

## WINNING THE OPEN

BY FRANCIS OUMET.

Next to playing a niblick shot such as I faced at the eighth hole of The Country Club, Brookline, in the round where I tied with Harry Vardon and Edward Ray for the national open golf championship, I know of no more trying ordeal than that of writing about how I won the title. Frankly, I must confess that a golf club feels more natural in my hands than a pen and that I would feel less uncomfortable facing a gallery on the links than in "facing" a gallery of readers in THE AMERICAN GOLFER. For one thing, a bad shot on the course admits of a recovery, but a "bad shot" in print picks up a divot which takes a long time to replace.

May I, first of all, express through the columns of THE AMERICAN GOLFER my keen appreciation and heartfelt thanks to the hundreds of people in all parts of the United States and some from abroad who have sent me messages of congratulations, not forgetting the telegrams from many clubs. In time I hope to make a more direct acknowledgment. It is through such generous and thoughtful tributes to my success that I am beginning to realize how kind the Fates have been.

For after all fortune has to deal kindly with any golfer in winning a championship in such a field as that which was played at The Country Club. There are times when things seem to go just right with a player and others when everything goes wrong; days when the ball bounds favorably and when putts hit the back of the cup and go down; other days when all the shots seem to be hit true, only to go a wee bit off the line or land in

broken spots in the fair-green, and when putts that both feel and look good simply flirt with the cup as if possessed of the imp of perversity.

The first three rounds of the championship proper I can dismiss in short order, though in them I played two shots which, in their turn, disgusted and gratified me more than perhaps any other two in the tournament. One was at the first hole of the first round, where I had a good drive and a satisfactory second only to make a miserable botch of a short approach and take six for the hole. The shot which was so gratifying came at the eleventh hole of the first qualifying round. My drive was to the right, fortunately behind a trap which might well have snared a longer ball in the same general direction. The drive left me about 190 yards from the hole, with the branch of a tree offering a barrier to any but a low shot. Putting my full force into a midiron, purposely played low, I had the extreme satisfaction of hitting the pin and almost holing a two. Having pulled off the shot just as calculated I felt elated and would have felt so even to get the green, let alone benefiting my score by a 3. My one grudge against Fate refers back to the fourteenth hole as played in the third round, the hole, I may add, where I took 7 in one of the qualifying rounds. The 7 was strictly on its merits, or rather demerits. The 6 at the same hole in the third round hurt my feelings. This time I used a brasse for my second and got away what I thought was as perfect a brasse shot as lay within my powers, both for distance and direction. What

was my surprise to find it not on the green but in a trap to the left. Friends in the gallery told me afterward that the ball was headed directly for the flag but hit a little hummock and bounded at a sharp angle into the trap.

The outward half of the last round found matters going badly. Try as I would, I could not get the ball to do what I wanted and to make matters worse I got into a hole in a trap guarding the eighth whence it was impossible to play other than away from the green. The ball was in a hole dug by some other player and then and there I vowed that I never would leave a trap without first smoothing over as best I could a hole left by my footprints or by my club. Out in 43 was a poor beginning to either tie for or win a championship and, to make matters worse, there came a 5 at the short tenth. Without intending it as an excuse, I would like to explain that 5, merely to press home that oft-repeated maxim, "Keep the eye on the ball." Fearing that a high pitch might mean that the ball would bury itself on the green, as had happened a number of times during the tournament, I tried the experiment of playing the shot with a midiron, trusting to the soft turf to keep the ball from over-running, while at the same time expecting the running shot to prevent any accumulation of mud on the ball. Like a novice, I was too eager to see what happened on the shot; looked up to watch the ball and, consequently, made a bad flub. Even after that it was just bad putting that cost me a 5.

Many have asked me since the championship how that 5 affected me, and my answer has been, truthfully, that it did not affect me. one way or

another. Mentally, I said to myself: "It's done; forget it." Instead of dwelling upon the play at the tenth I began to figure what I would have to do on the remaining holes. Possibly I was so wrapped up in this calculation that I did not have a chance to get nervous. I figured that on the remaining holes I would have to go down in one putt at the thirteenth and one at the sixteenth, for a 3 and a 2, respectively. My 3 I did get at the thirteenth, not with a putter but by holing a midiron from the lower edge of the green. No 2 was forthcoming at the short sixteenth, but a 3 was acceptable in view of another at the seventeenth, where my putt felt good from the moment I hit it.

Of course it would be nonsensical for me to say that at the start of the play-off I felt confident of defeating Vardon and Ray. While I did not feel nervous, I did realize the formidable task in hand. Two things and one person, in particular, helped me amazingly. The person was my little caddie, Eddie Lowrey; one of the two things was the appeal which he made to my patriotism; the other thing was my determination that Vardon and Ray should not be able to say that my tying them for the championship was a fluke, which I felt they could say if I "went to pieces" in the play-off. Another word for my caddie later.

The first hole of the play-off meant much to me, with its half in 5. After playing four shots I was about a yard from the cup and I never felt more pleased over a putt in the entire championship than when that three-footer dropped out of sight, unless it was the putt on the home green the day before which tied me for the championship

title. There is not much to say about the next three holes, but many have asked me about the spoon shot out of bounds at the fifth, luckily the only shot of the round which cost me a stroke. Some have told me that they presumed, owing to the slippery nature of the fifth fair-green, that my feet had slipped as I was about to play my shot. That was not the trouble, however. That spoon has a rather thin shaft and when I played the shot it was with a grip none too firm, with the result that the club turned in my hand. The fact that I used the same club right over again, after dropping to play three, seems to have occasioned some surprise; but I knew it was no fault of the club, hence lost no confidence in it, and at the same time realized that it was the most natural club to use for just the shot that confronted me. My opinion was confirmed when the next went on the green and it was doubly pleasing to get a 5. Moreover, the fact that I got a half there showed me that after all my opponents were not infallible in their play.

The fact that Vardon got a 3 at the sixth was not of a worrying nature. I debated whether to "go" for mine, but the nature of the putt was such that I decided a sure 4 was better than a possible 3 or a possible 5, feeling that another opening of a more suitable nature would come. On the seventh green I had a real surprise party, after a drive to the near edge, the hole being a short one. The cup looked a long way off and the green looked exceedingly wet and heavy. Taking everything into consideration, including a couple of little ridges and hollows to be crossed, I hit the ball what turned out to be a regular "young drive," the ball stopping way beyond

the cup. That was the only time in the round, I think, where I was far from the cup on the approach putt, the lesson proving salutary.

At the eighth there was another surprise party, but of an entirely different nature than at the seventh. Here I purposely played a running approach, rather than a mud-collecting mashie pitch, and after the ball passed out of sight over the brow of the hill, to the green, there came a shout from above, indicative that the shot had been a good one. I thought possibly the ball was about ten feet from the cup and was well pleased to find it hardly more than a foot away, for a 3. It was a grand putt that Ray sank for a 3 on the same green. He is a fine putter, especially good on laying up approach putts.

The tenth hole gave me an advantage of a stroke which I never dreamed of getting, all three of us being on the green with the tee shots and the others taking three putts each. At the eleventh I took more than usual time and care for the tee, feeling that the match was at a stage where I could not afford to make any slip-up. The twelfth, also, I played with greatest care, feeling that if I secured my 4 there I might pick up a stroke on Vardon anyway, inasmuch as I had been told that he himself said he could not play the twelfth. And I did get the stroke, too, for Vardon's second shot was wide and Ray likewise erred, both taking 5. About this time it dawned upon me that even against two such wonderful players there might be a chance of landing the title, with which thought I resolved that if they beat me it would be only by playing better than par golf. I was not disturbed when Vardon won back a stroke by

going down in one putt on the thirteenth green, though he was further from the hole than I on the approach. My putt was not well hit.

The fourteenth hole I understand was disturbing to some of my friends, the way I played it, especially as it had been a "hoodoo" hole for me in the tournament. It was here that I played a brassey for my second and half topped, the ball striking an embankment and not getting any great distance; whereas in view of the lie

somewhat longer approach than if I got away a good iron. In any event I felt reasonably certain of getting a 5 and was working for a 4. It panned out as I thought, for while I did not get a good brassey, at the same time the 5 was not difficult. Incidentally, when Ray went so far off the line with his second shot at that hole it flashed upon me that from then on Vardon was the one I had to fear.

The fifteenth proved this intuitive feeling to be correct, for Ray practic-



(Left to right) Harry Vardon; Mr. Francis Ouimet, the new Open champion, and Edward Ray.

the more logical shot appeared to be an iron. The fact of the matter is that I considered the shot from every angle and decided that I had everything to gain and nothing to lose by playing a brassey. Having confidence in my ability to keep a brassey shot straight I figured that to get away a good one meant being pretty close to the green, with a chance of running up the next near enough to go down with one putt; to half top or hit the embankment I figured would not be any more penalizing than to leave me a

ally became eliminated there and the short sixteenth settled him. When Vardon drove from the seventeenth tee and his ball went well to the left, I knew it must be in or close to some trap. I somehow got the impression that he played in that direction purposely, with the double idea that he would clear the trap and be in better position to pitch up for a 3 and also to lead me on to cut the corner dangerously fine and perhaps get into difficulties. Very likely he did not do anything of the kind; nev-

ertheless I was taking no chances and played well out in the open. When I saw that his ball was in a trap I felt, for the first time in the match, that the title was mine and I felt absolutely sure of it when, after getting safely on the green in two, I sank the putt for a 3.

My little caddie, Eddie Lowrey, 10 years old, not much bigger than a peanut, was a veritable inspiration all the way around; and a brighter or headier little chap it would be hard to find. His influence on my game I cannot overestimate. Before the play-off he came to me and said: "You're going to get a 72; it's your last chance." He added the last phrase because he had been telling me from the first round that he toted my bag that some time during the tournament I would get a 72. So much for his prophetic views.

Every time I got ready for play a shot he first asked what club I intended to use and then, as a final bit of counsel in handing me the club called for, he never failed to say: "Keep your eye on the ball." On one occasion, when I was about to putt he remarked: "Take lots of time;

it's only 10 o'clock now and you've got until six to-night. Get this one up dead, sure." Thus it went all the way. The lad was so certain I was going to win that it would not have surprised me had he gone up to my opponents on the first tee and said: "When does your boat sail for England? You might as well begin to pack."

How the little fellow ever managed to get around the course the way he did with my heavy kit is a mystery; I was much amused, notwithstanding the grimness of the situation, when at the seventh hole, after "losing" Eddie temporarily, I at last caught sight of what looked like a walking umbrella and a large bag of clubs coming through the small opening made by the crowd around the green. It was Eddie. The generosity of the crowd in making up a purse for him after the play-off I appreciate deeply.

To Vardon and Ray I can say only that I admire them as fine golfers and good types of sportsmen, and am only sorry that all three of us could not win. Vardon I hope will play the same beautiful style of game for years to come.

