



RIGGA NEWS

Newsletter of the Rhode Island Golf Association

THE HOGAN MYSTIQUE ON DISPLAY

by Joe Sprague, Jr.



Even before I entered the Ben Hogan Room at the USGA Museum I had a sense that this was something special. A black and white photograph of the man without his trademark cap hangs in the corner of the entranceway with a guest register laid open underneath (referred to as the “Ben Hogan memory book”) in which visitors are invited to write their comments.

It was a little unsettling, almost as if I were attending Mr. Hogan’s wake, but after setting just one foot into the room I was awestruck. It was at once a celebration and a homage to a man whose legacy in golf will never be duplicated.

I had visited the USGA Museum on two previous occasions. In fact, I wrote about my first experience five years ago in this very newsletter. I was in Far Hills, New Jersey again to attend a Rules of Golf Workshop, but what I was most looking forward to was visiting the Ben Hogan Room that had opened to the public less than six months before.

When I lived in Philadelphia, I used to caddy at Merion Golf Club on weekends just for the opportunity to walk the fairways. Every time I got to the 18th hole I’d walk over to the spot from where Hogan hit his famous one iron on the 72nd hole in the 1950 U.S. Open, and every time I would be amazed that a player could hit that shot under that pressure. But this was not just any player, and now here I was years later able to revisit the man’s entire career in just one room.

It was one of Ben Hogan’s last wishes that all his trophies and mementos be given to the USGA. After he passed away, his widow, Valerie, and Museum curator, Andrew Mutch, began the work of transforming the room that had previously been home to one of golf’s greatest collection of books. The completed room is an astonishing

three majors – the Masters, U.S. Open and British Open – a feat not duplicated until Tiger Woods in 2000.

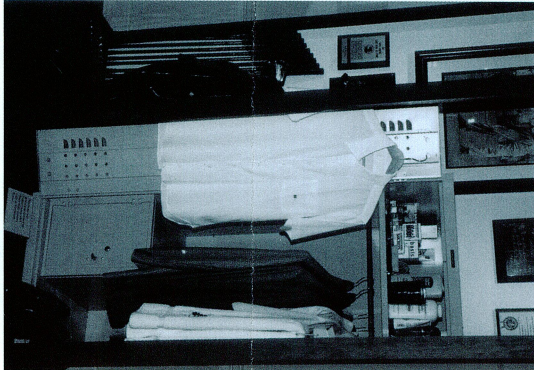
The U.S. Open in 1953 was played at Oakland Hills CC in Michigan. Hogan was not too enamored with the punishing course conditions and set-up. “The only way to walk down these fairways is single file,” he quipped after an opening round six-over par 76. “If I had to play this course every week I’d get into another business.” Hogan had the last say, though. After closing with a 67 to win his fourth Open, Hogan accepted the winner’s trophy and sternly remarked, “I’m glad that I brought this course, this monster to its knees.”

In all, Hogan amassed 63 career victories including nine majors. His life was the subject of a major Hollywood movie, 1951’s *Follow the Sun* which starred Glenn Ford. He authored two seminal golf instruction books, *Power Golf* and *Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals of Golf*. He founded a golf club company in 1953 that produced some of the finest irons ever made. But somehow the sum of the parts doesn’t begin to add up to the man who was Ben Hogan. As USGA Museum curator Andrew Mutch puts it, “He carries his own aura. A lot of people get emotional when they visit the Ben Hogan Room which is something I never expected.”

(USGA Museum is located in Far Hills, NJ – 3½ hours by car from Providence)

A PARTIAL LIST OF ITEMS DISPLAYED IN THE BEN HOGAN ROOM

- Hogan’s five Colonial National Invitation trophies
- Ben Hogan’s birth certificate
- Hogan’s replica Ryder Cup trophy
- The one iron in famous photograph from 1950 U.S. Open
- The “small” ball from Hogan’s 1953 British Open victory
- The champion’s green jacket from The Masters
- A set of irons Hogan used during his “Triple Crown” year, 1953



Hogan’s locker from his home club, Shady Oaks CC, in Fort Worth is prominently displayed in the museum. It was donated by his fellow members.

The man once described by golf writer Herbert Warren Wind as having “the burning fragility of dry ice” went by several nicknames during his playing career, but one need only intone the word “Hogan” now to evoke a sense of golf in its purest form. Almost religious in scope, the Ben Hogan Room pays homage not only to a career but to a man who pursued perfection with a quiet, relentless ferocity. A perfection that he would say was no secret at all – “the secret’s in the dirt.”

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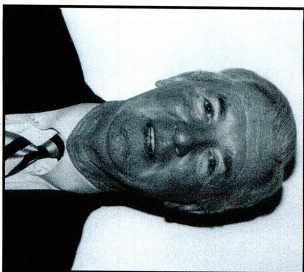
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Providence, RI

Presorted Standard

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE



This has got to be the best job in the world! Where else do you get to be called “President” and rarely have to go to the office!

Speaking of the office, we have just moved into our new accommodations at Burton Hole Golf Course. We now have the extra space and modern facilities necessary for our Association to meet the challenges of the new millennium. All this is amidst a truly beautiful golfing environment.

One of the major requirements to meet our challenges is a growing and active membership. Each of us must make it our job to be responsibly involved in the promotion of amateur golf in Rhode Island. This can be accomplished by not only participating in our events but by making sure that all our golfing activities reflect our true affection for the game.

The other big news, of course, is the lifting of the long-standing ban on wearing shorts while participating in RIGA events. For those of us who are sartorially challenged, keep in mind that our appearance not only reflects on us personally, but also on our fellow club and Association members. All of us may never be scratch players, but that doesn’t mean we can’t dress like one.

Let me close by saying how pleased and honored I am to be president of what may not be the biggest, but what is surely one of the best golf associations in America. May each of you enjoy your most successful golfing season in 2001 and remember, the game of golf is not a matter of life and death, it’s much more important than that.

RIGA TOURNAMENT VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE

We have often been asked by people, “How can I get involved with the RIGA?” For the most part, opportunities to volunteer or help out at an RIGA event have been limited to Board members and a few staff people. That is changing with the formation of the RIGA Tournament Volunteer Committee. Interest or experience in the Rules is helpful but not necessary. More important is your interest in the game and a desire to be around tournament golf for a few hours. Sometimes there is a need for people on the golf course, while other times we can use an extra person in the scoring area. Any RIGA member who has an interest in volunteering some time at a major tournament is invited to contact either Joe Sprague or Bob Ward at the RIGA office.

The RIGA lost two close friends this past December, Ken Margertson and Alex Walsh, and one in January, Brad Oxnard.

Ken Margertson, 72, was a life-long member at Triggs Memorial Golf Club and a Board member at the RIGA. A soft-spoken man who loved the game and his friends, Ken was a very fine player who possessed a classic swing that was silky smooth and very athletic. Ken also accomplished one of the rarest feats in golf by making a double-eagle on Triggs’ par-5 sixth hole. In addition to winning two club championships at Triggs in 1967 and 1978, Ken also won the RI Public Links Championship in 1969. He also competed in numerous State Amateur and Four-Ball Championships over the years. In fact, he would often play in the Four-Ball with his brother, Ron, another fine player who is a Past President of the RIGA and member at Metacomet.

Alex Walsh, 81, was a member at Newport Country Club and Past President of the RIGA. He was a gifted singer who performed with his wife and 10 children as The Walsh Family Singers for President Kennedy and his family at Hammersmith Farm in 1963. He was also a member of many local theater companies during the 1950’s when he had the lead in several shows. He was a 1940 graduate of the College of the Holy Cross, and a navy veteran who was stationed at Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked on December 7, 1941. Alex was president and general manager of the Barker Chadsley Co. before he retired.

Brad Oxnard, 99, was one of the best golfers of his day. He played competitive golf for more than 40 years beginning in the 1920’s. He won the RI State Amateur Championship in 1928 at the age of 27 and again in 1932. He also won the Four-Ball with Al Faenza in 1952, and he won the State Seniors in 1957, ’59, and ’60. Brad was a member of Metacomet Country Club since 1928 where he won seven club championships. He was a 1926 graduate of Brown University where he was captain of the tennis team and a member of the track, baseball and basketball teams. He was a stockbroker with the former Hornblower and Weeks Brokerage firm before retiring. As an avid and accomplished bridge player, he was director of the Bridge Club of Rhode Island for 50 years.

Executive Director’s Report

This winter’s snow cover has put a damper on even the heartiest cold weather golfer’s hopes of teeing it up. Even going south hasn’t been such a great option in many places with some very unseasonably cold weather hitting the usual warm spots. But at least we can see it on TV, and to watch our own Brad Faxon and Billy Andrade finish first and fourth at the Sony Open was a special treat on a wintery Sunday afternoon.

Every one I bump into has been saying, “How about Brad?” or “Did you watch Faxon on TV?” I sure did, and I’m very happy for him. With his new wife, Dory, and his newfound confidence in his swing, it seems like the sky’s the limit for Brad. And the most amazing statistic during his wire-to-wire victory in Hawaii? Brad led the field in the tour’s scrambling stat by getting up and down for par on 22 of the 24 greens that he missed in regulation. That’s almost .92 percent! Even more amazing, the player who finished second in that category - Loren “Boss of the Moss” Roberts - converted on just slightly more than 79 percent. I think we know who’s the real boss with the flat stick.

The RIGA should be all moved into its new headquarters at Burton Hole by the time you read this. Burton Hole’s Executive Director Don Wright and I have worked closely together during the transition, and I know that he’d love to see many RIGA members come by for a visit to play nine holes or hit a bucket of balls at the range once spring rolls around.

Non-conforming equipment has been a hot topic on TV and in

2001 WEEKLY INVITATIONAL PACKAGES

The Weekly Invitational package program was a huge success in 2000. As some of you know the whole program sold out in two weeks. With a few adjustments, the program will work the same for 2001. Because of the popularity of the weekly program a limit of four packages per foursome has been put into place to make the program available to as many members as possible. In the event that a foursome is left without a package, a captain who purchased four packages may be asked to give back one to ensure that everyone can participate.

Sign-ups are again by foursome only and on a first come, first serve basis. Each foursome will designate a captain who will be responsible for coordinating arrangements with the RIGA office. We will again limit to 25 foursomes per day. These will be sold on a first come first serve basis. As a captain you need to select “Day 1” or “Day 2” on the application below in addition to a preferred time: Early 7:30 - 8:30; Mid 8:30 - 9:45; Late 9:45 - 11:00. It is not necessary for a foursome to have the same four players each week, but all must be RIGA members.

WEEKLY PACKAGES

A new change this year will allow golfers to wear shorts. The dress code will be KNEE-LENGTH bermuda shorts only. If you show up at the golf course wearing shorts that are not proper attire, you will be asked to change into the proper clothing.

The fee for each package will again be \$125.00 per player, \$500.00 per foursome. Checks must be made out to the RIGA and must be sent in with your application. In the event a tournament is cancelled because of inclement weather or no carts are available, a refund check will be sent to the captain in the amount of \$100.00. If a player’s course is within the package they select, a refund check will be sent out only after the member plays in the tournament.

The captain is responsible for correctly filling out all information below and listing the names of the other three members who will participate. The deadline for applications will be March 2. Keep in mind that packages will be filled on a first come first serve basis and last year they were sold out within two weeks.

The RIGA office will call each captain to confirm packages and tee times the week of March 19-23.

Package # 1		Package # 2		Package # 3	
Quidnessett	April 23-24	Rhode Island	May 7-8	Ledgemont	April 16-17
Misquamicut	May 14-15	Laurel Lane	June 11-12	Winnapaug	June 4-5
Cranston	August 14-15*	N. Kingstown	July30-Aug1*	Triggs	July 2-3
Wannamoisett	September 25-26*	Sakonnet	September 10-11	Kirkbrae	September 18-19*
Montaup	October 22-23	Potowomut	October 2-3*	Agawam Hunt	October 9-10*

Package # 4		Package # 5	
Pawtucket	April 9-10	Point Judith	April 30-May 1
Green Valley	June 26-27*	Crestwood	May 22-23*
Foster	August 6-7	Fenner Hill	June 19-20*
Alpine Valley	August 21-22*	Beaver River	August 27-28
Metacomet	September 4-5*	Warwick	October 15-16

* Denotes Tuesday/Wednesday Exception: North Kingstown Monday/Wednesday

Please clip or photocopy and mail to RIGA office by March 2 with a check made payable to the RIGA. \$500 per foursome per package which must accompany application.

CIRCLE ALL APPROPRIATE CATEGORIES.

PACKAGE 1	DAY1	DAY2	EARLY	MID	LATE
PACKAGE 2	DAY1	DAY2	EARLY	MID	LATE
PACKAGE 3	DAY1	DAY2	EARLY	MID	LATE
PACKAGE 4	DAY1	DAY2	EARLY	MID	LATE
PACKAGE 5	DAY1	DAY2	EARLY	MID	LATE

Captain’s Name: _____ Club Affiliation: _____

Captain’s daytime telephone number: _____

List other players and club affiliation 2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

— Joe Sprague, Jr.