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THE IMPECCABLE BOBBY JONES

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In the four-hundred-year history of golf, there has been only one person who gave back to the sport more than twice what he had taken, only one person who was loved and admired not only by his fans and friends but also by his adversaries, one person who played for fun and never for money. His name is synonymous with all that is good in the game of golf: Robert Tyre (Bobby) Jones, Jr.

Bob Jones accomplished more as an amateur during his 14-year competitive career than virtually anyone. By the time Jones retired, he had compiled a golfing record that is still unmatched through the decades. By age 28, Bob had not only re-established the cornerstones of golf history, but also gathered into his possession the "Crown Jewels" of sport -- the Grand Slam. Bob Jones did not rest on his laurels, however. Instead, for decades thereafter, through words and deed, he made himself a willing vessel and generously poured it out for the benefit of the entire golfing world. As a result, Bob Jones is one of the few men in history whose stature has continued to exceed his legend.

Unlike some, the Bob Jones legend was built one personal relationship at a time. Bob was born and grew up in Atlanta which later became the golfing capital of the south. Bob was the only son of Atlanta lawyer Col. Robert P. Jones and his wife, Clara. A sickly child through his early years, the frail young "Rob," as he was called by his parents, could not eat solid food until age 5. After experimenting with numerous doctors who could not cure his stomach ailment, a frustrated Colonel Jones resolved to take off his son's shoes and socks and let him romp around the family's summer home at the East Lake Golf Course. Colonel Jones initially rented the old "mulehouse" where they stayed during the summer months. The house was named because the mules used to pull the gangmowers for the golf course were stored in the bottom level of the barn-like structure. The mulehouse was situated on a small dirt lane leading to the end of the trolley- car line which ferried passengers from the City of Atlanta. On this dirt road adjacent to the old 13th green, young Jones laid out his first three-hole golf course. Two holes were carved out of the dirt in the middle of the street and yet another hole was considered to be the "big ditch" on one end of the road. Bob made his first hole-in-one by hitting into the "ditch hole."

The East Lake Golf Course was a curious affair designed initially by Tom Bendelow. Two holes actually had a par of four-and-a-half. Its first two golf professionals were two-time U.S. Open Champion Alex Smith followed by his brother-in-law Jimmy Maiden, both of whom immigrated from Carnoustie, Scotland. In 1908, Jimmy's brother, Stewart Maiden, took over as head professional and thus began perhaps the most remarkable golf instruction ever.

Young Bob Jones never had any formal golf lessons. Instead, he began simply by peeking through the fence and watching Stewart Maiden play golf. Maiden was a dour Scot with

an especially wry sense of humor. After hours of teaching a recalcitrant club member, Stewart looked him in the eye and said, "Dammit, Red, do you have to play golf?" Maiden told another member, "Why don't you take two weeks off and then quit?" Jones became fascinated with Stewart Maiden's technique and was able to mimic every subtlety of the Stewart Maiden style, which would pay rich dividends for the East Lake club. Before they were through, Stewart Maiden's golf pupils accounted for 17 major amateur golfing titles, the last being the 1938 British Amateur Championship corralled by charming Charlie Yates.

By the age of 11, Bobby shot an 80 on the East Lake course. By age 12, he was banging out 250-yard drives. After Bob's father began to let his son play in tournaments, 13-year old Bob Jones became the Druid Hills club champion breaking the course record with a 73 and winning the gold medal. At 14, Bob won the Georgia State Amateur at the Capital City Club in Atlanta, and the following year became the youngest player ever to win the Southern Amateur at the Roebuck Springs Country Club in Birmingham, Alabama. During the tournament, one spectator saw Jones playing a stroke several fairways away and identified the player as Stewart Maiden. Corrected for his mistake, the spectator was insistent that only Stewart Maiden could swing like that.

In 1916, Jones became the youngest competitor in the U.S. Amateur contested at Merion CC. After winning low medal honors, Jones was put out in the fifth round by the reigning champion Robert A. Gardner. It was at Merion that Old Man of Golf Walter J. Travis, three-time American Amateur champion and 1904 British Amateur champion, saw the young Jones and commented, "He could never improve his shots ... but he will learn a great deal more about playing them and his putting method is faulty." At that time, Jones employed a wide putting stance not unlike Walter Hagen and an inconsistent jabbing-type stroke. Travis persuaded Bob's father that until he changed his putting stroke, the boy would never improve. Colonel Jones arranged for a putting lesson immediately before the final match between Evans and Gardner, but the Jones train was late from Philadelphia and Travis, being a stickler for punctuality, left to see the final match. It was not until 1924 in the locker room of the Augusta Country Club that Bob finally received the Travis putting lesson which changed him from the worst putter to perhaps the best putter ever. Travis told Jones to put his feet close together with heels almost touching, eyes over the ball and wrists in an "opposing" position. Travis then advised him to use a pendulum swing as if the player were trying to tap a tack into the back of the ball. The dramatic improvement in Bob's putting style elevated his competitive edge to an almost invincible level.

From his initial entry in the 1916 U.S. Amateur at Merion, Bob's competitive career extended 14 years until his retirement in 1930 culminating with the Grand Slam. During the first seven years, Bob was unable to win any major championships, although he won many regional tournaments. This period of time was referred to by his friend and biographer, Oscar Bane "Pop" Keeler as the "Seven Lean Years." Known as the "Dixie Whiz Kid" during this time, Jones was forced to overcome several major obstacles before tasting the sweet success of victory.

First, even though his Stewart Maiden Carnoustie swing was flawless from youth, Bob's putting method required an overhaul. Travis provided the remedy. Second, Bob had a difficult time dealing with the variety of emotions experienced by a golfer during the course of a round and even a tournament. A perfectionist even in his youth, Bob became furious when a shot did not come off exactly as he visualized. Some emotions simply could not be endured with a golf club in his hands. His club throwing became the subject of as much commentary about his golf game as his scores. Alex Smith thought it spelled doom for the youngster: "It's a shame, but

he'll never make a golfer. ... too much temper." Long Jim Barnes disagreed, "This kid will become one of the world's greatest in a few more years." Grantland Rice added, "He isn't just satisfied with a good shot. He wants it to be perfect -- stone dead. But you're correct about that temper, Alex. He's a fighting cock ... a hothead. If he can't learn to control it, he'll never play the kind of golf he'll be capable of shooting."

It was only when Bob's closest playing companions, Francis Ouimet and Alexa Stirling, chided him about his temper that Jones resolved to stop throwing clubs in competition. "Come Bob, let's just play golf," Ouimet once said to a sheepish Jones. Bob himself came to recognize the sorrow in Alexa's eyes when he acted out on the course. At one point, Stewart Maiden even counseled Bob's caddy, Luke Ross, not to rush after a club that Bob had thrown down the fairway. Instead, Maiden told Luke to go slowly after the club and give Bob time to cool down before placing another club in his hands while he was still hot-blooded. Bob's proclivity toward club throwing reached alarming proportions when Jones received a written reprimand from the USGA after an errantly thrown club bounced into the leg of a lady spectator. The watershed event which changed Bob's behavior forever occurred during his inaugural pilgrimage to the 1921 British Open championship contested at St. Andrews. While positioned to receive the runner-up amateur honors, Jones hit his ball into the hill bunker on the short 11th hole. After several attempts to blast the ball out of the sand, Jones became so upset that the ball only came out of the bunker in his pocket. He tore up his scorecard, threw the pieces into the Eden River and withdrew himself from the only major championship of his career. It was the most inglorious failure of his golfing life, and the British press made sure that Jones knew what they thought about it. Jones resolved from that point forward his conduct would be nothing short of exemplary. Indeed, even today the USGA award for model sportsmanship is presented in his honor.

Yet another obstacle overcome by Bob Jones during his Seven Lean Years was his "all-or-nothing" philosophy toward the management of his golf game on the course. Initially Jones could play only one way and that was to "shoot the works" and play every shot for all that was in it. In his early years, Bob always played against a definite personal opponent, playing against somebody, not against something. He had to learn "that matching shots with the most debonair of human adversaries is at best a feeble and uncertain pattern, compared with the iron certitudes of Old Man Par." This advice was brought to bear when Jones was paired with the Old Master of Golf, Harry Vardon, during the 1920 Open Championship at Toledo. Coming the 7th hole, both players had safely driven in front of the green. Vardon played a conservative run-up shot next to the flag stick. Young Jones decided to play a fancy pitch with backspin, but sculled the ball over the green and took a 7 on the par-4 hole. Vardon, who was not in the habit of talking much on the golf course, had not spoken to Jones the entire day. Bob asked Vardon on the way to the eighth tee, "Have you ever seen a worse shot than that?" Vardon simply replied, "No."

Bob soon came to appreciate that Old Man Par was a worthy opponent and while he never did get down in one putt, he never did take three either. Bob decided that he would shoot for par and let his opponents shoot for what they could.

Another obstacle barring Bob's initial path to success was his lack of confidence. For years Jones had to endure public criticism that while he had all of the shots in his bag, he still couldn't win the big one. It was here that O.B. Keeler made the greatest impact upon Jones' golfing career. Keeler knew as much or more about the game of golf than anyone else and had the rare gift of knowing how to write about it, too. When Jones' confidence was at a low ebb after his loss to Gene Sarazen in 1922 at Skokie, Jones lamented, "I don't think I'll ever be able to

win one of these things." Pop Keeler rebuked his young friend and ministered vitally to his confidence saying, "Bob, you're the greatest player in the world, and when you get that conviction through your skull, you'll win, not one, but many of them." This was only the first of many valuable contributions made by Pop Keeler to Jones' success. Keeler saw and reported every major championship victory won by Jones and traveled over 120,000 miles as Jones' closest friend and confidant. Jones himself recognized the importance of the ubiquitous O.B. Keeler: "When the other players read how wonderful we were as described by O.B., a lot of the fight was taken out of them before they stepped on the first tee. And we were so filled with gratitude by the same dispatches that we had to go ahead and win for fear of letting O.B. down." While it is true that Jones would have undoubtedly achieved his successes anyway, it is also true that Keeler succeeded admirably in helping make the name of Jones one of the great ones in sports history. And, like the well-known Boswell, Keeler helped himself to his fair share of fame while doing it.

Jones referred to Pop Keeler as his "secret weapon." Keeler had a "tar bucket" mind and everything that went into it stuck. He was trained in the Greek and Latin classics and could recite prose and poetry for hours from memory. Even the great English sportswriter Bernard Darwin was crushed by Keeler in a prose and poetry recital competition conducted on a steamship tram from Southampton to New London. Keeler's reputation for accuracy itself became legendary. Keeler once reported a court's judgment which was published in the newspaper. In the meantime, the judge had "lost" his order in a pile of papers on his desk. The frustrated judge ordered his clerk to go down and buy a copy of the *Atlanta Journal* and to "enter" Keeler's article on the judgment as the court's own! The next day the judge found his originally entered judgment and compared it to Keeler's published piece. The two were exact even to the punctuation marks!

The combination of Jones and Keeler became unbeatable. Even during the Seven Lean Years (1916-1923), Jones won three Southern Amateur titles (1917, 1920, 1922) and the Georgia State Amateur (1916). By age 20, Bob's resume of playing experience included ten major championships around the world (five U.S. Amateurs, three U.S. Opens, one British Open, and one British Amateur). Bob's accomplishments during the Seven Lean Years were not so lean that any other player would have loved to have those titles as a career record. They were, however, only a prelude for Bob's later fireworks.

The astonishing fact is that Jones was only a part-time weekend golfer and accomplished his record not by practicing but rather "playing" himself into shape. Unlike players of the modern era, Jones' rhythmical swing did not require pounding out thousands of practice balls on the tee. Bob actually put his clubs away from October to March and only began to prepare a few weeks before the major tournaments were conducted. During the seven fat years, Bob devoted no more than three months of each year both traveling to and playing in all the major championships. What was Bob doing with his idle time? Most of his time was spent assembling his extensive formal education. Jones was as much an intellectual as athletic prodigy. Bob graduated from Tech High School at age 16, was conferred his initial bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Georgia Tech in 1922, and received his second bachelor's degree in English literature from Harvard University in 1924. After a short stint in Sarasota promoting George Adair's Whitfield Estates golf course development, Bob entered Emory Law School to follow in his father's footsteps. After his first year, Jones took the bar exam to see how difficult it would be. To his amazement, he passed it and was sworn into the Georgia Bar in 1928 without having to obtain a law degree.

By sheer strength of character formed from his prior experiences, Jones marched through the Seven Fat Years (1923-1930) as a conquering hero. In the midst of extremely competent rivals, almost every major competition was distilled into one reported headline, "Jones Against The Field." He won 23 out of 52 tournaments entered. Jones won 13 of 21 major championships which was a 62% success rate. He won four of the seven professional golf tournaments played during the Seven Fat Years. Even Jones' critics, if any were to be found, couldn't complain that all this was achieved against weak competition. Sarazen, Hagen, Barnes, Hutchison, Armour, and Ouimet all captured major championships. Despite this, neither Sarazen nor Hagen ever defeated Jones in any British or American Open championship played during the Seven Fat Years. In 1930, Wee Bobby Cruickshank accurately predicted that Jones would capture all of the major championships in America and Great Britain. In the space of four months during the summer of 1930, Jones won the U.S. Amateur and Open and the British Amateur and Open. Reporters struggled with superlative after superlative to describe the heights to which Jones had ascended. *Atlanta Journal's* O.B. Keeler dubbed it the "Grand Slam" borrowing a bridge term. George Trevor of the *New York Sun* wrote that Jones had "stormed the impregnable quadrilateral of golf." Embellishing on that term, Keeler added:

This victory, the fourth major title in the same season and in the space of four months, had now and for all time entrenched Bobby Jones safely within the "Impregnable Quadrilateral of Golf," that granite fortress that he alone could take by escalade, and that others may attack in vain forever.

Keeler's prediction has proven accurate since no one has even come close to duplicating the "Grand Slam."

In the decade succeeding the Grand Slam, the question has repeatedly been raised, "How good was Bob Jones?" Francis Ouimet always answered this question with "Look at the record!" Bob's own proudest achievement was in finishing first or second place in 11 of 13 American and British Open championships in which he played. But there is more. Jones also held a major title eight years in a row. Noted golf writer Herbert Warren Wind once asked Francis Ouimet why he was unable to win any major championships between his 1913 U.S. Open victory and his 1931 U.S. Amateur victory. Ouimet could only respond: "Did you ever hear of a boy named Bobby Jones?" Despite the cold record, however, perhaps the most astounding fact is that Bob Jones conceived of the Grand Slam in 1926 and actually prepared himself for it four years before it happened!

Having achieved the ultimate pinnacle of success in all sports, Jones had the uncommon grace to retire from competition at the top of his game. Having played all his life for fun and never for money, Bob never wanted his favorite game to become just a job. His genuine love for the game compelled him to pursue other ambitions which yielded monumental contributions back to the game. It is perhaps at this point that Jones' contributions back to the game of golf exceeded whatever he had previously taken from it. Jones was always interested in educating the common man to improve his own game. Jones published more than half a million words in serialized golf articles and four books focusing on his own extraordinary method and techniques. Jones also went to Hollywood in 1931 and starred in 18 one-reel films on golf instruction titled "How I Play Golf" and "How To Break 90." Warner Brothers spent more than a million dollars in producing golf films which are still technological marvels and marketed to this day. Another major contribution Jones made was in the area of golf club design. Jones became a vice

president and director of the A.G. Spalding Company and helped design the most technologically advanced golf clubs ever known. Jones' innovations included the design of the "flange" on the back and sole of the club, the idea of matched and registered sets, locating the center of gravity on the "sweet spot" of the face of the club throughout the set, matching swing weights throughout the entire set and creating the Jones' form grip. The Bob Jones' line of clubs were marketed from 1932 until 1973, two years after Jones' death.

As if these contributions to the game were not monumental themselves, Bob also designed the world's wonder inland golf-course in the form of Augusta National Golf Club. Jones invited Dr. Alister MacKenzie to assist him because "no man learns to design a golf course simply by playing golf, no matter how well." Jones turned the world of golf course architecture upside down by refusing to build a severe course solely for the expert player. Instead, the layout was built for the enjoyment of not only the expert player but also for the "dub." Coupled with its unparalleled scenic beauty, Augusta National is the standard against which all other courses of the world are judged. That is also the case with The Masters Golf Tournament, which is so popular it is the hardest ticket to obtain in sports. It is little wonder then that Jones rebuked all efforts to build a statue to honor him saying, "This course is memorial enough."

The fact that Bob Jones returned more to golf than he took is not the major reason why his place in history has exceeded even the legend which has grown around Jones and his accomplishments, but rather the nature of his character. As observed by Herbert Warren Wind: "Jones had incredible strength of character. As a young man, he was able to stand up to just about the best that life can offer, which is not easy. And later he stood up with equal grace to just about the worst." Unlike any other hero in memory, Jones' character was imbued with a delicate balance in almost equal proportions of humanity, humor, courtesy, and consideration. There was nothing contrived or phony about him and what you saw was what you got. He was the same man on the field of competition during the day as he was "after five o'clock" when many so called heroes relaxed their plastic stiff persona and turned into miserable human beings. Unlike the others, Jones was a hero even after five o'clock.

Jones had a gorgeous natural instinct for humanity. Several times during competition, he called penalties on himself when no one else was around to witness the breaches. When applauded for his sportsmanship, Jones was disgusted, saying, "You might as well praise a man for not robbing a bank. There is only one way to play this game, and that is by the rules." Bob was a wonderful model for younger kids. After Bob lost the 1925 Open, young Charlie Yates told Bob, "I am sorry you lost." "Don't worry," said Bob, "you never know who your friends are until you lose." Despite every opportunity, Jones never used either his position or his friends to enrich himself saying, "You can only eat two eggs a day, you can only wear one suit. All you need is enough to pay your bills and be decent to your friends."

In his forties, Jones was stricken with a rare spinal disease which devastated his once-powerful physique and forced his use of one cane, then two, then leg braces and, finally, a wheelchair. Refusing to focus upon his physical tragedy, Jones said, "You have to play the ball as it lies."

Jones had a wonderful sense of humor. While playing Walter Hagen in an informal match, Jones handed a crumpled \$10 bill to his caddy and asked him to throw it in the bunker next to Walter's ball. Hagen reflexively picked up the bill, placed it in his pocket, and played his shot on to the green out of the bunker. When asked his total strokes for the hole, Hagen answered, "Four." Jones, however, playfully reminded Walter that he needed to add a stroke for unlawfully removing a "loose impediment" in the bunker! At a dinner celebrating Fred Russell's

25th anniversary as sportswriter for the *Nashville Banner*, all of the honored guests entered the banquet room except Jones who was brought in last wearing his leg braces and using a cane. He entered the banquet room to a standing ovation by the greatest legends in sports including the Four Horsemen, Grantland Rice, Jack Dempsey, Bill Tilden, and Red Grange. When the thunderous applause quieted down, Jones raised his glass and said, "I presume that little show was because I was the only man smart enough to bring my drink in the room with me." The entire room erupted in laughter. Bob's father, Colonel Jones, continually asked his son for advice on his golf swing. Once after taking a pass at a dandelion, the Colonel asked his son, "Now what's wrong with that swing?" Bob simply replied, "Nothing, you should try it some time." In his later years, Jones enjoyed fishing in a special boat prepared by his friend Charlie Elliott. On one fishing trip, a dock worker lifted Jones into the boat saying, "It is amazing that a man in your crippled condition could have been such a great golfer." Jones simply chuckled and said, "It wasn't easy." Almost everyone who knew Jones has a humorous personal anecdote, many of which are pleasantly circulated during The Masters tournament each year.

Jones' character also was uncommonly modest given the heights to which he had ascended. Atlanta sportswriter Ralph McGill got it right when he said, "Bob never took himself or his accomplishments so seriously that he stuffed his shirt with them." Jones liked the human race as a tribe but preferred it in small doses. Unlike Walter Hagen who derived energy from crowds of people, Jones was sapped of his energy by the same crowd. Even with this discomfort, everyone who met him was struck by his straight direct look, and as noted by Roger Wethered, "His presence alone gave you a wonderfully good feel." Tommy Armour observed, "He is a gentleman to the manner born. No other prominent golfer that I can call to mind can compare with Jones for politeness and consideration. His manners are not the cold formalities." Bob never tried to "collect for the champion he once used to be," and even deflected innocent accolades of his past accomplishments with self deprecating humor. Jones' modesty was genuine.

Jones also was consistently considerate to all those around him throughout his life. During his playing days, Bob focused on Old Man Par and not his opponents. Gene Sarazen remarked that when a player was paired with Jones, "You felt as though you were playing with a friend, and you were." In 1927, Jones successfully defended his British Open Championship at St. Andrews despite vigorous attempts by the British to regain the claret jug. Sensing their bitter disappointment during the presentation ceremonies, Jones announced that he would not take the trophy back to America, but rather, would repose it at the Royal & Ancient Golf Club "of which I am proud to be a member." The cheers were deafening.

Bob's victory speeches were always models of diplomacy in thanking his opponent, usually by his first name, and also the host club and all of the volunteers who made the tournament a success. Jones never appeared offensively eager in his quest of victory and did not gloat on its attainment, nor did he brood on the rare occasions when he was defeated. Jones never lost to the same man twice and never failed to sincerely praise the victor when he was defeated.

With his gift of singular character, Jones not only made contributions in his native state and country but also abroad. To the Scottish people, Jones was "matchless in skill and chivalrous in spirit." Several historic gestures were made honoring Jones' efforts to link the two nations in both rivalry and amity. In 1936, Jones traveled to Berlin to attend the Olympic Games. After a short stop off at Glen Eagles, Bob could not bear to be so close to St. Andrews without a visit. A chauffeur was dispatched to enter Bob's name in the ballot for a tee time at St.

Andrews. The next day while having lunch before his match, Bob noticed that several thousand people had lined the fairways of the first tee. At first he became disappointed that he had scheduled his match during an important tournament. Soon he discovered that the whole town had closed down their shops putting signs in the window, "Bobby's back." Tears coursed through the beard of a Scotsman who said, "Isn't it grand? Isn't it grand? Bobby's back." As the crowd continued to swell to 4,000, Jones played the most inspired golf in years going out in 32 and finishing in even par. As he played the eighth hole with one of several birdies, Bob's caddy whispered to him, "My but you're a wonder, Sir!" In later years Bob could seldom speak about the occasion for fear of becoming too emotional in describing the wonderful reception he had been given.

In 1958 the Royal Burgh of St. Andrews conferred citizenship upon Jones. The only other American to receive such an honor was Benjamin Franklin in 1759. During his acceptance speech Bob said, "I could take out of my life everything except my experiences at St. Andrews, and I would still have a rich full life." After his death in 1971, a special memorial service was held for Jones at Holy Trinity Church followed by the historic naming of the 10th hole as the "Bobby Jones" hole.

Even after 65 years of celebrating Bob Jones' Grand Slam, his name and his legend are still magic in all of sports. His memory continues to give hope to those who dare to think it's possible to be a champion of golf and life. Bob Jones proved that it was possible also to be a hero as human being. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun poignantly observed that aspect of Bob Jones' life that has often previously gone unmentioned, "It is, it seems to me, the complete absence, so far as I know or have read, of any besmirching or demeaning or unethical aspect of his legal or extra legal career." Bob Jones was, in a word, truly impeccable.