



### No Rest for the Weary

The day after the match at RCC, **Patty Berg** and **Dottie Germain** played a match at Llanerch Country Club with **Babe Didrikson Zaharias** and **Helen Sigel**. The Babe-Berg team defeated Dottie and Helen, one-up in the better-ball-of-partners match.

The match was played the day before the Philadelphia Inquirer \$17,500 War Bond Invitation Tournament.

A crowd of 2,000 followed the match, which was played through cloudbursts on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> holes. Helen Sigel missed a 3 ½-foot putt on the final green that would have sent the match to a playoff. The Babe posted the low score with 75.

The match featured four of golf's all-time greats.

Zaharias and Berg were among the Ladies Professional Golf Association's founding members in 1950. Both are in the World Golf Hall of Fame.

- **Babe Zaharias** won 48 professional titles, including 10 major championships, with three U.S. Open titles (1948, '50 and '54). She also won two gold medals and one silver in track and field at the 1932 Olympic Games.
- **Patty Berg** posted 63 professional wins, with 15 major championships, including a win in the first U.S. Women's Open championship in 1946. The Babe (1946) and Berg (1938) both won the U.S. Women's Amateur Championship.
- **Helen Sigel Wilson** won the Philadelphia Women's Amateur Championship 12 times and played for the United States Curtis Cup team against Great Britain and Ireland.  
(Continued on next page.)

## Byron's Berks Homecoming

June 1945. The war in Europe is over. The war in the Pacific is winding down.

Even in this environment, with world peace on the horizon, the U.S. government was selling war bonds to pay for the costs of the conflict. Which is why the *Philadelphia Inquirer* sponsored a war bond invitational golf tournament beginning June 14 at Llanerch Country Club. The nation's leading professionals and amateurs competed.

**Byron Nelson** was favored to win, and why not? He was the circuit's leading money winner. Byron was in championship form, having won the Montreal Open just three days prior by 10 shots. He was so dominant that the nation's scribes referred to him as The Umbrella Man because he had the field covered.



**Henry Williams, Jr., at Moselem Springs Golf Club, 1975, when he was the head golf pro.**

The day before the Inquirer tournament, an all-star foursome played an exhibition at Reading Country Club. The match was played for the benefit of the Lions Club welfare fund to help blind people.

**Byron Nelson**, in his Reading homecoming, was the marquee name and the group's senior member at age 33.

**Patty Berg**, 27, was there, she being one of the LPGA's founders and a future member of the World Golf Hall of Fame.

**Henry Williams, Jr.**, a long-hitting 28-year-old pro out of Royersford and future professional at Berkleigh Country Club and Moeslem Springs Golf Club, played.

Rounding out the foursome was **Dottie Germain**, a 21-year-old Philadelphian who would carve out one of the great careers in amateur golf, highlighted by a win in the 1949 U.S. women's amateur championship.

Here's where Nelson was in his career in 1945. He was a four-time major champion: The Masters in 1937 and 1942, the U.S. Open in 1939 and the PGA Championship in 1940. He would win a second PGA in July of '45. He had captured 36 of his 52 PGA tour events.

And he was in the midst of the greatest winning streak in professional golf—11 consecutive victories. **Lord Byron** dominated the tour in 1945, capturing 18 titles out of 30 tournaments entered. He had seven second place finishes. He also set a scoring record, averaging 68.33 strokes per round, a record that stood until **Tiger Woods** averaged 68.17 in 2000. That's the **Byron Nelson** who returned to RCC in 1945.

# The Golf Chronicles

## Golf Stories from the Pennsylvania Heartland

Byron Nelson  
Reading CC Pro  
1937-39



Number 113 • February 4, 2024

She was twice a runner-up and twice made the semi-final round in the U.S. Women's Amateur Championship.

- **Dorothy Germain Porter** won the U.S. Women's Amateur Championship in 1949; the U.S. Senior Women's Amateur four times; the Western Amateur three times; the Pennsylvania Amateur three times and the Philadelphia Amateur six times. She was on winning Curtis Cup teams as a player and captain.

Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Porter are in the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame.



**Patty Berg sinks a putt on her way to winning the first U.S. Women's Open Championship in 1946 at Spokane Country Club, Wash. Patty defeated Betty Jameson, 5 and 4, in the 36-hole final, the only Open ever contested at match play.**

A crowd of about 800 followed the match, which pitted Nelson and Germain against Williams and Berg in the better-ball-of-partners format. Nelson was the most accomplished player at the time, so his leading score of 32-34—66, five under par, was no surprise. Williams impressed the onlookers with his driving but all too often misjudged his iron shots, sending several balls over the green. Henry posted a 74.

Miss Berg – that is, Lieutenant Berg, as Patty was in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves – posted a credible 79. Credible because she had played very little golf the previous four years because of her military service. She did not drive the ball well, but saved many a stroke with an impeccable short game.

Miss Germain impressed all with her driving skills—the *Reading Eagle* reported that she “hit her woods like a man”—but suffered on the greens, which led to a score of 85. Her struggles were mollified somewhat by winning two closest-to-the-hole prizes on the 6<sup>th</sup> where she put her tee shot five feet from the pin and on 15 where she nudged Williams by a mere half-inch. Dottie's prize for each feat was a \$25 war bond.

Byron carded six birdies and only one bogey, that on number 7. He put his second shot in a green-side trap and played out to three feet. Inexplicably, Lord Byron missed the short par putt.

Before the golf, the Lions Club hosted a luncheon at which Nelson spoke appreciatively of Reading's loyalty to him. He displayed the gold watch presented to him by the members of RCC in June of 1939 after he won the National Open at Philadelphia Country Club.



**Dottie Germain won the Women's Western Amateur Championship in 1943 at age 19.**

Scorecards at Reading Country Club, June 12, 1945

Par Out	4	4	3	5	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	71
Byron Nelson	4	4	3	3	4	3	5	3	3	3	3	32
Dottie Germain	4	5	6	4	4	4	6	4	5	4	2	42
Henry Williams	4	4	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	3	5	35
Patty Berg	5	5	4	4	3	5	4	3	5	3	9	39
Par In	4	4	5	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	7	71
Byron Nelson	3	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	34 — 66
Dottie Germain	4	5	6	5	5	3	4	5	5	4	3	43 — 85
Henry Williams	3	5	5	4	4	3	5	4	3	3	6	36 — 74
Patty Berg	4	5	5	4	5	5	3	5	4	4	0	40 — 79

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*In a sidebar column in the June 13 Reading Eagle, the reporter **Chet Hagan** made the following observations.*

**Byron Nelson**, the “Old Master” of pasture pool, couples a brilliant memory with his equally brilliant golf. He greeted countless old friends on every hole at the Reading Country Club and called them all by their first names.

**Patty Berg**, the Marine Corps’ little bit of Ireland, knocked **Miss Germain’s** ball away from the hole on the first green as she prepared to putt . . . “Hey, Patty,” Nelson reminded her, “we’re supposed to putt out.” As **Dottie** went to replace her ball and complete putting, she asked, “where was it, here?” . . . “Might as well move it up six inches,” **Nelson** answered in his slow Texas drawl . . . She did and sank the putt as the crowd chuckled.

**P**roudest followers on the course were the caddies who carried the bags for the famous foursome . . . **Russ Crosley**, of Reiffton, was paired with Miss Germain, veteran **Johnny Foreman** carried Patty Berg’s clubs, **Speed Flowers** worked for the champ, and “**Beak**” **Fegley** was in charge of the clubs of **Henry Williams, Jr.**, promising Philadelphia pro and son of the Reading’s greenskeeper.

A perfectionist, **Nelson** always is shooting for a birdie. After shooting through with consecutive par fours on the first and second holes, the former RCC pro complained to his partner, **Dottie Germain**: “This is one of those days I just make a par on every hole.” (Can you imagine?) . . . Then on No. 3 he sank a 30-footer for a birdie three.

To some, **Nelson** could do no wrong . . . As the nation’s No. 1 golfer was ready to tee off on No. 4, one member of the committee shouted to a spectator strolling on the fairway: “Watch out, sometimes they slice!” . . . Very slowly the fan turned around and shouted back, “Not Nelson.”

**B**yron is still the “boy-faced golfer” . . . Only apparent tell-tale mark of the consistent tournament pressure under which he plays are his greying temples.

Those short “War Bond Holes”—the 151-yard No. 6 and 178-yard No. 15—provided plenty of laughs for the gallery. **Dottie Germain** won both \$25 war bonds for getting closest to the pin on both holes . . . On No. 6, after **Miss Germain** fired a fine shot at the flag, **Nelson** shouted across the 151 yards: “How close is Germain?” . . . **Bill Letnaunchyn**, current RCC pro, shouted in return: “Five feet!” . . . “That’s too good,” **Nelson** admitted . . . In his attempt at the war bond on No. 6, **Henry Williams** got

away with a beautiful shot that appeared as though it might better **Germain’s** previous blow . . . “Oh, you stinker,” **Dottie** shouted in a very unladylike manner, “get away from that green.” The ball obligingly fell short.

**O**n No. 15, **Dottie, Patty** and **Henry** were virtually tied for the war bond . . . Measuring all three shots, Letnaunchyn gave **Miss Germain** a half inch margin over **Williams** and two inches over **Lieutenant Berg**.

**Patty Berg** takes her golf seriously, and after tangling with a tree on the first hole, she grimly settled down to play her best golf. Although she bettered **Dottie Germain** 39 to 43 on the first nine, she was far from satisfied . . . On No. 15 she confided to **Nelson**, “Worst I’ve played in—ah—four years.” . . . On No. 16, she came forth with her first real smile of the day as she sank a long putt for a birdie three.

With her left knee wrapped in an elastic bandage, **Patty** tired as she toured the long course. On No. 7 hole, measuring 433 yards, she asked: “Is that the hole way down there?” . . . “That’s it,” **Nelson** answered . . . Distressed, **Patty** replied, “When do we come to a short one?”

**L**ord **Byron** had some trouble with his putting . . . On No. 7 after blasting a beautiful shot three feet from the pin out of a sand trap, he missed the putt by several inches . . . Disgusted he brought the ball back and tried again and missed. Several other times he tried and missed . . . “For crying out loud, how can I be so lousy,” he asked the gallery in general . . . See, boss, just like you and I.

Biggest thrill for the duffers probably was on the No. 5 green. **Williams** pitched up a beauty, which hit in back of the pin and kicked back—with a terrific back spin—and rolled two feet from the pin. **Nelson** duplicated, but was about three feet away . . . Amazed, one duffer said to another, “I’d cut a ball in half trying that.”

All four golfers were obliging for the amateur photographers who haunted the course, stopping on nearly every hole to pose . . . **Nelson** continually was giving instructions to **Dottie Germain** on how to play the course. . . On No. 10, **Nelson** pointed to the dogleg and said to his partner: “You play it off the corner and then go after a birdie.” [Editor’s note: In 1945, the 10<sup>th</sup> hole was a short par 4. The fairway is now the practice range.]