

WE HAVE NO "BORN" CHAMPIONS

By VIRGINIA VAN WIE

SO many use the expression "A born golfer" and I wonder just what they mean. Never have I encountered a born golfer. True, some have more natural ability than others, but before they arrive at the point where someone uses that expression in regard to their game, they have practiced diligently utilizing every bit of that ability in an effort to perfect their golf shots.

If such a thing as being born a champion golfer is possible, I can say truthfully I should prefer to be denied that blessing. Perhaps that is because I have finally accomplished the thing I set out to do only after a great deal of serving and it is true that something you have labored long to acquire brings far more joy and satisfaction than having the same honor just land in your lap, as it were, with no effort on your part to attain it.

The road I travelled to the championship was pretty long and steep, and I am forced to admit that more than once during the climb I considered myself in second gear;

a few times, I think, with a slipping clutch. Since I have reached the top, I appreciate that second gear, the length and steepness of my own particular road and the wisdom of those kind souls, who, after a disappointing defeat, would say, "Never mind you are young yet."

At the time I appreciated the kindness far more than the wisdom. When you have struggled four or five years to win a particular championship and failed, the fact that you have plenty of time to win it in the future is not especially comforting.

I was discussing golf with two very fine women golfers one day and one of them, who has had more experience than I, said she had observed that a consistent winner generally possessed three qualities. First a good golf swing; second a fine golfing temperament; and last, but by no means least, a strong physique to stand the strain of a week's competition.

I have thought since how true that statement is. Very few are fortunate enough to



possess all three. Glenna Collett Vare, Helen Hicks and Mrs. L. D. Cheney are three golfers who possess these qualities.

These three have, first, all the physical qualities needed, strong pliable hands, strength in arms, legs and body. They all have the needed power and in addition all three are fine competitors, cool, determined, and never beaten until the match is over. No one of the three is ever inclined to get excited or upset at anything that might take place. Their concentration is high class. In addition I might mention that all three have exceptionally fine golf swings that have been built up through long, hard training, practice and play.

Glenna has been a most consistent winner since I started competitive golf. Five times she has been our national champion. Four of these five were captured over a period of six years, the last three consecutive years being 1928, 1929 and 1930. The decisiveness of these last three victories stands out very clearly in my memory as two of them were inflicted upon myself. In 1928 I played in the final against Glenna and received a 13 and 12 trouncing. In 1929 Mrs. Cheney (then Mrs. Pressler) was beaten by a score of 5 and 3, and in 1930 I was again the victim, to the tune of a 6 and 5 defeat.

Consequently there was little doubt in my mind as to who reigned supremely in the Women's Golfing World of America. This was a portion of my road to victory, which made me appreciate my final arrival at the destination toward which I was driving.

The general opinion at this time seemed to be that I would never defeat Glenna, and a few (according (Continued on page 38)



In the picture at the left, Misses Virginia Van Wie and Helen Hicks appear during their final match for the 1933 Women's Championship. At the top of the page, Mrs. Glenna Collett Vare and Mrs. L. D. Cheney. Miss Van Wie, in the accompanying article, cites the three other prominent stars shown here as having the three qualifications, which she finds mark a champion



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to some articles I read) seemed to be under the impression I didn't want to. To the contrary there was no one I wished more to win from than Glenna for one prevailing reason. She was the best in my estimation and to win a national championship without defeating Glenna somewhere along the week's journey would have been half-earned.

There was just cause for the opinion that Glenna was my jinx and I could not beat her. Before my final victory over her in the National at Salem, Massachusetts, in 1932, I had only won two matches from her, both having gone extra holes before I ended victoriously. Glenna had beaten me by a large margin generally in other matches. Helen Hicks beat Glenna more often than Glenna won from her, yet I was slightly ahead of Helen in the matches we had played. Therefore it did appear as though Glenna was my hoodoo.

However, I never thought of her as that, and, when we went out to play, there was no such feeling in my mind. This much was true—I considered her the greatest golfer in our country. I knew she had more difficult shots under

control than any other girl I was called upon to play, and, appreciating her mastery of all golf shots, knowing full well her ability, made playing against her very difficult.

Glenna, realizing my confidence in her game, quite naturally gained confidence playing against me and always played very well. This in my estimation is the reason for the general opinion that she was my jinx. But a jinx is a superstition and I was not superstitious. I was, however (perhaps foolishly), too appreciative of her marvelous knowledge and mastery of any type of golf shot she might be called upon to execute. This very fact, however, made me more desirous of defeating Glenna somewhere along the line, should I ever win the National, for then I should feel the title had been justly earned.

Now let's go back to the second consistent winner I mentioned—Helen Hicks. Helen's climb to that supreme position of National Champion was a comparatively short one, which is greatly to her credit, but I think a little bit too bad for her own sake. For when you reach the heights in three short

years, you not only are incapable of fully appreciating them, but also there is suddenly nothing left for you to struggle for, and, when no definite goal is ahead, you are apt to lose interest.

Helen qualified in the National for the first time in 1928, three years after my first qualification, and won the title in 1931, one year before I reached the same goal. To accomplish such a feat in so short a time I thought was marvelous. It was, and I was very interested in her reaction.

When the American Ladies Team was sent abroad to play against Great Britain, Helen and I were paired together in the doubles (better known as the Foursome). We also were roommates during the trip, so we had a great many opportunities to discuss golf from all angles. The psychology as well as the mechanics of the game.

I decided on that trip that Helen's next national title would mean more to her than her first, providing she had to struggle a while to win it. She appreciated her first title, don't misunderstand me, but she found it a great responsibility. Everyone expected her to play flawless golf, and her zest for the

game was waning, which made it difficult.

The story of Helen's failure to qualify in the 1932 Championship the following fall is familiar, but very few appreciate the bitterness of such a disappointment. When you are denied the privilege of defending your title, because you couldn't seem to make your shots click on the one day the U. S. G. A. had decided was qualifying day, you have just cause to kick things hard and look as mad as you feel, but Helen did none of these things. In fact, when I very inadequately expressed my sympathy over her disappointment, she replied, "Thanks, Gino, but I feel it is the best thing that could have happened to me in spite of my disappointment. Golf defeated me today, now I am going to spend this year defeating it."

She had a goal ahead of her once more and with her interest again aroused she went to work on her game, entered eight tournaments the following season, winning seven straight and finishing as runner-up in the eighth, which was last year's National. That is real consistency, for those eight tournaments were played over a period of seven months.