This, in itself, would have been sufficient and the folks back home were thrilled with pride. But the devoted four were not content. They plunged into match play with the same tenacious courage and determina-

tion which marked their successful progress through the qualifying round.

At the close of the first round only one of the four had been erased from the action, and, curiously enough, in defeat Eddie Clarey snatched a more robust sprig of laurel than his colleagues did in victory. For Edward, the stalwart Bala entry, gave the distinguished Francis Ouimet a severe fight and was only beaten two up when the Bostonian won the last four holes.

Platt Achieves Fame

J. Wood Platt, the youngster who was destined to go further and achieve greater heights than any other Philadelphian ever scaled in a National Amateur championship, won handily. So did George Hoffner, Paul Tewkesbury and Max Marston.

The luck of the draw threw Platt and Tewkesbury together in the second round, and Platt triumphed. Hob Gardner ruined Max Marston once again in a brilliant battle. Hoffner was the victor in an extra hole match, and

Continued on 20th Page, 1st Column

THE RISE AND FALL OF PHILADELPHIA IN CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF

Continued From Page 19

with Platt, kept Philadelphia in the action.

In the third round Hoffer bowed to that grand veteran of the links, "Bill" Fowkes, but Platt started the golf world and thrilled the City of Brotherly Love by eliminating Francis Ouimet by one of the most sensational matches ever played in the United States. Ouimet, who was an overwhelming favorite for the championship following his notable defeat of Chick Evans the day before, succumbed to the Philadelphia stripling on the thirty-eighth green while a tropical storm lashed both players and a gallery of many thousands.

Thus did a Philadelphia at last win in the semi-finals of an amateur championship. The following day Platt met S. Davidson Herron, and for the first time in the history of Philadelphia newspapers, the sporting departments were kept busy all day answering telephone calls from anxious devotees seeking a report on a golf match.

High Tide of Success

That Platt went down to defeat is history. The terrific strain under which the youngster had labored the previous day had taken its toll of energy, and Herron won with considerable ease.

But the Philadelphia golf world rejoiced. Local entries had become a factor in a title event, one had beaten Ouimet and snatched the day of a semi-finalist. Furthermore a Pennsylvanian, the robust Herron, had reaped the championship. The game was given a distinct impetus in Billy Penn's ball-tick and everybody was happy.

Thus it happened that the links world of Philadelphia looked forward to 1920 with confidence. Certain for the first time that the title events of the approaching season would not be devoid of a local angle, Platt was coming all the time, Carey steadily improving, Tewkesbury and Marston playing sound and steady golf and George Hoffer only a brief stride behind Platt.

Furthermore, Marston had become a Philadelphia golfer in name as well as in fact. During the season of 1919 the Cranford linksman had entered tournaments from Baltusrol, although a resident of Philadelphia and a member of the Merion Cricket Club. Because of the resultant confusion in drawing territorial lines for Lesley Cup matches, Marston had been asked to make his position clear, with the result that he issued a definite statement to the effect that hereafter he would play from the Merion Cricket Club.

The opinion of Quaker City linksmen was justified by subsequent events. There were some disappointments, of course. For instance, neither Carey nor Tewkesbury were among the qualifiers in the amateur championship played at the Engineers' Club. But Platt, Marston and Hoffer were, and with them appeared the names of two other Philadelphia district qualifiers, Maurice Hitley, of Atlantic City, and Meredith Jack, of the Merion Cricket Club.

No Famine, But Still Not a Feast

Thus it came to pass that for the second successive year the City of Brotherly Love had five qualifiers in the national championship fight. Nothing to touch of the red fire about in a district the size of Philadelphia with thousands of golfers playing at two score clubs, but not so bad when the famine that had gone before is kept in mind.

The entries from the city which gave the links game "loft" Lesley did not prosper in match play as they had in 1919 at Oakmont, however. The brilliant Phil Carter cut Marston down in the first round; again the luck of the draw forced Platt to blot out a colleague as it did a year before when he was through against Tewkesbury—a his victim on this occasion being Maurice Hitley; and Hoffer fumbled an opportunity of stepping into the Hall of Fame when he blew to the four winds a dazzling chance to trouble Tom Armour, a British entry, then rated as a formidable challenger of American golf supremacy.

The Philadelphia had the polished son of John Bull two down with six to go, only to suffer one of those unaccountable lapses of form which have handicapped him throughout his career on the links. The result of it all was that Armour received Hoffer's congratulations on the home carpet.

And so it happened that only two Philadelphians, Platt and Jack, entered the second round at the Engineers' Club. Here the latter encountered Francis Ouimet and thereafter became one of the gallery. Not so Platt.

Enter the "Giant Killer"

J. Wood's opponent was S. Davidson Herron, then champion, and the man who had strangled the Philadelphia at Pittsburgh in the semi-finals of 1919. The Quaker City youth was hardly convinced a chance against the titleholder, who had trounced him with such consummate ease in their Pittsburgh meeting, but Platt relishes the under dog role. He is ever at his best when the going is hardest.

Once more Platt gave the golf world a thrill and the game a great impetus in his home city by cutting down another giant of the links. Herron fought and fought hard, but he could make no headway against the debonaire son of Yew who henceforth was to be known as the "Giant Killer." The champion succumbed on the seventeenth green.

On the heels of this great success came a bitter disappointment for Philadelphia golfers, for the day following Platt's dazzling victory over Herron, he (Platt) was erased from the championship by Ned Allen. The Quaker entry entered this match as much a favorite as he had been an outside choice against Herron. Thus was Philadelphia totally eliminated from the amateur classic of 1920.

Nevertheless, at the close of the 1920 championship season Philadelphia golfers were carrying their heads high and keeping the tailors busy sewing on vest buttons. For the district held an enviable place in the links realm.

Local players had established the fact that they must be recognized in the amateur title tourney. A Lesley Cup team recruited almost entirely in the Quaker City had snatched that classic trophy from the golfers of Massachusetts and New York. And, to make the thing complete, a team of Philadelphia women had captured the Griscom Cup in the yearly tri-city competition.

Bursting of the Bubble

But alas, the high water mark had been reached. The future held only bitter disappointment and blasted hopes for those who felt that the Philadelphia district was on the threshold and about to enter into the place of golf glory reserved for those who father a champion. It was not to be. The tide of success was about to recede, and without warning, right at a moment when it seemed that flood of triumph would surely fling a native son to the pinnacle.

One year 1920 was ushered in with the announcement that J. Wood Platt,

Plenty of Beef Is Needed for This Squad

Students of the football type are decidedly in the minority at the University of Cincinnati. Of the 1639 men at the Ohioan campus less than a hundred possess sufficient weight to merit gridiron consideration. The average student of Cincinnati tips the scales at only 133 pounds. Only three of the 1639 weigh more than 200 pounds. Only fourteen weigh more than 180, and five of these are medics and have little use of pigskin entertainment, and of the eighty-one between 120 and 160 pounds only fourteen are taking courses that will permit them to don the moleskins.

Philadelphia's "giant-killer" had been selected a member of the United States team to invade Great Britain. Here was Opportunity! A large number of sportsmen felt that the conqueror of Ouimet and Herron was the right man to seize the winged-footed one as he passed.

Quaker City golfing circles were in fever of excitement the day before the British championship opened. For weeks cables had been read with avidity—cables which told of the inspiring progress of the entire U. S. team, and particularly referred to the work of Philadelphia's champion.

Then the bombshell. Hungry for more optimism, Quaker golfers seized the morning papers of the day the British championship opened—and got only word of a numbing catastrophe. An accident had overtaken Platt, he had fallen, his knee was injured and he would be unable to strike a single blow for his country, his State, his city, his club and himself. Here was paralyzing news indeed.

In that bitter moment the Philadelphia golf district took the back track insofar as achieving the high places is concerned. Disaster followed disaster, and worst of all, nobody seemed to care very much. The backbone of the district as a producer of champions was broken.

Examine the Rules

First Philadelphia's Griscom Cup team of women journeyed to Boston, there to defend the trophy so nobly won a year before. A few days later it came back without the cup, humiliated and beaten both by New York and Boston. Then came the Philadelphia district championship and down went Platt, the defending champion; Hoffer, Tewkesbury, Carey and the other stars of the Quaker City expected to do such great things in the year 1921.

Then the amateur championship at St. Louis, the greatest event of its kind ever held in America. Everyone was there. Boston, New York, Pittsburgh, Chicago—North, East, South and West—all sent their gifted golf sons. But Philadelphia held the purse she had set in 1919 and 1920 and qualify three men.

Philadelphia did no such thing.

As a matter of fact the Quaker City had just one entry—Max Marston—and he qualified only to be blotted out of the action in the first round by Francis Ouimet.

The whole sad story is not yet told. Philadelphia had one more chance, and such a dazzling chance with its wonderful opportunity to wipe out the hateful earlier history of this disastrous year. Pennsylvania must defend the Lesley Cup, and it came to pass that circumstances made it wise to select an all-Philadelphia team, the first time such a thing had been done in the long history of Lesley Cup competition.

But it was not in the wood. Stark's failure still trailed the golfers of Penn and the Lesley Cup went the way of the Griscom trophy.

Thus the downfall of the Philadelphia district in 1921 championship golf became complete. What of 1922?