



Bob Hamrich checks club at Tokyo course as his Japanese girl caddie looks on.

Five Pros Play The Long Tour

Singapore, Hong Kong and other Far Eastern cities were on the itinerary this winter as a quintet of Bobs made the big swing

BY BOB HAMRICH
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Five American golf professionals, including myself, took a six-week tour through the Far East early this year and found that golf is one of the most rapidly developing games in the world. In addition to being something of a unifying force, golf is a medium for knowing other people and customs, other viewpoints and tastes, and understanding problems beyond our own. With me were four other Bobs — Watson, McCallister, Joyce and Gajda.

That's the same Gajda of Brookline fame, by the way.

Playing golf in the Philippines, Singapore, Malaya, Hong Kong and Japan was a refreshing and challenging experience. Our tour began on Feb. 4, 1963, in the Philippines where we joined golfers from all over the world for the Philippine Open at Wack Wack G & CC. Among them were George Bayer, Peter Thomson, Kel Nagle and many others who came to talk golf, play golf, and as the opportunity afforded, to teach and promote the game.

Not Like America

Ben Arda, Philippines pro, showed the way in the first tournament by taking honors under a blistering hot sun. It was in this tournament that we began to appreciate that all is not done the world over as we do it in America, particularly on a golf course. For the undernourished and small-frame Filipino, the American standard golf bag is too heavy; he has to pull a cart. Instead of the balanced diet we read and hear so much about, the Filipino eats rice and more rice. Our raisins really tasted good after we tried the prevailing fare!

Of course, all is not golf in the Philippines. Here cockfighting and boxing are the great recreations and entertainment. For sheer, unadulterated frenzy and excitement which these sports generate, we have seen no equal in America. These fans give their all, often to the extent of crashing the gate 5,000 strong at boxing matches and rioting in the ring after a match. They really enter into the spirit of things in a big way.

Two Courses in Singapore

In Singapore, our second stop, golf is coming along slowly but surely. Although there are only two courses there, they are good ones, even though very difficult as to accessibility.

The tournament here was played on the Royal Island Club, with Alan Brookes of Austria, taking honors. I was fourth in the Pro-Am tourney. We learned some-



Here's the lineup of Bobs. (From left) Bob McCallister, tournament pro; Bob Hamrich of Champaign (Ill.) CC, who wrote this piece; Bob Watson, Wykagyl CC, New Rochelle, N. Y.; Bob Joyce, Nevele CC, Ellenville, N. Y.; and Bob Gajda, Forest Lake, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

thing of the pressure created by a nation's fear of war and imminent attack. The Indonesian differences with Singapore seem to intensify the evidences of poverty, sickness, hopeless old age, and almost non-existent business.

They Play The Horses

Yet, there persists a real interest in sports for both the participant and the spectator. Horse racing at Fan Ling on the Chinese mainland and golf exhibitions and tourneys attract people from everywhere. There is real golf potential in Singapore, but progress will be slow as long as political and social unrest dominate the scene.

We Americans were not exactly received with open arms, but we sensed an obligation to foster goodwill, both for golf and for our country. We like to believe that we realized some success in so doing.

As we moved on to Malaya, we went to Kuala Lumpur where we played the Selangor GC course. This is a very long, but not difficult course which I remember with pleasure. I had my best day of the tour, winding up with a pro-am score of 64, and as second low pro with a 68. Playing with the commander of the Malayan Navy, the Hon. A. B. Synott, I learned what oppressive heat on a golf

course is. It was here that we really appreciated the services of Dr. Fait, father-in-law of golf professional, Bob McCallister. He advised us and treated us so we could withstand the heat as well as the change in food. Since our return to America we have learned of his sudden death. He was an excellent tour party associate and most of all, a fine friend.

Golf Seems Out of Place

Malaya is another country whose slow-paced living and medieval atmosphere make golf seem almost an incongruous intrusion. Yet, both the king and his prime minister watched the play. In this land of temples carved from stone and beautiful churches and shrines, recreational activity, and particularly golf, is steadily increasing. The 1964 Bangkok tournament is already scheduled.

From Malaya, we headed for the Royal Hong Kong GC in Fan Ling. It was here that we learned to appreciate the luxury of having our golf courses in America close at hand. To reach this 75-year-old British course from our headquarters on the Kooloon, we used trams, cabs, ferries, trains, and bicycles. It took two-and-one-half hours! But we did get there and saw some historic scenery in the bargain.

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The Long Tour

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There we saw the Chinese Red Border. It is in the great tidal wave area which recently claimed 7000 lives. The sampan (boat) community of 75,000 people, most of whom never leave the water, compose a cross section of activity that up until now seemed far removed and relatively insignificant to American golf professionals. But it served to remind us that the world is becoming smaller because transportation has brought us so much closer together.

It's Booming Here

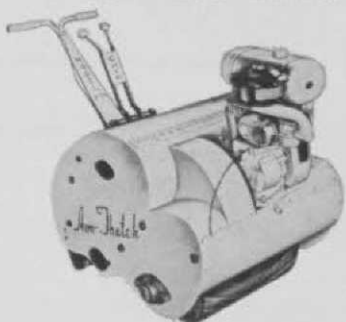
On to Japan we went after the Hong Kong tourney. Here we encountered the greatest golf boom in the world. Tokyo features golf courses with two greens for each hole; one is bentgrass, the other, rye. Here also is Shiba Park with its three-tiered driving range, complete with mats, underground ball retrievers, and unbelievably long lines of golfers waiting for hours to "hit a few." Many of these people never play an actual course but prefer to play the range. From eight in the morning until almost midnight here golf flourishes. Even the first nine holes of one course are lighted to permit evening play. Girl caddies, who do an excellent job, are traditional in Japan.

In the Yomiuri International tournament, Doug Sanders was the big name. He won by four strokes as he turned in an exceptional 73 in the face of a 60 mile-an-hour wind. The Japanese are good golf fans with better-than-average appreciation of a good shot.

As we turned back to America, we thought again about the great improvements in international sports and sports competition in the last decade or so. Indeed, golf and golfers, as we saw them, have a great role to fill in the world scene.

My many reminiscences of the trip to the Far East, and the films I took, are proving very useful in my TV program, "On the Green," which is presented weekly by the Pepsi Cola people on WCHU-TV in Champaign. Every time I show the pictures, there are a dozen recollections of things I saw and did in Tokyo, Singapore and other Far Eastern cities. I'm not necessarily beating the gong for the travel agencies when I say that any professional who makes the trip and plays some of those courses on the far side of the world in the future has exciting adventure awaiting him.

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