

This is one of a series on the history of the New York State Golf Association taken from the manuscript "The 20th Century NYSGA", written by Frederick W. Box, NYSGA Historian.

NYSGA History: Chapter 2

By Frederick W. Box, NYSGA Historian

The New York State Amateur Championship moved upstate in August, 1923 with Buffalo golfers dominating the play at the Orchard Park Golf Club (Buffalo area) just as Long Island members had done in 1923.

Eddie Diggs of Cherry Valley CC defended the title and Richard A. Jones Jr. of White Plains won the medal with an even par 72, but that was all the downstate contingent could brag about. In the final it was Lee J. Chase of the Park Club, Buffalo, easily capturing the title with a 7 and 6 victory over Henry Comstock of the Country Club of Buffalo. Neither had played particularly well in qualifying-- Chase with a 78, and Comstock with a 79.

Jones went out in the first round 2 and 1 to Comstock, the Western New York Champion and Williams College player. Comstock won the last three holes of the front nine to take a 2 up lead and won four more holes in a row (seven consecutively) with a three under burst. Jones replied by winning the next three holes with two pars and a birdie, but could only halve 17.

Comstock won his way to the finals with victories over C.H. Rogers, Buffalo, 2 and 1; R.L. Tichor, Syracuse, 4 and 3; and W. Hamilton Gardner, Buffalo, 1 up.

Chase defeated, consecutively, J. McAuliffe, Buffalo, 6 and 5; Jack Mackie Jr., Inwood, 8 and 7; F. E. Wattles Jr., Hamburg, 1 up (22 holes); and J. F. Dailey, Rochester, 1 up (20 holes).

Diggs fell in the quarter-finals to Gardner, 3 and 2, trailing all the way. Chase, who had won the Florida amateur during the previous winter and had to play extra holes in the quarter and semi-finals, had an easier time in the finals. He shot a one under par 71 in the morning that included five straight hole wins on the second nine and a three up lead. (Comstock had won the first four holes.)

Some great putting extended Chase's lead in the afternoon going to 8 up after 27, before losing 28 and 29, but clinching the Ganson DePew Trophy with a win at 30. Chase had a par 36 in the afternoon nine while Comstock fell off to 41.

Jack Mackie Jr. of Inwood, who went out decisively in the first round in 1924, showed he had matured in the July, 1925 tournament although he was only 18 years old. Shortly after annexing the Long Island Junior Title, Mackie led the downstate entries to another domination of the upstate competitors as they did in the 1923 event.

The upstate contingent captured three of the top four spots in the qualifying round, led by Frank Wattles Jr. of Hamburg and Yale with a 77 fired in a sandstorm at the Lido CC links at Long Beach, LI. The foul weather was reminiscent of the 1923 tournament at Garden City, played in a rainy weekend.

Wattles' score was achieved although he went over par on only three holes in winds that were almost blinding at times. Neil Fulkerson of Belleclaire was second with a 79, followed by W.A. Gardner of Buffalo at 80 and W.E. Boyne of Buffalo at 81. Three other Long Islanders shot 81 and Mackie was at 82. Richard A. Jones Jr. of White Plains, the 1924 medalist, shot 81 and Eddie Driggs of Cherry Valley, the 1923 champ, was at 83. Stephen Greghegan of Huntington, the runner-up, could only score 90. Only 56 golfers turned in cards, and a score of 94 made the championship flight.

Lee J. Chase of Buffalo, the 1924 winner, was among the victims in the first round, losing to J.L. McAleenan of Fox Hills, 2 and 1. Eddie Driggs of Cherry Valley, the 1923 victor, won his way to the semi-finals before losing to the youthful Mackie 3 and 1.

Mackie also was victorious in matches with P. Miller Jones, Richmond, 2 and 1; F. E. Wattles Jr., Hamburg, 1 up; and Tom Sherman, Utica, 1 up.

Greghegan defeated Grant A. Peacock, Garden City, 3 and 2; R. A. Jones Jr., White Plains, 3 and 2; Harry Scharff, Lido, 1 up; and H.G. Edwards, Garden City, 4 and 3.

In a second round match, Tom Sherman defeated his brother Sherrill, the state golf president, 3 and 2.

Like the 1923 and 1924 finals, Mackie scored decisively against Greghegan, 20, in a battle of youngsters, leading 3 up after the morning round of the 36-hole finals. The son of the Inwood CC pro won holes 6 through 10, the ninth when the Huntington player knocked Mackie's ball in the hole on a stymie. Jack had a 38-39-77 in the morning to Greghegan's 43-41-84, and a three hole lead.

The eventual champion won four consecutive holes (3 through 6) starting the afternoon round, and despite Greghegan's wins on 7 and 8, was fully in command. He had threes on 10 and 11, and a halve on 12 to close out the match, 7 and 6.

The American Golfer Trophy for club pairs went by default to Cherry Valley CC when Lido CC player R.W. Woolworth was unable to appear for a playoff. The winning duo was J.F. Riddell and Donald McKellar and the Lido team was Woolworth and Tom Potter.

This tournament was the last under the administration of Sherrill Sherman of Utica who is considered the founding father of the association. Although he turned over the presidency, he remained as first vice president, a policy that was followed until 1950 to insure experienced transition among the officers.

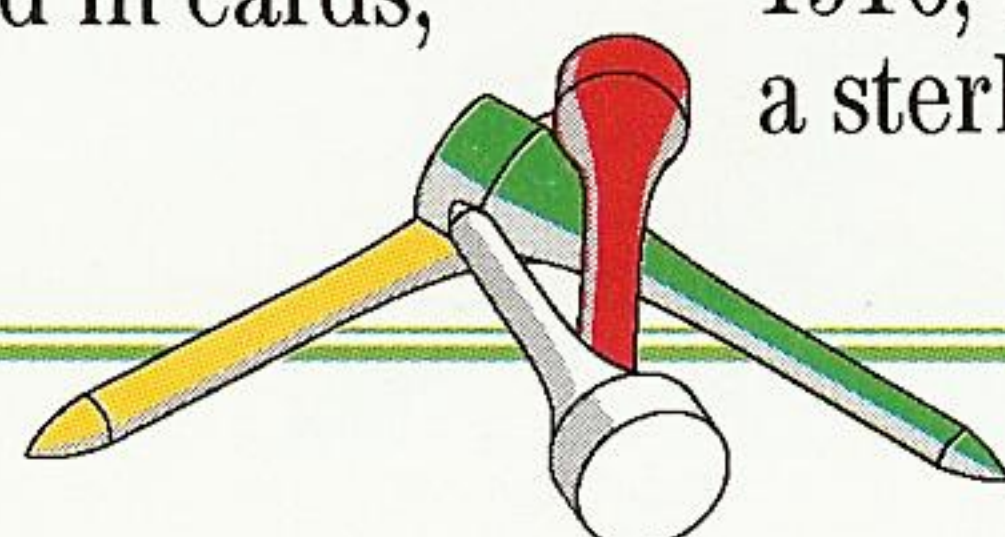
Sherrill remained an interest in the NYSGA at least until 1956, serving on the Executive and Advisory Committees and as treasurer in 1951 and 1952. Concerning his term as treasurer he commented, "A situation developed of criticism that indicated the possibility of the withdrawing of the golf clubs of the Metropolitan District unless drastic action was taken. Since then, we have had a properly functioning organization with audited reports."

Mr. Sherman had served Yahnundasis Golf Club faithfully for more than 40 years in various capacities and followed the interests of his father, James S., a founder of the club and its second president. Sherrill was club president in 1918 and 1919 and served on the board of directors for 23 years, never missing a meeting, according to Yahnundasis' history. For 16 years he was chairman of the greens committee and let's not forget he was the club champion nine times from 1905 through 1932.

He went on to play 18 consecutive times in the U.S. Amateur and was a semi-finalist in 1915. Seven times he played with the U.S. Seniors team against Canadians and twice abroad: in 1948 in England and Sweden and in 1954 in Scotland. There he became a member of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews.

With his brother Tom, a club champion seven times from 1907 to 1916, they won the Club of America team championship in 1915 and a sterling silver putter now on display in the U.S. Golf Association

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Museum in Far Hills, NJ. They also teamed against touring professionals of the day including Harry Vardon and Edward Ray.

The second NYSGA president was Don W. Parker of Garden City, the charter secretary-treasurer, who secured the invitation to hold the first tournament at his home course. Mr. Parker carried on the brunt of the association's burdens as the amateur tournament grew in participation reaching 150 entries in 1927. The Women's Amateur started in 1930 and, despite shaky early years, has continued uninterrupted since. Sherman served as his vice-president and Ganson DePew as second vice-president until his death in 1934. P. R. McCrea of Oak Hill CC, Rochester, succeeded Parker and served as secretary-treasurer until Sherman took over in 1950. Charles J. Tobin of Albany became general counsel in 1940 and Leslie A. Palmer of New York City as executive secretary in 1929. C.L. Hequembourg of Schenectady succeeded Mr. DePew in 1935.

The Parker years started in 1926 with a gradual increase in contestants (89) and the first closely contested final. The tournament moved upstate to the McGregor Links at Saratoga Springs where the qualifying scores again were high (78) and a 16 player championship flight was tried for the first time.

Albert Brodbeck of Mt. Vernon's Siwanoy CC, a University of Pennsylvania golf and basketball captain, led the youngsters to a second straight triumph with a 1 up (19 holes) over W. Hamilton Gardner, Country Club of Buffalo veteran. Gardner was one of three who tied for the medal along with Steve Greghagan, the 1923 finalist, and Henry W. Comstock of Buffalo, the 1924 finalist.

Jack Mackie Jr., the 1925 champion, missed the championship sixteen by a stroke shooting an 84. Brodbeck barely made the top flight with an 83 along with President Parker. Maurice J. McCarthy of Green Meadow CC, a Georgetown University freshman, was competing for the first time and shot an 81. He was to win in 1929.

Brodbeck shot a one over par to win his quarter-final round match 3 and 2 over S.E. McKean of Oneonta. Gardner did even better with par against E.V. Romans of Westhampton, 2 and 1; Comstock edged J.L. Stewart of Schenectady, also 2 and 1, and George G. Gagnon of Cohoes sent his fellow club member Roy Biermeister to the sidelines, 1 up. Comstock had come into the tournament after winning the Mexican Amateur.

In the tightest championship match to date, Brodbeck shot a 37 on the first nine to Gardner's 38, winning the first and eighth holes and losing the seventh. Gardner quickly fell farther behind losing 10, but they traded 11 and 12. After three holes even, Gardner tied for the lead by winning 16 and 18 when Brodbeck put his second shot into a greenside bunker.

On the extra hole Gardner drove into a bunker and took two shots to get out while Al reached the green in two and had a par to a six by his opponent.

In a playoff for the medal Gagnon defeated Comstock 75 to 79. The winners of other flights were: Second, Phillips Finley, Quegue, L.I.; third, H.R. Beyerl, Schenectady; fourth, Charles Hodgman, Mt. Vernon and fifth, J.A. Becker Jr., Albany.

It was all Arthur W. (Ducky) Yates of Oak Hill CC, Rochester, in the 1928 tournament on his home venue when he won the medal with a par 72 and all four of his matches comfortably. It was his fourth try for this title while playing a heavy schedule up and down the Easter seaboard. His most notable victory came in the North and South event at Pinehurst.

The field of 150 golfers included all four previous champions, three of whom made the championship flight: Al Brodbeck of Mt. Vernon defending, Eddie Driggs of Lakeville, 1923 winner; Jack Mackie Jr., Inwood, 1925 victor. Lee Chase of Buffalo, 1924 champ, failed to make the championship, shooting an 86.

Yates shot a 38-34=72 in the medal round to edge John F. Dailey Jr., also of Oak Hill (36-37=73). Mackie had a 75, Brodbeck and Driggs each had a 76. It took a score of 80 to make the top 16.

Driggs came into the tourney after winning the Metropolitan Amateur.

Dailey ousted Brodbeck in the opening round 2 up while Driggs and Mackie went out in the second round. Driggs lost 3 and 2 to L.W. Chapin, the Oak Hill champion; and Mackie was ousted by Dr. Jack Ryerson of Cooperstown 3 and 1.

Meanwhile Yates pummeled Jarvis Hicks Jr., Salisbury, 1 up; James Weldon, Oak Hill, 2 up; Ryerson 5 and 3, and F.H. Gouveneur, CC of Rochester, 4 and 3.

Gouveneur reached the all-Rochester final defeating Thomas J. Riley, Garden City, 2 up; Dailey 4 and 3; and Chapin 3 and 2.

The 260 pound Yates played sub-par golf in his 30 holes of the final two matches going three under fours for 30 holes. Against Ryerson, he fired a par 36 on the front nine to lead three up. And after the Cooperstown golfer won 10 with a putt across the green, Yates won three of the next five holes to close the match.

Gouveneur proved a tougher opponent although Yates led 2 up after nine holes, but Gouveneur won 12. Then Yates ran off the next three holes going 4, 4, 2 with birdies on 13 and 15 to close out the match 4 and 3.

Winners of the other flights were: second, C.M. Loeb, White Plains; third, Sherrill Sherman, Utica; fourth, S.E. McKean, Oneonta.

After two straight years upstate, the tournament moved to the Westchester-Biltmore CC West Course with 136 golfers in the field. And as Ducky Yates won on his home course in 1927, so did George Dawson, 27, who moved east from Chicago.

Like Yates in the previous year, Dawson shot the medal of 77—only this time he was tied with Donald Carr of Mt. Kisco and John Ayling of Syracuse, in the rain. Yates had a 78 while Mackie and Brodbeck had 82's. Ayling won the medal in a draw.

Dawson defeated Mackie, Charles Faul of Westchester-Biltmore, F.J. Fitzpatrick of Albany 5 and 5 and Mark Stuart of Westchester Hills 1 up in 20 holes to reach the finals.

Yates made a valiant effort to repeat, defeating Richard A. Jones Jr., Westchester, 2 and 1 and again dusting F.H. Gouveneur of Rochester 3 and 2.

The brother of John Dawson, the U.S. Amateur runner-up, had little trouble with Yates in the 36 hole final, winning 4 and 3. He shot 73 to Yates' 76 in the morning round to go 2 up, and won with three birdies in four holes in the afternoon to lead all the way. Newspaper reports said stymies played a big role during the tournament.

This was the first tournament run by Lester Palmer of New York City who held the title of Executive Secretary. This position is now known as Executive Director.

The roaring twenties was closed out at the Mohawk Country Club, Schenectady, with 135 entries but no defending champion. George Dawson of Rye had moved back to Chicago.

A worthy champion emerged as Maurice McCarthy of Green Meadow CC, Mt. Vernon, won the medal with a par 71 (34-37) and the title 9 and 8. The Georgetown senior came into the tournament as the NCAA Champion.

The medal round was highlighted by a 73 (40-33) fired by 16 year-old H. Law Weatherwax of Albany. Past President Sherrill Sherman of Utica shot a fine 76 to make the top flight.

McCarthy had only one hiccup on his way to the title and that was in the semi-finals when Jarvis Hicks of Hempstead carried him to an extra hole.

In his other matches, McCarthy defeated J.S. Beale of Schenectady, 4 and 2; Sherman, 6 and 4; S.E. McKeon, Oneonta, 4 and 3; and George Ayling, Syracuse 9 and 8 in the 36-hole final.

McCarthy was 9 up after 18 holes, shooting 39-37=76 to Ayling's 48-41=89, so it didn't take long in the afternoon. Ayling was able to keep McCarthy from extending his lead, but it didn't matter as he won 9 and 8, the widest margin of victory up until that time.

