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That Last Bang at the Pin

BY SANDY McNIBLICK

"Wonder what a wooden Indian thinks about?" Wonder what the Smith Brothers think about?" These captions and the like have graced certain cartoons done by Briggs. They went big. This cartoonist happens to be an ardent golfer. We have often wondered if he or anybody else, even the player himself could analyze what a golfer thinks about who steps up to his last approach shot in a championship with a chance at the title.

Of all the shots in a close championship that last bang at the pin carries the most thrill. It's the last test. It comes at the end of a terrific nerve strain. Superhuman play all the way to this shot may be wiped out at the flick of an iron with a poor shot here.

To a golf scribe who trundles after the knickered satellites on many fields through many championships, dozens of settings for that last approach, which must be right, occur.

There was that red-hot sizzling finish of the 1920 North and South open championship at Pinehurst. Right down to that very last approach iron the eighteenth, or 72d green on No. 2 course Clarence Hackney, Fred McLeod and Walter Hagen all had a free shot at the title.

Hackney, pro at Atlantic City, led the procession. A terrific gale right in his teeth fairly shoved against his round, brick-red features as he socked out a long skimmer straight down the line from the tee. He knew what they were doing behind him and figured he had to get his 4. It meant catching the green with his second, a terrific shot at that minute in that gale. Smiling and confident, nay cocky, up to now, the twinkle fled from Hackney's eyes and they turned hard as granite as he braced against the wind. He was having some of those thoughts.

The shot travelled on a line. There was applause. It had gotten there all right but was over. He took a 5. It led the field when along came diminutive Freddy McLeod. The crowd was gathering to be in there at the finish.

McLeod had a 4 to be out in front and his wood to get there was pretty as it came, just a speck of white against the blue, slowly rising to drop with a thud and roll close to the sand green. He got his 4.

Last came Hagen. Every man, woman and child on the course was in his train or packed around the green as he stood to the task of erasing his ball through the wind up to the green. A 4 would win, a 5 would tie.

"A cinch either way," they murmured. But was Hagen thinking any such consoling thoughts as that. The stress of the moment must have played havoc even in his experienced and oaken heart for he slapped his approach exactly and unanimously into the trap at the green's edge. He was out of it. He took a 6.

Then there was the national open championship later on at Toledo. Never in the history of this event has there been such a finish. To the turn of the last eighteen holes they had been eagerly bunched but in to the stretch of the last nine they began to string out. It looked to be all Vardon with a fistful of strokes to the good and a birdie on the 64th. It was to be the grand master's crowning triumph of a superb reign on the links. But the unaccountable happened. Vardon "blew up" and his partner, Jim Barnes, began to make up strokes so fast on Vardon that it looked almost as though it would be "Long Jim."

But Ted Ray was hitting it up in his last round. So were Leo Diegel, Jock Hutchison, and Jack Burke. It was a dizzy situation. In platoons they tore from one group to the other, a gallery of frenzied fans. Finally they swarmed to the home hole. Here the titanic battle for supremacy would be settled.

They saw Jack Burke lead the field with 296 to be tied by Harry Vardon, steadying down at the last. A long drive at this hole was followed by a short pitch, a shot requiring the maximum of finesse to a green set up like a pie plate.

Five in all had a chance at the title. Ted Ray had the stroke to spare and went into the lead unemotionally—outwardly.

Leo Diegel came down there before them all. His pitch up had to be dead. A birdie 3 would give him a tie with Ray. They groaned aloud as he just got on. A 4 for him.

Came Jock Hutchison, the last hope. They almost prayed for that pitch of his to bring up dead. Was human nature equal to the miracle? What was he thinking about?

Not a man in the great gallery envied him as he yanked at his cap and faced what had to be a miracle shot. It wasn't. The title had gone far, far away. Ted Ray stood looking on. "Gosh, ain't it hot?" he whispered.

Quoth Cupid, "No more capers!
Well, I have had my fling;
I see by all the papers,
Disarmament's the thing."

"The world is tired of tooting,
And tired of war's alarms,
The world gives up its shooting,
The world lays down its arms."

"The thought my spirit harrows,—
But I'm a patriot,—so,
I'm going to scrap my arrows,
I'm going to junk my bow."

"And when I drop the curtain,—
When all my tactics cease,—
Of one thing I am certain,
Some people will have peace!"

Carolyn Wells.

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