

News

AMATEUR GOLF

Rule allowing amateurs to win money shocks PGA; local groups opposed

The United States Golf Association's year-end announcement that amateur golfers would be allowed to compete for money up to \$350 in any tournament beginning January 1, as well as the traditional trophy and merchandise prizes, brought an official protest from the Professional Golfers' Association and warnings that the USGA was inviting trouble and undermining the game of golf by the revolutionary change in the amateur code.

The PGA's concern that cash prizes for amateurs would undercut golf shop sales was such that PGA President Donald E. Padgett planned to meet with the USGA Executive Committee to present the PGA members' adverse reaction

release and was surprised that the USGA would make a decision having such a damaging effect on the income of 8,200 golf professionals and 4,300 apprentices without prior consultation with the PGA. He said there is "no longer an amateur golfer — merely golfers who play for less money."

"We had no choice," he concluded, "but to seriously and completely object to this change in the code of amateurism."

A flood of protests poured into the USGA from PGA members, including Arnold Palmer, national chairman of the USGA's Associates Program, which draws support from amateur golf associations and leading amateur golfers. They prompted Tom Meeks, director of the USGA's department that administers the amateur status rule, to admit: "We're aware we've created a monster."

Actually, the USGA contends that it has not made any change in policy, that awarding money to amateur golfers has been permissible since 1965 when the USGA ruled that the Rules of Amateur Status were not violated when a Minnesota golf club distributed cash (presumably from entry fees) to winners of its two-man team leagues.

P. J. Boatwright, USGA executive director, told GOLF BUSINESS that it was simply trying to clarify its Policy on Gambling by explaining how gambling (not a violation, though discouraged) differs from playing for prize money (a violation).

The "clarification" that the USGA announced is that, while its Rules of Amateur Status flatly prohibit "playing for prize money or its equivalent," its Policy on Gambling has always condoned "wagering" among individual golfers and teams of golfers. The current trouble stems from the fact that in its clarification, the USGA added a third example of "golf wagering and not playing for prize

money," which permits:

"Participation in an event in which golfers play for money contributed by the golfers, but no participant may win more than \$350."

Since this obviously would embrace practically all club and association tournaments and



Arnold Palmer, chairman of the USGA Associates Program, also protested the ruling.

others in which amateurs pay entry fees, the clarification includes a parenthetical note recommending that merchandise be awarded, as usual, instead of money.

"Actually," according to Boatwright, "instead of liberalizing the Rules of Amateur Status, the new regulation has made them more restrictive. Whereas in the past an amateur would win any amount of money — so long as all the money was put up by the players — now the USGA has put a limit on it, restricting it to \$350, the same as the allowable merchandise value."

Boatwright admitted that the policy clarification had been "widely misunderstood." This is not surprising since it would be hard to find anyone who was aware that amateur golfers could accept any amount of money under any circumstances.

Easterly told GOLF BUSINESS he was confident that the whole matter would be corrected to the

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PGA President Padgett protests USGA "amateur" ruling

and hopefully persuade the USGA to rescind the rule. The meeting was set for January 27, the day before the USGA's 84th annual meeting in San Francisco, when the organization will review its entire policies on amateur status and gambling.

In a letter to USGA President Harry W. Easterly, Jr., which he asked to be considered an "official protest," Padgett said he was "stunned" when he read about the cash prizes for amateurs in a news

satisfaction of the professionals at the San Francisco meeting.

"We could have handled the matter better," he confided. "It never occurred to us that we would be taking any business away from the professional. It certainly was not done with any idea of doing him in."

Some critics, including Palmer, mistakenly suggested that the change could lead to amateurs playing in professional tournaments, like the Florida Tour, limiting their winnings to \$350; or that promoters might organize amateur tours with cash prizes of up to \$350.

What these and other critics did not know, and which probably contributed to the scope and depth of their criticism, is that a new paragraph has been added to the Policy on Gambling which is part of the clarification, but which was unwisely omitted from the USGA news release. It disapproves of amateur events organized and designed to create cash prizes. Golfers who participate in them without waiving their right to a cash prize are deemed to be playing for prize money, which violates the code.

Palmer, in an interview with GOLF BUSINESS at his Bay Hill Club and Lodge, Orlando, Fla., said that allowing cash prizes for amateurs could lead to amateurs competing against professionals for money, and that this was "very bad" for golf. He voiced his opposition directly to the USGA in a phone call. "They're inviting trouble," he concluded.

Dow Finsterwald, a PGA vice president and head golf professional at Broadmoor Golf Club in Colorado Springs, Colo., agreed with Palmer's criticism, adding that the \$350 cash rule "can only hurt golf." Among other things, he said, "It will induce more cheating on handicaps."

Other random reactions:

Roger Ganem, executive director, Florida PGA: "Now the pro is at the mercy of his members."

Frank Strafacci, executive director, Miami Amateur Golf Association: "It's horrible."

Bill Strausbaugh, former PGA vice president: "The sharp line between professional and amateur golfers has been dulled."

Herb Rose, president, Middle Atlantic PGA: "It (cash prizes) will adversely affect golf. It absolutely breaks away from the longstanding traditions of golf with which the USGA has been entrusted."

Golf associations, in general, are protesting the allowance of

cash prizes and planning to continue awarding merchandise prizes.

Janet McCue, associate executive director of the Chicago District Golf Association, said she felt the decision was "very good" since it meant the group could increase its merchandise prizes by \$100. But she said the association has no intention of giving away money.

"We purchase gift certificates redeemable only in the pro shop. We would never give cash. It just seems more in the spirit of amateurism and we feel an obligation to professionals for running the tournament," she said.

Miss McCue estimated that about \$25,000 was awarded to amateurs in 26 tournaments sponsored last year by the association. There are 143 private clubs and daily fee courses that are association members in Chicago.

The executive director of the Carolina Golf Association, Hale B. VanHoy Jr., also said his group would not give money to amateurs. "We have no intention of going along with the thing," he said.

VanHoy predicted that the new rule would be "rescinded or changed" at the USGA's annual meeting. He said the Carolinas association, which consists of 318 clubs sponsoring 51 tournaments, would also ask their members not to give money to amateurs in any invitational tournament they sponsor.

Henry Meiers, executive director of the Cleveland District Golf Association, also said his group will not award cash prizes. "We think it's better for the economy if merchandise is bought in the pro shop," he said.

Meiers, however, said he does believe money should be given to amateurs traveling more than 100 miles to participate in a major tournament to help pay for their expenses. "The amateurs are upset that they are putting money into tournaments and not getting anything in return. It costs them just as much to go to some tournaments as it does the pros."

Other changes in the amateur code which further loosen the restrictions on amateur golfers were also announced by the USGA:

—The maximum retail value of a prize an amateur may accept is raised to \$350, from \$250.

—The amount of working time teachers and other school employees and camp counsellors may spend giving golf instruction is raised to 50 percent, from 10

percent.

—Restrictions on the sale of golf merchandise by amateur golfers have been deleted from the code.

—An amateur may now accept golf balls, clubs, clothing, shoes, and other golf merchandise from a manufacturer without paying the current market price, provided that the manufacturer does not intend to associate the product with the player's golf skill or reputation. (Strangely, this new proviso allowing the acceptance of free merchandise under certain conditions is mentioned only in the news release. The pertinent section in the Rules of Amateur Status still states an absolute prohibition, but it was explained to GOLF BUSINESS that the prohibition only applies to amateur golfers of national reputation). — *Joseph Gambatese (As GOLF BUSINESS went to press, the editors learned that the USGA had withdrawn its new amateur ruling for reconsideration. Look for further details next month.)*

ASSOCIATIONS

ASGCA to honor Graffis brothers

Herb and Joe Graffis — founders of *Golfdom* magazine (now GOLF BUSINESS), *Golfing* magazine (now *Golf*), and the National Golf Foundation — will receive the third annual Donald Ross Award from the American Society of Golf Course Architects on February 27, during the society's annual meeting at the Carefree Inn near Phoenix.

Named in honor of the "father of American golf course architecture," the Donald Ross Award is bestowed annually by the ASGCA "for contributions to furthering the understanding and appreciation of golf course architecture in this country."

ASGCA President Bill Amick said, "We feel that the award is richly deserved, since the name of Graffis is so tightly linked to American golf. Herb and Joe have been identified with the game in one form or another since World War I and through their prodigious writing have explained the nuances of golf course architecture to several generations of Americans."

The Graffis brothers operated *Golfdom* magazine for several decades, with Herb as editor and Joe as business manager. They were jointly honored in 1962 with the Richardson Award by the Golf Writers Association of America and in 1972 with the United States Golf

Association Green Section Award. Herb was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame last year, along with Donald Ross.

The ASGCA annual meeting will run from February 26 through March 3. Representatives of the Allied Associations of Golf have been invited to participate in a seminar on February 27 and to attend the awards banquet. The meeting agenda includes a variety of seminars as well as reports from 17 committee chairmen. The President's Banquet will be held on March 2.

USGA reorganizes headquarters staff

The venerable United States Golf Association, although usually resistant to change, ended the old year with a wholesale reorganization of its headquarters staff.

Overall direction of the association remains the responsibility of Executive Director P.J. Boatwright, Jr., but former Assistant Director John D. Laupheimer assumed the new position of deputy executive director with direct responsibility for administrative activities. His areas of authority include the USGA Associates Program, the Green Section, public relations and communications, and membership. Frank Hannigan retains the duties and title of assistant director for special projects.

Laupheimer told GOLF BUSINESS the changes were made because "the organization is growing, and we felt a need to better define the functions within the organization. These are now defined according to directors."

The new system groups administrative functions into five departments, each supervised by a director. They are:

Rules, amateur status and conduct, handicapping, competitions — Tom Meeks, formerly regional director.

Membership and services, Green Section, regional affairs — Charles W. Smith, formerly administrative assistant in rules, handicapping, Green Section, and membership.

Implements and ball — Frank Thomas, formerly technical director.

Administration — James T. Reilly, formerly controller.

Communication, public relations, Associates Program — a new director had been hired just before GOLF BUSINESS went to press, but would not be announced until February 1. Robert Sommers