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# Sir Walter and Mr. Jones: Walter Hagen, Bobby Jones, and the Rise of American Golf. Prologue

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## PROLOGUE

*Sarasota, Florida*  
*Winter 1926*

### 1

Walter Hagen could hear the murmur within the gallery. Several hundred of his fans were nervously whispering to each other, watching his every move, and wondering just how he might reach the sixth green. He crouched low to examine his ball, nestled against the rough. Then he stood up and nonchalantly surveyed the pine tree in front of him; finally, he stepped aside and looked down the fairway to the putting surface. Shielding his eyes from the sun, he said a few words to his caddie and smiled. If his fans were anxious, Hagen seemed calm enough. It was hardly the first time that he had been in a tough spot during a big golf match. He went to his bag, selected and reselected his club, settling on a midiron, and set up over his shot. The low hum from the gallery faded; all was quiet.

Hagen had indeed been involved in many important events, but this one was different. This time his opponent was the outstanding amateur from Atlanta, Bobby Jones. For years, golf fans and writers had contemplated a head-to-head match between Hagen and Jones. By early 1926 Walter Hagen had collected seven major championship victories: two U.S. Opens, two British Opens, and three match-play PGA crowns, most recently in 1924 and 1925. He was considered the nation's top professional and most dangerous match-play opponent. Bobby Jones, in a shorter period, had also put together an impressive record in major championships. He had captured the U.S. Open title in 1923 and was runner-up in that event in 1922, 1924, and 1925. He also had won the match-play U.S. Amateur title in 1924 and 1925. Many observers regarded

him as the finest medal player in the world. In late 1925 the two finally agreed to wage a home-and-home, seventy-two-hole affair that would be contested over consecutive Sundays later that winter. Most sportswriters would call it the Unofficial World's Championship of Golf; the Southern Golfer simply dubbed it "The Battle of the Century."

The fact that it was a test of amateurism against professionalism added excitement to the epic duel. Between 1888 and 1920, amateurs played some of the finest golf in America, winning three out of the four U.S. Opens between 1913 and 1916. Their dominance was easy enough to understand; upper-class amateurs, often of old Anglo-Saxon stock, were the only ones to have access to the nation's finest golf courses, laid out on private clubs. Born into wealth, amateurs had the time to practice and play golf. They were an elite group, and golf authorities recognized them as such, always introducing the amateurs at open events as "Mr. Robert T. Jones" or "Mr. Charles Evans." Professionals, by contrast, were simply announced by their initials and last name, as in "W. C. Hagen." For the pre-World War I generation, golf was an especially exclusive sport. Jones, from a prominent, moderately wealthy family of Welsh descent, was only the latest in a long line of accomplished American amateur golfers.

Hagen, on the other hand, had been reared in an obscure working-class German-immigrant family from Rochester, New York. He was the finest example of the new homebred golf professional who had entered the game through the caddie ranks. Others, most notably Gene Sarazen, had followed Hagen's trail into the sport. So when he competed against Jones in the winter of 1926, it was not just another big event; "Sir Walter" was playing for pride--his own and that of professional athletes everywhere. As Hagen put it, "Winning that challenge match was equally important to both Bobby Jones and to me." Jones confirmed this: "Although this match

involved no championship, it did carry a sizable load of prestige, and I wanted badly to win it."<sup>i</sup>

The money seemed almost incidental, but the two camps agreed that gate receipts should be collected and divided between the players, and a businessman friend of Hagen's put up an additional \$5,000 prize, which would be given to charity if won by Jones. There was unusual pre-match ballyhoo; the New York World even reported that in the St. Petersburg area the golf match "eclipsed" the arrival of Babe Ruth's Yankees for baseball spring training. Betting odds had Jones a 3-2 favorite, based on his medal scoring average and on sentimentality. Gould B. Martin of the Metropolitan Golfer noted that "the American sporting public is so constituted that its sympathies are always with the amateur--and Bobby Jones is no mere amateur, he is one of America's best beloved athletes." Hagen took it a bit more personally, feeling that "the public somehow had come to consider the amateurs as the Galahads of golf. While I was a professional--the natural villain of the game."<sup>ii</sup>

So it was with much anticipation that approximately 1,200 spectators gathered on Sunday morning, February 28, 1926, at Whitfield Estates, Jones's "home" course in Sarasota, Florida, to witness the first rounds of golf's Battle of the Century. The breeze along the Gulf Coast was balmy and pleasant. The players arrived at the first tee similarly clad in knickers, long ties, and pullover sweaters; Hagen, as he always did to show off his perfectly combed, sleek hair, went hatless, while Jones opted for a rakish Fedora. At thirty-three years of age, Hagen was ten years older than his opponent. And at 5'11" and 180 pounds, Hagen was also considerably bigger than the 5'8", 165 pound Jones. After an eye-to-eye handshake, Jones lit a cigarette; then Hagen won the honor, and the match got underway.

They seemed nervous in the early holes, but Hagen settled himself more quickly than

Jones, particularly on the greens, and grabbed a 3-up lead by the lunch break. Nothing changed through the first five holes of the afternoon. As the pair teed off on the par four sixth, Jones planned to build some momentum going into the last nine of the day. Both men hit solid drives, but while Jones's was down the middle, Hagen's bounded toward the rough. Jones hit his approach to within twelve feet of the flag; at that point, with Hagen's ball in a tricky lie behind a pine tree, it looked like a win for the amateur.

Then came the turning point. Jones had watched Hagen crouch low over his ball, examine his lie, the pine tree, and his difficult path to the green. He saw Hagen smile when he went to his bag and talked to his caddie. And, like everyone else, in the silence he fixed his gaze on Hagen as he began his backswing. Sir Walter had decided to reach the green by slicing a midiron shot around the tree, but the stroke did not come off as planned. Instead, he completely miss-hit the ball, topping it so that it took off under the tree branches. To everyone's amazement, the ball carried down the fairway, through a bunker, up a bank that guarded the front of the green, and finally rested about ten feet from the flag! Now Jones was under pressure to make his twelve-footer; his putt rimmed the cup but stayed out. Hagen then delicately rolled his ball into the hole for a birdie three, and, rather than trailing by only two, Jones was again 4 down.

Jones later told his biographer O. B. Keeler, "I watched that shot [from the rough], and I said to myself, I'm four down to a man who can miss one like that! When a man misses his drive, and then misses his second shot, and then wins the hole with a birdie--it gets my goat!" It was the kind of performance which caused Leo Diegel to remark, after losing to Hagen in a 1925 PGA match, "I never want to play him again; he's killing me!"<sup>iii</sup>

As they made the final turn, Hagen went on the offensive, shooting for birdies. The

strategy paid off, and he started a run that all but finished Jones. The Atlantan played the last nine in a solid 36, but Hagen scorched it in 32 (-4). After the first day, Hagen was 8 up.<sup>iv</sup>

Although they were only at the halfway mark, during the intervening week dopesters began writing concluding analyses. Martin believed that the first half of the match had taught so-called golf experts an important lesson: "Professional golfers are far better than amateurs, and especially is Hagen the best of the pros, better than Jones, the best of the amateurs." Most commentators were more restrained, but no one suggested, at least in print, that Jones had a chance to come back the following Sunday at Hagen's Pasadena Golf Club in St Petersburg.

Apparently many golf fans refused to give up on Jones; on March 7 a gallery nearly twice the size of the previous Sunday's gathered at Pasadena to witness the last rounds. After halving (or tying) the first hole, Jones must have felt that fate was still against him, because he lost the second in a most demoralizing fashion when Hagen dropped a putt of nearly sixty feet to go 9 up. Despite his lead, Sir Walter kept his "fighting mask" on all day, playing as though he was behind. He finished the third round 12 up, with a medal score of 69 (-3) to Jones's 73. Hagen's total provided the basis for a famous joke that "Walter had gone around in 69 strokes and Bobby in 69 cigarettes."<sup>v</sup>

When they started the fourth and final eighteen, the only uncertainty was how soon the end would come. They approached the seventh (sixty-first) hole with Hagen dormie 12. In other words, Hagen could not lose in regulation, and in order to win, Jones would now have to take the final twelve holes of the contest--he could not afford to halve even one of them. Both men made the fringe of the par four green in two. Jones's fans roared when he sank his chip shot for a birdie, but Hagen quickly silenced them, also chipping in his third for a halve and the victory.

Although the two played out the last eleven holes to please the paying spectators, their "Battle of the Century" was over. It had not been the tension-filled wire-to-wire match that many had hoped it would be. Rather, Hagen had overwhelmed Jones, 12 and 11. Hagen later called it "my greatest thrill in golf." To Jones, it represented a "glorious licking . . . far and away the most complete" defeat he ever experienced in match play.

By that point in his career, Jones's behavior in defeat was as endearing as in victory, and in this "severe drubbing" he was at his best. Someone suggested that the gate receipts should be given to a charity, but Jones countered that Hagen should keep all of the money. Hagen did take the Whitfield Estate receipts, about \$1,800, as well as the \$5,000 prize, but he gave away the Pasadena earnings--more than \$5,000--to the St. Petersburg Hospital. The champion still cleared \$6,800, the largest purse in the world's history of golf up to that time. Hagen also gave Jones a handsome pair of cuff links to thank him for the match. He said in the closing ceremony, "Jones realizes that a professional makes his living out of the game . . . . I want the world to know that I appreciate his attitude and that I consider his action the most generous in the history of American sport."

The USGA agreed with Hagen's last point; in fact, it thought Jones too generous and soon after prohibited any more exhibitions involving amateurs, unless all of the money was given to charity. That upset golf fans, who wanted a quick rematch. Such an event never materialized, though, and there would be only one Hagen-Jones Battle of the Century.<sup>6</sup>

## 2

Golf writers, historians, and fans ever since have debated the meaning of the 1926

Unofficial World's Championship of Golf. Most of the discussion has centered on the lopsided outcome. Jones's supporters have refused to believe that it was anything other than an anomaly and that their man was still the best of his day, if not the best ever. They have argued simply that he had been off his game, while Hagen had overachieved. To Hagen's fans, such observations are little more than excuses. Sir Walter was the best golfer of the period, and he had proved it once again. But the Hagen-Jones Battle of the Century contains rich significance beside the unresolvable, if enjoyable, debate over each player's competitive greatness; indeed, the contest brought together two of the most popular, yet contrastable athletes of the 1920s.<sup>7</sup>

Although many Americans have heard of Bobby Jones through the Masters tournament he founded, few more than recognize the name of Walter Hagen. That is puzzling, because his competitive record is among the best ever. During the period from 1914 to 1932, Hagen won eleven of the currently designated major championships: two U.S. Opens, four British Opens, and five match-play PGA titles (four in a row from 1924-1927). In 1922 he became the first American-born golfer to win the British Open. Hagen also won five Western Opens, giving him a total of sixteen contemporary major titles. His record in the majors has been exceeded only by Bobby Jones (unless one counts Hagen's Western titles), and, more recently, by Jack Nicklaus. In addition to his major championships, Hagen recorded some thirty other tournament victories in his career, including three Metropolitan Opens and three North and South Opens. Because he was so tough in match play, Hagen was named the captain of the first United States Ryder Cup teams. Sportswriter Al Laney concluded, "all of us who wrote golf in Hagen's day made too much of his flamboyant showmanship [and] not nearly enough of his golf."<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, as Laney suggests, Hagen's importance goes beyond his statistical golf



record. Hagen, in many ways fulfilling the popular image of the 1920s, was an original, colorful figure and did much to popularize the game. According to Herbert Warren Wind, Sir Walter was "a born showman," who "loved the big gesture" and attracted thousands of people to tournaments with his knack for the spectacular in behavior and dress. In the spring of 1925, Keeler described him as "the leading showman of sport today," characterizing Hagen's charisma as an "instinctive, natural ebullition," unseen since the days of the great prizefighter John L. Sullivan. Laney remembered, Hagen's "mere arrival on the scene did something, caused something to happen. His every appearance seemed to be accompanied by the figurative blaring of trumpets and a metaphorical waving of banners, and Walter was perfectly conscious at all times of his role as a performer."<sup>9</sup>

In addition, analysts noted that even Hagen's swing was original. It was obvious to golf experts that he had played a lot of baseball in his youth; his stance was wide, his swing plane relatively flat, and he exaggerated his weight shift, creating a "lurching" motion at the point of impact. Hagen was "self-taught and not in the slightest measure a copyist or a patternist," observed H. B. Martin. In a piece entitled "What Makes Hagen a Great Player?" golf writer William Richardson argued that Hagen's greatest asset was not his swing but rather his "head." Others, especially Jones, possessed a more artistic, technically sound swing, but no one surpassed Hagen's mental toughness or tactical skill. Highlighting Sir Walter's ability to win, British golf writer Arthur Croome wrote that Hagen "makes more bad shots in a single season than Harry Vardon [a British golfer who helped pioneer the game in America] did during the whole period 1890-1914. But he beats more immaculate golfers because three of 'those' and one of 'them' count four, and he knows it." On the course, Hagen was a pure utilitarian; he cared far less about

what his swing looked like than about whether he won or lost, and he always played to win.

Robert Harlow, Hagen's close friend and manager, believed that "if Walter got into a game of tiddledywinks with a couple of kids on the nursery floor, he would try as hard to beat them as he did to win the British Open championship."<sup>10</sup>

Hagen was unconventional off the course as well; anecdotes about his carefree lifestyle are legion. Wind wrote that Hagen drank "what would have been for other people excessive quantities of liquor. . . . [He] broke eleven of the Ten Commandments and kept on going."

Hagen could, apparently, party all night, show up to the locker room the following morning to prepare for a tournament, and ask his competitors: "Well, who is going to be second?" Much of this is legend. Actually, Hagen took decent care of himself during his playing days and drank far less than was commonly believed. At a party, Hagen would often ask the bartender for a ginger ale, which he would nurse as if it were a cocktail, or he might merely walk around with a drink, sipping and then discarding it as inconspicuously as possible. "I could make one highball last longer in my own glass than any Scotchman ever born," Hagen remembered. As for staying up all night, he once admitted that he usually had little choice; that is, he could not always sleep before big competitions. So Hagen was not quite as indulgent or cool as everyone assumed.<sup>11</sup>

But if Hagen's drinking has been exaggerated, the stories concerning his womanizing are probably all true. He was certainly popular and undisciplined with female fans, often finding an evening's companionship within his gallery. "I met beautiful and charming women all over the world," bragged Hagen. "A roving eye was my Geiger counter; my claim was staked with a devoted appreciation of their potentials and ability to make my travels and my leisure moments more enjoyable." According to one story, Hagen was introduced to Ernestine Schumann-Heink,

famous contralto of the Metropolitan Opera. Although he had never heard of her, he took one look at her "ample bosom," and reputedly said, "my dear, did you ever stop to think what a lovely bunker you would make?" Extended exhibition tours with "roving eyes" as "Geiger counters" did little for Hagen's family life; during a period in which divorce was still relatively uncommon, he was married and divorced twice.<sup>12</sup>

Yet Hagen displayed other notable qualities, beside his unconformable behavior. It seems that early in his career he was a modest, even unassuming individual, but once established, he was rarely humble and often cocky to the point of arrogance. J. H. Taylor believed, however, that Hagen's showmanship was "but a pose designed to impress and to conceal real anxieties." Given his modest roots and limited formal education, Hagen must have occasionally felt out of place, even insecure, in the culture of golf. Whatever the motive, Hagen did exude confidence. Recalling his first experience with Hagen, Croome wrote: "It was at once borne in on me that here was a man who would not fail through excess of modesty." But while sometimes appearing arrogant and materialistic, Hagen also impressed people with his generosity, playing many matches for charity and giving away money to caddies, friends, and hospitals, as in the Jones match. And, according to H. B. Martin, Hagen's two outstanding characteristics were his refusal to court sympathy or self-pity and his utter disregard for making an alibi--whatever the breaks might be. Those rather traditional attitudes endeared him to competitors, who generally admired and respected Hagen, in spite his showmanship. "I love to play with Walter," Jones declared. "He goes along chin up, smiling away; never grouching about his luck, playing the ball as he finds it. He can come nearer beating the luck itself than anybody I know."<sup>13</sup>

Hagen is also significant because his career signaled a new stage in the evolution of his

sport. He is regarded as the country's first professional touring golfer; he was the first golf professional to abandon the traditional role of giving lessons and selling equipment for a country club, showing that one could make a comfortable living by playing in tournaments and exhibition matches. Other working class youths had risen to fame and fortune through baseball or prizefighting, but not in the exclusive sport of golf. During the 1920s, Hagen's annual income ranged from \$45,000 to \$75,000, depending on his standing. In retirement, he carried the distinction of being the first golfer to earn a million dollars. In an age that idealized amateurism, when "professionals" in sports were often frowned upon as common and crass, Sir Walter offered class (his comments to Ms. Schumann-Heink notwithstanding) and commanded respect. He was suave, debonair, and of course, always impeccably dressed. Grantland Rice concluded that "Hagen, by his tact, deportment, style, and over-all color, did for the professional golfer what Babe Ruth did for the professional ball player."<sup>14</sup>

Sir Walter also challenged the status quo by leading several "rebellions" at the finest golf courses around the world, helping to gain equal treatment and accommodations at clubhouses for both amateurs and professionals. In 1920, for example, Hagen attempted to break down social barriers at clubhouses in Great Britain, where upper-class amateur prejudices toward professionals remained strongest. Upon arriving in England to play in his first British Open, he learned that professionals were prohibited from entering the clubhouse at Deal. So Hagen ordered his chauffeur to park his long, luxurious Austin-Daimler automobile in front of the clubhouse and proceeded to use it throughout the tournament as a sort of locker room. The club secretary asked Hagen to park the car behind the building, but Hagen politely said no. He repeated similar antics at other prestigious British clubs. Although the barriers to professionals

did not collapse immediately, they did eventually, and Hagen is justly credited with assisting the process.

Hagen, therefore, represented a curious character and a significant athletic figure. Golf's leading showman and one of its greatest athletes, he was a confident and feared competitor, who was flamboyant, controversial, and original, as well as gregarious, respected, generous, and, within his sport, egalitarian. Much of his irreverent image and lifestyle reflected the so-called "roaring" side of American society in the 1920s. "In Hagen you have the irresponsible playboy of golf, and at the same time a keen and determined competitor," wrote Rice in 1930. Chick Evans, an outstanding American amateur, said of Hagen, "he is in golf to live, not to make a living." Actually, Hagen was in the game to do both. Jones may have put it best when he reflected on Hagen, "He wasn't called Sir Walter for nothing."<sup>15</sup>

As for Bobby Jones, on and, to a lesser degree, off the course, he represented what Hagen did not--continuity and tradition. "Mr. Jones" was unlike Sir Walter except in his achievements on the course. Jones's record is equally impressive. He won his first competitive tournament at the age of nine when he took the 1911 East Lake Jr. Championship in Atlanta. "A pink-cheeked, round-faced, blue-eyed boy," Little Bob splashed onto the national scene in 1916 with his performance in the U.S. Amateur Championship at the Merion Cricket Club in Philadelphia, where he became an instant star, the game's child prodigy.

Observers admired Jones's fluid swing and the studiousness with which he approached the game. He was often described as a methodical "student of good form." "Golf's Great Stylist," he made the game look easy, "with scarcely a blemish in a swing that appeared to onlookers as absolutely perfect." Whereas Hagen "swayed" or lunged at the ball during his

swing, Jones had a "classic" and "flawless" swing, marked by "perfect balance," an "orthodox" narrow stance, and a "rhythm" that finished with a "statuesque" follow through. As one golf writer observed, Jones moved "up and down, instead of to and fro." British amateur E. W. E. Holderness noted that Jones's swing "just flows sweetly and smoothly from start to finish" and concluded that Jones was the natural heir to golf's classicist, Harry Vardon. George Duncan, a prominent British professional, considered him an "artist who is never satisfied with anything less than perfection." Yet in the finest tradition of English amateurism, Jones was not a "fanatic" of the game who hit practice balls for hours on end; rather, to him golf was "a game of character" in which "preparing himself was much more important than preparing his shots." The Atlantan even looked old-fashioned on the course; in place of Hagen's dazzling, pin-striped wardrobe, Jones wore drab or navy blue knickers.<sup>16</sup>

Despite his natural ability, Jones took longer than expected to win a major title, and, during the early years of his career, he developed a reputation as a spoiled hothead. "The one fault that [Jones] had to conquer was the overeagerness and the fiery impatience of youth," concluded Grantland Rice. Eventually, however, he "curbed his temper" and, like a model Victorian, learned from his infirmities. But it was never quite as simple as his admirers made it seem. In the spring of 1930 Jones admitted, "I've never gotten rid of my temper. I still get as mad as blazes, but I don't show it; I suppress it."<sup>17</sup>

As age and experience had their influence, Jones finally broke through in 1923 to begin an outstanding run in the majors that included thirteen titles before his retirement in 1930 at the age of twenty-eight. In all, Jones won three British Opens, one British Amateur, four U.S. Opens, and five U.S. Amateur titles, including the Grand Slam (all four of those titles) in 1930.

Together with Hagen, he promoted international competition by playing on and captaining Walker Cup teams (the forerunner and amateur counterpart to the Ryder Cup).

But apart from their competitive records and popularity, Jones and Hagen had little in common. Jones was blessed with many, if not all, of the advantages a young man could hope for in 1920s America. The son of an Atlanta lawyer, Jones could afford to play the game as an amateur, a luxury denied Hagen; as the child of a club member, Jones took the traditional route into the sport. Jones also had the time and resources to acquire a formal education. While Hagen had dropped out of school in the middle grades, Jones provided an admirable example of how one could blend education and athletics. Commentators highlighted his formal education and interest in literature and classical music. Rice informed fans, "In starting for a championship [Jones] might be found with a Latin book or a calculus treatise, completely engrossed, with all thought of golf eliminated until he reached the scene of battle." Of course it was not all classical literature for Jones; like Hagen, he loved billiards, hunting, and, especially, fishing.

Pastimes aside, Jones also developed a personal life that was very different from Hagen's. A model of decorum off the course, he stated that his priorities were family first, vocation second, and golf third, with the game never being a life unto itself. A careful examination of his life reveals that Jones was capable of mixing those priorities, especially golf and vocation, but he certainly prized and protected his wife and children, a Victorian ideal passed on to him by both his father and grandfather. Generally speaking, he lived a disciplined, humble, and orderly life. Although Jones enjoyed a good joke and a few drinks with friends, he was never accused of being raucous.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, while many Americans found Sir Walter an alluring figure, they simply

adored Bobby Jones. After winning the 1926 and 1930 British Opens, Jones received two of the largest New York ticker-tape parades bestowed on any person, much less an athlete. Upon his retirement, Golfers Magazine declared Jones "the greatest sports idol the world has ever known; more loved and admired than a Cobb, Dempsey, Ruth, or Tilden."

Most looked up to Jones because he was, supposedly, a "simon-pure" amateur. "He is the most popular champion in any sport because he is an amateur to the marrow, a sportsman at all times, a lover of the game for itself and not the profit to be made from it," wrote one commentator. H. B. Martin said of Jones, "never was there an athlete who imbued a truer sense of amateurism . . . who steadfastly refused to listen to tempting offers to join the professional ranks."<sup>19</sup>

Yet no one could be truly "simon-pure," and, inevitably, throughout his life Jones profited from golf. Indeed, the irony is that in the long run Jones may have made more money from golf by remaining an amateur than he ever would have made if he had played as a professional. In the 1920s, though, he entered only a handful of professional tournaments and never accepted prize money, ignoring the "golden glow" of profit. For this, Americans gave Jones their undying loyalty and respect. Even when Jones retired in 1930 and "cashed in" to do a series of golf instructional films, observers thought him "wise," because he "chose the proper moment for quitting," having "won everything there is to win" and having a "growing family" to look after. The fact that the films were "educational" lent an amateur flavor to his first major act of commercialism. In sum, to his legions of admirers, Jones was the embodiment of amateurism; actually, he, like everyone else, wrestled with the definition and role of the amateur athlete in the midst of emerging professionalism in sports. Still, all of this was in stark contrast to Hagen's



frankly commercial exploits.<sup>20</sup>

Jones was also adored because he seemed to possess the finest personal characteristics. While Hagen was the "cocky showman," Jones was most often perceived as "modest" and "sportsmanlike." William Richardson succinctly remarked, "Bobby is modesty personified." In his diatribe on modern sports, Paul Gallico admitted that Jones was the "One Hero" who "would stand up in every way as a gentleman as well as a celebrity . . . and who never once . . . has let me down in my estimate of him." When Jones won the 1926 British Open, the Times of London declared that "no more modest or generous golfer" had ever won the event. The same newspaper compared Jones's retirement to that of George Washington, saying both left the stage "with the blessings" of their "fellow citizens." In the summer of 1930, the Catholic periodical Commonweal noted that "Bobby is widely loved because he is genuinely modest, because he mingles a boyish intentness with the artist's grim obsession with perfection, [and] because he is a model of sportsmanship." Britain's Golf Monthly concluded that "the significance of Mr. Jones" was his "character," which "captured the hearts of the golfers of two hemispheres" through "modesty and the sincerity of a nature as honest as the sunlight."<sup>21</sup>

Though a feared competitor, Jones was considerate and kind to his opponents. No one accused him of gamesmanship as he attacked "Old Man Par" instead of his competition. Gallico believed that "Jones could not even work up a grudge against an opponent. His sole enemies were himself and the landscape." Neither did he pursue victory at any price, and he sincerely believed that there were more important things than winning; Jones became famous for calling rules violations and penalties on himself, even while it cost him a major tournament.<sup>22</sup>

But if Jones's public life was nearly a perfect reflection of the finest traditional values, his

private views were not always so admirable and were certainly more complex. For example, although he never identified with the dark, intolerant defense of tradition in the 1920s, Jones was characteristically a traditionalist on social questions. On the individual level he was kind and considerate with everyone, regardless of skin color. Unlike the other great Georgian athlete of the early twentieth century, Ty Cobb, there were no incidents of hatred or violence toward blacks in Jones's life. On the public level, though, he never supported progressive civil rights policies and apparently stood by idly while his Masters tournament became a focal point for charges of racism in golf.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, during competition he was never as calm and collected on the course as he appeared to be. On one occasion he confessed, "People may get the impression that I find it easy to go on playing golf day after day without breaking down. But actually it is really hard work and . . . I [often] feel a bundle of nerves."<sup>24</sup>

In other ways, Jones simply broke from tradition, manifesting modern traits; for instance, he lacked a strong sense of Protestant religious piety. Although reared a Southern Baptist, he married a devout Roman Catholic, permitted his children to be raised Catholic, and was not much concerned with religious conduct or issues. He also cursed and smoked excessively. The "69 cigarettes" quip was only a slight exaggeration, and he regularly enjoyed a glass of corn whiskey, even if it meant breaking the law in the era of Prohibition, which, despite popular misconception, not everyone did. Finally, Jones lived in Atlanta, the city that most embodied the New South, and that also symbolized his familiarity with change and progress. Nonetheless, sportswriters portrayed Jones as the classic southern gentleman, and for the most part, this popular perception had deep roots in reality.<sup>25</sup>

In sum, during the period 1914-30 Walter Hagen and Bobby Jones dominated golf. The publicity they generated contributed much to the transformation of American golf from an elite pastime to a popular spectator sport, and together they led the way in establishing the U.S. as an international golf powerhouse. Both were outstanding sports heroes, yet their backgrounds, personalities, and public images were remarkably different--even antithetical. Sir Walter and Mr. Jones are revealing enough as individuals, but taken together they provide comparisons and contrasts which illuminate a pivotal period in the history of golf and American society. Beyond that, their stories are some of the most exciting and enjoyable in all of sports, and are simply worth remembering.<sup>26</sup>

### Notes--Prologue

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- i. Will Grimsley, Golf: Its History, People, and Events (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), 57-8; Walter Hagen and Margaret Seaton Heck, The Walter Hagen Story (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 148-51; "Hagen Overwhelms Bobby Jones," Professional Golfer, 6 (March 1926), 24; "The Battle of the Century," Southern Golfer, 7 (March 15, 1926), 11; Robert Tyre Jones, Jr., Golf is My Game (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), 96.
- ii. New York World, February 28, 1926; H. B. Martin, "Golf Records Make Interesting Comparison," Metropolitan Golfer, 4 (May 1926), 20-1; Gould B. Martin, "Jones No Match for Hagen," Metropolitan Golfer, 4 (March 1926), 8; Hagen and Heck, Walter Hagen Story, 148.
- iii. Sarasota Herald, March 1, 1926; see also, Hagen, Walter Hagen Story, 153-4; Grantland Rice, The Bobby Jones Story (Atlanta: Tupper and Love, 1953), 140; and Jones, Golf Is My Game, 98. In the last account, Jones recalls that Hagen's ball was not really obstructed by a tree, but was in the middle of the fairway. Sarasota Herald report mentions

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the tree, however. Also, Hagen's birdie putt was made more difficult by the fact that Jones's missed putt had laid him a stymie (that is, Jones's ball was partially blocking Hagen's path to the hole). Finally, the accounts of the length of Hagen's birdie putt vary from 3 feet to 15 feet. See also O. B. Keeler, "Hagen--Match-Play Master," American Golfer, 29 (May 1926), 1; reprinted in Charles Price, American Golfer (New York: Random House, 1964), 77-82.

iv. First day medal totals: Hagen 71-7--141; Jones, 77-74-151. Most telling, though, was the number of putts required: Hagen used 27 in the morning and 26 in the afternoon to Jones's 31 and 30. Hagen, Walter Hagen Story, 154; Sarasota Herald, March 1, 1926.

v. Tampa-St. Petersburg Tribune, March 8, 1926; Sarasota Herald, March 8, 1926; New York Times, March 8, 1926, 13; and Hagen, Walter Hagen Story, 155. Accounts of the length of Hagen's birdie putt vary from the Times's record of forty feet, to Hagen's fifty feet, to the Herald's report of seventy feet. In any case, it was long, and no one, including Hagen himself, expected the putt to fall. Herbert Warren Wind, The Story of American Golf (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), 151.

6. Grimsley, Golf, 58; Robert T. Jones, Jr., Down the Fairway (N.Y.: Blue Ribbon Books, 1927), 148. Rice, Bobby Jones Story, 137; Richard Miller, Triumphant Journey: The Saga of Bobby Jones and the Grand Slam of Golf (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980), 161; New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 8, 1926; New York Herald-Tribune, March 8, 1926. H. B. Martin, Fifty Years of American Golf (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1936), 330; Allison Danzig and Peter Brandwein, Sports Golden Age: A Closeup of the Fabulous Twenties (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1948), 193.

7. I found the seed for this project in Benjamin Rader, American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 194-9.

8. On Hagen and Jones, see Paul Gallico, The Golden People (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965); Grantland Rice, The Tumult and the Shouting, (N.Y.: A. S. Barnes & Company, 1954); Hagen, Walter Hagen Story; Ross Goodner, Golf's Greatest (N.Y.: Golf Digest, 1978), 70-9; Wind, Story of American Golf, 118-32; George Peper, ed. Golf in America: The First Hundred Years (N.Y.: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1988), 52-61; Bernard Darwin, Golf Between Two Wars (London: Chatto and Windus, 1944); Gene Sarazen, Thirty Years of Championship Golf (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Press, 1950), passim; Al Barkow, The History of the PGA Tour (NY: Doubleday, 1989), 17-24, 269; Al Laney, Following the Leaders (Classics of Golf reprint, Ailsa, Inc., 1991), 46.

9. Wind, Story of American Golf, 119-120; O. B. Keeler, "Showmen of the Game," American Golfer, 28 (May 16, 1925), 7; Laney, Following the Leaders, 46.

10. For a discussion of Hagen's swing, see Tom Scott and Geoffrey Cousins, The Golf Immortals (N.Y.: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1969), 43-55; H. B. Martin, Fifty Years

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of American Golf, 325; O. B. Keeler, "Studying the Styles of Champions: Walter Hagen," American Golfer, 26 (19 May 1923), 24; New York Times, November 13, 1927, XI, 9; September 1, 1929, V, 4.

11. Wind, Story of American Golf, 127; interview with Ken Janke (friend of Walter Hagen and executor of Hagen estate), May 14, 1997, Birmingham, Michigan; Hagen and Heck, Walter Hagen Story, 176-7, 262; Al Barkow, History of the PGA Tour, 19; H. B. Martin, "A Champion in the Making," Golf Illustrated, 40 (December 1933), 41.

12. Charles Price, The World of Golf (N.Y.: Random House, 1962), 132; Hagen and Heck, Walter Hagen Story, 260.

13. J. H. Taylor, Golf: My Life's Work (London: Jonathan Cape, LTD, 1943), 212; A. C. M. Croome, "The Other Side of Hagen," American Golfer, 29 (September 1926), 26; Martin, Fifty Years of American Golf, 324-5; O. B. Keeler, "Studying the Styles of Champions," 24.

14. See Peper, Golf in America, 52-60; Herb Graffis, The PGA: The Official History of the Professional Golfers' Association of America (N.Y. Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1975) 167-74 and "The Haig," Sport, 27 (June 1959), 88; Al Barkow, Golf's Golden Grind: The History of the Tour (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1974), 39-75; Detroit News, May 25, 1924; Rice, Tumult and the Shouting, 65; "How Hagen and Harlow Hit It Off," Professional Golfer, 9 (January 1929), 21.

15. Charles Bartlett, "Walter in Wonderland," Professional Golfer, 33 (June 1951), 18; Barkow, History of the PGA, 23-4. Rice, "Golf's Bad Boy," 18; Grimsley, Golf, 59; Jones, Golf is My Game, 97.

16. Grantland Rice, "There's Only One Bobby Jones," Collier's, 75 (4 April 1925), 20; E. W. E. Holderness, "Golf's Great Stylist," American Golfer, 31 (July 1928); Thomas Uzzell, "A Study of Bobby Jones's Swing," American Golfer, 27 (18 October 1924), 8; Martin, Fifty Years of American Golf, 361; Scott and Cousins, The Golf Immortals, 81-96; Price, World of Golf, 174; "In the Locker-Room with Bobby Jones," Literary Digest, 105 (5 July 1930), 42.

17. Rice, "There's Only One Bobby Jones," 20. See Jim Barnes's quotation in Martin, Fifty Years of American Golf, 357; also, Jerome Travers and James Crowell, The Fifth Estate: Thirty Years of Golf (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 67; W. E. Woodward, "What Makes Him Click," American Magazine, 109 (April 1930), 170.

18. Philadelphia Inquirer, September 8, 1916; Rice, "There's Only One Bobby Jones," 20; "In the Locker-Room with Bobby Jones," 42

19. Francis J. Powers, "Bobby Jones Retires From Competitive Golf," Golfers Magazine, 58 (December 1930), 7; Angus Perkerson, "Atlanta, Home of Golf Champions," Golfers

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Magazine, 50 (October 1926), 29; Martin, Fifty Years of American Golf, 362. Scholars have done much in recent years to trace the origins of the amateur ethos. Ironically, although amateurism has been usually regarded as an original or pure approach to athletics, in fact one can make a compelling case that professional sports have deeper roots and that the amateurism which Jones and others embodied was actually a fairly recent (late nineteenth century) invention of the Victorian middle and upper classes—an invention that distinguished and protected them from the perceived crass materialism of the working class. For a discussion of the origins of amateurism and its uses, see especially S. W. Pope, Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926 (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1997); also see Donald J. Mrozek, Sport and American Mentality (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); Mark Dyreson, Making the American Team: Sport, Culture, and the Olympic Experience (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Rader, American Sports.

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22. Gallico, The Golden People, 280.

23. Charles C. Alexander, Ty Cobb (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1984); David Owen, The Making of the Masters: Clifford Roberts, Augusta National, and Golf's Most Prestigious Tournament (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1999); Steve Eubanks, Augusta: Home of the Masters Tournament (Nashville, TN: Rutledge Hill Press, 1997); Curt Sampson, The Masters: Golf, Money, and Power in Augusta, Georgia (N.Y.: Villard Press, 1998); Charlie Sifford with James Gullo, Just Let Me Play: The Story of Charlie Sifford, The First Black PGA Golfer (N.Y.: British American Publishing, 1992).

24. "Bobby Jones on His Victory," Golf Monthly, 20 (June 1930), 314.

25. New York Times, July 31, 1927, VIII, 2; Elliott interview.

26. For surveys of 1920s America, see Lynn Duménil, The Modern Temper (N.Y.: Hill and Wang, 1995); Stanley Coben, Rebellion Against Victorianism: The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1991); Roderick Nash, The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930 (reprint, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1990); Joan Hoff Wilson, ed., The Twenties: The Critical Issues (Boston: Little Brown, and Company, 1972); Paula Fass, The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the Twenties (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1977); Paul A. Carter, Another Part of the Twenties (N.Y.: Columbia

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University Press, 1977); T. J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace (N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1981); and William Leuchtenberg, The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). See also Randy Roberts, Jack Dempsey: The Manassa Mauler (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979) and Roderick Nash, "Sports Heroes of the 1920s," in Steven A. Riess, ed., Major Problems in American Sport History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 324-9.