

Nowadays Jones, because of an injured spine, goes around the course in a golf cart. Above he is shown watching Cary Middlecoff win the 1955 Masters.

A Visit With Bobby Jones

Bob Jones, golf's champion of champions, estimates

the pressures of the pro tournament circuit – including this week's Masters. He also gives his frank opinion of today's top pros and amateurs.



1925: Bob with the great Walter Hagen, whose "conduct on the golf course," says Jones, "was impeccable."

Right: Bob in 1916 was a 14-year-old boy wonder who trounced ex-Amateur champ E. M. Byers.



By Harry Paxton and Fred Russell

Recently we had an opportunity that reporters seldom get—a chance to sit down in relaxed privacy for a long, candid discussion of golf and golfers with the master of them all, Bobby Jones. Although he still makes news as a host at the Masters Tournament, and as a friend of golf enthusiast Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jones seldom talks at any great length for publication. He never was one to court personal publicity, even during the years when he was getting tons of it by running up his unmatched total of thirteen national-tournament victories, and since 1948 spinal trouble has reduced both his mobility and his availability.

Robert Tyre Jones, Jr., is now fifty-six and his golf playing is over, but in a broader sense he is unchanged. Jones always rated as one of the most intelligent and gentlemanly of sports



celebrities, and he remains exactly that. Throughout our conversation we found him temperate and good-humored in his answers but always frank and explicit. He evaded no issues and ducked no questions about the top golfers of today. As for how to play the game, he did not claim to have arrived at any magic formula, but he did have some very pointed words of basic advice for the golfers of the country.

We got together with Jones in his home town of Atlanta. "We" are Fred Russell, sports editor of the Nashville Banner, and Harry Paxton, sports editor of the Post. Russell is a long-time Post contributor, and a long-time friend of Bob's. Paxton's only previous direct knowledge of Jones was the boyhood thrill of watching him complete his "grand slam" of four British and American championships in the 1930 United States Amateur Tournament at the Merion Cricket Club outside Philadelphia.

Bob Jones—no one who knows him ever calls him Bobby—greeted us both with Southern graciousness, speaking in his easy Georgia drawl. He was seated at his desk in the offices of Jones, Williams, Dorsey and Kane, the Atlanta law firm founded by his father. Here Bob comes daily to attend to his varied business affairs. It was quickly agreed that we would simply close the door to Bob's walnut-paneled office and turn on the tape recorder we had brought along to transcribe our conversation.

On Bob's desk were framed reproductions of paintings of two of his special friends-Cliff Roberts, with whom Jones founded the Augusta National Golf Club and its Masters Tournament; and President Eisenhower, the latter as depicted by Norman Rockwell on a Post cover in October, 1956. Photographs of other friends hung on the office walls, along with some scenes from Bob's tournament days and assorted other sports items.

One of the first questions everybody asks us in connection with our trip to see Bob Jones is, "How is his health?" The answer is, "About the same." His trouble was caused by an injured vertebra at the top of the spine, the effect of which was a deterioration of nerve supply to his limbs. This resulted in an increasing atrophy, and pain in his arms and legs. Two operations some years back failed to correct the trouble. However, Bob Jones continues to live a full (Continued on Page 68)





as Bob Jones did—not even Ben Hogan, who won eight of the twelve major championships he competed in during his peak years of 1948 to 1953. In the Bobby Jones era, which began in 1923, big-time golf for eight years was reduced to a matter of Jones vs. the field. The brilliant young amateur entered a total of twenty-one American and British national tournaments and won thirteen. In four others he was runnerup. In 1930 Jones made a clean sweep of all four big ones—his famous "grand slam" and retired at twenty-eight, an age when a tournament golfer usually is just approaching his prime. His amazing record:

1930, St. Andrews, Scotland: Policemen had to escort Jones through a mob of enthusiastic Scots after he won the British Amateur title. This was the first of his four championship wins that season (see below).



Completing the "grand slam": Four months later, Jones easily won the U.S. Amateur title at the Merion course near Philadelphia. He thus became the first and only golfer to take all the major amateur titles in one year.

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A Visit With Bobby Jones

(Continued from Page 23)

and rounded life. He stays off his feet most of the time, but can walk with the aid of two sturdy hickory canes which bear the same stamp—ROBERT T. JONES, JR.—that he used to put on his golf clubs.

Bob is matter-of-fact about his disability. "Here's a right interesting thing," he remarked at one point, gesturing toward the canes. "There's a grand old girl up in Barbourville, Kentucky—Miss Nola Minton, used to have a lot of wonderful show horses. She made hickory golf-club shafts in the old days. Well, a few years ago she saw me with two bamboo canes and, not long after she shipped me these hickory canes, and she wrote me a little note, 'You've been leaning on hickory all your life. It's too late to change now.'"

Speaking of hickory, we wanted to know whether Bob considers the change from hickory to steel shafts the most important advance in golf equipment today.

"Yes, I suppose that's the main difference," Jones said. "But that in itself is responsible for a lot of other differences. I mean, your balancing can be so much more accurate when you can control the qualities of the shaft-the capacities of it and the distribution of weight. The steel shaft is lighter, so you can put more weight in the head. And the steel shaft eliminates the torsion factor"-meaning twisting. "But I think the main difference in the play of steel and hickory is that the boys nowadays can hit more nearly all outmore nearly full power-without running the risk of something going wrong. The boys seem to be hitting more with their hands than we used to do. I think that's the reason they're hitting the ball farther. I know that the golf ball itself hasn't got that much additional driving power, but people my own age, like Dick Garlington and Charley Black and Watts Gunnthey're driving the ball a good deal farther today than they did when they were younger."

or hurt him to play in tournaments week after week?

"That's hard to answer," he declared, "because it would have involved a complete transformation in my habits of living and thinking. You see, I never regarded golf as the paramount interest in my life. If-with my mind on other things, at least-I had had to play in five or six tournaments in a row, I feel I would have been so damn well fed up with it that I wouldn't have been able to hit the side of a barn. On the other hand, if I'd changed my whole way of living and said, 'Well, I'm going to play a golf tournament every week for the whole year for the rest of my life,' maybe I could have conditioned myself for it."

Jones was warming now into a subject on which he is very expressive—the mental tensions involved in big-time golf.

"These fellows who play the circuit now," he said, "they all have to take a week or two off every now and then. They all get jaded with it, as you do with anything. That's really the reason I quit playing in competition. I'd made up my mind even before I got around to 1930 that if I ever found a convenient stopping place, I was going to do it. "You take Walter Hagen and some of the others of my era. I think they lost their real enthusiasm for tournaments long before they were physically on the



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Then he doesn't think the golf ball itself is much of a factor?

Jones said, "It could be some. I suppose the modern ball has a greater percentage of flight to roll. The ball we used to play in the late 'Teens was a soft, heavy sort of small ball. On a dry, hard fairway you could get tremendous distance with it because it had a lot of run.

"There are a lot of other new factors. We know more about golf-course maintenance now than we did before. We've got better grasses for putting greens and fairways. But there's no getting away from the fact that technique has improved at the same time. People jump higher today and run faster, and all that sort of thing, and it's perfectly natural." Jones went on, "Here's another angle that's always interested me. In the days when Walter Hagen, Gene Sarazen, Tommy Armour, Harry Cooper and I were all playing, it was sort of accepted that everybody had to have one bad round out of the four in the U.S. Open championship. I think the guy who broke that pattern was Ralph Guldahl. The first time Ralph won the Open"-in 1937 with a score of 281-"he played four good rounds. And that set a new pattern in everybody's mind for scoring in the Open. I think that makes a lot of difference."

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downgrade. I know I did. Gene Sarazen was about the only one of our vintage who kept up his enthusiasm for so long. Of course, Ben Hogan and Sam Snead have gone on a long time in this era."

We asked him to elaborate on the reasons a man's tournament enthusiasm wears down.

Jones answered, "In tournament golf, and particularly in an Open championship, you take an awful lot of mental punishment. Golf is played at such a slow pace that you don't have an opportunity to work off steam in physical activity. Playing around that golf course in four hours, you get so weighted down by the strain and the responsibility and the difficulty of concentrating that you just wish to goodness you could hit a careless shot-just hit the ball without thinking. And if you ever yield to that temptation you'll always pay for it. "So unless you're terribly keen to win, you just won't make yourself take that kind of punishment. I think Ben Hogan may be experiencing a little of that now, although he certainly wants to become the first man to win five Open championships. But it seems to me that he's getting a little bit to the point where it's harder for him to make himself maintain that unbroken concentration." Does a top competitor like Jones sometimes concentrate so much that he becomes oblivious of his surroundings? "I've hit a number of shots like that," Jones responded. "I think probably every crucial shot that I've played in tournaments was more or less that way. I was just sort of unconscious. I was made that way by the strain. Strain causes some people to concentrate a little better. "It was always easier for me to play when I was (Continued on Page 70)



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Another change is that the playing pros today compete practically the whole year around. Bob Jones seldom entered more than five or six events a year and sometimes played in only two—the United States Open and the United States Amateur. Does he think it would have helped



70

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behind. My (Continued from Page 68) approach could be positive and aggressive, and then you can play well. The one thing I could not cope with on a golf course was the fear of looking ridiculous-not only to other people but to myself-by throwing away a big lead. I'd begin to play defensively. But when you finally have thrown the lead away, and you get around to the last hole and you've got to put the ball on the green or in the cup, then the pressure gets so great that you just lose yourself in making the shot.

"A lot of tournaments I threw away and then managed to get them back. I won my first Open in 1923 by hitting a 190-yard iron shot over a pond to the green on the last hole of a play-off with Bobby Cruickshank. I have absolutely no memory of hitting that ball."

"What did you do for relaxation in those days?" we inquired.

"In between tournaments there was no problem," Bob said. "I loved to play golf. I played golf all the time. It wasn't the pressure of being tired of golf, but being tired of taking that damn punishment in the tournaments."

"How did you relax during a tournament?" "I just stayed away from everything. You don't want to be around the lobby and have a lot of people pulling on you and wanting to talk about golf, golf, golf, so you get away from it. I'd go right up to my room and get in a tub with a drink, a highball. I'd drink that and have one or two more, then eat supper in my room and go to bed." We asked whether he had any trouble eating or sleeping. "I had trouble eating," Bob said. "I was so nervous I didn't want to eat anything. I'd always eat a very light breakfast, and I couldn't bear the thought of food at lunch-I'd eat a piece of toast and drink some tea with sugar in it. But I'd always eat a good meal at night." Jones added, after further reflection, "Here's the whole thing. I'd get so keyed up about a tournament, and while I was on that golf course, that was the most important thing in the world. And then two or three days after I'd gotten home, whether I'd won it or lost it, I'd say to myself, 'Why do you get so damn excited about a golf tournament?" "It was like the time Sam Snead was talking to me in Augusta two or three years ago-I'm proud of this, that's the reason I like to repeat it. Sam said to me one night at a Masters Club dinner, 'Bob, tell me, which one of the championships that you won did you want to win the most?' I said, 'Sam, it was always the one I was playing in at the time. And if I hadn't felt that way, I never would have won any.""

there definitely were. The next question was, "Do you think the best golfers of your day were as good as the best golfers of the present day?"

"I think so," said Bob. "Maybe some of the golfers today have a little more repetitive ability. Maybe they don't make quite so many bad shots. That could come from playing a lot more competitive golf.

"But I think the main difference in any era between the fellow who wins big tournaments and the fellow who doesn't has more to do with his psychological construction than it does with his physical ability. I'll quote Ben Hogan on that. Hogan said that a man who's capable of being a champion in one era could be a champion in another.

"All you can beat are the people that are around at the same time you are. This reminds me in a backhanded way of what Sergeant York"-the World War I hero-"was supposed to have said when he got back home, and someone asked him how he'd made out in the war. He said, 'Well, I killed more of them than they did of me.""

Jones went on, "You can't beat the ones that came before you, or the ones that come after. For example, how could you compare Vardon with me, or Hogan, or Tom Morris? You just can't do it." Harry Vardon, with whom Jones-then eighteen-had the experience of being paired in the 1920 U.S. Open, was a sixtime British Open winner prior to the First World War; Tom Morris was a nineteenth-century Scottish great. Getting down to cases on the modern golfers, we invited Bob to give his opinion on the irritatingly slow play of some of the current tournament performers. Does he think it's just a habit they're in, or are they trying deliberately to annoy the other fellow? "I don't think they try consciously to do that," Jones answered. "I do think there's a certain amount of selfishness involved. But mostly I think that a lot of our younger pros and amateurs are overimpressed with the amount of time and study they have to give to the making of a

golf shot. They look to me like they try to take into consideration more damn things than they have to. I think they're setting a very bad example for youngsters.

"I used to walk around a little bit on the green after I got the ball on there, but all I was trying to do was to tranquilize my breathing. Walking a good distance up to the green and making your way through a crowd of people requires a little exertion, and so I'd stall around a little bit just to get my breathing tranquilized, and get my mind back on the shot. But no more than that. Like old Alex Smith used to say, 'Miss 'em quick.' If I ever took a second waggle, I might as well put the club back in the bag. I just couldn't hit the ball.

"I think people get the jitters-the yips, some of them call it-when they can't stop waggling before they play a shot. Cary Middlecoff got into that kind of thing not long ago."

We asked Jones to single out some of the greatest present-day players. Bob said there were quite a number of them. "Obviously Hogan, Snead, Demaret, Middlecoff-I don't think that I can give all the names right off."

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Would he include any of the younger golfers in that category yet, such as Burke, Littler and numerous others?

Bob Jones declared, "I tell you frankly, a lot of the younger crowd over the past ten or a dozen years have been a little disappointing to me. We've found that there were a lot of them who could play fine golf, but when you get to something like the Open championship, they're just not there. Burke finally came through in 1956 and won the Masters and the P.G.A. Dick Mayer won the Open last year, and that George May tournament"-the lucrative Tam O' Shanter "world" championship. "Doug Ford-he won a good bit last year. He won the Masters. But I have to see these young fellows win some of the big ones, and with some consistency, before I get too impressed."

It was mentioned to Jones that a few years back a good many people thought Littler was (Continued on Page 72)







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Although Jones did not return to national-championship competition after retiring as an amateur in 1930, he did play in the Masters Tournament for a number of years after helping to get it started in 1934. He never came close to winning. Was this because he couldn't get himself "up" the way he used to during his active career?

"I was keyed up," Bob declared, "but I just didn't react the same way. I had abandoned the whole damn business for four years, and I couldn't condition myself mentally. If I was going to do it, I had to get right back in things, which I had no intention of doing. When your confidence is high, your reaction to strain is quite different than when you haven't played a lot of competitive golf, and you're not certain how you're going to react."

We raised the question of whether there were more good tournament golfers now than in Bob's era, and Jones said



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"Well, there have been a number of them like that," Bob observed. "They'd be hot as a firecracker during the winter tournaments, and then get up to the Open and it'd be the same old thing."

Jones expressed approval of the Professional Golfers Association's decision to switch its annual P.G.A. championship tournament from a match-play to a medal-play basis this year. He always did feel that medal play, in which the man with the lowest score wins, was a fairer test than match play, in which the entrants compete against each other in a succession of individual elimination contests. Jones also believes that a medalplay tournament is more attractive for the spectators.

"A person can mill around one place and see nearly everybody in the tournament," he said. "But in match play, when you get down to the final and there's only one match—only two people playing—if you don't run your damn head off, you don't see anything."

A remarkable feature of Bob's own success in the big tournaments was the fact that he was an amateur-the only one in this century who could consistently outdo the top pros. Did they resent it? "If they did, they didn't show it," Jones replied. "In fact, I think the golf I enjoyed the most of all the golf I ever played was the practice rounds I got in with the pros before the Open championships. And of all the people I could be paired with in an Open, the ones I liked to play with the most were Gene Sarazen, Number One, and Walter Hagen, Number Two." About the colorful and unconventional Hagen, Jones testified, "He was always on time for championship play, and his conduct on the golf course was impeccable."

percentage of winter tournaments, for the reasons I've already talked about. In the U.S. Open you only have to beat about six or eight people. The rest of them beat themselves. But in the Colonial Open, say, where there's less pressure, you've got to beat them all."

How about his own baby, the Masters, which is being played April third to sixth this year? Is it harder to win than the ordinary winter tournament?

"No doubt about it," Bob Jones said. "There's that little pressure. The pros attach more importance to it. It's a prestige tournament. I've been very pleased with the stature the Masters has gained. But I could never claim that it was as important as the Open championship. The top dog is still the Open. The British Open used to be, but today it's the American Open."

Bob Jones had evaluated players and tournaments for us. Now we asked him to evaluate golf courses. What was the toughest course he ever played—the one he would least like to tackle again?

"The ones that are tough are the ones that you most like to tackle," Jones responded. "The thing I dreaded was to get on an easy golf course, especially a short one with a lot of drive-and-pitch holes on it. I liked a course where length in two shots was important, not length in one shot. I felt my driving was probably a little more consistent than some of the other fellows', and that I could play the brassies, spoons and long irons at least as well. "Of all the courses I've played tournaments on," Bob Jones continued, "if I had to be sentenced to play only one course the rest of my life, I would pick St. Andrews, in Scotland, because it changes so much, and there's nothing about it that's obvious. "The way we build a course in this country, the fellow who designs it tells you how you must play it. He gives you a fairway and a green and some bunkers around it, and he tells you you've got to drive here. If you don't you're in the woods or some other place. St. Andrews, you can drive almost anywhere, but if you haven't picked the right spot according to the weather conditions and the conditions of the ground, you're at a disadvantage. "I didn't like St. Andrews at all when I first played it." This was during the 1921 British Open, when Jones, then a nineteen-year-old, picked up on the eleventh hole of a bad third round-the only time he ever withdrew from a tournament. "But pretty soon I studied the course, and by the time I played there in 'Twentyseven, and again in 'Thirty, I felt that I knew it."

What are some of the special problems at St. Andrews?

Jones explained, "The difficult conditions are when the wind is blowing and the ground is firm and hard. It's easier if they've had a lot of rain—you see, they have no way of watering the greens over there—and if the course is soft. But you don't often find it that way. When the greens are fast and they don't hold, you've got to maneuver around hazards rather than playing over them. When you make a pitch shot, you've got to maneuver around so you're pitching into the wind. Then you can control the shot."

In preparing for a tournament, did Jones spend long hours at the practice tee, like such moderns as Ben Hogan?

"No," Bob said, "I was not much of a practice-tee fellow. That was no good for me, because on the golf course you've got to make the first shot, not the eighth one. On a practice tee you haven't got that sense of responsibility.

"A lot of the things you do wrong on a golf course, you do wrong because you're thinking too much about your swing. When you get on a golf course, you shouldn't think of anything but what happens from here to there. Just say, 'Here's the ball, and I want to knock it over there,' and then go ahead and knock it over there." Jones summed up, "If you want a message from me to golfers around the country, that's it. Don't worry about your swing after you get on the first tee. If you haven't learned to play by then, it's too late-if you haven't learned to swing by then, that is."





We wondered whether Jones thought it possible today for an amateur to become the top man in golf.

Bob said he didn't see why not. "I think it's only a question of finding a man who's going to stay an amateur long enough. The professional side of the game is so attractive now that a fellow who is a good golfer can make a good living out of it. It's much more attractive as a life pursuit than it was in my day."

Last summer Harvie Ward, the U.S. Amateur champion in 1955 and 1956, was barred from amateur competition for a year for having accepted some tournament-expense money from his autodealer employer. Without referring specifically to the Ward case, Fred Russell asked, "Where do you think the line should be drawn between the amateur who can operate on his own, travel on his own, and the amateur who is sponsored and sort of supported in some way by a patron?" "I feel this way, Freddy," Jones declared. "Professional golf is a fairly honorable profession, and if a boy wants to play golf and doesn't happen to be lucky enough to have a father with means, I think the best thing for him to do is play as a pro. If he doesn't want to make golf his life work, then I think he ought not to be playing in too many tournaments until he's made enough money where he can afford to do it. I think it's bad for him the other way." Said Harry Paxton, "Leaving the amateur question out of it, you don't think it's inconceivable, then, that a man today could win as high a percentage of the national tournaments he played in as you did?" "No, not at all," was the reply. "You know, it's easier to win a high percentage of national tournaments than it is a high

We ventured the opinion that there probably is no one way for golfers to swing.

Bob Jones declared, "Fundamentally, there's just one order of movement that is the most efficient method of hitting a golf ball. You hear an awful lot of talk about the modern swing differing from the swing of twenty years ago. It doesn't at all, except in the minutest sort of detail.

"There's just one basic way a man can hit a golf ball with full power and full efficiency, and it never will be any different as long as he's just got two arms and two legs. You've got to wind up the trunk and lift the arms and cock the wrists. Then you've got to use those sources of power in a certain order-unwinding the hips, leading, unwinding the trunk, leading the downswing, pulling with the arms. The final uncocking of the wrists is the culmination of the blow. But you can't be thinking about all those things and about where you want the ball to go. And where you want it to go is the most important." Our next query was this: Would Jones be willing to comment on the golfing technique of his friend, President Eisenhower, for whom the Augusta National Golf Club has been a favorite vacation retreat in recent years? "I don't mind," Bob said. "He's a lot better than average. He takes a good cut at the ball, he knocks it a good ways, and if he could play enough to acquire a short game that was commensurate with his long game, he could score pretty well. Unfortunately I haven't been able to play golf with him, because it was in 1948 that I got this disability. But I've enjoyed riding the cart around and watching him play. I kept score for him one day down there in Augusta, and I think he had an eighty-two, and he had thrown away at least five shots around the green by not having the touch. I've also played two rubbers of bridge with the President, but I'm not good enough for him there." From November to May nowadays Bob Jones (Continued on Page 75)

Put it This Way

By FRANKLIN P. JONES

A bargain is anything on which there is no down payment.

When two women lie to conceal each other's age, they're twins.

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Too often, the way to a man's heart trouble is through his stomach.

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The safest way to go around a corner on two wheels is on a bicycle.

(Continued from Page 72) spends many of his weekends at Augusta. His home is in Atlanta, where he lives on Tuxedo Road with his wife and the youngest of his three children, daughter Mary Ellen. He has an older daughter, Mrs. William H. Black, and a married son, Robert Tyre Jones III. There are five grandchildren, one of whom is Robert Tyre Jones IV. Incidentally, the original Robert T. Jones was Bob's grandfather. Bob's fatherwho died in 1956-was Robert P. Jones.

Bob has plenty of things to keep him occupied these days, including the presidency of the Augusta National Golf Club. "My principal business interest," he told us, "is the Jones golf clubs made by Spalding. That's a relationship that has endured since 1931. They make a full line of golf clubs with my name on it, and I assist in the designing and promotion"he is vice president of the Spalding Sales Corporation. "Then I have some interests in Coca-Cola bottling plants in this

country and in some foreign countries." Jones graduated in mechanical engineering at Georgia Tech, took English literature at Harvard and then studied law at Emory University. "I don't actively practice law any more," he said. "I found that you can't work at the law and too many other things at the same time." It has often been written-and Jones agrees-that during his early years in golf. Bob had trouble controlling his temper. However, he was literally a child in those days. He was a prodigy of fourteen when he entered his first national championship-the 1916 U.S. Amateur, in which he reached the third round-and he played in a total of eleven national tournaments before finally crashing through with his first big victory in the 1923 U. S. Open.

During those years when he was just missing out, did he ever get discouraged to the point where he thought of giving up tournament golf?

"Oh, no," Bob Jones declared emphatically. "I think I enjoyed playing in tournaments more before I began winning them, because then you've got nothing on your mind but your hat, and no special reputation to live up to, and no responsibilities."

Was there a precise moment in 1930 when Jones made up his mind to quit?

"I think maybe I decided a little earlier than that, on a contingent basis," Bob said reflectively. "I felt that I might have won all four championships in 1926"when he took the U.S. and British Opens and was runner-up in the U.S. Amateur-"and I knew we were to play the Walker Cup matches in Great Britain in 1930, which happens only once every four years.

"So I figured that in 1930 I'd have a crack at winning all four at one time"his only other opportunities had been in 1921 and 1926. "I took a little more pains in 1930 to get ready. When I did manage to win the four of them, I decided that would be a good time to stop." Would he have stopped if he hadn't

75

won all four?

"That's very hard to answer. I think I might have. But there wouldn't have been any occasion to make any announcement of retirement. Had I not won all four championships I wouldn't have had the opportunity to make some golf movies"which disgualified him as an amateur-"and I probably would have gone on playing one tournament a year for a few years. Or maybe I just wouldn't have showed up. That's really what I had in mind. I didn't intend to make any formal retire-

ment. I just decided I was going to quit." We had one last, inevitable question. Does Bob Jones think he could have done as well in golf today?

"I would rather somebody else would speculate about that," he said. "But I haven't seen anything around that would discourage me from trying."