



“Protected by Pinkerton”

Security can be just as important to a tournament's success as publicity, course condition, or weather

As a hushed crowd gathered around the 18th hole to watch Hale Irwin tap in a putt to put him under par on the second round play at the Colgate Golf Classic at Pinehurst, N.C., in late August, a smaller scale drama was being played out at the gate entrance to parking lot number 2. Someone wanted to bring in a folding lawn chair to comfortably watch the play. The offense was of course minor, but tournament officials are constantly challenged with ticket holders attempting to enter golf tournaments with everything from beer-laden ice chests to 8-foot folding ladders for “above the crowd” viewing of PGA players in action.

Security has always been a problem at major golf tournaments, but since the sport turned into a popular spectator event in the mid-fifties, tournament directors have been challenged with the handling of crowds which at the bigger events can surpass 100,000 people during the normal 4 days of competitive play.

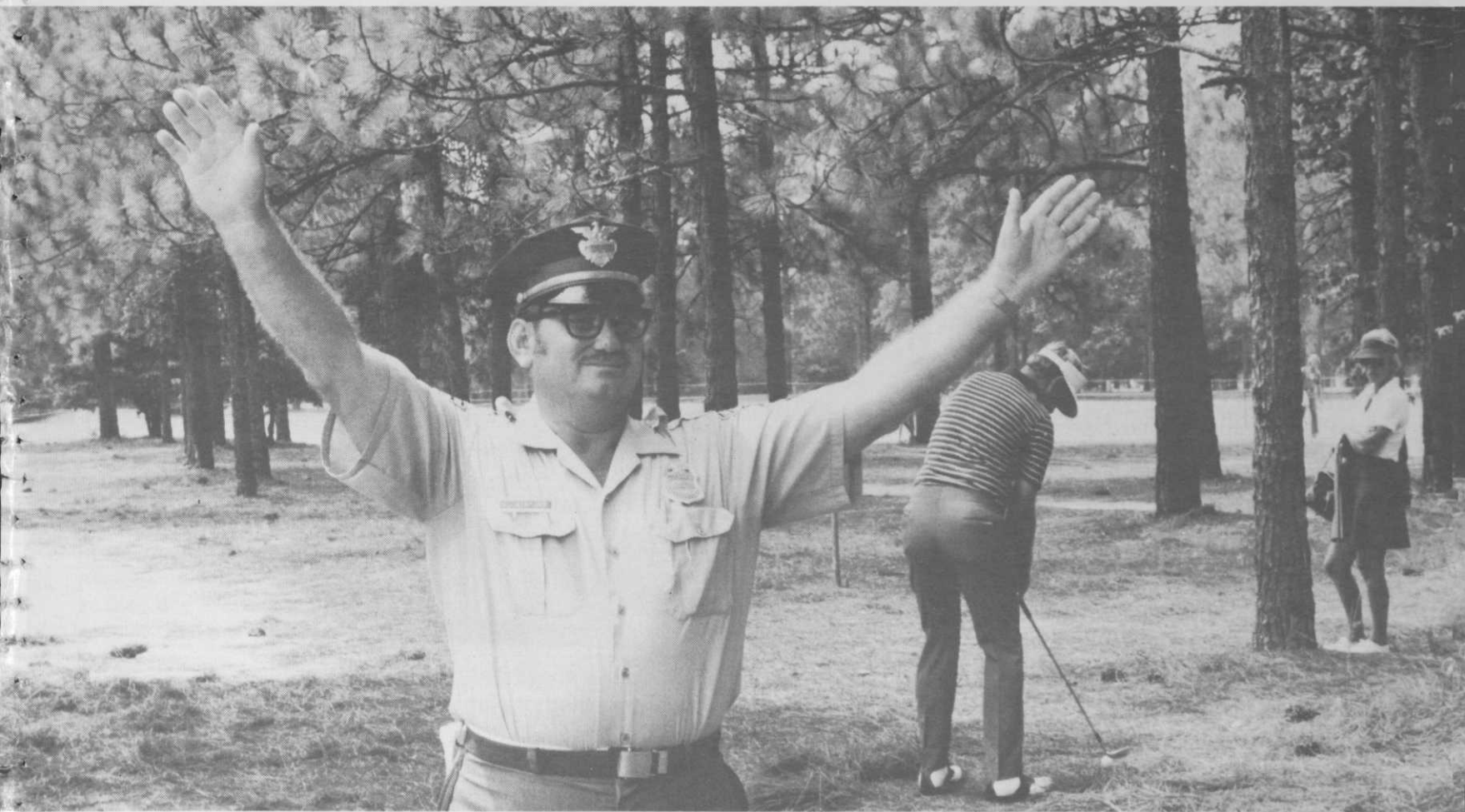
Strong security operations at a ma-

ajor tournament mean more than gently evicting the golf fan with a few too many beers under his belt, according to Nelvil Theard, Director of Sports and Special Events for Pinkerton's, the well-known security service which this year will provide guards for 17 of the 44 major PGA events. And when it comes to policing the greens, Theard is no duffer. He has personally handled security at 18 Master's tournaments — an event that Pinkerton has been servicing since its inception in 1934.

Why you need good security

Many of the reasons for in-depth security service at a tournament are obvious, according to Theard. Large crowds — or even moderate ones found at satellite tournaments — can easily ruin thousands of dollars of greens and fairway maintenance investment on one sunny afternoon. And it isn't only the matter of monetary loss; damage to greens and fairways can seriously affect play by club members or paying customers after the

LEFT BELOW: Nelvil Theard checks with his guards on the Pinehurst course. RIGHT: An armed guard should be stationed in the financial office. BELOW: Guards control crowds on the course to enable golfers to hit out of rough.



tournament. And while golf fans are generally a well-behaved lot, the growing size of golf tournaments means that local pickpockets, auto thieves, vandals, and even stickup artists can be attracted to the event. The unfortunate reality, according to Theard, is that the scale of modern sporting events and their heavy play in the local press means a security plan is an absolute necessity.

Additional factors also force tournament officials to approach tournament security with some serious thought. Today's tournaments involve big money — not only for the top players but for the sponsoring organization. Whether staged for profit or for a charity, a tournament can generate a cash flow of hundreds of thousands of dollars and a loosely-operated perimeter patrol and ticket checking system can mean tens of thousands of dollars which never get to the cash box.

"It's amazing," Theard says, "the number of people we pick up without tournament tickets. If it weren't for a

uniformed guard, the course would be flooded with free entries." (Theard's recommendation for handling the problem saves the culprit from added embarrassment and adds to the cash flow. Pinkerton guards are issued tickets which they sell to "captured" gate crashers on the spot. The proceeds are turned in at the end of the day.)

Two other factors in recent years have also elevated the need for careful security plans at tournaments. The more obvious one is that the large cash gate collections make tournaments a tempting target for opportunistic robbers. Ticket sales booths and money collection points need uniformed and armed protection. The less obvious factor is that the players themselves need and want protection services. Top PGA pros have become celebrities and are constantly besieged by overly aggressive fans, autograph hunters, and just plain screwballs. Control of these characters means the pro can better concentrate on his game — and will more favorably view returning to the tourna-

ment the following year.

Careful pre-planning of a tournament security operation is vitally important, according to Theard. With more than 200 PGA tournament security operations to its credit, Pinkerton recommends that security planning operations start at least 9 months in advance. For its assignment at the U.S. Open, Pinkerton is actually drawing up security plans a full year in advance of the tournament.

How to get good security

Step one in the development of a security plan involves a careful analysis of the tournament course, a detailed study of the clubhouse, and a written report recommending the specific guard posts to be staffed — and at what hours — during the event. The report also incorporates a projected cost for providing the service. "The best way to approach the staffing requirements," according to Theard, "is to provide the tournament committee with a complete list of areas that need coverage and then let them decide

what services they actually want."

The number of uniformed — and plain clothed — security officers is dependent on the expected crowd size and the type of posts to be staffed. Guards who handle admission control duties during the morning hours can be reassigned to course patrol duty with big-name players and then moved to assist with traffic leaving in the late afternoon. At most tournaments the guard contingent can be lighter during the first few days of play when fewer spectators are expected.

Predetermined guard post schedules must always be subject to last-minute rearrangements. At Pinehurst, for example, a clubhouse social event for a sponsoring organization required security assistance at the last minute. "We always have last-minute changes in security needs," according to Theard, "so we always have top-level supervisors on the scene ready to shift guards or bring in additional help."

Experience at handling golf tournaments over the years has led Pinkerton to define a number of key security needs which recur at almost all major golf events.

Control of parking is almost always a critical area. Entry to reserved lots by PGA players and officials — along with a limited number of other VIP's — is a sensitive area. Everybody wants to be close to the clubhouse, but only a few cars can be accommodated. Here the guards check for special parking tags or the universally recognized signal from PGA tournament officials and pros — the flashing of a PGA moneyclip. Guards are also trained to be sure the cars are parked in tight formation to maximize the utilization of the parking area. In addition, guards are instructed to watch for cameras, folding chairs, ice chests or other restricted articles — and to advise the spectator that he is better off leaving the article in the car rather than having to surrender it at the entrance gate. If requested by the tournament sponsors, Pinkerton can also handle the sale of parking tickets at lot entrances.

Handling parking, according to Theard, is a duty which requires both courtesy and firmness. At most PGA



Uniformed guard is posted at clubhouse entrance to keep out gate crashers.

tournaments the lots in which club members usually park are turned over to "outsiders" running or participating in the event. Members, naturally, don't like being directed down the road to a parking field when they are used to parking within a few feet of the clubhouse entrance.

Ticket sales is another area in which Pinkerton provides both guards and ticket sellers. Usually tournaments have a number of ticket sales booths at the various gates, but efficient traffic movement sometimes requires that tickets be sold out of aprons at vehicular entrances.

Gate security is an additional area which requires a uniformed presence, according to Theard. "Marshalls usually do an excellent job at keeping the play in motion, but they are not equipped to control crowds or act in a police function," he said. "The actual presence of a uniformed guard at a gate or on the course does more for security — and ticket sales — than putting up a 10-foot fence." While ticket checking is the main function of gate guards, they also have specific instructions concerning restricted articles. "We get people trying to bring in

everything from portable TVs to folding ladders," Theard says, "and we just have to confiscate them on the spot." While a few spectators may be disappointed they can't watch play in the manner to which they are accustomed, the restriction of articles is an absolute must at crowded tournaments.

At planning meetings security management reviews with tournament officials an extensive list of items which they recommend be kept off the course. Each guard on duty at the tournament has a supply of claim checks so the article can be confiscated on the spot and later picked up at a designated point. (Theard recommends that large signs indicating restricted articles be posted at each parking lot entrance in addition to being printed on the individual tickets.)

The clubhouse and satellite facilities are another area where proper security is a must item. Each clubhouse entrance should have a guard posted who checks for specific clubhouse entry credentials. In addition, guards are usually needed at restricted areas inside the clubhouse such as





Guards patrolling the course and clubhouse aren't girlwatching — they look for spectators without proper tickets displayed.



press room, hospitality rooms, and players' locker room. Here Pinkerton guards are trained to screen for the special badges needed for entry to each area.

The finance office — usually located in the clubhouse — is one of the few areas where Theard feels an armed guard is necessary. Unfortunately, the pro shop is proving in recent years to be another area of the clubhouse complex which requires protection during major tournaments, according to Theard. Attempted shoplifting of everything from sun hats to sets of clubs is a common occurrence during tournament days. A guard at the exit checking for cash register receipts is usually enough to dissuade those with lightfingered inclinations.

Protection on-course

While providing security for parking lots, entrance gates and the clubhouse facilities is important for tournament protection, it is only part of the overall security operation recommended for a tournament. The real action — and the crowd — is out on the course.

Here Pinkerton recommends both fixed guard posts and roving course guards who move with featured players. The scorekeepers tent, practice driving range, and practice putting green are all areas which need guards to protect players from autograph seekers, Theard says. He also recommends the use of a guard at the various TV towers out on the course. "People are anxious to get a good van-

tage point and often start to climb up the nearest structure. Before you know it someone is getting hurt."

Perimeter patrol is another area of on-course security which needs tournament consideration. "This isn't a safety factor as much as it just makes good economic sense," according to Theard. "Most golf courses don't have a high fence to keep people out, but the presence of guards — especially along areas near public roads — proves to be a strong deterrent to people infiltrating onto the course without buying tickets. And since a daily ticket is frequently \$10 a head, the potential for lost revenue is tremendous."

On the course itself guards are usually recommended for tees, fairways, and greens on which the heaviest spectator flow is anticipated. Special emphasis is placed on areas where the crowd is constricted because of nearby woods or manmade obstacles such as bridges over a stream. "Many courses have small bridges over streams/ponds which require special attention," according to Theard, "since we not only have to control the crowds, but must assure that the players can move on through to their next shot." (Theard points out that a substantial portion of all tournament security is designed to expedite play, rather than to catch unwelcome spectators.)

With the arrival of featured pairings on the first tee, two or more guards are assigned to travel with the pros the length of the course. Not all

pros need this celebrity protection, so assignments are flexible and depend on the crowd anticipated.

Here the guards have a set procedure. First they clear a path to the tee so the players can set up for the drive and then step out and walk behind the gallery checking for the inevitable cameras that start popping out of pockets and handbags. "We've got nothing against pictures ourselves," Theard says, "but they can be a real distraction to the players, so they are banned on the PGA circuit."

As the tee shots are driven the guards start forward down the fairway to a point where the balls are landing. Their duty here is to straddle any ball which might leave the fairway until the caddy arrives to protect the ball from the crowd. If the balls all remain within the roped area, they turn and watch the crowd flow toward them. "We're not just looking at the pretty girls," Theard says, "this is where we are best able to spot spectators who don't have a ticket hanging from a button on their shirt. You'd be surprised how many sales we make to people who 'forget' to buy a ticket."

If assistance is needed in dropping the rope to facilitate a shot from the rough, the guards are instructed to help and then make sure the crowd is kept back so the player has a clear shot at the green. At the green itself, the emphasis is placed on assuring that the spectators remain outside the ropes and remain absolutely quiet as the players stroke the ball. The guards then escort the players to the next tee and the process begins all over again.

Along with Theard and other management officials who provide security services for golf, football, tennis, and other sports events, Pinkerton has a small cadre of officers whose specialty is the supervision of programs which attract large numbers of spectators. This permits the staffing with local Pinkerton guards — to keep the costs down for tournament officials — while furnishing a real expertise on how to best run a security operation for that particular sport. At all events a top Pinkerton official is on the scene to manage the overall operation.

"I'm probably the only guy in the country," says Theard, "who wears out a pair of golf shoes every 2 months but never picks up a club." □