



The Golf Chronicles

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



Number 60 • September 22, 2017

After 54 Holes

The third round was played Saturday morning. For the first time, Snead did not lead the field.

211	Johnny Bulla
212	Sam Snead
212	Craig Wood
212	Denny Shute
212	Clayton Heafner
213	Bud Ward (a)
214	John Rogers
214	Tommy Armour
214	Olin Dutra
214	Jug McSpaden
215	Horton Smith
216	Byron Nelson
216	Henry Picard
216	Ralph Guldahl
217	Wilford Wehrle (a)
217	Paul Runyan
218	Harry Cooper
218	Sam Byrd
219	Ky Laffoon
219	Lawson Little
219	Dick Metz
220	Vic Ghezzi
220	Bobby Cruickshank
220	Johnny Revolta
220	Joe Belfore
220	Frank Moore
220	Matt Kowal
220	Jimmy Demaret
221	Ed Dudley
221	Dutch Harrison
223	Sam Parks
223	Felix Serafin
223	Al Espinosa
224	Gene Kunes
224	Jim Turnesa
224	Norm Van Nida
224	Ed Kingsley (a)
224	Johnny Hanes
225	Al Houghton
225	Teri Johnson
225	Bill Turnesa (a)
225	Frank Walsh
225	Lloyd Mangrum
225	Billy Burke
225	Ted Luther
225	Alvin Krause
225	George Von Elm
226	Tony Manero
226	Bill Francis
226	Ray Mangrum
227	Tom Creavy
227	Arthur Bell
227	Gene Sarazen
227	Pat Sawyer
228	Ed Meister (a)
228	Leo Walper
228	Ben Hogan
228	Frank Gelhot
229	Ted Turner
231	Bruce Coltart
233	George Slingerland



Byron Nelson, left, Reading, Pa., **Craig Wood**, center, Mamaroneck, N.Y., and **Denny Shute**, Huntington, W.V., each laid claim to the National Open trophy. The trio, tied at 284 after 72 holes of competition, would meet in an 18-hole playoff to settle the Open's first three-way tie since 1913.

The PCC course was a difficult challenge. Nelson's final-round 68 was one of only six sub-par scores all week. Par busters included Snead, first round; **Horton Smith**, second round; and **Clayton Heafner** (a tournament-best 66), **Johnny Bulla** and **Joe Belfore**, third round. Only seven players—the amateurs **Bud Ward** and **Wilford Wehrle**, **Lawson Little**, **Matt Kowal**, the home pro **Ed Dudley**, **Tommy Armour** and **Dick Metz**—equaled par at 69.

Byron leads. Nelson was first to post 284. He came in just behind the amateur **Bud Ward**, Spokane, Wash., whose final-round 72, which featured a 30-foot birdie on the final hole, left him at 285.

Snead was next to stare down destiny. Destiny won, as the Slammer's 18th hole failure became the stuff of legends. Even after a bogey 5 at the 17th hole, Snead was still one shot ahead of Shute and two better than Nelson and Wood. Snead believed he needed a birdie on 18 to win. Alas, he needed only a par 5 to post 283. By the time he surrendered his ball to the hole, Slammin' Sammy carved out a triple-bogey 8. After hitting his second into a ditch short of the green, Snead required three more hacks to put his ball on the carpet. Three putts later, he had his snowman. Sam's explanation for his melt-down is on page 3.

Although Snead is usually assigned to the heart-break role in this and subsequent Opens, Wood and Shute suffered in their own ways.

Wood's woe. Wood was next in line with a chance to best Nelson. The blond-haired bomber blasted two shots onto the 18th green, a mere 558 yards from the tee. He had a 12-footer for eagle 3 and a score of 283. The ball refused to drop into the cup; Wood's tap-in birdie 4 tied him with Nelson.

Short Shute. Shute was the last player on the course who could beat 284. Playing four twosomes behind Wood, he needed to finish with three pars for 283 and victory. But the unfortunate Shute drove into a fairway trap on the 17th hole. His only option was to play out short of the green. On in three and two putts yielded a bogey 5.

Shute faced a third shot of 75 yards to the pin on the par 5 18th. He could do no better than leave himself a 30-footer for the winning birdie. He left the putt less than a foot short, tapped in and finished tied with Nelson and Wood.

See it now. A movie of the 1939 U.S. Open is [here](#). You can also enjoy an interview with [Byron Nelson](#). Byron's golf game rarely failed him, but in this interview, his memory did. He says he needed a birdie on the last hole for 284, but he shot 284 with a par on 18. (photo on page 2). He birdied 18 in the first playoff against Wood and Shute, which extended the playoff to a second day minus Shute.

Nelson Surges as Snead Makes a Snowman in June

This is the fifth in a Golf Chronicles series telling the story of **Byron Nelson's** victory in the 1939 National Open played at Philadelphia Country Club's Spring Mill course.

The final two rounds of the 1939 U.S. Open are remembered for two sub-plots First, **Byron Nelson** surged to the top of the leaderboard after starting five strokes off the lead following 54 holes. He shot 68 in the final round to finish at 284, five over par for the tournament. Nelson finished tied for first with **Craig Wood** and **Denny Shute**.

Second, **Sam Snead**, who led after the first and second rounds, made a snowman in the June heat. Snead finished two in arrears and went home.



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Denny Shute's Lament

Henry McLemore, writing for the United Press syndicate, reported that Denny Shute said golf pros are being "taken for suckers."

Shute directed his ire at the paltry Open purse.

In Shute's reckoning, the time had come for professional golfers to demand that the purse for the game's biggest tournament reward the players with more than "haircut money."

Judging by the tone of McLemore's writing, he agreed. The scribe pointed out that:

- A heavyweight champion can win upwards of \$1 million for a single title fight.
- The winner of the Indianapolis 500 takes home \$25,000.
- The winner of the U.S. Open or Wimbledon tennis tournaments earned between \$25,000 and \$100,000.
- The top baseball players earned five-digit salaries (Remember, this was 1939!).
- The winner of golf's National Open: \$1,000.

Here are the leading finishers' scores and earnings from the '39 Open's \$5,000 purse:

Byron Nelson—284	\$1,000
Craig Wood—284	\$800
Denny Shute—284	\$700
Bud Ward (a)—285	medal
Sam Snead—286	\$600
Johnny Bulla—287	\$450
Ralph Guldahl—288	\$325
Dick Metz—288	\$325
Ky Laffoon—289	\$175
Jug McSpaden—289	\$175
Paul Runyan—289	\$175
Ed Dudley—290	\$108.34
Henry Picard—290	\$108.34
Horton Smith—291	\$100
Wilford Wehrle (a)—292	medal
Olin Dutra—292	\$66.67
Sam Byrd—292	\$66.67
Clayton Heafner—292	\$66.67

The schneid. Snead's Open play was **Mickelsonian**. Most observers, and most likely Sam himself, figured he would win the Open. Two, three or even four Opens was not out his reach; he was that good. Until Michelson's travails, Snead was the solid choice for best golfer without a U.S. Open trophy. Phil still has a chance to get off the schneid, but...

Nelson notes. Byron characterized his final round as "sound golf."

"I feel I was lucky, though," Nelson said. "Anytime there are from two to five other golfers with a chance to catch you and they don't do it, I feel you are lucky."

Nelson blamed his problems during Saturday's morning round 71 on his putter. His third-round highlight was an eagle 2 on the 384-yard third hole when he hit a 9-iron shot from 100 yards into the cup. The ball hit the edge of the green and kicked left into the hole. On the 350-yard 9th hole, however, Nelson carded his only 6 and only double bogey of the tournament to make the turn in 36, two over par. After bogies on 12 and 13, he was four over par for the round. But he kept himself in contention with birdies on 16 and 17.

Afternoon delight. "I really played fine golf in the afternoon," Nelson said. "I didn't miss a shot. The only hole that gave me trouble was the third in that round. My second shot went into the bunker and I chipped out to 2 ½ feet and I missed the putt. It was the only bogey I had all afternoon."

Nelson considered his second shot to the 17th hole his best of the afternoon. He played a low 7-iron into the wind, the ball finishing five feet from the hole to set up a birdie.

Nelson missed an opportunity to post 283 on the 558-yard finishing hole, which would have won the tournament in regulation play. His second to the par 5 reached the fringe of the green. He chipped 10 feet past the cup. Byron stroked the putt carefully on the slick green but the ball grazed the rim and stayed out. He made a three-foot putt coming back and posted 68, the best score turned in on the final round.

Following the day's play, Byron and Louise, his wife, returned home to Reading.

Here's how Nelson played the 36-hole finale.

Par out	434	444	344—34
Par in	434	344	445—35—69

Third Round

Nelson out	432	545	256—36
Nelson in	435	354	335—35—71

Fourth Round

Nelson out	335	444	344—34
Nelson in	434	344	435—34—68—284



By the slimmest margin, **Byron Nelson** misses a birdie putt on the 18th hole that would have won the Open in regulation play.



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Sam Snead's Agony

In 2000, **Eamon Lynch**, a golf writer whose credits include *Sports Illustrated* and *Golf Magazine*, posted a letter he received from **Sam Snead** in response to an inquiry about the final hole of the '39 Open.

In his neat handwriting, the Slammer details his painful collapse on the 18th hole.

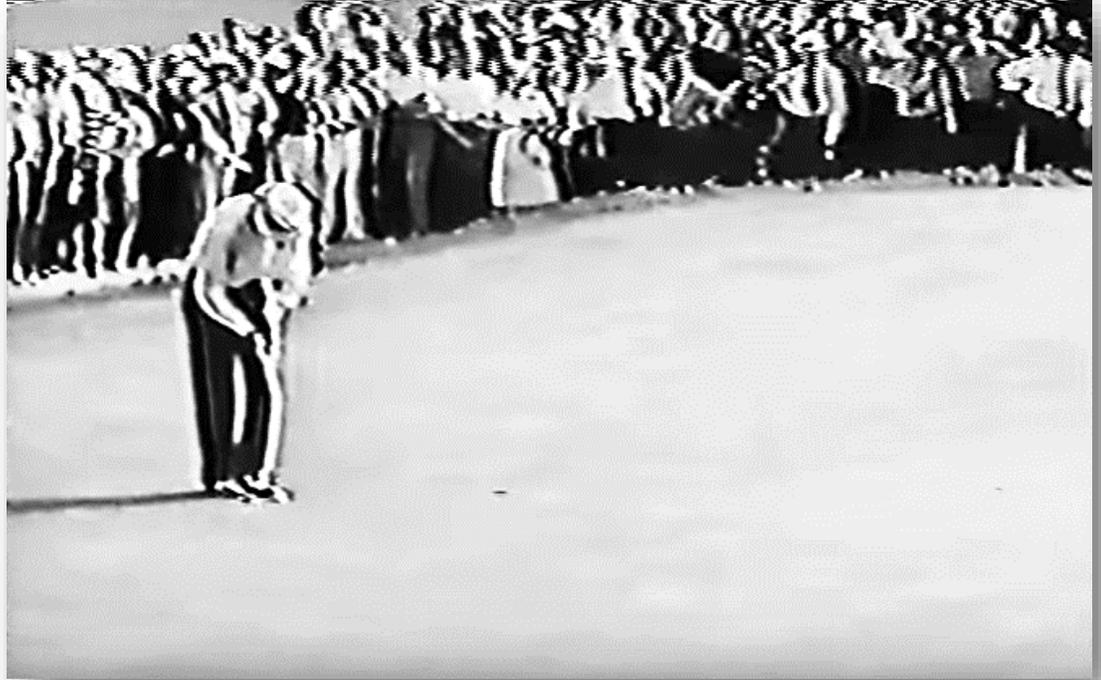
"The one golf shot I would most like to take back was my second shot on the 18th hole of the final round of the 1939 U.S. Open. I thought I needed to make birdie 4 on the par 5 18th to tie Byron Nelson for the tournament but actually only needed to make par 5 to win.

"I hit my drive in the right hand bunker. I figured I needed to get on the green in 2 so I elected to hit my 2 ½ wood. I knew I could hit it a good 250 yards if I caught it just right. I topped it and it landed in a ditch.

"From there into another bunker under the lip. I went on to make 8 and lose the tournament.

"If only I knew the real score, I would have used a 3 iron and layed up to make an easy 5 and win."

Sam Snead



Above: Sam Snead putts for a double-bogey 7 on the final hole of the '39 Open. He played the hole aggressively, thinking he needed a birdie to tie **Byron Nelson**. He didn't.

Below: Snead's putt comes up short. His 8 left him two strokes out of a playoff with Nelson, **Craig Wood** and **Denny Shute**.





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U.S. OPEN GOLF SCORES

Denny Shute, Huntington, W Va.	142	70	72	284
Craig Wood, Mamaroneck, N.Y.	141	71	72	284
Byron Nelson, Reading, Pa.	145	71	68	284
xMarvin Ward, Spokane	142	71	72	285
Sam Snead, White Sulphur Springs, W.Va.	139	73	74	286
Johnny Bulla, Chicago	143	68	76	287
Ralph Guldahl, Madison, N.J.	144	72	72	288
Dick Metz, Lake Forest, Ill.	148	71	69	288
Ky Laffoon, Ravinia, Ill.	146	73	70	289
Harry E. Cooper, Eastern Point, Conn.	143	75	72	290
Horton Smith, Chicopee, Mass.	140	75	76	291
Olin Dutra, Los Angeles	144	70	78	292
Ed Dudley, Phila Country Club	148	73	69	290
xWilford Wehrle, Racine, Wis.	148	69	75	292
John E. Rogers, Denver	145	69	79	293
John Revolta, Evanston, Ill.	149	71	74	294
Tommy Armour, Medina, Ill.	145	69	80	294
E. J. Harrison, Oak Park, Ill.	147	74	74	295
Bobby Cruickshank, Richmond, Va.	147	73	75	295
Felix Serafin, Clarks Summit, Pa.	152	71	73	296
Victor Ghezzi, Deal, N.J.	144	76	76	296
Ray Mangrum, Oakmont, Pa.	145	81	71	297
Jim Tunesa, Providence	149	75	73	297
Leo J. Walper, Bethesda, Md.	149	79	70	298
Arthur Bell, Monterey Park, Calif.	148	79	71	298
Sam Parks, jr., Pittsburgh	146	77	76	299
Terl Johnson, Norristown, Pa.	149	76	74	299
xEdwin C Kingsley, Salt Lake City	151	73	75	299
Gene Kunes, Norristown, Pa.	149	75	76	300
Frank Walsh, Rumson, N.J.	149	76	75	300
Billy Burke, Cleveland	148	77	75	300
Gene Sarazen, Brookfield, Conn. or, N.Y.	151	76	74	301
Joe Belfore, Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich.	152	68	81	301
xWilliam P. Turnesa, Briar Cliff, Man	146	79	76	301
Bruce Coltart, Haddonfield, N.J.	151	80	71	302
Al Houghton, Bethesda, Md.	149	76	77	302
Tom Creavy, Albany	150	77	75	302
Tony Manero, Peabody, Mass.	150	78	76	304
Lloyd Mangrum, Los Angeles, Calif.	144	81	79	304
Ted Turner, Clementon, N.J.	149	80	76	305
George Von Elm, Taft, Calif.	149	76	81	306
Normon Von Nida, Sydney, Australia	152	72	82	306
xEdward Meister, jr., Warrensville, O.	147	81	79	307
Ben Hogan, White Plains, N.Y.	150	78	80	308
Frank Gelhot, Cincinnati	150	78	81	309

x—Denotes amateur.