

# IS BOBBY JONES LOSING INTEREST IN GOLF?

ONE OF THE GREATEST billiard players that ever chalked a cue was playing in a match with one who was so much his inferior that, as the *New York World* remarks in an editorial recalling this encounter—apropos of Bobby Jones's recent defeat—"comparison would merely be



THE BOY WHO SURPRIZED HIMSELF BY BEATING BOBBY JONES

Johnny Goodman, of Omaha, who eliminated the champion but failed to capture the championship.

ludicrous." Yet in this particular match the great player, Jake Schaefer, "could not seem to get started" against his opponent, Felix Grange of France. Schaefer, *The World* says, "would make a shot so brilliant that the gallery would hum, follow it with a beautiful gather, and then miss a set-up that a novice could make. As a result Grange forged steadily ahead, and it was not until he was well into his second hundred that Schaefer woke up and pulled the match out of the fire. Why his clumsiness in the earlyinnings? 'Well,' mused one spectator, 'Jake Schaefer is thirty-four years old. He has played in so many matches that he can't begin to count them all. And against that punk out there he can't quite get up enough interest to click them off. People think that what age does to you is weaken your muscles and dull your eye. That's the bunk. Jake's muscles and eye are as good as they ever were.

What it does to you is much worse. It erodes your soul, so that things don't matter as much as they did. Billiards is like football, boxing, and chess. Only youngsters can care enough about it to play it well.' "

Between this episode and the unexpected elimination of Bobby Jones in the recent national amateur golf tournament at Pebble Beach, California, *The World* draws a parallel. The supposedly invincible Bobby, holder of the title when the tournament began, was defeated in his first round of match play, eighteen holes, by Johnny Goodman of Omaha. Goodman himself fell in the next round. The tournament in general was one of upsets. Jones lost. Then, we read in the *New York Sun*, "came the topple of George von Elm, rated as second-best amateur in American golf, and that of Gene Homans, Roland Mackenzie, and Donald Moe." And finally Harrison Johnson of St. Paul came out on top, defeating Dr. Willing of Portland, Oregon. But let us return to *The World's* explanation of Bobby's fall. Says this journal:

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## Bobby Jones

Altho he is only twenty-seven, he "has played in so many matches that he can't begin to count them all." He has been through two big tournaments this season. He was up against a player whom he should have taken with ease, a player to whom he probably gave only passing thought as he looked forward to the really difficult play. But passing thought is not enough to defeat even a mediocre player. And before he realized what was happening, Mr. Bobby Jones, the greatest golfer the world has ever seen, was out, with no way to get back. It all goes to show that skill, presumably the most mechanical thing that a human being can learn, has an emotional undertone too. Unless you care you are not likely to show much of it.

This view would seem to agree more or less with *The World's* news account of the match, where we read, "Jones, it must be said with due deference to the steady, heady golf played by Goodman, was quite a bit off the top of his game." But William D. Richardson, in the *New York Times*, presents a somewhat different view, as he tells us of the match and the things that Bobby had at stake in it:

Jones met a fate he narrowly escaped in the last two championships. For the vast majority of the gallery who came for the express purpose of seeing Bobby win his third consecutive title and surpass the record he and Jerry Travers now hold jointly through having won four championships the defeat of the Georgian was nothing short of a calamity.

Bobby had still another mark within reach of his mashie niblick—the record of winning both the open and amateur in the same year—a feat only accomplished by Chick Evans thus far.

Except for the first two holes and the thirteenth and fourteenth, Jones played great golf, but those holes were his undoing.

Bobby's ball had a poor lie on the first. He fluffed the shot and was thirty feet short of the green, while on the second he took a 6 by driving into a bunker, playing out short of the cross bunkers and eventually becoming stymied. Goodman, in the same trap on

his drive, just managed to carry the cross trap on his third, and won the hole by chipping up close.

Goodman won the third with a birdie 3, holing a twelve-foot uphill putt for it, and so was 3 up after the first three holes. Bobby stemmed the tide running so strongly against him, by winning the fourth with a birdie 3, and he also won the sixth with a birdie 4.

His first putting lapse came when he three-putted the short seventh from twenty feet, running four feet past when he went after a birdie, but he won the next one when Goodman's second went into the sand and he failed to get out on his first attempt.

After that Bobby began to play real golf, but Goodman never wavered, halving the ninth and tenth with fours and the eleventh with a birdie 3.



**THE NEW NATIONAL AMATEUR  
CHAMPION**

Harrison Johnson, the "pride of St. Paul," who succeeded to Bobby Jones's crown after a tournament full of upsets.



### *Bobby Jones*

The downfall of Bobby was greeted with terrific mourning in most segments of the golf circle, and several controversial points were brought once more to the fore. One of these was the advisability of outlawing the eighteen-hole match, in favor of the thirty-six-hole, in such tournaments, on the theory that the shorter course does not furnish a sufficient test. But it seems to Heywood Broun, in his *New York Telegram* column, "It Seems to Me," that Jones's defeat was a good thing. In explanation of this heretical view he says:

Even in golf an aristocracy should not be established. It is a good thing for the game to have Jones lose now and again. It is a good thing for Jones. The youngster who put out the champion had to perform prodigies to achieve his triumph. There is no fairness in suggesting that the result was a fluke, even tho it is likely that Bobby could trim him nine times out of ten. What of that? Eighteen holes may furnish a less exacting test than the double round, but it is a standard golfing distance, and the verdict deserves respect.

There is luck in golf, as in most other sports. As far as I know, chess is the only field of human competition in which chance has been reduced to a minimum, and for that very reason it is also one of the dullest of pastimes. Luck can have much to do with success in politics, industry, or even art. I do not see why it should be barred from the golf course. A few believe that the processes of science owe nothing to chance, but Newton needed to get a break with the apple, and Franklin's thunder-storm seems to have come along at a convenient moment.

Moreover, a friend of mine who is engaged upon medical research tells me that many of the greatest discoveries in his field were made by men who were upon the trail of something else. And Columbus, so the teacher said, was looking for a northwest passage.

Men engaged in pursuits far more important than the attempt to win the amateur golf championship have been obliged to submit to the dictates of fate. Jones does well to take his debacle calmly. He cut a shot too fine and fell into a pit. Napoleon did the same thing at Waterloo. Bobby should anoint himself with the satisfaction which comes to those who failed while greatly daring. It was a reckless stroke and not a timid one which sent him to the side-lines.

Turning more directly to the match and its participants, however, let us have a look at the twenty-year-old who deposed the "King of the Links." In the *New York Evening World* we find this brief sketch:

Johnny Goodman has had one of the most colorful careers in golf, even if he didn't obtain much prominence until he eliminated the Atlantan from the national amateur.

Johnny, one of eight children left orphans by the early death of their father, became a caddie in Omaha, when he was ten years old. Like many another star of the game he learned how to play by watching his employers' mistakes on fairway and green.

When he was fifteen he won a tournament in Omaha. At sixteen he was State Champion of Nebraska. Next year he won the city championship of Omaha. He attended night school to get a high-school diploma.

In 1926 he was so anxious to compete for the trans-Mississippi title that he took a job as cattle-tender on a freight train

*Bobby Jones*

to reach St. Louis, scene of the tournament. He reached the semifinals. The next year several Omaha golfers, who had been much impressed by his record, invited him to join their motor party to the trans-Mississippi in Colorado. He won the tourney.

Last June young Johnny jumped into national prominence for the first time when he turned in the lowest score of any of the 1,400 golfers, amateur and professional, who tried to qualify for the national open at Winged Foot.

Country clubs in Omaha wanted to pay his expenses, but he refused the offers, not wishing to endanger his amateur status. Again he hired out on a cattle train. He finished thirty-fourth at Winged Foot.

The sensations of a golfer who has beaten Bobby Jones are more easily imagined than described. Johnny Goodman himself could not describe them, and admitted it in a copyrighted article for North American Newspaper Alliance, in which he said:

The crowd was fine, but the only thing I remember is Bobby Jones coming up with his hand outstretched.

I can't tell you what it feels like. If you have ever wanted something real badly—and then found out you could have it just by trying hard, you will know how I felt when I beat Bobby Jones.

I will never make the mistake of thinking I can ever beat him again. He didn't play very well, and I am sure he could beat me every time he tried, but I will say that if I ever again have the honor of meeting him, I will try just as hard.

It is a wonderful honor, just to have played with him.

But you can tell the world, Bobby Jones is the best golfer—and the finest gentleman in the world, and if it hadn't been that I wanted to win if I could, I would be awfully sorry that he didn't beat me, for I feel sure he could have won the National Amateur Championship.

I had the advantage of Bobby Jones when we started to play. Every one thought sure that Bobby would win, so I started out to do the best I could. Bobby couldn't seem to get going, and the first thing I knew I had won the first three holes.

Three holes up at the start of an eighteen-hole match is quite a handicap and I wondered if I could keep trying hard enough to win.

Bobby Jones is a wonderful gentleman, and I know he didn't blame me for winning those first three holes. Like every fan in that big gallery, I thought it would be only a question of time when Jones would cut loose and swamp me.

