



The Immortal Bobby Jones

THE DASH THAT ENDURES

It's a rich and remarkable space few of us experience, the dash of Bobby Jones. **It was from 1902-1971.** His life – his dash – was a triumphant journey as a champion golfer and American hero. It was also one filled with many other accomplishments, failures, and losses – a very human life. An inspiring life. It is a wonderful story and a dash that endures.

The Dash Begins

Bobby Jones was born in Atlanta to Robert and Clara Jones. His father, Robert Purmedus Jones or the "Colonel", was a gregarious man. Jones was a standout athlete and baseball player, even offered a contract to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers, although his father discouraged him not to do it. Instead he became a respected lawyer in Atlanta and secured a rising company, called Coca-Cola, as one of his clients.

His first shots were in the front yard of their home next to East Lake Country Club, just six miles from downtown. In 1908, East Lake was a summer retreat and escape from the craziness of the city – all 150,000 Atlantans!

He was only 6 years old, when as a skinny youngster, he won a six-hole tournament at East Lake Country Club. Yes, the East Lake we all know as home to the PGA Tour Championship today. **It did not take long for his genius at**



golf to become evident. At 9 he was the club's junior champion. At the age of 10 he shot a 90 for 18 holes. At 11 he shot 80. At age 12, 70. At 14 he won the Georgia Amateur Championship.

By age 14, he was driving the ball 250 yards. Remember, this was using 1916 technology and rubber golf balls with such names like the Zome Zodiac and Black Domino. He played at a time when golf clubs had wooden, not steel



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or graphite shafts and the wedge had not yet been invented. Quite often he did it formally dressed in a dress shirt, tie, and knickers.

He played in his first U.S. Amateur at age 14 in 1916 at Merion Golf Club - which later becomes an integral part of this story - as the youngest player in the field. He made it to the third round of match play and captured the attention of the golf world.

In his early years, a horrible temper really plagued him. It was not until he learned to control it that he started to win championships. Yet it showed his passion for the game and exceedingly strong will to win. And win he did.

At 21 he was United States Open champion. He played 31 championships and placed first or second more than 50% of the time. During these, he lost an average of 14 pounds, the result of the stress and anxiety of tournament golf.

Amazingly, in his 13 years of major competition, Bobby was a student in high school or college in nine of them. He played in 52 tournaments in that span, an average of four a year, and won 23 of them.

O.B Keeler, a famous sports writer of the day, one of his best friends and the man who coined the term Grand Slam, was present at all 31 of Bobby's championships. Together, they traveled 150,000 miles together - by train or boat.



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His putter, he named **Calamity Jane**, was made in Scotland before 1900 and became the most famous putter in the world. It was in his bag for most of his wins. He actually had two versions, one of which you can find on display at Augusta National, and the other at the USGA golf museum.



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“The only person in golf history to win all four major championships in one calendar year, a record that may never be broken.”

He even named his driver, Jeannie Deans. This was before we numbered clubs, they had names and nicknames instead. For instance, a 9 iron was a Niblick, a 4 iron a Jigger, a 6 iron a Spade Mashie, and a 3 wood a Spoon.

The Scot's adored Bobby Jones they called him Bonnie Bobby. He won the British Open and the British Amateur at St. Andrews golf course, the home of golf. More importantly, he won the hearts of the Scottish people, so much so that **they honored him with a key to the city. The only other Americans to be granted such an honor were Benjamin Franklin and Jack Nicklaus.**

The Grand Slam

And then, of course, there is his most notable achievement of all, winning The Grand Slam in 1930 at Merion Golf Club in Philadelphia, the only person in golf history to win all four major championships in one calendar year, a record that may never be broken. That's part of the dash that just may endure forever.

His triumph at Merion was a painful, anxiety ridden one. His humanness was once again apparent.

Leading up to his fourth and final major at Merion in 1930, he was sick with acute abdominal pain. His doctor diagnosed severe stress and incredibly discouraged him from playing in this final leg of the Grand Slam. Bobby was determined to play and play he did.

On September 27, in the finals, the last 36-hole match, he defeated Eugene Homans 8 and 7 on the 11th hole. At least 18,000 fans and 50 U.S. Marines in dress uniform witnessed him win the Grand Slam on that day.

Bobby received his second ticker-tape parade in New York City, a grand turnout to welcome America's golf hero. By the way, John Glenn is the only other person to have such an honor. He then arrived home to Atlanta where 125,000 Georgians honored him with yet another





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parade. Bobby was now world famous - and the world was his for the taking.

And then Bobby did the unimaginable. He retired from tournament golf at age 28. He was done.

His Life Off the Course

Bobby Jones' achievements as a golfer are legendary. Yet, there is so much more to this iconic golfer than his accomplishments on the golf course. **He lived a full and rich life off the course – a very human life of triumphs and tragedies.**

He graduated from high school at 16 and went on to **Georgia Tech** where he majored in mechanical engineering. He was captain of the golf team, the Golden Tornadoes.

// ***He was a brilliant mind by all accounts."***

In 1925, with no interest in engineering, he entered **Harvard** to study English literature. Friends said he read the dictionary like it was a book. He learned French and German and would often study Latin or Calculus on the way to tournaments to have something to do. His was a brilliant mind by all accounts.

He was a very gifted writer, with a brilliant command of the English language, equal to his skill on a golf course. Consider this, one of his most famous epithets: "On the golf course, a man may be a dogged victim of inexorable fate, be struck down by an appalling stroke or tragedy, become the hero of an unbelievable



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melodrama, or the clown in a side-splitting comedy – any of these within a few hours, and all without having to bury a corpse or repair a tangled personality.”

When he finished at **Harvard**, he went to work for the Adair family – the leading developers of the time and friends of the Jones family - selling real estate and golf memberships in Florida at the Whitfield Estates Golf and Country Club.

Still trying to find his way in life on the course and not enjoying real estate sales, Bobby returned to Atlanta and enrolled in **Emory law school**. He was there for just three semesters when he passed the Bar, something one could do at that time without a diploma. He joined his father’s law firm, practicing civil and contract law, until his death. Today the firm is known as Alston & Bird, one of the nation’s most successful law firms and the one that represents

the Jones family to this day. His contributions did not stop there.

During WWII, Bobby volunteered and was inducted into the US Army as a captain in 1942. He served as an intelligence officer and landed on Normandy the day after D-Day, serving two months on the front lines where he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Think about that for a moment – going from a life of comfort and grand golf to volunteering at age 40 for the austere and uncertain life of a soldier in a combat zone. Through it all Bobby remained disarmingly humble.

Jones The Innovator and Entrepreneur

What you may not know is that Bobby Jones was an innovator and entrepreneur as well. “He was very much a forward thinker,” according to Bob Jones IV.

During his lifetime, Jones lent his name to only one endorsement, **Spalding golf clubs**. In 1932, he helped the company design a set of woods and the first matched set of irons. Charles Price, the famous writer, noted, “After overseeing the casting of the irons and sanding of the shafts by hand himself, Jones had rejected more than two hundred different clubs until he arrived at the set that satisfied him.” **His signature clubs sold 2 million sets in 15 different models. He co-founded two golf clubs, Augusta National and Peachtree.**



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*And of course he **founded** one of the most famous golf tournaments in the world, **The Masters.***

While it may be hard to believe today, Augusta was a very radical design for its time, one Jones had a large hand in with famed course architect Alister MacKenzie. Augusta also was one of the first courses in the world to have an underground sprinkler system – 32,000 feet of cast iron pipe - which eliminated the need to pull hoses long distances and made thorough watering possible.

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There's more.

He was a partner in a minor league baseball team, the Atlanta Crackers, the City's baseball team for 60 years before the Atlanta Braves came to town.

When he finished tournament golf, he made two very famous instructional films for Warner Brothers. His "How I Play Golf" and "How to Break 90" movies were considered innovative for the time with trend-setting graphics and instruction methods.

Jones also became a major stockholder and founder of **Coca-Cola** bottling companies in New England, Michigan, Scotland, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile.



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Bobby's Family

He married Mary Rice Malone in 1924, and they soon had three children. The Jones family lived most of their married years at 3425 Tuxedo Road, just a few miles from Bobby Jones Golf Course in Atlanta. They called it Whitehall and it is still there today.

Bobby's son, Robert Tyre Jones III, was also an accomplished golfer, winning the Atlanta city junior, and qualifying for three US Amateurs. In one of them in 1959, he lost his first-round match to some kid named Jack Nicklaus, 7 and 6. He even played on the Emory golf team for four years. Sadly, he died at age 47, just two years after his father.

His grandson, Robert Tyre Jones, IV, is a psychologist and lives in Atlanta with his wife Mimi. Bob, as he is known, loves to speak about his grandfather and does so with an authority like no one else can do today.

A Dogged Victim of an Inexorable Fate

In the late forties, life became tough for Bobby. Ironically, he became a dogged victim of an inexorable fate off the course.

It began when he started having bad neck pains. These pains were so debilitating that he played **his last round of golf at East Lake at age 48**. The greatest player to have ever lived,



never played golf again.

Eventually his neck pain was diagnosed as syringomyelia, a painful and incurable spinal disease. This led to leg braces and later being in a wheelchair full time. He could not stand or walk without assistance. In his last years, he could not write or even sign his name.

While he had some very human moments of anger and despair, he never complained publicly. **He was always the gentleman. When people asked him if he was ever bitter, he often remarked that "one plays the ball as it lies," a reference to one of his most famous quotes: "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."**

And he did.



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He even kept his sharp wit and sense of humor, once saying, "I haven't played golf in eight years. But then, I haven't missed a putt in eight years, either."

On December 18, 1971, the incredible Bobby Jones' passed away at age 69.

The Dash That Endures

Why was he so immensely popular, then and now?

It is important to know that in the decade following World War I, America luxuriated in the Golden Era of Sports with its first collection of super stars such as Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney, Bill Tilden, Red Grange - and Bobby Jones. **All were great athletes, but none had extraordinary character and humility like Bobby Jones.**

His legacy endures in many ways.

The Robert Tyre Jones, Jr. Memorial Lecture of Legal Ethics at Emory was inaugurated in 1974 and continues to this day.

In 1955, the **USGA established the Bob Jones Award**, the association's highest honor, to recognize distinguished sportsmanship in golf.

There is also a Robert Tyre Jones, Jr. Scholarship Program between Emory and St. Andrews University in Scotland. Each year eight scholars are named and exchanged, four from each institution. Another program between St. Andrews and Georgia Tech provides for the exchange of graduate students.

And then there is **Bobby Jones Golf Course**, one which we know well. It opened on December 30, 1932, when the city of Atlanta dedicated it as the Bobby Jones Municipal Golf Course. At 1pm, Jones hit the first ball and played in the first foursome with Charlie Yates, Billy Wilson, the professional at Piedmont





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There is so much for each of us to learn from his life. Character, humility, and perseverance certainly come to mind first.

Park Golf Course, and Chick Ridley, the former Georgia State Amateur Champion. Since then, we estimate 4.2 million rounds of golf were played and at least 500 million shots hit on this historic course through 2017.

And in Philadelphia, on the last Friday of September of each year, the members of Merion Golf Club gather to honor Bobby with a round of golf, a black-tie dinner, and a walk to the 11th hole where Bobby is remembered. Bob Jones IV has been one of the special guests.

He is buried at Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta.

His gravestone is surrounded by the same 18 flowering trees that grace Augusta National's holes and is always covered in golf balls and tees left by thousands of visitors each year to honor the man.

There have been at least 40 books written about him and several movies made.

The postal service even honored him three times. Once was when a post once named Calamity Jane was established just for the 1976 open at Atlanta Athletic Club. The others are commemorative stamps in 1981 and 1998.

The accolades and tributes are many. These are just a few.

The Bobby Jones story of character, triumph, anxiety, loss, integrity, family, sportsmanship, intellect, perseverance, and pain. His was a human life in every respect. He suffered the same slings and arrows all of us endure while here, during our dash.

There is so much for each of us to learn from his life. Character, humility, and perseverance certainly come to mind first. Learning, innovating, and taking risks are close behind.

Bobby Jones' dash has and will endure for ages, which is why we are now Bobby Jones Links. **We have been presented with the incredible gift to make a difference in many lives thanks to his legacy.** ■