

W.B. McCullough, Jr., to be inducted into Golf Association of Philadelphia Hall of Fame



By Martin D. Emeno, Jr

GAP HALL OF FAME



Reporters dubbed Warrington B. McCullough, Jr. a “weekend golfer” during a historic 1940 U.S. Amateur Championship run. It seemed to be an appropriate tag for a 32-year-old then father of one who was an executive in the family’s auto part and industrial mill supply business. However, the “ordinary” golfer’s accomplishments were anything but commonplace. McCullough, a member at both Huntingdon Valley Country Club and Pine Valley Golf Club, penned a résumé both expansive—parts of five decades—and impressive, eight Major Golf Association of Philadelphia victories, seven Crump Cup wins and that 1940 U.S. Amateur Championship in which he defeated four U.S Walker Cup team members en route to the final.

At the Player’s Dinner on Oct. 12 at Aronimink Golf Club, McCullough, with son Tony and daughter Joyce in attendance, will be inducted into the Golf Association of Philadelphia’s Hall of Fame. He’ll join Association royalty and prior Hall inductees William Hyndman, III, Maxwell R. Marston, Harold B. McFarland, J. Wood Platt and R. Jay Sigel.

McCullough was a steely competitor and his record bears that out. He won four Golf Association of Philadelphia Patterson Cups, three Silver Crosses, one Amateur Championship (he was runner-up three times as well) and one Junior Boys’ Championship. Nicknamed Duff, after his father Warrington, Sr. affectionately called him “the little duffer” on their trips to Huntingdon Valley, McCullough registered nine total Father-Son victories, three with his father and six more with his own son. He won the 1937 Pennsylvania Golf Association Amateur Championship and finished runner-up in 1948. His seven Crump Cups, Pine Valley GC’s exclusive national invitational, were a record at the time. In 1960, he became the first individual since the Crump’s 1922 inception to take the honor two years in a row. And when McCullough turned 55, he wreaked havoc in the Golf Association of Philadelphia senior ranks with three Warner Cup wins and two Senior Amateur Championship titles.

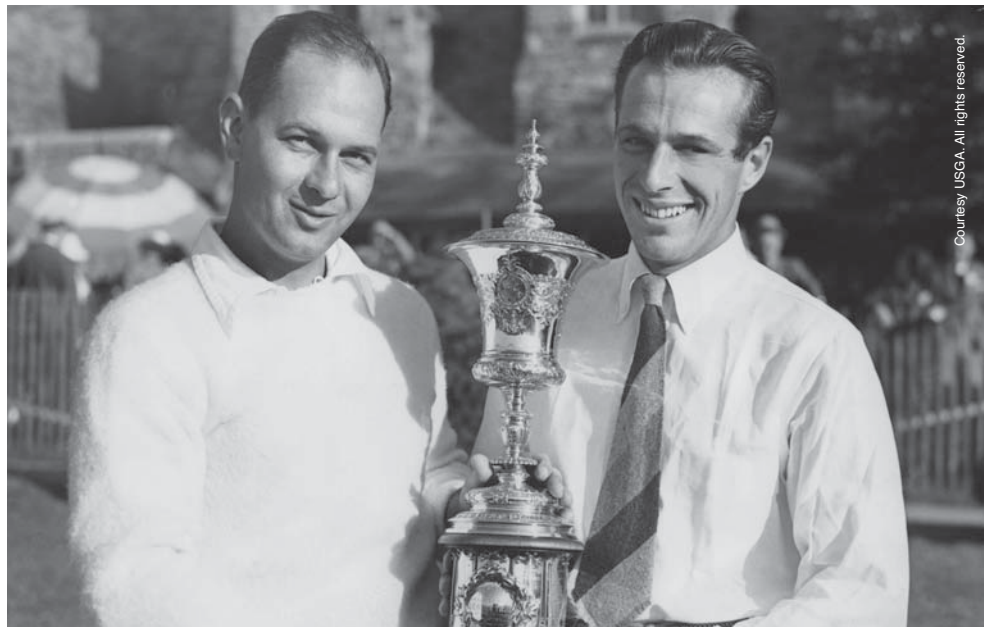
McCullough won those initial Father-Son events early on in his career but he truly busted onto the Golf Association of Philadelphia scene in 1934 with his first Silver Cross Award victory. He would take the 1939 Patterson Cup at Philmont CC and finish as the runner-up in the Amateur that year to the legendary Platt. He swept the Patterson and Silver Cross in both 1942

and 1949 and took his lone Amateur title in between, in 1947, with a 3&2 victory over Matt Scammell, Jr., of Huntingdon Valley CC at Merion GC (East). It was a title that filled “a vacant space among the many golfing trophies,” wrote the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on July 25, 1947. McCullough ended the final match on the 16th hole when he drained a 30-foot birdie putt, a green he reached only once in his other four matches.

In 1951, McCullough added his fourth and final Patterson Cup. Sidelined the prior two years with a back ailment, McCullough survived rainy conditions and a difficult field to win by two strokes. He posted a 69 at North Hills CC and a 78 at Philadelphia Cricket Club. To give you a sense of the competition, Hyndman, who holds the record with 10 Patterson wins, finished second.

Not to be forgotten was his Father-Son success. McCullough and his father took three Father-Son titles, 1932, 1936 and 1937. He would later win six more with his son (1965, 1968, 1970-71, 1978-79).

It was in the summer of 1940, though, when McCullough ascended from a talented Philadelphian to a national “hero.” In a U.S. Amateur Championship field laced with the outstanding names in American amateur golf, McCullough advanced to the final after traversing a mine field very few, if ever, had to navigate. After qualifying and advancing past the first round, he defeated Gus Moreland of Illinois, a 1932 and 1934 Walker Cup member, 1-up. The next day, he stopped Willie Turnesa, a past U.S. Amateur Champion and future three-time Walker Cupper, 3&2. That afternoon, it was Kentuckian Johnny Fischer, a three-time Walker Cup member (1934, 1936, 1938) and winner of the 1936 U.S. Am., that fell 5&4. Fischer defeated the likes



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W. B. McCullough, Jr. (L) and Richard Chapman with the 1940 U.S. Amateur Trophy.

at the time in his *A Centennial Tribute to Golf in Philadelphia* book. “The golf world was astounded. With almost nonchalant ease, the obscure Philadelphian had cut a devastating swath through the upper echelon of American golf: four Walker Cuppers up, four Walker Cuppers down. And two of them were recent winners of this championship.”

In the final, McCullough faced Dick Chapman, a resident of Philadelphia and member of Aronimink, who joined Winged Foot GC two years earlier when it was announced as the host club. Chapman knew every

tled when he fell behind. I will never forget a statement he made to me during a match when we were a couple holes down. He said, ‘Gordon, you can win them just as fast as you lost them.’ Duff was a great gentleman. He was very helpful to me as a younger player by playing with me and offering advice. Having the opportunity to play with Duff and Bill Hyndman at Huntingdon Valley was a tremendous advantage at the beginning of my competitive career.”

Added son Tony, “He was very wise in that he knew you had to practice the long game one third, putting one third and the short game one third. He said if you miss the green, you still have to make par. When I told my dad ‘nice shot’ [to the green], he would say ‘it’ll be as good as the putt.’ His concentration was complete. He was quietly competitive. He always told me when I complained about not winning any tournaments to play in more because you sometimes win matches you shouldn’t and will lose matches you shouldn’t.”

McCullough believed in not only giving back to the game with his play but with his time as well. He served as President of the Pennsylvania Golf Association in 1948. (Son Tony did so as well in 1977.) His wife Ruth was the Women’s Golf Association of Philadelphia President from 1962-63.

McCullough’s complete club and invitation tournament successes are too lengthy and robust for these pages. He did, though, win seven HVCC Club titles (1926, ‘30, ‘38, ‘41, ‘46-47, ‘51) and three Pine Valley GC Club championships (1935, ‘57, ‘59). Maybe, just maybe, McCullough’s greatest feat, invitational-wise, came in the 1953 Old York Road Invitational. He carded a front-side 29 in the first round en route to a victory.

McCullough died in January of 1989 at the age of 81.

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of Ted Bishop and Jess Sweetser earlier.

The New York Times tabbed McCullough “The Hero of the Day.” He recorded two victories over two of the championship’s most feared figures in less than eight hours. It was also after the Turnesa win that reporters tagged McCullough, a relative unknown in national circles, a “weekend golfer.”

The semifinal match would be no easier, and McCullough drew Ray Billows in the 36-hole contest. A 1938 Walker Cupper, Billows from Poughkeepsie, N.Y., had reached the U.S. Amateur final in 1937 and 1939. The day prior, Billows defeated reigning champion Bud Ward, 4&3, and entered his match with McCullough a clear favorite. McCullough built an early lead and never looked back, defeating Billows, 5&3. *The New York Times* printed, “In one of the biggest upsets in championship history, Billows was trounced by W.B. (Duff) McCullough, a 32-year-old Philadelphia businessman who confines himself to weekend play. Trailing from the very beginning, Billows never had so much as a look-in and was beaten on the 33rd, 5 and 3.”

James Finegan summarized the prevailing thought

nuance of the club. According to son Tony, and a fact known by very few, McCullough battled dysentery that final round. The results reflected something gone awry with Chapman winning, 11&9.

“If you could see the photos I have from the National Amateur, they’re very descriptive,” said Tony McCullough. “The point is that the U.S. Amateur is the only tournament in his district, so to speak, he didn’t win. He won in the city and state. In that final, specifically, the day of the finals he was exhausted. He didn’t have any strength left.”

McCullough was solidly built and of medium height. He played football at Lawrenceville School and the University of Pennsylvania, but suffered a back injury at Penn that made him less of a power hitter, reads Finegan’s book. In addition, to being an accomplished iron player, he was particularly adept around the greens.

“[Duff] was not long off the tee but had a masterful short game. He had this old mallet headed putter that I still have a mental image of that he could putt the eyes out of the hole,” said the legendary O. Gordon Brewer, Jr. “He was a great competitor and would not get rat-