

# Scarbrough maintains old ties to maintenance

By Vern Putney

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Bill Scarbrough 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."

Scarbrough, 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, Scarbrough 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, Scarbrough'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, Scarbrough criss-crossed the country and played a variety of demanding layouts. The presence here of so many superintendents from these areas provided rare opportunity to update information on links and supers and to rekindle memories.

Having played the nation's most prestigious courses, it would follow that Scarbrough would single out the likes of Augusta National as his favorite. Not so. That honor belongs to Riverside Municipal Golf Course in Portland, Maine, his personal shrine of golf.

"That's where I learned to play the game as it should be played," declared the Memphis, Tenn., native. "The golf gang there each week-end ranged from 24 to 30 players. Betting abounded (quarter Nassaus), and one rule was inflexible: Play the ball down and putt everything out. This meant the ball wasn't touched from the time it was teed up until plucked out of the hole. There was no conceding putts inside the leather."

Baptism into this seemingly harsh code of golf conduct, formative and informative, became comforting. Scarbrough knew he could compete under any circumstance. While others might not be able to cope with a tight lie or heavy rough, Scarbrough hit through the ball with confidence.

Riversiders were behind him when the pressure was greatest. He received a "Good Luck" message on the eve of his scheduled 36-hole match play final with fellow Memphis native Junie Bauxbaum. Scarbrough bowed, 3 and 2, but appreciated immensely the backing of his Northern friends.

Scarbrough was assigned to

Portland's Navy recruiting station from 1947 through 1949. He captured the city championship in '49, defeating "extremely likeable and capable" youngster Tony DeRice.

"The Riverside Experience" provided Scarbrough further favorable fallout. 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 turfs earlier looked upon only as a convenient surface from which to launch a golf ball came in handy. Scar-

brough 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 Scarbrough, still a trim 6-3, 200 pounds, completed a 30-year hitch in 1970.

Most precious in his storehouse



Bill Scarbrough

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 protectionists.

"They're giving us fits with mole crickets, and these critters are no

small potatoes in this neck of the woods," Scarbrough asserts. "If we can't use the proper pesticides to achieve maximum effect, it affects our playing surfaces and therefore our shots. 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 Scarbrough 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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