



The Golf Chronicles

The story of golf at Reading Country Club and in Berks County

Number 12 • July 7, 2015



Sam Snead's course-record 63, shot in 1949, still stands.

Slammin' Sammy's Record 63

*It was twenty years ago today (more like 66)
Slammin' Sammy showed us how to play
He toured the course with grace and style
Seven under, sure to raise a smile
So may I introduce to you
The round you've known for all these years
Slammin' Sammy's record sixty-three.*

Bad parody aside, July 7 is a historic day at Reading Country Club. In the first round of the 1949 Reading Open, 37-year-old Sam Snead, playing out of White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., shot a seven-under-par 63, besting Byron Nelson's course record of five-under 66 shot in the first round of the 1938 Central Pennsylvania Open on August 7. Nelson played a par 71 course; the 12th hole was a 451-yard par 5. Snead's record still stands.

Two other pros shot noteworthy scores that July day in '49. Lawson Little also beat Lord Byron's score with a 64 and George Lowe, Jr., shot 65.

So, how did the Slammer go low?

Birdie binge. Snead played the par 70 course in 30-33, needing only 27 putts. He made seven birdies and no bogies. The course in 1949 was the same as it is today, with two exceptions. Number 10, now a par 3, was a 258-yard dogleg right par 4. The old fairway is now the practice range and the tee was under the large tree next to the driveway. The 17th was a 400-yard par 4, played from today's forward tee. The greens for each hole remain unchanged.

The best way to take in Snead's accomplishment is to read the account from the *Reading Eagle* published on July 8. You can do so on the following pages.

Alas, the magic deserted the Slammer in the second round. His 71 left him tied with Vic Ghezzi, Deal, N.J., at 134. Cary Middlecoff, 28, the 'transplanted tooth treater from Tennessee'—He was described thusly by *Reading Eagle* reporter Jerry Kobrin and don't you wish today's sports writers churned out prose like that?—was a stroke back. The Doc caught the Slammer in the third round, 65 to 66, leaving the duo tied at 200. Ghezzi's 70 placed him four in arrears. Pete Cooper, Ponte Verda, Fla., trailed Ghezzi by two after fashioning a splendid 64.

The 66 Route. Middlecoff closed with a 66 for a four-day total of 266, 14 under par, earning the victory by a stroke over Snead, who shot a final round 67. The Doc won \$2,600 while the Slammer pocketed \$1,900. Three pros missed Snead's record by a stroke on Sunday: Johnny Palmer, Badin, N.C. (finished third at 274 for \$1,400); Jim Turnesea, Elmsford, N.Y. (six-way tie for 10th at 279 worth \$348.33), and George Fazio, Conshohocken, Pa. (also tied 10th at 279).

The headline in the July 11 *Reading Eagle* summarized Middlecoff's joy and Snead's agony in seven simple words: ***Snead Muffs 4-foot Putt at 18th Hole.*** Here's how Kobrin described the drama:

"Without even giving Snead the benefit of novocaine, Middlecoff drilled a six-foot putt for a birdie on the 18th hole of yesterday's round for a 72-hole total of 266, then fidgeted in the locker room while his hillbilly rival approached the same carpet and muffed a four-footer, the final shot of the tournament, that would have thrown the four-day scramble into a dead heat.

"Only the narrowest of margins prevented the curtain from rising today on an 18-hole playoff between the National Open and the PGA champions. Snead's attempt for a birdie on the last green, measured for what seemed an age, skirted the rim of the cup and trickled two inches beyond—another nerve-shattering episode in Snead's long running feud with his mischievous putter."

Kobrin Style

Jerry Kobrin, Reading Eagle staff writer, wrote the article reporting on Sam Snead's record-breaking 63 in the first round of the 1949 Reading Open. Let us consider his magical sentence shown in the penultimate paragraph in the column to the right.

This skilled reporter constructed a long, flowing sentence that is readable. In the literary sense, it scans. The man could turn a phrase and he used humor and colorful language, e.g., 'carpet' and 'muffed', to entertain the reader. I'll overlook the stereotype inherent in 'hillbilly'.

Kobrin's sentence tells the reader that Middlecoff and Snead were not in the same group, this despite being tied for the lead at 200 strokes after three rounds. Middlecoff's fourth-round starting time was 1:32 p.m., playing with Pete Cooper and Ed Furgol. Snead was in the final group, going off at 1:56 with Vic Ghezzi and Johnny Palmer. There were two groups between featuring amateurs who were far down the leader board. These groups included Berks Countians Julian Frankel, Berkleigh Country Club, 225-80-305; Buddy Lutz, Reading Country Club, 226-75-301; and Jack Weitzel, Manor Golf Club, 226-74-300.

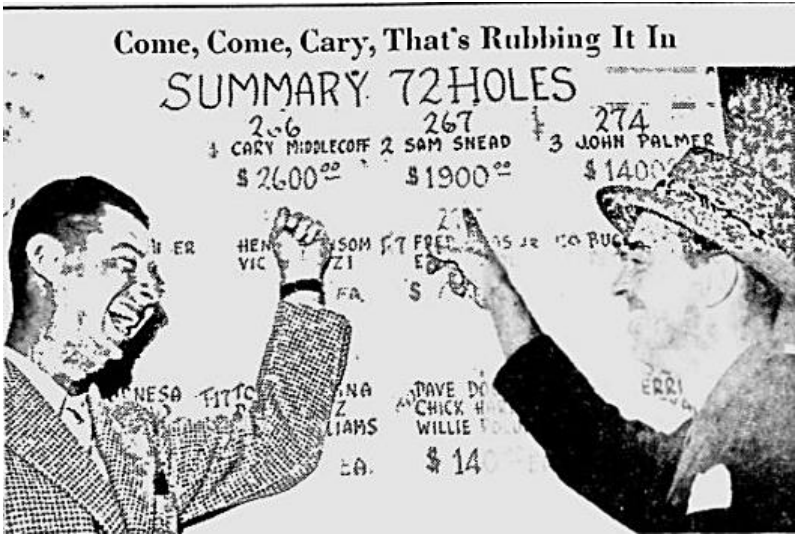
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Byron Nelson
RCC Pro
1937-39



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The photo above appeared in the Reading Eagle on July 11, the day after Cary Middlecoff's one-stroke win. Could Sam Snead really have been that smiley after missing a four-foot putt to tie?

Breaking records. On August 24, 1938, Byron Nelson shot eight-under 63 in a non-competitive round. The *Reading Eagle* reported that Nelson beat the record of 65 he shared with "Lighthorse" Harry Cooper, the English professional who won 31 PGA tournaments, including seven in 1937. The article notes that Nelson's 63 featured an eagle 3 on the 14th hole. He played the 500-yarder with a drive, 5-iron and a putt.

Nelson shot his 65 on April 19, 1937, in a round played with members. Cooper shot his six-under 65 in an exhibition match on July 2, 1938. He teamed with Jimmy Thompson, the long-hitting Scot playing out of Shawnee-on-Delaware, to defeat the team of Byron Nelson and Horton Smith, Springfield, Missouri, who won the first Masters in 1934 and again in 1936. Cooper shot a record 29 going out, with birdies on 1, 2, 3, 6 and 9. Such was Cooper's dominance that he and Thompson beat Nelson and Smith 61-68 in the best-ball match. The foursome delighted the 1,000 fans who followed the golf.



Sam Snead, the Sulphur Springs, W. Va., golfer, is shown dropping his last putt on the 18th hole, a ten-footer, that gave him low score of 63 in the first round of the \$15,000 Reading Open tournament yesterday at the Reading Country Club.

Favorite Snead lowered Byron Nelson's former record for competitive play by two strokes. Cheers from the crowd greeted Snead as he birdied the 18th for the new mark.
(Eagle Staff Photo.)

Reading Eagle, July 8, 1949. Snead's playing partners were Jack Grout, Harrisburg (shot 74), and Henry Ransom, St. Andrews, Ill. (shot 68).



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Reading Eagle
July 8, 1949

Record 63 Needed To Pace Opening Round With Little Runnerup

**Lawson Misses Tie by Stroke; George Low Jr.
Posts a 65 for Third in Tournament Surprise;
Five Contenders Are Deadlocked With 67s**

Like a movie script, opening-round play in the third annual \$15,000 Reading Open golf tournament ran true to form yesterday at the Reading Country Club course. For good measure, Sam Snead, the odds-on favorite, even posted a record-breaking 30-33—63, seven strokes under par, to hold the lead as the touring pros and amateurs took to the links in the second 18 holes today.

Winner of four tournaments this year, the White Sulphur Springs, W. Va., pro did just what was expected of him. He even chopped two strokes from Byron Nelson's competitive mark of 65 at the Reading.

Advantage Slim

Despite Snead's sensational round, his advantage was slender over his nearest competitors, Lawson Little and George Low Jr., who were among 22 entries to better par. Little, who in the past won the British and U. S. amateur crowns, also had one of his better days, and was one stroke off the pace with a 30-34—64.

Only an eight-foot putt that hit the cup and bounced out on the 18th green kept Little from tying for the lead. The Monterey, Cal., veteran, thus was one of two contenders to stray from the script.

Low, son of a famous professional, made his first tournament start of the year and took third spot with a surprise five-under-par 65. The Clearwater, Fla., contender went out with a 32 and kept up his sub-par golf with a 33 on the incoming nine.

Middlecoff Trails

Snead couldn't afford to relax today, because a step or two back were five rivals in the 67 bracket, four strokes off the pace. Among them was Sam's nearest competitor in golf earnings, Dr. Cary Middlecoff, Memphis, Tenn., National Open champion. The other four were Chick Harbert, Detroit; Johnny Palmer, Badin, N. C.; Fred Hawkins, Antioch, Ill., and Henry Williams Jr., Tully Secane CC, Philadelphia.

And if that group isn't enough to make trouble, two other vets of the pro golf circuit, Dick Metz, Virginia Beach, Va., and Lloyd Mangrum, a crowd-pleaser from Chicago, were deadlocked with 68s.

The crowd followed Snead yesterday and the golf devotees were rewarded with a dazzling exhibition by Slammin' Sam. Rarely was Snead in trouble as he put to-

Snead Used Only 27 Putts in Record 63

Sam Snead's successful effort in establishing a new competitive record of 63 in the \$15,000 Reading Open at the Reading Country Club yesterday was a story of perfect golf. Snead needed only 27 putts in yesterday's opening round.

He had seven birdies, the most decisive coming on the 18th when he canned a ten-footer. The White Sulphur Springs, W. Va., pro started on the right foot with four birdies on the first nine. His longest putt was 12 feet.

Snead's score:

Out ... 443 343 423—30

In ... 344 443 443—33—30—63

Par for the course:

Out ... 444 353 434—34

In ... 444 453 444—36—34—70

gether seven birdies and par exhibition on the other holes.

Little also was good for a 30 on the front nine and for a moment it looked as if he would match Snead's score. But he had a bogey-5 on the 16th that ruined his efforts. It was the 16th that brought trouble to Middlecoff. He also settled for a par as did Palmer.

In addition to the 22 golfers who were under 70, seven others hit par right on the nose yesterday to retain their title chances. After today's round, 60 low scores and ties were to qualify for Saturday's 18-hole test.

Best score by a Berks contender was a 71 by Walter (Buddy) Heckman, assistant pro at the Berkleigh Country Club. Jackie Weitzel, of the Manor, led Berks amateurs with a 72.

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First Round Scores in Reading Open

Sam Sneed, White Sulphur Springs, W. Va.	30-33-63	*Lynn Creason, Harrisburg	34-39-73	*Paul O'Neill, Rich-Maiden	37-40-77
Lawson Little, Monterey, Cal.	30-34-64	*Herb Strohman, Lebanon	35-38-73	John Wudnoski, Wilkes-Barre	39-38-77
George Low Jr., Clearwater, Fla.	32-33-65	*Elis Taylor, Newark, Del.	35-38-73	*Francis J. Allan, Pittston, Pa.	39-39-78
Cary Middlecoff, Memphis	32-35-67	Gibby Young, Wilmington, Del.	36-37-73	Bill Boyle, Philadelphia	38-40-78
Fred Hawkins, Antioch, Ill.	32-35-67	Mike Parco, Buffalo	35-38-73	Jerry Barber, Los Angeles	38-40-78
Henry Williams Jr., Tully-Se-cane, Pa.	34-33-67	Rod Munday, York	36-37-73	*Norge Long, Galen Hall	38-40-78
Johnny Palmer, Badin, N. C.	30-37-67	James Gantz, Morgantown, N. C.	33-40-73	*Bob Batdorff Jr., Berkshire C. C.	40-38-78
Chick Harbert, Detroit	30-37-67	Teri Johnson, Wilmington, Del.	35-38-73	Joe Caldwell, Demarest, N. J.	37-41-78
Don Metz, Virginia Beach, Va.	33-35-68	Jim Turnesa, Elmsford, N. Y.	36-37-73	Jim Davis, Hellertown, Pa.	38-41-79
Lowd Mangrum, Chicago	32-36-68	Jack Helms, York	36-37-73	Harold Evans, Lewisburg	34-45-79
Henry Ransom, St. Andrews, Ill.	30-38-68	Joe Kirkwood Sr., Philadelphia	37-36-73	*Charles Nehl, Emmaus	38-41-79
Harlan Will, Lebanon	35-34-69	*Don Mangino, Schenectady	34-40-74	*Billy Eben, Reading C. C.	35-34-79
Bill Nary, Los Angeles	34-35-69	Charles Bassler, Catonsville, Md.	37-37-74	Jack Robinson, Orland	36-44-80
Herman Keiser, St. Andrews, Ill.	32-37-69	Glenn Teal, Detroit	35-39-74	*George Smith, Reading C. C.	40-40-80
Eric Monti, Santa Monica, Cal.	34-35-69	*Mike Hansen, Catasauqua, Pa.	37-37-74	John Bishop, Paxinas	35-45-80
Craig Wood, Mamaroneck, N. Y.	31-38-69	Huey Crawford, Philadelphia	35-39-74	Joe Nichols, Englewood, N. J.	37-43-80
Jim Ferrier, San Francisco	34-35-69	Stan Dudas, Shawnee-on-Dela-war, Pa.	35-39-74	Neal McGeehan, York	38-42-80
Vic Ghezzi, Ensleywood, N. J.	35-34-69	Ray Gettle, Ashland, Pa.	36-38-74	*Rod Eaken, Berkshire C. C.	39-41-80
Clayton Heafner, Charlotte, N. C.	33-36-69	Robert Francis, Wyoming, Pa.	36-38-74	Hugh McLellan, Army Chemical Center, Md.	37-44-81
Willie Polumbo, Kennett Square	33-36-69	*Julian Foster, Brazil	36-38-74	*William Mohr, Berkshtre C. C.	42-39-81
Burk White, Greenwood, Miss.	31-38-69	Newt Bassler, Carmel, Cal.	35-39-74	Harry Markel, Berkshire C. C.	39-42-81
Fred Haas Jr., New Orleans	32-37-69	Gene Webb, Clayton, Mo.	36-38-74	*Ed McGinley, Macungie	39-42-81
Skip Alexander, Lexington N. C.	32-38-70	Jack Grout, Harrisburg	37-37-74	*Billy Delk, Greenville, S. C.	41-40-81
*Jimmy McHale, Philadelphia	35-35-70	Jim Marotta, White Plains, N. Y.	38-36-74	*Donald Trout, Reading C. C.	39-42-81
Matt Kowall, Philadelphia	34-36-70	Johnny Weitzel, Harrisburg	37-37-74	John Lyman, New York	38-43-81
Ed Furcol, Royal Oak, Mich.	33-37-70	*Johnny Markel, Berkshire C. C.	36-38-74	W. H. "Pat" Browne, Allentown	36-45-81
Jack Burke, White Plains, N. Y.	33-37-70	Otto Greiner, Baltimore	34-40-74	Donald M. Welland, Phoenix-ville	41-40-81
Joe Kirkwood Jr., Hollywood	35-35-70	Joe Rusas, Albany	36-39-75	Henry Moyer, Lehighton	39-42-81
Johnny Moyer, Orwigsburg	36-35-71	Johnny Musser, Ellicott City, Md	37-38-75	*Frank Gavin, Baltimore	42-40-82
Harry Dee, White Plains, N. Y.	35-36-71	John S. Long, Bethlehem	34-41-75	*Don Dougherty, Akron, O.	39-43-82
Chick Hart, Philadelphia	36-35-71	*Julian Frankel, Berkleish C. C.	36-39-75	Don Tammany, Wilmington, Del.	37-46-83
Buddy Heckman, Berkleish C. C.	36-35-71	Jerry Volpe, Englewood, N. J.	36-39-75	Horace Hand, Williamsport	44-40-84
Jerry Desio, Port Chester, N. Y.	35-38-71	Bob Hayes, Louisville	36-39-75	*Stewart Jenkinson, Allentown	41-42-83
Toney Penna, Cincinnati	35-36-71	Al Smith, Winston-Salem, N. C.	35-40-75	Bob Schoener, Bethlehem	38-46-84
Paul Kern, Binghamton, N. Y.	34-37-71	*Joseph Hoch, Bethlehem	37-38-75	*Johnny Vocum, Green Hills	40-44-84
*MacGregor Hunter, Santa Mon-ica, Cal.	35-36-71	Frank Gerrity, Scranton	36-40-76	Frank Stocke, Allentown	44-41-85
Ted Neist, Walla Walla, Wash.	35-36-71	George Fazio, Conshohocken, Pa.	36-40-76	*James Garland, Tamaqua	41-44-85
Loma Frakes, Philadelphia	34-37-71	Art Doering, Charlottesville, Va.	38-38-76	Dick Henkel, Orwigsburg	40-46-85
Felix Serafin, Pittston, Pa.	36-35-71	David Hendry, Hanover	36-40-76	*Dr. Samuel E. Rager, Rich-Maiden	40-16-86
Edward Tabor, Harrisburg	33-39-72	Ky Laffoon, Chicago	35-41-76	Walter Potter, Orwigsburg	42-45-87
Clarence Ehresman, Ashbourne, Pa.	33-39-72	*R. C. Hornberger, Akron, O.	37-39-76	*Jack Roddy, Pittston	43-45-88
*Arthur J. Wall Jr., Clarks Sum-mit, Pa.	32-40-72	Jack Peek, Lancaster	39-37-76	Pat Gardner, Carbondale	44-45-89
Henry Clay Poe, Reading C. C.	35-37-72	*Buddy Lutz, Reading C. C.	37-39-76	W. R. Dickinson Jr., Macungie	46-45-91
Ralph Hutchison, Bethlehem	34-38-72	*Dom Avonzato, Reading C. C.	38-38-76	*E. H. Masucci, Bath	47-46-93
Dave Douglas, Wilmington, Del.	36-36-72	Jimmy Duke, Baltimore	37-39-76	Lou Palladino, Yonkers, N. Y.	43-w'drew
Pete Cooper, Ponte Verda Beach, Fla.	35-37-72	Ed Ginther, Wilmington, Del.	38-39-77	*C. N. Miller Jr., Berkshire C. C.	43-w'drew
Cas Banas, Coatesville	34-38-72	Fred Johnson, Flourtown, Pa.	37-40-77	*Lyn Cassel, Norristown	46-w'drew
*Robert Davis, Harrisburg	34-38-72	Clint Kennedy, Marshalltown, Del.	37-40-77	Anthony Rogan, Petersburg, Va.	withdrew
*Jack Weitzel, Manor Golf Club	37-35-72	Charles Schneider, North Hills, Pa.	39-38-77	*Denotes amateur.	
Andy Gaspar, Pittsburgh	34-38-72				
Marty Furgol, North Hollywood, Cal.	33-39-72				
Bob Hamilton, Landover, Md.	36-36-72				
Hike Turnesa, Elmsford, N. Y.	33-39-72				
Ray Hill, Shreveport, La.	35-37-72				
Mike Rooney, Wrightsville, Pa.	37-36-73				

They're both PERFECT



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Eagle Scribe Uncovers Switch-Hitting; Other Sidelights in Golf Tournament Play

By PAUL LUKAS
Eagle Sports Writer

Like a switch hitter in baseball, Henry Ransom, the St. Andrews, Ill., pro, resorted to hitting one left-handed when he encountered trouble on the 13th hole yesterday . . . Ransom's tee shot settled under an evergreen tree, and Henry hit the ball left-handed back toward the tee . . . Even so, Ransom managed to get a 38 on the back nine after a four-under-par 30 on the first nine . . . So Ransom today was in contention with a 68, five strokes from pacesetter Sam Snead's 63.

Ransom, the transplanted Texan now playing out of St. Andrews, Ill., had his personal rooting section in the person of his eight-year-old daughter, Marcia, who followed her daddy around all 18 holes yesterday.

Marcia, who pronounces her name, "Mar-Cee-A," in a cute Texas drawl, gravely informed an inquiring reporter that she has a little brother who is accompanying her and her parents around the circuit. Asked if she plays golf, she said she already can beat her "Mummie." Her daddy faded to a two-under 68 after being five-

under at the 13th, but is still in the running.

George Low Jr. explained why he wasn't competing more often in the pro golf circuit . . . "I've devoted more time to the fishing business in Florida," the husky linksman said, "and a back ailment and knee trouble are other factors."

After posting his 65 score that held up throughout the greater part of the day, Low hurriedly took a shower, refreshment and came back to the 18th green to see some of the finishes.

Most all of the golfers praised the condition of the course, especially the greens . . . The recent rain was welcomed by competitors and spectators . . . One familiar face missing in the \$15,000 Reading Open is that of Jimmy Demaret, who was entered but couldn't make it . . . He is in California.

The first nine holes proved to be an easier mark than the incoming nine . . . Arthur J. Wall Jr., Duke University graduate, started with a 32 on the outgoing nine and then skyrocketed to a 40 on the back nine . . . Skip

Alexander, Lexington, N. C., has to settle for a par 70 after two-over 38 on the last nine holes.

"Slammin' Sammy" Snead, appears, is quite an ardent angler in addition to being the hottest golfer on the pro circuit. While waiting to tee off on No. 10 yesterday, Sammy took one of those souvenir yardsticks from a youthful spectator and measured the distance from the end of his middle finger to the end of his right forearm.

"That's how I measure my bass," Snead said to his admiring gallery.

Proudest caddy in the tournament is Ray Kulp, 31-year-old Birdshoro resident, whose name was drawn from a hat as Snead's bag-toter. Names of the Reading ten best caddies were placed in a hat to select Snead's bearer. Kulp, who shoots in the 80s himself, classified Snead as "one swell fellow."

Snead, incidentally, seems addicted to that colorful straw hat he wore while competing yesterday. After a shower he emerged from the clubhouse attired in it. (Turn to Page 19, Col. 2)

(Continued from Page 16)

white sport shirt, bright red sport coat, light slacks and brown and white shoes. Perched on his head was the same hat. His first question to a group of fellow pros was, "Where's the mail bag?" He soon reappeared with several letters which he read. Mail delivery is oftentimes delayed because of the weekly hops made by the money swingers.

Billy Weitzel, 16-year-old brother of Pro Johnny and Amateur Jackie, the Montello golfers, toted Jackie's clubs yesterday when his regular caddy failed to show. Billy will tote 'em for Jackie the remainder of the tourney. He admits he's not in the same class as his two brothers, although he plays on the Wilson High golf team.

Most of the golfers were in good spirits—joking with the gallery and talking over bad shots with opponents. On the troublesome 15th hole, however, Herman Keiser went through all the motions of "blowing up" even to the

point of throwing his stick into the bushes. The 15th, one of the toughest of the layout, was also the scene of several unscheduled water shows as some of the golfers were trying to stroke their way out of the creek bordering the greens.

Cary Middlecoff, golfing dentist from Memphis, Tenn., had the spectators in stitches with his antics and southern drawl. Middlecoff had something to say about every one of his shots during the early play, but tightened up with the tension later on. The National Open champ barely missed a hole-in-one on the eighth hole when his ball hit the green three inches from the cup. The sphere rolled, however, and Middlecoff used two putts to sink it.

Joe Kirkwood Jr., the Joe Pa-looka of the movies, wore one of the dressiest outfits ever seen on the Reading links. The actor, who looks more like a boxer than most pugilists, wore maroon trousers, a maroon-and-gray shirt and a maroon cap. Kirkwood's dad, famous trick-shot artist, entered the tourney at the last minute as a post entry. The elder Kirkwood toured the circuit ahead of his son and sometimes turned around to check on him. At various times he would surprise and amuse the spectators with some dizzy stroking.