Scarborough maintains old ties to maintenance

By Vern Putney

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Bill Scarborough long ago traded in the tools and technology of a three-years stint as a golf course superintendent to resume a competitive career. But the retired Navy career man retains a keen interest in "the men and women who make the game go."

Scarborough, now tournament coordinator for the North Florida Golf Association, hovered around the scoreboard during the recent national golf course superintendents' championship play at two Sawgrass courses.

A skilled computer operator and handy with typewriter and pencil, Scarborough covered the annual event for the North Florida Golf News.

The local resident, now 68, a one handicapper and still a national course superintendent member, may have been that group's highest-rated player. He was National Public Links finalist in 1956, semifinalist in 1954 and quarterfinalist in 1955.

At his peak, Scarborough's handicap was plus three, which meant he spotted par three shots before he teed off. He was expected to score 69 or better each round.

In the course of a competitive odyssey spanning 40 years, Scarborough criss-crossed the country and played a variety of courses. But perhaps his most cherished experiences were those provided by the courses of the eastern United States.

"That's where I learned to play the game as it should be played," declared the Memphis, Tenn., native. "The Riverside Experience provided Scarborough further favorable memories. In addition to gaining a new insight into golf "from the ground up," he learned to read different grasses. Bentgrass was new to him.

Closer acquaintance with various turf earlier looked upon only as a convenient surface from which to launch a golf ball came in handy. Scarborough was appointed superintendent at Pawtuxet River (Md.) NTC in 1951, at NAS Memphis in 1954 and Jacksonville NAS, his current home course, in 1955. Lieutenant Scarborough, still a trim 63, 200 pounds, completed a 30-year hitch in 1970.

Most precious in his storehouse of Navy-golf memories, beyond the Bermuda Amateur title in 1958 are all-Navy crowns in 1961, '68 and '69, and Pacific Northwest Golf Association title in '79.

Current concerns of Jacksonville's five-time Seniors champion dominant in this area's age group and a recognized rules authority, are environmental problems and the expanding role of the so-called environmental protectors.

"They're giving us fits with mole crickets, and these critters are no small potatoes in this neck of the woods," Scarborough asserts. "If we can't use the proper pesticides to achieve maximum effect, it affects our playing surfaces and therefore our scores. The grass dies, and we wind up playing out of dust. At my age, I can't give the course anything."

Opponents might disagree—loudly. They won't mind seeing Scarborough sidelined March 23-29. He'll be working the practice tee as a volunteer marshal at TPC of Sawgrass during the PGA Tour stop.

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