



The Golf Chronicles

Golf Stories from the Pennsylvania Heartland



Number 68 • February 16, 2018

The Story in Headlines

Newspaper headlines shouted war news in August 1944 as the Allies were on the move across Western Europe. Most newspapers were broadsheets, with a single page measuring 22 inches wide. These headlines were big, bold and black, as befitted the events of the times. Here is a sampling of the *Reading Eagle's* banner headlines that demanded attention.

August 1

**U.S. Tank Forces Race into Brittany;
Warsaw Enveloped in a Pall of Smoke**

August 2

4,735 Britons Killed by Robot Bombs

August 4

Reading Transit Crippled by Walkout

August 5

Triumphant Yanks Sweep in to Brest

August 7

Yanks Menace Le Mans in Paris Push

August 10

Yanks Ram into Paris' Last Defenses

August 12

Bradley Pushes 10 Miles beyond Loire

August 13

Yanks Need 700,000 Tons of Bombs to Finish 1944

August 14

Eisenhower Visions Major Victory this Week

August 15

Strike Halts Submarine Production in Connecticut Plant

August 17

**Berks Man Kills 4, takes Own Life;
Three Children, Housekeeper Slain with Gun**

August 18

Nazis in Full Retreat South of Seine

August 19

Battle of France Turning into Rout

August 22

Normandy Trap Nets 100,000 Nazis

August 23

Paris Liberated by 50,000 Frenchmen

August 24

Hungarian Army Reported in Revolt

August 25

Jail Fugitives Trapped on Farm near Centerport

August 26

Additional Jap Treachery before Pearl Harbor Disclosed

August 26

**Allies Open Drive on 200-Mile Front;
Chase Foe across Seine toward Reich**

August 27

Allies Plunge Toward German Border

August 29

**Chateau-Thierry and Soissons Seized in Sweep
through Broken Marne Line**

August 31

**British Cross Somme, Seize Amiens;
Soviets in Bucharest, Moscow Hints**



Old Bessie, a B-24 Liberator, was on display at an open house hosted by the U.S. Army Air Corps at Reading Airport. The event celebrated the Air Corps' 37th anniversary.

The Night Old Dixie Came to Town

The *Golf Chronicles* 67, [The Peripatetic Pencil Pusher](#), told the story of **Ralph Kennedy**, the globe-trotting golfer who played 3,165 courses in a lifetime on the links. The wandering Ralph visited Berks County on August 15, 1944, playing at Berkshire C.C. and Reading C.C.

Which got the GC editor to thinking: What else was going on at that time? As it turns out, quite a bit and the news wasn't all sports. Here's a look at events from 74 Augusts ago, culled mostly from pages of the *Reading Eagle*.

Oh, and who's Old Dixie and why was he in town? Turn to page 3 to find out.

► **August 1:** Some 15,000 Berks County residents gathered at the Reading Army Air Field for an open house that honored the 37th anniversary of the Army Air Corps. The featured attraction was Old Bessie, a battle-scarred, paint-worn B-24 Liberator heavy bomber. A number of bombers were lined up behind Old Bessie. The Air Corps used the Reading field to prepare B-24s that were headed for combat and to store aircraft returned home from duty.

In July 1945, a B-24 that had served in Europe crashed at Reading when the landing gear collapsed. The Liberator skidded off the runway on its belly before coming to a stop on an earth embankment. The three crew members were uninjured. Because of the severity of the damage, Air Corp officials decided to scrap the plane.

► **August 2:** **Byron Nelson** and amateur **Babe Didrikson Zaharias** posted a best-ball score of 63 to win the pro-am tournament that preceded the Beverly Hills Open. Nelson won \$500. **Olin Dutra** and **Ray Bolger** finished with 64. Dutra shot 66 on his own ball, while Nelson and the Babe both shot 70.

► **August 3:** **Cornelius McGillicuddy**, known as **Connie Mack**, age 81, was honored for his 50 years as a big-league manager, all with the Philadelphia A's. The ceremony at Philadelphia's Shibe Park, later named in Mack's honor, preceded the game against the Yankees.

► **August 6:** **Byron Nelson** won the Beverly Hills Open, posting 277, 11 under par. Nelson won \$1,500 in war bonds. **Tony Penna**, Dayton, finished two strokes back. Nelson trailed Penna by two after 36 holes. He shot 68-69 in the 36-hole final.



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The Reading Eagle published these photos on August 14, 1944. The aircraft parked at the Reading Army Air Field were excess planes that the Civil Aeronautics Administration intended to sell. The top photo shows Fairchild trainers. Most of the planes in the bottom photo were Piper Cubs.

► **August 6:** **Earl Reifsnnyder** defeated **Jimmy Hart**, 4 and 3, to win the RCC club championship in a 36-hole match.

► **August 11:** **Bill Reedy**, the Eagle's sports editor and the best sports writer ever in Reading, speculated that a discussion of who was the better golfer, **Byron Nelson**, **Bobby Jones** or **Walter Hagan**, would depend on the age of the person making the observation. The duffer who watched Bobby and the Haig at their prime would go with the heroes of yesterday. The current generation would go with the contemporary star, Lord Byron. Nelson was considered by many to be a greater shot-maker than Jones or Hagan.

Bob Wallace, Berkleigh CC pro, pointed out that the playing field was not level: the stars of the '40s had better equipment. Wallace, a personal friend of Nelson, believed that Jones would be a star in any era of play.

A poll conducted by *Esquire* magazine in 1944 asked just that question: Who is the greatest golfer of all times? Jones won overwhelmingly, with 82 percent of the vote. Other poll findings revealed that **Byron Nelson** was considered the game's greatest iron player. And here's a fascinating question: If **Walter Hagan**, **Bobby Jones**, **Gene Sarazen**, **Byron Nelson**, **Craig Wood** and **Ben Hogan** were playing in the same tournament, which one would you follow? Jones won handily with 40 percent, followed by Hagan at 26 percent and Nelson with 12 percent.

► **August 12:** **Bill Reedy** suggested that Albright College schedule a game against the University of Utah's national championship basketball team. The Utes had open dates on their December east coast tour. The teams did not play, which was unfortunate because Albright fielded one of its best teams ever, finishing 19-1, losing only to Muhlenberg, 54-34.

► **August 13:** **Darden Hampton**, a former Tennessee resident, won the Berkshire C.C. club championship, 4 and 3, over **Ken Perkins**, the 1934 champion, in an 18-hole match.

August 14: **Bill Reedy** began his column thusly: "The dream of conservationists to end for all time the pollution of the once beautiful Schuylkill River and restore it as a navigable stream would certainly be a boon to aquatic sports. The youngster of

today doesn't have any conception of the great amount of competitive activity that once took place on the Schuylkill in the vicinity of Reading."

He mentioned the river swim, an event that once attracted 3,000 spectators. The event graced the river from 1913 to 1927, when it was abandoned because the waterway was clogged with coal dirt. The one-mile swim was shifted to the Angelica Dam and the Tulpehocken Creek, sites that, according to Reedy, did not have the same appeal as the river.

In that same column, Reedy noted the 10th anniversary of the **Berks County Golf Association**. The Association was inactive in 1942 and '43 because of the war. The upcoming better-ball-of-partners tournament at Berkshire, to be played the following week, would see the reinstatement of BCGA tournaments. The first county amateur championship was contested in 1929 but, according to Reedy, the BCGA had yet to be organized.

► **August 21:** The Carpenter Steelies defeated the Black Yankees of the Negro National League, 8-0, in an exhibition game that drew 3,000 fans to George Field. The Steelies erupted for seven runs in the bottom of the first and never looked back. **Fritz Titlow**, **Lefty Organtini** and **Don Dawkins** shared mound duty for the Carpenter squad, holding the opposition to four singles and a double. The Steelies used the game as a tune-up for their Industrial League play-off series against the Clover Farms nine. Alas, there was no joy in Stellieville: Clover Farms won game 1, 10-5.

► **August 22:** Lt. (J.G.) **Paul Brown** was named head football coach of the U.S. Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Ill. Brown formerly coached Ohio State University. Brown attracted national attention, which led to the Ohio State job, as the helmsman at Massillon, O., High School. His schoolboys posted six consecutive unbeaten seasons. On October 21, Brown took his Bluejackets to Columbus and lost to the Buckeyes, 26-6. The teams entered the contest undefeated.

► **August 24:** The 41 players on Reading High's varsity football team underwent physicals. The squad had only five returning lettermen and 18 players with junior varsity experience.



The photo from the August 29 Reading Eagle shows what was described as "a comparatively small but ambitious squad" that reported for Reading High's first day of football practice at Albright College Stadium. Coaches **Ron Kichline**, **Truck Yentsch** and **Al Harris** led the candidates through calisthenics. And was there ever a better football name than **Truck Yentsch**?



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► **August 24:** King, a German shepherd dog owned by **Paul Maurer**, Pleasant View Hotel, Stony Creek Mills, was honorably discharged from the Army K-9 Corps. In a letter to Maurer, the Army stated that he "should be assured that the service rendered was of major importance in connection with the war effort." The honorable discharge certificate indicated that the dog was used for sentry duty. King enlisted on November 17, 1943.

► **August 24:** The Brooklyn Dodgers, led by their colorful manager **Leo Durocher**, defeated the Carpenter Steeles of the Industrial League, 7-5, in an exhibition game played before 2,957 cash customers at George Field. The Dodgers were the first major league team to play in Reading in three years. Only a few Brooklyn regulars played. **Dixie Walker**, the major league's leading hitter with a .356 average, went 1-for-2 with a single in the first inning. **Tom Brown**, a lad of 16 plucked from the Brooklyn sandlots, had three hits in five plate appearances. The catcher, **Mickey Owen**, was the other Dodger regular to play. **Bobby Bragan** of the Dodgers hit the only home run.

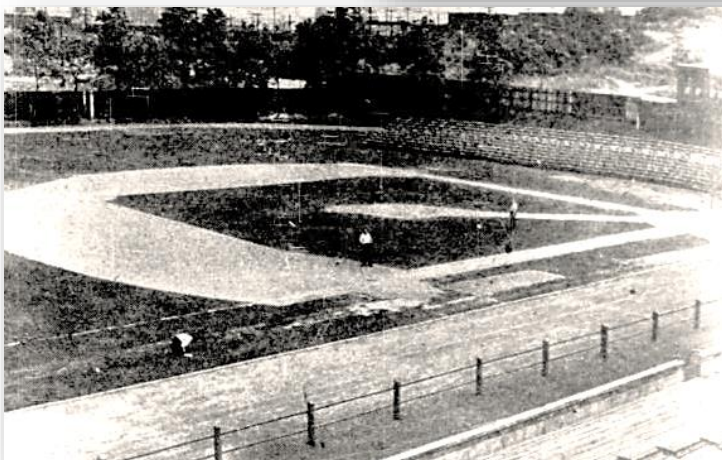
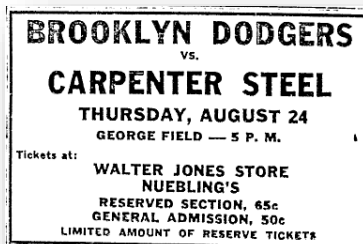
The Dodgers defeated the Lancaster Red Roses of the Interstate League, 20-9, the previous night before 1,656 fans.

► **August 26:** Horse racing fans wagered \$8,359,109 at nine tracks across the country. Saturday's attendance was 150,431. The 36,938 fans at Belmont Park in New York wagered a track-record \$3,042,468. Better bets at Garden State Park, Cherry Hill, N.J. reached into their wallets to the tune of \$1,680,750, also a track record.

► **August 26:** **Gen. Charles de Gaulle** led a parade down the Champs Élysées in Paris as German snipers shot at him there and inside Notre Dame Cathedral.

► **August 26:** Clover Farms defeated the Carpenter Steeles, 5-2, to close out the best-of-three Industrial League play-off series.

An ad in The Reading Eagle, August 22, prompted the clash between the local amateurs and the big-league professionals. The photo shows the grounds crew preparing the diamond for the arrival of the Brooklynites.



► **August 26:** **Ch. Beacon of Out of Bounds**, a two-year-old boxer, won best in show at the Berks Kennel Club event. The boxer was owned by **I.B. Hollenbach** and **Dr. E.B. Heindel**. The event, held at the South End Gun Club in Loraine, attracted 250 entrants and a large crowd. Hollenbach, proprietor of Rockhall Kennels on the Philadelphia Pike in Reiffton, handled the champion.

► **August 27:** **Bill Reedy** reported that **Byron Nelson** lost the PGA final match to **Bob Hamilton**. Nelson helped Hamilton with his swing at the Philadelphia Inquirer tournament earlier in the year. As a result, Hamilton added 50 yards to his drives. Nelson commented thusly to an Associated Press reporter: "Match play is not a true test of golf. I'm in favor of changing the championship to a medal play event."

To illustrate Nelson's point, Reedy reported that Nelson was 30 strokes under par for 196 holes played. In contrast, Hamilton was just 12 under for his 205 holes. Hamilton won 1-up, playing the 36-hole championship match five under par to Nelson's four under. The PGA was among Hamilton's five tour wins.

Reedy wrote that Nelson made the same comment to him six years previous when he was the pro at RCC. **Craig Wood**, 1944 U.S. Open champion, and **Ed Dudley**, president of the PGA, felt the same way. Medal play was finally adopted for the 1958 championship, played at Llanerch C.C. in suburban Philadelphia.

► **August 27:** The Shillington High Speedboys and Boyertown Bears high school gridgers were to report for pre-season physicals the following week. The West Reading Cowboys and Wyomissing squads, both starting their first year of football, scheduled their first practices for September 5, school's opening day. The two newcomers met on October 14, with West Reading defeating Wyomissing, 13-0. According to the *Reading Eagle*, Wyomissing's less-than-inspiring nickname was the Sunsets.



Dixie Walker, the major league's leading hitter with a .358 batting average, steps to the plate in the first inning of the exhibition game against the Carpenter Steeles. The Dodger's right fielder had one hit in two at-bats. The spectators in the background are enjoying the new grandstands erected along the first-base line.



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► **August 28:** **Byron Nelson** won the richest prize in golf, the All-American Open at Tam O'Shanter golf course in Chicago. Nelson shot 280, eight under par, defeating **Ed Dudley** by five strokes, for his third All-American title. Nelson won \$13,462 in war bonds, the equivalent of \$10,100 in cash or \$36 per stroke. The win ran Byron's total money for the year to a record \$25,468.

Betty Hicks, Long Beach, Cal., won the All-American Women's open by one stroke over **Dorothy Germain**, Philadelphia.

The tournament featured an amateur division in which **Johnny Markel**, the Coast Guardsman from Reading, posted 312. **Ed Christiansen**, a policeman from Miami, **Ed Furgol**, a defense plant worker from Detroit, and **Ken Heilman**, a chemist from St. Louis, tied at 295. Furgol won the 18-hole playoff.

Johnny Markel had a storied golf career. In 1941, as a high school senior, he accomplished a feat that has not been matched. Representing Reading High, Markel won his third consecutive Pennsylvania state high school golf championship. Several players have won two state titles, including **Arnold Palmer**, Latrobe (1946 and '47) and **Jay Sigel**, Lower Merion (1960 and '61) but only Markel has three.

Fact is, for about 70 years, **John Markel** was a big part of any discussion about golf in Berks County. He was born into the game. His father, **Harry**, started at Berkshire Country Club as assistant pro in 1922 and was head professional from 1931 to 1966. The family lived on the golf course and it was there that Johnny developed his game.

John joined the Berkshire staff in 1961 as assistant to his father and took over as head professional following Harry's retirement. John stayed until New Year's Eve 1986, when he retired at age 65. That is a remarkable run of 64 years with a Markel on the Berkshire staff. John Markel died on February 1, 2016, at 94.

Markel's Marks

117 Professional and amateur tournament wins.

7 Berks County Amateur Championships: '38, '40, '41, '47, '53, '54, '60.

3 PIAA District 3 Championships: '39, '40, '41.

3 PIAA State Championships: '39, '40, '41.

3 Consecutive Berkshire CC Championships: '47, '48, '49. He also won in '52.

2 Philadelphia Junior Championships: '40, '41.

1 Philadelphia Amateur Championship: '49.

1 Philadelphia PGA Section Assistants Championship: '64.

1 Philadelphia PGA Section Senior Championship: '83.

1 Induction into the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame, Berks County Chapter, '85.

► **August 31:** **Art Gable** led qualifying with a 78 at Riverside Golf Club in the Public Links golf tournament, sponsored by the city recreation department. Gable's round was also scored as the first round in the Riverside club championship. He shot 80 in his second 18 for a 158 to lead the pack.

Talkin' Baseball

Throughout August 1944, the *Reading Eagle* followed the daily exploits of major leaguers and Reading natives **Whitey Kurowski**, St. Louis Cardinals third baseman, and **Dominic Dallessandro**, Chicago Cubs outfielder.

Kurowski, a right-handed batter and thrower, finished 1944 with 20 home runs, 87 runs batted in and a .270 batting average in 146 games. He was named to the National League all-star team. Kurowski was a career .286 hitter with 106 home runs, 529 rbi in 916 games.

St. Louis Series. Whitey played his entire nine-year career with the Cardinals (1941-'49). That fall, he played on St. Louis' World Series championship team, as the Cards knocked off their cross-town rivals, the Browns, in six games. The '44 Series was the third and final time in which both teams had the same home field, the other two being Giants-Yankees series in 1921 and 1922 at the Polo Grounds in New York City. Yankee Stadium opened in 1923. The 1921 Series was the last time the nine-game format was used. The Giants won the title, 5 games to 3. The Giants won again in '22, 4 games to 1.

Whitey played all six games at second base. Although his fielding was perfect, Whitey hit only .217, with four singles and a double and just one run batted in. The Browns were a historically bad team that won their only America League pennant in a war year when major league talent was diluted. Their 89-65 record was at that time the worst ever for an AL champion. In 1953, the Browns became the Baltimore Orioles.

Dallessandro played in 117 games, hitting eight home runs, driving in 74 and amassing a .304 average. In eight seasons, Dom played for Boston Braves (1937) and the Cubs (1940-'47). Dallessandro played 746 games, batting .267 with 22 home runs and 303 RBI. He threw and batted left-handed.



*This photo of **Johnny Markel** appeared in a high school golf preview article in the Reading Eagle, April 10, 1938. Markel, a freshman at Northeast Junior High, was about to begin his Reading High School golf career.*