

HE WAS A THOUGHTFUL GOLFER

Few Golfers Knew and Appreciated the Game from
More Angles Than Did The Late John G. Anderson

By J. P. GLASS

JOHAN G. ANDERSON was young in years when he passed away not long since, but in golfing experience he was as old as Methuselah. In the course of playing in most of the states of the Union and some sixteen or seventeen different countries, he had explored every technical and mental possibility the game offers. Having won fifty-three championships, and having twice reached the final of the U. S. Amateur Championship, it was too bad that he never experienced the supreme emotional triumph.

He can fittingly be classed as a brainy golfer. His game was always thoughtful. That he did not become our national champion, was in no sense due to faulty headwork. His head pulled him to victory over men with greater natural ability. He knew more about the strategy and the psychology of competitive golf than most of us will ever suspect. It was, for him, a game in which one employed wit, as well as skill.

One of the greatest matches of John's career was his semi-final meeting with "Chick" Evans in the Amateur Championship of 1913 at Garden City and one of the most satisfying phases it held for him was contained in the fact that at a crucial stage good headwork gave him victory.

When they reached the sixteenth tee, John was one up and held the honor. The problem in his mind was how to hold his narrow lead through the remaining three holes. The sixteenth hole on that day measured about 425 yards. One of its complications was a road crossing the fairway about 225 yards from the tee. A ball from the tee was apt to end up in that road, leaving a tough second shot to be negotiated.

John first decided to use his driver and try to cross the road. But caution triumphed. He put this club back in the bag, took out a cleek and played a two hundred and fifteen yard shot safely ten yards short of the danger zone. His ball ended up on smooth turf, leaving him with perfect conditions for a spoon second.

He figured that Evans was the one who should take a chance with the road and that, since he was down, and the match was nearing its end, this is what "Chick" would do. His calculation was correct. However, trying for distance, "Chick" pulled his

ball into rough short of the road on the left. His lie did not permit a wood second shot and an iron could not get him home. His recovery left him short of the green, whereupon John lashed a spoon shot that left him with a four-foot putt. His birdie, with "Chick" taking five, put him two up and he finally won, 2 and 1.

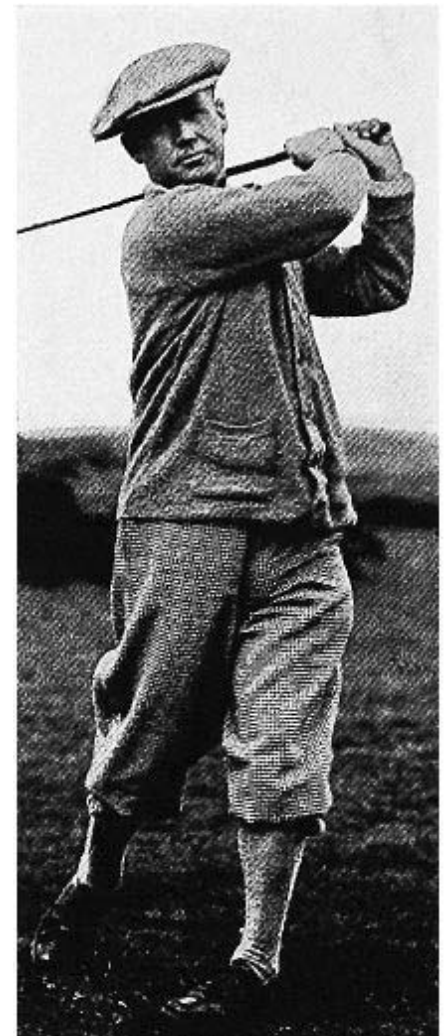
I think Anderson's satisfaction with his play from the sixteenth tee at Garden City was largely due to the fact that a cruelly illogical bit of fate once had helped "Chick" to beat him in one of the most thrilling encounters of his career. John told me about it years afterward.

Two years before, he and Evans had been the finalists in the French Amateur Championship, played at La Boulie, near Versailles. They had met under peculiarly interesting conditions. In the first place, the final had fallen on the Fourth of July and Americans had motored from various remote places all over Europe to celebrate the day by watching their compatriots decide the French championship. Secondly, all Paris was celebrating the arrival there of the famous Japanese naval hero, Admiral Togo. Practically the entire aerial force stationed at Issy participated in the ceremonies.

John and "Chick" played through the day with one hundred airplanes and thirty dirigibles sweeping low, with hideous roars, above their heads. They should have been disconcerted but were not. Instead they staged a scintillating exhibition which left them all even at the end of thirty-six holes. Evans had scored 72-70 and John 69-73—quite some golf in any championship.

They halved the first extra hole in three and went to the second tee. Here things happened. The second tee was set near a turn in an adjoining highway leading to Issy. Five yards from it, in the elbow of the turn, stood a stable. Just as Anderson was swinging down on his drive a huge automobile tore around this stable with a loud blast of its horn. He flinched, barely struck his ball with the heel of his club, and, dismayed, watched it roll feebly under the low-hanging branches of a fir tree five yards off the tee.

No one not similarly experienced can appreciate the tragedy of such a happening.



For thirty years John G. Anderson was a well-known figure in American golf, and within that period he played the game in many parts of the world. He was a real and true disciple of the game

Evans already had driven and had sent a neat shot down the middle of the fairway. John had to attempt a recovery where only a miracle could rescue him from defeat. Under the circumstances, I think his succeeding accomplishment monumental. The only way in which he could play from under the fir tree was to get down on his knees and roll his ball out with a putter. His third shot brought his ball just even with "Chick's." Then he pitched eighteen feet from the cup and holed his putt for a five.

Such a gallant recovery deserved a full reward, and for a time it seemed possible he might halve the hole. Evans sent his second shot over the green, but played back four feet from the cup and got his 4.

This was one case where the major share of the applause went to the defeated. For the rest of his life, Anderson naturally held that the French motorist and not Evans beat him out of the championship. He by no means forgave the Frenchman, because he happened to be Santos-Dumont, greatest airman of his (*Continued on page 38*)

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day, who was hurrying to Issy to take up a plane.

Anderson had a great fondness in later years for competition in the French championship. He won the title in 1924 and 1926, a little more than a fifth of a century after taking his first intercollegiate championship. The competition was never soft. When victorious in 1924 his opponent in the final was Cyril Tolley, the big Britisher, then at the peak of his game.

This also was at La Boulie, where John always seemed to play great golf. During the championship he played consecutive rounds of 75, 71, 70, 70, 70, 74 and 72. From the seventh hole of the third round to the second hole of the final round he lost only one hole. This went to G. J. Castel, the Belgian champion, merely because he unfeelingly sank a forty-foot putt for a birdie.

His best exhibition was against André Vagliano, several times winner of the French closed championship. Going out, Vagliano shot a 35 and had him three down.

"How are you doing?" Madame Vagliano asked John at the ninth green. "The best I can," he replied, "but if your husband keeps on like this, he'll win the championship." He didn't realize that he was just going to do something sensational. However, he came in with a 32 and eased the Frenchman out of the picture.

When he met Tolley in the final he ran into a bitter uphill fight. But some extremely clever thinking pulled him through. When they left the thirty-first green the match was even, but John never once had been up on Tolley. Several times he had squared the match, but he never could get ahead. Walking up a hill on the thirty-first fairway something happened that aroused the ever-keen mind of Anderson. The day was hot. Not a breath of air apparently was stirring. But, taking off his cap to mop his brow, John detected what appeared to be a cooling current of air. It struck him at once that if a breeze was coming up, it would have an important bearing on the play at the next hole, the fourteenth, a two-shotter of three hundred and forty yards.

He tossed up a wisp or two of grass. It drifted in such a way that he knew they would be playing into a current of air from the fourteenth tee. However, that current would not be head-on, but would move slightly left-to-right.

"I considered this vital," said John afterward.

"The green was baked hard. A bunker crossed the front of the green. To keep your ball on the green your pitch must barely clear this bunker. The breeze, if it should strengthen, could play havoc with a delicate shot over the bunker. It seemed to me that the thing to do was to get as far to the right as possible on my drive, so that I could play straight into the wind on my second shot. I used a spoon from the tee, and, as I knew the rough on that side was not bad, deliberately drove into it. I hit a little short, too, so that I wouldn't have a shot involving delicate wrist action. I calculated that a retarding breeze would help me to increase the freedom

of my swing a lot in playing my second.

"It was a question, now, of whether Tolley had noticed the breeze, and whether he would play the hole as he had been doing on previous rounds. He had remarkable success on it. On six successive occasions he had made birdies. The last one had come against me in the morning round. Could he repeat once more? 'By George!' I told myself, 'I don't believe he can keep it up. It wouldn't be golf—that's all!'"

"Tolley always had driven to the left side of the fairway and then played a delicate pitch over the bunker in front of the green. If he noticed the breeze now he might change. But he didn't and drove as usual, out-hitting me and leaving me to play first to the green.

"The breeze freshened as I played. My ball stopped twenty-five feet past the cup. Now Tolley grew conscious of the breeze. He knew he was in a tough spot. It wasn't only the front bunker that threatened him. On the right side of the green was another bunker. From where he was to play, the wind was practically a cross-current. If his ball drifted at all it was liable to slip off the baked green into the second bunker even if it escaped the first.

"He took off his coat and his cap to make the shot. In his anxiety he lifted his head. He topped his ball and it rolled only a few yards. His third went over the green and he took a five. I won easily with a four."

John's good headwork had put him up for the first time in the match. Sinking a twenty-foot putt on the next hole, he went two up. He finally won, one up, by grimly holing a ten-foot putt to halve the eighteenth hole.

Typical of Anderson's efforts at strategy was the stunt he employed against his old enemy, Vagliano, in the 1926 French Championship. They met in the fourth round.

John deliberately let the Frenchman outdrive him. It wasn't merely that he was controlling his tee-shots with an idea of keeping out of the rough, which was very, very hard; he wanted to be first to play to the green. He thought that if he was lucky enough to place his second shots close to the pin he might make Vagliano press trying to get inside them. This was what happened. The Frenchman played wild and John quickly took a lead.

Meantime, Gardiner White, former Metropolitan amateur champion, who was in the gallery, got to worrying about John's short tee shots. Between holes he slipped up and asked: "What's the matter with your driving?"

"Nothing," said John, "I'm using a spoon. Get the idea?"

Vagliano believed, now, that John was weak off the tee. On the next hole the American disillusioned him. There was a transverse trap two hundred and thirty yards from the tee. John took out his driver and hit a two hundred and sixty-five yard smack that carried over it easily. Surprised, Vagliano tried the same thing. His ball found the trap. After that he could never get going.

In this same championship John used psychology to good effect to beat a well-known British amateur, Captain Hawke. When he first met Hawke he endeavored to study him, his usual course with opponents. Conversation was impossible, however, for the Eng-

lishman was as silent as a clam. Neither could John read his face, for it was hidden under a floppy hat.

John had made one observation about British amateurs which he thought might be valuable on this occasion. They fancied long hitting off the tee. He felt that if he could arouse Hawke's pride in his tee-shots he might accomplish something.

By this time they had arrived at a hole which offered strategic possibilities. The fairway was flat on the right side, but on the left it rose in a low hill. The procedure usually was to play on the flat, which was what Hawke did—getting a nice shot, too—but Johnny played on the hill. He calculated that if his ball would carry to a certain spot it would go on over the hill, after which a long roll would add distance. His shot came off according to schedule. When they reached their balls, John's was fifteen yards ahead.

The succeeding holes offered the American similar opportunities. Before long Hawke took the bit in his mouth. He made up his mind he wouldn't be outdriven. He went wild and John soon had a commanding lead.

Anderson's last threat to the United States Amateur Championship came in 1915, when he lost to Bob Gardner in the final. That day, which meant so much to him, the gods were against him. They overbalanced the efforts of three old friends who tried to pull him through to victory.

In one of his earlier matches with Nelson Whitney the trio had mascoted John until he became six up, when they left him to watch another match. He began slipping and lost four straight holes. "I was tempted to send for them," John related years later, "but fortunately they came back of their own accord. I braced and beat Whitney."

Thereafter his friends stuck close to him. But during the night before the final, there was a heavy rainstorm which soaked the course. This favored Bob Gardner, who was a much longer driver than Anderson. The latter depended on accuracy rather than distance, but could not afford to lose the roll that a dry course would have given him. Gardner won, 5 and 4.

The three friends' efforts to aid John reached a high degree of sacrifice. Once, in previous days, they had "rooted" him to victory in raincoats. During his battle with Gardner they donned these garments once more. The day was hot and muggy, their discomfort was terrible and they shed perspiration by the bucket. But they didn't take off the raincoats until John's defeat was certain.

There is something pathetic and heart-warming, albeit humorous, about this. Such episodes give us the final, the real worth of golf. I think John G. Anderson knew a great deal about this golden phase of the game, just as he knew so much about its other phases.