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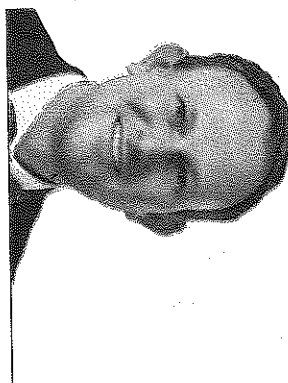
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Golf is like life, focus on your next shot

Allen Mendenhall



fixing ball marks, repairing divots, and properly signing their score cards. A good competitor compliments golfers who hit good shots.

The legendary Bobby Jones epitomizes the scholar-athlete dedicated to excellence and etiquette. A Southern gentleman, he read widely and earned global admiration both on and off the course. Few athletes are as educated; he obtained bachelor's degrees from Georgia Tech and Harvard in Engineering and English Literature, respectively, and his law degree from Emory University.

He chose to remain an amateur, despite being the era's best, because he believed, nobly, that sports should be pursued for the love of the game,

not financial gain. Jones could have been the highest-earning golfer professional, but he opted to play for other reasons.

Of the expectations for spectators at The Masters, the tournament he founded in 1934, Jones wrote, "In golf, customs of etiquette and decorum are just as important as rules governing play. It is appropriate for spectators to applaud successful strokes in proportion to difficulty, but excessive demonstrations by a player or his partisans are not proper because of the possible effect on other competitors."

Spectators should never, he believed, celebrate a golfer's adversity: "Most distressing to those who love the game of golf is the applauding or cheering of misplays or misfortunes of a player."

An incident during the opening round of the 1925 U.S. Open cemented his reputation for honor and honesty. As he took his stance to hit from the rough, his iron caused his ball to move slightly, unnoticed by others. Jones called a penalty on himself. Commended for his self-imposed ruling, Jones demurred, "You might as well

praise me for not robbing banks."

Golf fans recall this story even if they cannot remember the name of Willie Macfarlane, the competitor who won the tournament.

In short, golf builds character and cultivates politeness, fairness, and ethical behavior. Nobody, no matter how good, consistently plays great rounds. Life is like that, too: sometimes you have tough days, but you play through them, set goals, and learn from mistakes.

This week's "Word to the Wise" is attributed to—you guessed it—Jones: "Golf is the closest game to the game we call life. You get bad breaks from good shots; you get good breaks from bad shots—but you have to play the ball where it lies."

Focus, dear reader, on your next shot.

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