



# GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER®

THE INSIDE REPORT ON WORLD GOLF

NUMBER 339

OUR 31<sup>ST</sup> YEAR

JULY 2020

Dear Subscriber:

ARE THESE TIMES tough or simply chaotic, inconvenient, misinformed and fearful? The three stories that follow are offered about tough individuals, a tough golf course, and some tough times. It's just golf... or is it?

BEN HOGAN is widely acknowledged for the disregard he had for personal discomfort and pain. His father killed himself when Ben was just a child; he slept in bunkers in order to get the first caddie assignment of the day; and having survived a nearly fatal car collision, he produced what is considered the greatest competitive season ever played.

COLONIAL was Mr. Hogan's home club where just last month the tour re-started its post-Wuhan schedule. It has always been respected for the skill it demands. This is a good time to recall the Hogan-Colonial connection because who knows how much longer the cultural tribunes will allow use of the word *colonial*.

JOHN J. McDERMOTT, as Mr. Hogan had done, learned his golf as a caddie, and dropped out of high school to become a professional golfer. Two years later, at age 19, he won the U.S. Open—the first American to do so. The following year he won again—the second player to win consecutively. He repeatedly beat the best players Great Britain and America had to offer, endured ostracism by the U.S.G.A., was shipwrecked, and died in a Pennsylvania insane asylum.

## Hogan and Colonial The Medium as Well as the Message

Colonial suited Ben Hogan. Both the course and the legacy of the man reflect stringent, seemingly emotionless success that recognizes the best in their respective disciplines without fuss.

The great players always have courses where they shine: Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods at Augusta National, Sam Snead at Augusta and Greensboro, Davis Love III at Hilton Head and, of course, Young Tom Morris at Prestwick. For Mr. Hogan, it was Colonial—where he won five times; the fifth being his last tour victory. Colonial came to be called *Hogan's Alley*, as did Riviera and the 6<sup>th</sup> hole at Carnoustie.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Hogan and Colonial  
McDermott

The difficulty of Colonial and the fact that it was in Fort Worth must have brightened Mr. Hogan, whose character was forged in Texas heat by the self-reliance and determination he learned as a boy. "He was the hardest man I ever knew, emotionally," commented a friend. "He could be

gracious or he might ignore you. It was not shyness. He was too tough to be shy. It was preoccupation."

Herbert Warren Wind wrote that Mr. Hogan played with "the burning frigidity of dry ice".

Colonial can be described with many of the same words. It, too, is enigmatic but direct. "A straight ball will get you in more trouble at Colonial than any course I know," said Mr. Hogan.

John Bredemus is the eccentric architect responsible for Colonial's original design. He was reputed to have hated shoes and new golf balls, and to consider a vantage point from the top of a tree the prime viewing place from which to plan a new course. A tax dispute with the U.S. government sent him into exile in Mexico in the late 1930s.

Colonial opened in January 1936, a year after Mr. Hogan and Valerie Fox were married, and the same year Perry Maxwell produced Southern Hills in Tulsa. Colonial was defined and refined five years later by Mr. Maxwell, who made it what it is today.

A retired banker, Mr. Maxwell came late to golf and even later to golf course design. Like Frank Lloyd Wright and Christopher Wren, Mr. Maxwell simply had a knack for it. He worked a few small jobs, but it was not until his three-year apprenticeship under Alister MacKenzie in the early 1930s, which included the creation of Crystal Downs in Michigan, that Mr. Maxwell's talent was recognized.

Striking out on his own, Mr. Maxwell added his touches to Pine Valley, The National, Maidstone, Augusta National, and Colonial. He had a flair for large, contoured putting greens and swales, which were given the sobriquet *Maxwell rolls*. This was how he created drama on flat ground.

During this same period, Mr. Hogan's mettle was forming an approach to golf honed by strict discipline and disregarding pain. Mr. and Mrs. Hogan traveled in near poverty with no need for sympathy—only success. Quietly and voraciously, he strived to attain what he could clearly visualize. In March 1940, it began to happen.

On March 22, the Associated Press inarticulately reported, "Ben Hogan, the lad who'd been second in almost everything but never had been first, proved he had the quality that makes champions Thursday when he won the thirty-eighth annual North & South Golf Championship with a record seventy-two hole score of 277.

"Eleven shots under par for the famous Pinehurst No.2 course, the Fort Worth professional took down the first money in beating Sam Snead by three strokes ... Byron Nelson was third with 286, nine shots back." The following week Mr. Hogan won at Asheville. He was on his way.

During the next nine years, Mr. Hogan won Player of Year [1948]; the Vardon Trophy five times [1940, '41, '42, '46, '48]; was undefeated as a player on two Ryder Cup teams [1941, '47]; was undefeated as captain of two Ryder Cup teams [1947, '49]; won two P.G.A. Championships [1946, '48]; one U.S. Open [1948]; leading money winner honors five times [1940, '41, '42, '46, '48].

World War II interrupted the P.G.A. Tour, but Mr. Hogan's return to competition after the war saw him taking up where he had left off. As Hogan biographer Curt Sampson wrote, "In the three and a half years bracketed by his dis-

charge from the Army Air Corps and his 1949 automobile accident, Hogan won thirty-seven tournaments. No one had ever been better in a similar amount of time. Hogan had his own little era. It took a ten-ton bus to stop him."

At 8 a.m. on Feb. 2, 1949, on a dark, foggy Highway 80—halfway between Phoenix and Fort Worth, a Greyhound Bus 548 smashed in to the Hogans' Cadillac Series 62. The steering column was pushed into the driver's seat. On its way, it fractured Mr. Hogan's collarbone at the end of his left arm. Next the car's 500 lb. V-8 engine was pushed through the firewall. It broke Mr. Hogan's pelvis,



BEN HOGAN AND HIS CADILLAC MONTHS AFTER THE COLLISION

snapped his left ankle, mutilated his left leg, and snapped his right-side seventh rib. Blood clots indicated he might not live, the mangling of his left leg that he might not walk again, and competitive golf was unthinkable.

The strict discipline of his approach to golf forged Mr. Hogan's game before the collision. He relied upon it again after the collision to accumulate his major achievements. At this moment of his most severe abjection, he did not

accept what others would certainly have resigned to as fate. The momentum of his most daunting obstruction was turned to the acquisition of his greatest accomplishments.

After the accident, he garnered three of his four Player of the Year honors. By 1953, he had won three of his U.S. Open victories; two Masters, and his [British] Open victory—all accomplished after the collision with the bus in 1949.

Mr. Hogan's injuries limited his 1953 participation to just six tournaments, five of which he won, three of those five were majors. He was unable to enter the P.G.A. Championship because it was played at the same time as the Open.

Out of 292 career tournaments—before and after the collision—Mr. Hogan finished in the top three 139 times, and in the top ten 241 times. His 64 P.G.A. tournament victories rank him fourth all-time behind Sam Snead and Tiger Woods each with 82, and Jack Nicklaus with 73.

During Mr. Hogan's rehabilitation following the collision, he took therapeutic walks from his home to Colonial. The 12-mile trip to the Club became a metaphor.

Colonial had by now also collected its competitive reputation—particularly the 5<sup>TH</sup> hole which was named *Death Valley*. Cary Middlecoff adopted this strategy at the 5<sup>TH</sup>: “First I pull out two brand new Wilson balls and throw them into the Trinity River. Then I throw up. Then I go ahead and hit my teen shot into the river.”

Colonial’s 5<sup>TH</sup> ranked as the hardest par 4 on the P.G.A. Tour as late as 1983. It is a 466-yard dogleg right that is tightly guarded by a tree-lined ditch on the left, more trees on the right, and the Trinity River deep right. The prevailing wind blows from left to right accentuating the dangers. The narrow landing area calls for a controlled fade with something less than a driver, which then necessitates a long approach to its well guarded green.

During the 1941 U.S. Open that was played at Colonial, Craig Wood was three over after playing just four holes of the second round. Mr. Wood was the reigning Masters champion and had been afflicted with a chronic back ailment that required him to play wearing a corset. There was heavy rain during the second round, which waterlogged both the course and Mr. Wood’s corset. From the 5<sup>TH</sup> tee, he pulled his drive into the ditch guarding the left side of the fairway just before a downpour halted play.

During the suspension, Mr. Wood decided he would withdraw, but Tommy Armour talked him into continuing by pointing out that everyone was struggling with the weather and the difficulty of the course. When play resumed, Mr. Wood managed a bogey at the 5<sup>TH</sup> and then played the next 49 holes in even par. His four-over 284 was good enough to win the U.S. Open by three strokes.

Not unlike Colonial, the intensity and precision Mr. Hogan claimed from his golf made his cool toughness magnetic to those who believed his secret was something other than hard work. His advice to a jovial Gardner Dickinson was, “There’s nothing funny out there.”

In retirement, Mr. Hogan was a mainstay during the week of the Colonial. His five victories there and the Club’s proximity to his home saw him present for various functions. As the tournament dinner was adjourned, a line would form at his table for autograph seekers.

Mr. Hogan, like the serious and exacting golf course that lay just beyond the dining room, may have found all the hoopla rather trite. The point was the intensity and accomplishment necessary to win at Colonial. What took place on the course was all that mattered. Mr. Hogan had no need to draw attention to his accomplishments at Colonial. If they did not know—and of course they all did—he had no need to tell them.

By this time, Mr. Hogan was the personification of the style he created. He shunned his five Colonial champion’s blazers for a tailored gray suit while he quietly signed autographs. Mr. Hogan and Colonial suited one another.



JOHN J. McDERMOTT, JR.

### **John J. McDermott, Jr. Audacious, Insane and Forgotten**

The generally unacclaimed competitive accomplishment and social ostracism of John McDermott are without compare in the long history of golf. He was the first native-born American to win the U.S. Open, remains the youngest to do so, the only teenager to do so, the first to break par for 72 holes, and one of just six ever to win consecutively. His accomplished talent is indisputable but generally unknown and rarely acknowledged.

The fact that Mr. McDermott had the temerity as a teenager to taunt the world’s best golfers and the talent to deliver leaves us mindful of the young Cassius Clay. The press of Mr. McDermott’s day was not so intrigued as that of Mr. Clay’s day. Sporting society during the second decade of the 20<sup>TH</sup> century was not receptive to such a presence as Mr. McDermott, and he was not prepared for the social beating to which he would be treated.

Francis Ouimet’s win at Brookline in 1913 was an aftermath, almost a footnote, to Mr. McDermott’s consecutive victories in 1911 and 1912. Mr. McDermott was a professional at a time when the world viewed golf professionals as socially inferior to amateur players. Johnny McDermott broke through first. To fail to recognize his immense accomplishment would be a continuation of the tragedy that marked the years following his U.S. Open victories.

Following here are the facts of Mr. McDermott’s rise as one of golf’s greatest champions—probably its most audacious. Please keep in mind, as you read these chronological events, that the U.S. Open was played in June (1909, ‘10, ‘11), in August (1912), and in September (1913).

JOHN J. McDERMOTT (JJM) was born in Philadelphia on Aug. 8, 1891. He worked as a caddie at Aronimink and learned his golf from the Club's professional, Walter Reynolds. He was a good student but dropped out of high school before graduation to become a professional golfer.

1909

At the age of 17, the 130-pound, 5ft. 8in. JJM enters the U.S. Open at Englewood, New Jersey. He finishes tied for 49th. At some point during the year, he asks A.W. Tillinghast to help him get the professional's position at the Philadelphia Cricket Club, but the position is already filled by four-time U.S. Open Champion (1901, '03 - '05) Willie Anderson. In a newspaper article, JJM challenges all Philadelphia professionals to a Home-and-Home match for \$500. He beats the first taker handily.

1910

In June, JJM, 18, enters the U.S. Open at the Philadelphia Cricket Club. With a score of 298, he finds himself in the championship's first three-way playoff in which he scores 75 to finish second to Alex Smith's 71, and beat Mr. Smith's brother Macdonald's 77. JJM vows to "get" Alex Smith the next year.

1911

At Chicago in June, JJM, age 19, plays his way into another three-way playoff with a 72 hole score of 307. In this playoff, he scores 80 strokes and is victorious over Mike Brady's 82 and George Simpson's 85. He becomes—and to this day remains—the youngest U.S. Open Champion at an age of 19 years, 10 months, and 12 days.

1912

At Buffalo, JJM, 20, wins his second U.S. Open with a score of 294 [course par was 74]. He is the first in U.S.



For W.C.F.:

*"Boys, if you didn't bring it with you, you won't find it here."*

Ben Hogan

A comment sometimes made to his fellow professionals as he walked onto the practice tee at tournament time.

Open history to break par for 72 holes; and the second—after Willie Anderson—to win consecutively.

1913

JJM wins the Western Open, a tournament second in stature only to the U.S. Open. Later in the year, he suffers heavy losses in the stock market.

On Aug. 24, in a run-up to the U.S. Open that will be played at Brookline a month later, JJM wins the Shawnee Open. Harry Vardon comes fifth, and Ted Ray seventh. In remarks at the prize giving, JJM predicts that he will beat them again at Brookline, "We hope our foreign visitors had a good time, but we don't think they did, and are sure they won't win the National Open."

After JJM's remarks are publicized, despite his apology, the U.S.G.A. considers refusing their two-time defending champion's entry into the U.S. Open due to his "extreme discourtesy". Ultimately he is allowed to compete. Disheartened by the public denigration of his behavior, JJM finishes eighth. Mr. Ouimet wins.

1914

In June, JJM, now 22, travels to Scotland to compete in the Open Championship at Prestwick. His transportation is late and he arrives after play has begun. He is offered the courtesy of entering despite his late arrival but declines saying it would not be fair to his fellow competitors. On his return to America on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, he is shipwrecked in the English Channel and rescued after some time in a lifeboat.

In August at Midlothian in Blue Island, Illinois, JJM, 23, competes in his last U.S. Open and finishes tied for ninth. Later that year, he blacks out and collapses at Atlantic City, his home club.

Shortly thereafter he enters the asylum for the insane at Norristown, Pa., and never again plays golf competitively.

Yours vly truly,

Gary A. Galyean  
Editor & Publisher

Destinations included in GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER® are chosen at the discretion of the editors. All expenses related to the gathering of this information are paid by the publication. Rates quoted are subject to change without notice. Subscription rate is \$88 US per year (\$98US overseas); renewal rate from \$82US.



Back issues are available to subscribers only at \$10 each. Inquiries: Gary GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER®, 11718 Southeast Federal Highway, No. 210, Hobe Sound, Florida 33455. Tel (772) 559.3382. Copyright 2020 Gary Galyean. Tag Galyean, Art Director. Quotation, reproduction or transmission is prohibited.