



#### WHERE GOOD PUTTING WON A HALF

Harry G. Bragg (left), general manager of the Auto Merchants Association, is refereeing a close match between Lee J. Eastman, president of the Packard Motor Car Company of New York; Alfred Reeves (putting), general manager of the Automobile Chamber of Commerce; William L. Colt, president of the Chrysler Motor Car Company of New York, and R. B. Sloane of the Upperpu Cadillac Corp.—held at the Winged Foot Golf Club

## Wriggling Out of Tight Places

By A. T. PACKARD

TWO tournament players and two golf writers were in agreement that Bobby Jones' method of stringing along with Old Man Par was the royal road to golf championships, whether match or medal. Then the four "reminiscencers" broadened the field of discussion to include Watts Gunn. To me, Watts represents the most astonishing burst of golf personality I ever saw in action. Hole after hole I followed Watts at Merion in the full expectation at each tee that the start of my story would be about how he snapped off the head of his driver on the back swing. So fast, fairly vicious, was his back swing, that the club blurred as it does just before impact in a moving picture. Before the head of the club emerged from the blur, Watts started his equally fast and vicious forward swing, the outraged club head bending the shaft beyond a right angle. Yes, the shaft was bound to break soon and the introduction of my tomorrow's story was ready when Watts, 5 or 6 down at the time, started what is, and probably always will be, a tournament record by winning fifteen straight holes.

But an even better subject was at hand in the discussion of some marvelous play at crucial holes in championships, three of the four reminiscencers agreeing that the palm should be awarded to the thirty-sixth hole in the match between Jess Sweetser and "Chick" Evans in the St. Louis National of 1921 and the fourth maintaining as strongly that it was any one of three holes in the play-off for the Open between Bobby Cruickshank and Bobby Jones. Finally there came agreement on the one subject of the best match ever seen by any of the four. It was the thrilling, extra-hole battle between Sweetser and Evans at Mayfield in the Western championship of 1922. There indeed was a thesaurus of material for an article, and the pleasant task was well under way when it was side-tracked by the editor of GOLF ILLUSTRATED for "Wriggling Out of Tight Places."

A dozen good subjects popped into mind but nearly all of them had to be canceled because the player who did the sensational playing finally met defeat. The wording of the subject indicated that the wriggler must also be victor. And that construction, within my memory, seems to leave a clear field to the last five holes in the final rounds between Albert Seckel and Harrison R., "Jim", Johnston in the Western Amateur

championship of 1924 at Hinsdale—a decidedly memorable occasion.

Through a week of spotted weather, during which tropical downpours alternated with brilliant sunshine, Johnston and Seckel had worked their way into the final bracket through a field that included every star player who had a chance of winning. Each had played close to par in all his matches, Seckel making a specialty of eagles to even up for loose play on an occasional hole. If memory serves, Johnston had not been more than one over par on any hole in his qualifying or match rounds. For once at least, in the history of tournaments, the final rounds bade fair to be the most thrilling; with the added thrill that the winner of the match would win the championship.

Hinsdale was perfection, the weather was glorious, Chicago lived up to its reputation of furnishing a huge and orderly gallery and the match was all square after the morning round. The first two holes of the afternoon round were halved in par. The first break came at the third hole, which Jim conceded after a wild shot into an unplayable lie. From that point to the finish of the home hole, not one was halved. Including the third, Al won four in a row. He lost one by loose play and another at the eighth with his par against Jim's birdie but returned this compliment on the twenty-seventh of the match and began the final nine 3 up. On the thirty-second tee he was 4 up and 5 to go. If he won any one of the holes or halved two he would bridge a gap of thirteen years since he beat Bob Gardner for the title at Detroit in 1911.

It looked easy, in spite of the fact that he had almost abandoned tournament play for several years. He never had played better than during this tournament and he had not lost more than two, let alone five holes in succession during any match round. There are better players than Al Seckel but it will puzzle anyone to pick out a star player better fitted temperamentally to face a crisis in a match game. Perhaps it is an explanation of the result that the situation did not appeal to Al as a crisis. He had not seen Jim's impressive entry into tournament play three years before at Westmoreland, where he tied with Rudy Knepper for medalist honors and was stopped in the match rounds only by superlative golf on the part of "Chick" Evans. Later, in the same year, Jim had put Al out in the National at St. Louis and followed it with a victory

over Francis Quimet and what I will always think would have turned Jesse Guilford's 1 up victory into a defeat except for a miraculously bad mashie shot of Jim's on the thirty-third, when Jim was 1 up and Jesse had practically presented him with the hole on a silver salver with a wild approach shot to the rough. Yes, even a golf writer, if he holds his job, must learn that a golf game is not over until one of the players is more holes to the good than there are left to play. Al was 4 up but there were 5 holes left to play. It didn't look much like a crisis. In the last five holes he had gone from 2 up to 4 up. Why worry?

Another one of the things I believe but can't prove is that Al lost his chance for the championship by his mental attitude as he played his tee shot on the fourteenth. He is a born fighter in the sense that he never stops trying to do his best in a contest. It is a frame of mind that often leads to victory but occasionally brings about defeat; it becomes so automatic as to throw the reasoning faculties into eclipse. In all his golf experience Al had based his game on long and accurate work from the tee. In that department, he and Jim probably were the two best players in the tournament. From the first hole in the morning round there had been a contest within a contest on length and accuracy, from the tee. That minor contest became automatic with Al. He had fairly held pace with Jim's mighty swipes and the justification of his methods lay in the fact that he was 4 up and 5 to go; only one hole short of a championship. Why change? He was too old a hand to suffer from over-confidence. Doubtless he realized the nearness to victory and was experiencing the mental elation that precedes winning from a worthy foe but, and here is the crux of the matter, he gave no thought apparently, to the fact that he was face to face with a crisis; that every shot was a crucial one until the winning shot had been played. The purely defensive game has little part in Al Seckel's mental or physical make-up. His offense is his strong defense. He went after the one hole to win and not the two halved holes that would do as well. There seemed nothing to indicate that the most hectic five holes of his entire golfing career were just ahead.

It was Al's honor on the fourteenth hole of the course, the thirty-second of the match. He was 4 up with five holes to go. He is a fast player and it was immediately manifest that he was trying for another of his long drives. In the effort his club went slightly over the line before impact and there was the consequent side-spin that did not appear in the flight of the ball but showed up in the roll. The last of the roll left the ball a few inches in the rough on the right of the fairway. From the tee, it looked as though the rough at that point was rather thick. Jim had his regular driver in hand and there must have flashed to his mind the memory of what "Chick" had taught him at Westmoreland; deliberately driving the short ball and throwing the fear of the Lord into his opponent by the accuracy of his approach. Anyway, that is the way it worked out. Jim changed his club, drove down the alley about 225 yards and stuck his second twelve feet from

the pin. It was an advanced course in the psychology of golf. Walter Travis would have walked forward to his opponents ball, gazed at it studiously from all angles, smiled commiseratingly at his opponent and stuck his approach where he wanted it; leaving his opponent in wonderment at whether his lie was as bad as Travis seemed to think it was.



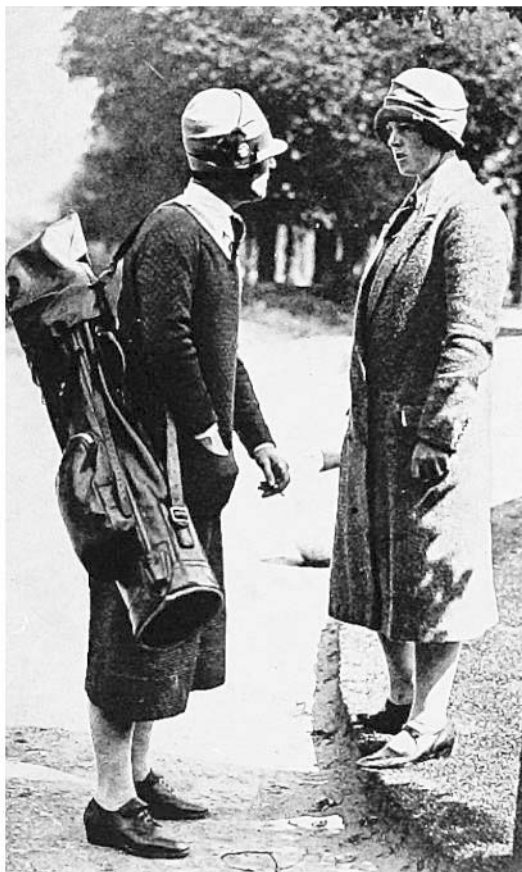
**ADDING UP THE SCORE**

**At a recent tournament, H. O. Havemeyer, of Tuxedo, became interested in figuring his score and was caught in the act**

up and 4 to go—and the fourteenth should be an easy half.

The fifteenth is a kind of casement hole, relieving the pressure somewhat before that trinity of closing holes which is as hard to play in par as the final three at Flossmoor or Merion. Jim leaned his ball

against the blade of grass he seemed to have chosen from the tee and Al did as well. Their seconds were about twelve feet from the hole, with Al slightly away. His putt hit the cup but stayed only, dead to the hole. Jim's putt went down and Al was 2 up and 3 to go. Ask any tournament golfer what the germs of doubt and suspicion were doing to Al's psychological processes as he walked to the sixteenth tee.



**THROUGH FOR THE DAY**

**Miss Cecil Leitch, former British champion, about to leave the Ranelagh course, stops to discuss scores with Miss Molly Gourlay, the former English champion**

about fifteen feet above the hole and off the putting surface, a slight ridge intervening. His only possible play was to get his ball over the ridge and trust to Providence that it would stop within putting distance. Al did but Providence didn't. He was away and missed the putt. He was 1 up and 2 to go. Was his psychology (Continued on page 49)

But modern methods are more subtle. By the change of clubs Johnston indicated that Seckel's judgment was at fault in straining for distance on a short hole. Perhaps it was only that he took his own best method of playing for a certain half and possible win. Anyway, his second was on the green, twelve feet from the pin, when Al addressed his ball in the rough with the knowledge that no golfer in the world knew how hard to hit it to overcome the resistance of the grass by which it was surrounded. Psychology and the law of chances did their deadly work. Al was 3

This is the famous Andy Gump hole, a huge trap at the right backgrounding with sand the unmistakable silhouette of the Gump clan carved out of the turf in the middle. The green is narrow, pointing toward the tee. To the left of the green is a dense jungle where no player looks for a ball the second time. It simply delays the game. All this, mind you, on the upper slope of a hill facing the tee so squarely that Andy's silhouette looks like a picture on a wall. A slight dab of green on the crest of the hill is the apron to the putting surface. It is about fifteen feet square. From the tee, 200 yards away and across a valley, it looks like the edge of a single blade of grass. But one must hit that blade of grass with a 200-yard carry and with enough backspin to hold the ball on the green or you may kiss par good-by. The right side of the green slopes upward and the hole was half way up the slope. An approach from the right of the green, even from the edge, could not be held. It would roll fifteen or twenty feet beyond the hole. Well, Jim hit the edge of the blade of grass with a 200-yard backspin carry and his ball trickled to the middle of the green, fifteen feet below the hole. Al had one which looked equally good but it developed a slice that landed the ball

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normal as he walked to the seventeenth tee," the thirty-fifth of the match?

The 500-yard seventeenth at Hinsdale is an easy par 5 but a hart birdie 4, for which each knew the other would play. Johnston hit a 300 yard screamer down the fairway. A started to do as well or better, but there came a vicious slice that carried the ball far out of bounds. His second ball also sliced, this time into the high rough near the line fence. He tried desperately to get it out but failed; picking up and conceding the hole. All square and one hole to go. Four holes lost in succession! The crisis!

The battlement green of the eighteenth is hard to hit but each player was on in two strokes, Jim about thirty-five feet from the cup and Al a foot or two farther. Al's putt was dead to the hole and more than a thousand of the gallery began easing away toward the first tee for the extra hole. There were other thousands who stayed and told the first thousand hit it a good rap, the ball struck all about it afterwards. Jim simply walked up to his thirty-five foot putt, squarely against the back of the cup, bounded straight up and back into the hole. And Al Seckel, from fifty feet away, darted across the green with the first congratulations to the new champion.

You know Bob Cutting, don't you? Well, I'm surprised. That shows you are a new-comer in the realm of golf, that you never have been in Chicago, never have talked with a Chicago golfer, that you do not know there is a Western Golf Association or an eligibility list of the United States Golf Association or that, west of a line between Pittsburgh and Buffalo, with an indefinite extension to the north and south. Bob Cutting's decision on a golf matter is final.

So I called up Bob and asked him what would be the best illustration of the arbitrary title: "Wriggling out of Tight Places." There was almost a snort of disgust over the wire as Bob answered: "There's only one best illustration. The last five holes of the final round between Al Seckel and Jim Johnston." So that is that!

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