**From Tee to Cup**

(Jack Zimmerman)

Ladies and gentlemen;

The other day a look at the Dayton sports calendar informed me that this coming Tuesday marks the beginning of the men’s city amateur golf championship. This is one of Dayton’s “Play-it Pays” institutions and proof evident will come if you but visit Moraine Country Club where Jack Zimmerman will be out to retain the trophy which proclaimed him champion last year. The work for Jack is cut out for him as the field is big and strong but Jack is at his best when the chips are down and the going rough. Hundreds of Daytonian sports fans will be there to see if they can analyze the deffects of their own games from Tee to Cup.

“He takes a six on number seven, he hit the trap on old 11,

His drive is wild, well this games no fun but on the 19th, dad has one.

Through woods and water, sand and rough,

He makes the greens; the wind is tough.

He’s on in two and rims the cup so on 19 he settles up.

The fairways Cut, he wouldn’t know,

Now that’s one place he didn’t go.”

But, I know full well that the journey from tee to Cup will witness many well executed shots at Moraine next week. Golf in Dayton and in the great Miami Valley has always had its champions and that’s why I asked can Jack Zimmerman repeat?

In reality Americans are recent converts to golf. Though a similar game was known and played in new Netherlands during the 17th century, golf’s importance among our sports dates from the tournament at Newport Rhode Island in 1894 when 30 amateurs competed at metal play for the first national championship. This was the opening wedge by a little group who loved the mysteries of the Royal game. Their enthusiasm was the object of much good natured ridicule at first, but within 20 years, the fairways and greens were invaded by thousands all eager to learn

There are many things about the game of golf to charm, but one of golf’s most attractive features is the opportunity which it affords the player for self expression. He is under no compulsion to subordinate himself to a team, or to coordinate his efforts with those of other players. He is not subject to the long continued strain of attacking an enemy’s position or defending his own against assault. Yet, there is competition of the keenest sort in golf. Each player soon discovers that he is his own most formidable opponent. Innumerable mental hazards, more difficult than the physical ones, are obstacles to be overcome along the entire course. They constitute a continual challenge even to the player whose game entitles him to rank high among golfers. Without doubt, the game revealingly tests the temperament and character of its devotees.

“And whether those who play the game

Are amateurs or pros,

It surely tries their temper out

And keeps them on their toes.”

The game of golf might well be described as a good drama. There is act one “The Drive” with its appropriate setting; the gallery, the attendant caddies and at long holes the brassy shots. Act two may be called “The Approach” an interesting episode with problems of the lie, the hazard and the character of the ground. For act three there is the putt, played against a back ground of green. 18 such dramas in every round; some funny, and some tragic. Nor does the golfer ever tire of the natural stage upon which his out door dramas are played.

Many approaching the game of golf for the first time fail to realize that it is a game of skill. Americans are the champion baseball players of the world but many a slugger has proved to be a “Duffer” on the links. He strikes savagely with tense muscles and as soon as the club head hits the ball, he ends the stroke then and there.

Curiosity killed the cat, at least so runs the old adage, and curiosity plays havoc with the golfer. He just wishes to see that ball go down the middle 250 yards-more or less-chiefly less, or he wishes to see the little Apple clear a hazard-and what happens? Well he lifts his head and there remains the ball right on the tee.

Many changes have come to pass in our American culture in the last generation-but the spirit of sportsmanship has not changed; nor has human nature changed! It is precisely because golf reveals human nature so thoroughly because the temptations and rewards of the game illustrate the perennial weakness and strength of men and women who play it, that it remains so fascinating, and that from a “duffer” who has played the game for 30 years. Years in which are found much solace as I visualize some tinkling, bewitching, scintillating putts and the beaming smiles of my companions as I drive into the rough or bunker.

In the old days of golf memories we are told that clubs were cheap, club dues low and caddies scarce! But all this has changed as I see those tee carts going over the many golf courses, I feel a sting of regret, because I hope the caddy will be with us forever.

You know, there is a companionship between player and caddy that is delightful. There he goes toting the clubs, sometimes a little too heavy for him I think. He watches your play closely, gives advice when asked, and in fact he plays the role of hero worshiper! Years roll on apace, but there is that silhouette of Kayo, Whitey, Tommy, Jack, George, Andy, and Texas. What red-blooded youngsters they were and a happy thought to know they are all doing well. Just as there is more to fishing than catching fish, just so is there more to golfing than hooks, slices, birdies, pars, aces, dodoes and bogies.

It is a treat to study golf instructors. All have their favorite phrases. One professionals watchword is “balance”; another is “pivoting”; another “keep your head down” or it may be “keep your eye on the ball or bend your knees as if you are bowling or swing as if you were mowing with a seythe. But the truth is, that all of these maxims like the shibboleths of the moralists and pedagogues mean very much the same thing. For if you can keep your eye on the ball, you can keep your head down; and if you can keep your head down your body is balanced, ready to pivot; and if the swing is true to the imaginary line of the flight of the ball, and is properly timed and properly finished, you have pivoted in spite of yourself. Simple isn’t it? The easiest thing in the world to do!

Yes Sir, the game of golf is a demon to master, but that is where much of the fun lies. Bliss Perry in speaking of golf gave advice in the form of four C’s. Concentration, coolness, courage, and confidence. And of the four, confidence is the most difficult to acquire

As you take your stance on that first tee you should remember that you are playing against yourself as well as against your opponent. One morality of the game of golf is the constant presence of an ideal-that is a “par” for each hole-to say nothing of a “Birdie” or an “Eagle.” And if old man confidence is with you why you will soon be under 100, then the 90s. For the present we omit the 70s and 80s because to break these it takes lots of judgment-that is proper balance of body and mind. And how easily it is lost!

Now you are about to play a shot and you notice that someone is watching you. It may be the club professional with his ever watchful eye and you grow suddenly self-conscious. You try to swing as you have been taught and you make a wretched shot.

But now back to old man confidence! You are about to swing when your wife or best girl appears sweetly, but most untimely from the clubhouse to see you start or just to see you play the last hole, and you in embarrassment, promptly mess your drive, look up on your approach and take three putts on the green from a distance of 3 feet. Or you may lose your moral balance by a bad lie or a very bad putt. Of course a few golfers never have a bad lie; even the lowly weed and dandelion are classified as artificial hazards in their herbarium. But be that as it may, confidence leaves you and you try desperately to recover by resorting to the number four iron-a club which has never failed you before. Now you hesitate and you go for that trusty jigger. Friends that is indeed a magic club-in fact in some cases almost indispensable because it is a treasure trove of confidence!

But like Sammy and Baffy the name of jigger has almost disappeared. And so to golf! Just pick up your caddy bag and start for the first tee. Tee your ball up-not too high-forget the gallery, in fact, forget everything you have read or thought or done and sweep that little white pellet down the fairway for better or for worse-and we all hope it will be for better. And follow the gleam and follow through.

But whether you shoot in the 70s for over 100 makes little or no difference. The game is the thing as thousands of Americans will tell you. And so it will be that hundreds of Daytonian’s will seek the Moraine Country Club there to glorify the great game of golf. Some will go as spectators; others will go as the participants and judging from past tournaments it will be a classy field.

As I look back over past tournaments in Dayton I see the names of many champions who will ever forget the thrilling matches between Ed Hamant, Bob Kepler and Bob Servis and those long, long drives of Clyde Mumma and Kenny Peterson? As these names come to view, I again must say can Jack Zimmerman repeat? Well, one short week will answer that question.

In 1937 Jim Flynn the sponsor of “Sports Memories” reached the pinnacle of his golfing career for then it was that Jim was crowned champion of Dayton. Jim still is master of many shots and if that old putter responds he is still among the top in any field.

As a part of “Sports Memories” I see champion Joe Higgins of ‘38 and ‘42. ‘39 and ‘40 Paul Genung. Don Shock carried off the blue ribbons in 1946 and 1947. Ken Rogers in ’35 and Dick Tang in 1948. And again I ask; can Jack Zimmerman the champion of 1949 repeat? Great golfer is Jack!

So over the fairways let us go, par, sub-par, or bogey not withstanding, and when we reach that 19 hole we can discuss the many shots of the day and be just as much at home as are the golfers at the Black Bull of St. Andrews or at Green Man Inn at Blackbeath.

Robert Worst