

The Golf Chronicles

Golf Stories from the Pennsylvania Heartland

Byron Nelson
Reading CC Pro
1937-39



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The Scribe

Any reader of the Philadelphia Inquirer from the 1930s to 1976 surely came across the byline of **Fred Byrod**. Byrod was with the paper from 1929 until his retirement in 1976. He was sports editor his final 18 years in the newsroom. Retirement, however, just opened a new chapter. Byrod covered the area golf scene for local magazines well in to his 90s.

Sports was his life and Philadelphia sports was his passion. His obituary reported that Fred spent his final moments watching the Eagles in Super Bowl 39. His son, Bob, said, "He went to sleep right after kickoff and never woke up." The Eagles lost to New England, 24-21, in the game played at Jacksonville.

A native of Sunbury, Pa., where his father ran a family-owned newspaper, didn't play golf until he joined the Inquirer in 1929 while attending Temple University. He graduated from Temple in 1933. He served three years in the South Pacific, reaching the rank of Captain.

Although Mr. Byrod covered a range of sports, golf was his favorite. He covered 69 major championships.

Fred Byrod knew the game's greats. **Jay Segal**, a Philadelphia area native, and **Arnold Palmer** remembered him for his persistence and thoroughness.

"It seemed like he covered my golf since I began playing the tour," said Palmer, who called Mr. Byrod a friend.

His position as a respected sportswriter is best told in this anecdote. After **Ben Hogan** won the 1950 U.S. Open at Merion C.C., he retreated to the locker room, too exhausted to talk to the press. This was just 16 months after Bantam Ben suffered severe injuries in a near-fatal car crash. Finally, Hogan relented and said he would talk only to Fred Byrod. That's respect.

Fred Byrod died on February 6, 2005, age 94.

Byron Nelson, Open Golf Champion, Tells of His Plans for the Future

by Byron Nelson

as told to Fred Byrod, Philadelphia Inquirer

Three days after he won the 1939 U.S. Open at Philadelphia Country Club, Byron Nelson wrote an "as told to" article in the Philadelphia Inquirer. Byron told his story to Fred Byrod, a legendary Philadelphia sports writer. Here is Byron's story published on July 15, 1939.

I've been National Open golf champion for only three days and I know now what I've felt for some time—the title isn't worth \$50,000 or \$25,000 as many think.

As a matter of fact, if anyone wants to guarantee me \$10,000 for this year, I'll take it and turn over all of what I make except for my club job.

I'll probably play 50 or so exhibition matches this summer, and perhaps five of six tournaments, one "must" being the P.G.A. next month. [Nelson lost in the finals to Henry Picard in 37 holes. He won \$600.]

Other than that, I have no definitive plans. Members of the Reading Country Club have been very kind to me and I was happy that I could win the Open as some repayment before going to Inverness Club next spring.

After the current Inverness tournament, in which I am playing with Harold McSpaden [They lost in a playoff to Johnny Revolta and Henry Picard, winning \$412.50 each], I'll return to Reading and except for the Anthracite Open in Scranton [Nelson won \$35 with a score of 291, 11 over par and 18 strokes behind Henry Picard's winning 273], probably won't play any other competitive golf until the P.G.A.

I don't think I ever would want to devote all my time to tournament golf. I enjoy teaching—although of course not 10 or 12 hours a day. By that time you've usually seen so many sliced and hooked shots that you're afraid to hit a ball yourself.

Someone has already asked me what I think my chances are of winning the Open again next year. Goodness, I haven't even given it a thought.

One thing, the prices they quote against the players a week before the tournament starts are ridiculous. Ralph Guldahl was 6 to 1 at Spring Mill., for instances. I don't think anyone should be less than 10 or 12 to 1, and I doubt weather I would take that.

A certain percentage of luck is necessary to win the Open. I was glad I was 27 before my big chance came along. I don't believe I would have been smart and experienced enough to take it two or three years ago—that is, I would not have been able to pull myself together when the breaks went against me and I would not have known when and how to be cautious.

Finally, I think I am now better qualified to profit from my victory, and to conduct myself as should a champion.