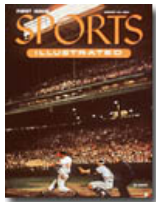


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August 16, 1954

TEXT SIZE ⊖ ⊕

Golf's Greatest Putt

Time: 1929 U. S. Open. Place: 18th hole. The Man: Bobby Jones

Grantland Rice

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GRANTLAND RICE

BORN: 1880

DIED: 1954

One of the last articles written by [Grantland Rice](#), who died suddenly July 13, was a piece for [SPORTS ILLUSTRATED](#). It is as typical of [Grantland Rice](#) as any article could be. It is about golf, the game he loved the best. Its central figure is [Bob Jones](#), whom he esteemed above all the other champions he knew and admired as his ranking hero. Its setting is the '20s, the age when sports first became an important part of the American scene, assisted by Granny's incomparable ability to convey to his readers his genuine love of sport and the excitement that seized him at certain major moments—such as [Jones's](#) dramatic finish in the 1929 National Open. For these reasons, and others more personal, I think this story by [Grantland Rice](#) is the perfect one with which to inaugurate our regular golf column.

—Herbert Warren Wind

On a late June afternoon in 1929, some 10,000 tense spectators crowded up to the 18th green at the Winged Foot Golf Course in [Westchester County, New York](#). As they came running up to the green, crowding as close as they could get, you heard every type of sound from a whisper to a shriek blended into one vast babble of excited human voices. The startling news was passed from person to person—[Bob Jones](#) was on the verge of the worst catastrophe any U.S. Open had ever known.

As [Jones](#) broke through the crowd and came upon the green, the babble suddenly was stilled. This was the silence of suppressed nerves. Since the first Scottish herdsman addressed an early golf ball with a shepherd's crook, I doubt if any golfer had ever faced a moment so packed with tension.

It was one of the great moments I have ever known in sports. The silence was complete. Only a few short minutes before, [Jones](#) had been six strokes up with only six holes to go. Now he had one putt left, for a tie. [Bobby Jones](#) had faced crucial putts before—more of them than any other golfer I have ever known—where important championships were at stake. But this putt meant more to [Bob Jones](#) than merely winning an Open. It meant the recapture of his golfing soul. It meant removing a dark stain from his pride, certain nationwide ridicule that was to follow failure.

Let's go back a minute. The real drama of this, the 33rd Open, and of [Bob Jones's](#) career, started at the long 12th hole.

Here [Al Espinosa](#), the only challenger, took a destructive 8. When [Espinosa](#) took this 8, he felt he had no chance. With the tension off, he finished with four 4's and two 3's for a 75 and a total of 294.

Even with this spurt on [Espinosa's](#) part, [Jones](#) could drop three strokes to par over the last six holes and still win. There never was a surer thing in golf.

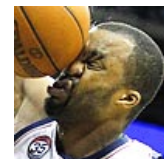
Bob lost one stroke at the short 13, and then at the 15th he had a heartbreaking 7, three over par. Now he needed three pars to tie [Espinosa](#). Here was undoubtedly the finest golfer

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in the world...yet no duffer had ever blown so bad.

Jones got his pars on 16 and 17 and came to the final hole needing a par 4 to tie his Mexican-American rival. Bob's drive was good. His second shot hit the hard, keen green and ran down a grassy bank. He chipped from below, but the chip stopped 12 to 14 feet short. He stopped as he came up on the green and saw how far short he was—the putt he had to hole to even get a draw.

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