



Arnold Palmer's wife and chief rooter, Winnie, watched him take 1962 Masters three-way play-off (right) against Gary Player and Dow Finsterwald.

# Arnold Palmer—The Winningest Man in Golf

He's on his way to a childhood dream, a golfing grand slam, and if he succeeds, his dad, mom, and wife should take bows **By JACK RYAN**



**T**HE MOTHER of the winningest man in golf looks back and remembers him as a "determined boy, even at 9 or 10."

"Some of the local women would get up a foursome," she says. "I'd tell Arnie, 'Now stay home and help your sister.' But by the time we'd get to the back nine, one of the girls would tell me, 'Arnie's following us—and carrying his clubs.' So what could we do? We'd let him play."

His father, a former laborer at the Latrobe (Pa.) Country Club who worked his way up to club pro, has similar memories. "The members didn't want a pesty kid playing their course—especially when he played it better. I'd tell him, 'Only play on Mondays when the course is closed.' But any day I could expect a member to come up and say, 'Deke, that boy of yours is out there practicing again.'"

The boy has grown to man, champion, husband, and father. But he hasn't changed much. "He'll come home between tournaments to rest," says his wife Winnie. "That means practicing shots during the day. At night, we'll sit around watching tv, but Arnie will jump up after a few minutes and practice 'phantom' putting in the living room."

The golfing boy grown to golf wizard is Arnold Palmer, of course, an affable crowd pleaser with the physique of a steel worker, which he nearly was, and the understanding family that every golfer dreams of.

At the halfway point in the current golf season, Palmer has won about \$50,000 in tournament prizes; his yearly income from all sources is about \$300,000; he has collected more than \$325,000 on the links in his eight-year career; and he has won the 1962 Masters tourney (for the third time), the first link in his "dream of a lifetime."

This week Palmer goes after the second link, the United States Open at Oakmont, Pa. If he wins and then duplicates the feat in the British Open next month and the subsequent PGA tournament, he will have fulfilled his boyhood pledge—a golfing grand slam unequalled since the glorious days of all-time great Bobby Jones.

"The idea of a golfing grand slam is still very much in my mind," Palmer says. "I hardly remember when it wasn't." The words are immodest, but Palmer sounds more like a Sunday golfer who hopes to break 100.

What makes a golfing great? Palmer has his own ideas on technique (at \$1,000 a demonstration). Other experts point to his V build, the chunky muscles that swell in his shoulders and taper to steel-like whips in his wrists.

"He always had big hands," his father, Milford (Deke) Palmer, says, "and I first taught him the Vardon overlapping grip. I told him to get a firm grip on the club, slow backswing, steady head, careful on overswing." Mr. Palmer was criticized for turning Arnie into a "sledge-hammer swinger." Today critics pay to watch his 270-yard drives.

Mr. Palmer also taught his son that before he could control his power, he must control himself. In a high-school tournament, Arnie flubbed a shot, tossed his club over a tree in anger. "Do that once more," his father said, "and you never golf again." Today Palmer is a writhing ham between shots but coldly automated in addressing a ball.

The elder Palmer moved his family to a tiny groundskeeper's cottage in Latrobe after the Pittsburgh steel mills closed during the Depression. There wasn't much extra money for entertainment, so everyone turned to golf.

**B**Y THE TIME he was six, Arnie occupied a permanent perch on a nearby fence and would greet visitors with, "Wanta see me hit the ball into the hole?"

"He always loved a gallery," Mrs. Palmer says about the gallery's favorite player. "People watching him golf never made him nervous. He enjoyed them being there. After every good shot, he'd turn to our visitors and say, 'Did you see that one, did you?'"

One day a friend gave Arnie a book about Bobby Jones, and he couldn't stop reading it. That's where the idea of the grand slam came to him.

A golfing career needs financial backing in its early stages, however, and although Arnold became a high-school star he appeared destined for work in the nearby mills. But an unexpected golf scholarship to Wake Forest University led, in turn, to an amateur apprenticeship.

After service in the Coast Guard, Palmer became something of a golfing bum, drifting indecisively from business to golf. In 1954, he was entered in the Fred Waring Tournament at Shawnee-on-the-Delaware when a freckled-faced, pert-nosed girl in the gallery caught his eye.

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