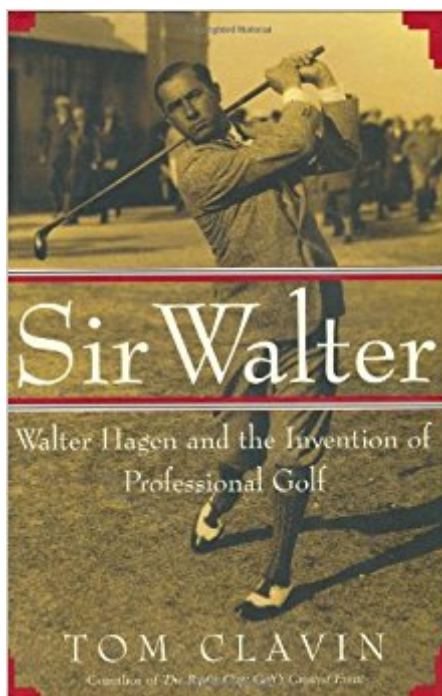


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# Sir Walter: Walter Hagen And The Invention Of Professional Golf



## Synopsis

During the Golden Age of Sports in the 1920s, Walter Hagen was to golf what Babe Ruth was to baseball. The first professional golfer to make his living playing the game rather than teaching it, Hagen won eleven major professional tournaments over his long career -- two U.S. Opens, four British Opens, and five PGA Championships (including an amazing streak of four consecutive PGA wins) -- a record surpassed only by Jack Nicklaus. Hagen was also influential in helping to found the Ryder Cup and was the first American golfer to top \$1 million in career earnings -- a figure equivalent to over \$40 million today. Award-winning sportswriter Tom Clavin has penned a thrilling biography that vividly recalls Hagen's dazzling achievements and the qualities that made him a star. Energetic, witty, and one of the best putters ever to walk the green, Hagen was a man who loved to party, was extraordinarily generous to his friends, and golfed the world over, giving exhibitions. He preferred to travel by limousine, and if he intended to stay awhile he'd bring a second limo just to transport his clothes, which were nothing but the finest. On his many trips across the Atlantic to compete in the Ryder Cup or British Open, Hagen was known to throw parties that lasted days, ending only when the ship reached the shore. He was also the first professional golfer to admit to playing not only for the love of the game, but also for the love of the winner's purse. Walter Hagen, forerunner of today's sports superstars, is as dynamic a character as can be found in American sports history. Bringing Hagen to life with incredible detail and countless anecdotes, *Sir Walter* is the authoritative biography of the man who helped create professional golf as it's known today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although the claim that Hagen "invented professional golf" is a stretch, the five-time PGA Championship winner undoubtedly influenced the sport. Hagen (1892–1969) grew up poor in Rochester, N.Y., but got a 10-cents-an-hour job at a local golf course when he was eight. Watching the men he caddied for taught him how to play the game as well as how to read people and greens, skills he quickly mastered. Journalist Clavin deftly shows how Hagen's success (by the time he was 30, he'd won national championships in the U.S., Great Britain and France) and his showman's personality inspired the 1920s boom in American golf course building, revolutionized the public's perception of the game and even led to the creation of the PGA. Clavin infuses his narrative with impressive facts: Hagen was the first player to use a tee (previously, golfers had hit their ball off a tiny mound of sand), the first golfer to start his own line of clubs and balls and the first person to stand up against the inferior treatment of professional golfers in comparison with their amateur counterparts. Clavin also captivantly portrays Hagen's personal life, depicting him as a fun-loving sharp dresser with a carefree personality who could paint the town red at night and rule the greens during the day. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Professional golfers often give credit to Arnold Palmer for turning the sport into the big-money spectacle it is today. That's all true, but Tiger Woods and company should also tip their logo-bedecked hats to Walter Hagen, who, as Clavin makes clear in this long-overdue biography, almost single-handedly created the idea of the golf pro as sports star. When Hagen, a working-class boy from Rochester, New York, decided to make his living winning golf tournaments, the sport was reserved for well-bred amateurs like Bobby Jones. Professionals weren't allowed in the clubhouses at the courses where tournaments were held. Clavin carefully sets that context and then shows how Hagen changed it all. It was the Roaring Twenties, and the Haig, as he came to be called, quickly established himself as the Babe Ruth of golf: partying all night, arriving at the course in his tux, and changing clothes in his limousine. The public loved it, and with on-course heroics to match off-course flamboyance, Hagen soon pried open the clubhouse doors. A fascinating slice of golf history that has the panache of a Preston Sturges movie. Bill Ott Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

I read this on a recommendation of a friend. I found the style a bit slow at times, relying as it frequently did on newspaper accounts. That said, I gained a much greater and deeper appreciation for what Walter Hagen did and for who he was. I am amazed and have a new hero. Old Tom died

after drinking too much and stumbling down the wrong set of stairs. My dad was a mean alcoholic and he smoked a lot. So there were poignant moments in the back of my mind as I read. I could see his bulbous nose for instance. But we all are human. And The Haig was amazing. He was apparently a golfing workaholic. An ambassador. A fierce competitor. A gifted athlete. A social genius. Determined to dress the part he wanted to be. An eager traveler seeing new places and meeting new friends. A peacemaker. A pioneer. A champion of Jeffersonian ideals. A connoisseur of fashion, golf, drink, women, and the full life. I came away an ardent admirer. And wanting to be better.

Reading about Bobby Jones brought me to research Sir Walter Hagen. When it comes to golf, I am, at best, a hack but I love the game. Tom Clavin sank a hole-in-one with this book. It is a great account of not only Walter Hagen but the history of professional golf in the states and the key figures that played a part. The names you expect to see are there; Vardon, Ray, Ouimet, Jones, Sarazen, Hogan, etc. Walter Hagen is the father of professional golf. I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It started slow for me but once into it, I didn't want to stop reading it. A good buy, an excellent read.

Before Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Ben Hogan, there was Walter Hagen. All today's pros owe a debt of thanks to Hagen for literally opening the doors to respectability for golf professionals, and setting the stage nearly 100 years later for the kind of paychecks today's professionals on tour now receive. Clavin's book offers a superb look, not only at Walter Hagen's 'life full lived' but also at the era in which he played. This was a time when golf had just begun in America and the traditions developed in Scotland and England viewed golf professional as little more than hired help at their private clubs. In fact, at most courses in the UK, professionals were not even allowed inside the building, often changing for tournaments in the parking lot and eating lunch on the lawns. Walter Hagen, almost single handedly, changed all that with a bravado and audacity that would rival today's reality shows! Often, he would ride up to a tournament in a hired limo and demand entrance to a club. If denied he would order an extravagant lunch and eat right in front of the entrance! He was by far the most elegantly dressed player in any event he entered, and would frequently be seen talking with beautiful women in the gallery while playing and setting up dates for the evening. Some of the most interesting stories Clavin describes include how he was the consummate gamer when playing in one on one matches. His record in the PGA, which was match play, is still today the best of all time. As the consummate showman, he would often regale the crowds by making shots look much more difficult than he felt they were and then 'miraculously' pull them off

to the delight of his legion of fans. Walter Hagen became my hero after reading this book! I really only knew him because of the huge amount of clubs that have borne his name over the years. This exceptional book will sway a lot of readers to a more well rounded view of the man as well.

Tom Clavin does an excellent job bringing Walter Hagen to life. This is more than your typical biography in that the author captures the person of Walter Hagen, his personal struggles in life, and the impact he had on many lives, both professional and personal. Moreover, the author treats us to an entertaining history lesson of the early stages of golf in America. As many professional golfers have said, Walter Hagen is the quintessential golf professional who loved life, the game of golf, and lived it to the extremes. This should be recommended reading for all golfers who appreciate the game, both amateur and professional alike. In fact, many of today's tour players can learn a thing or two from Walter Hagen, breaking away from their vanilla personality. The world needs another Walter Hagen. Good job, Mr. Clavin.

Fine book on Hagen's life and career!

As a retired Naval Flyer, I thought I had lived a grand life thus far, but Walter is my new role model. Don't hurry, don't worry, we're only here for a short visit, so be sure to stop and smell the flowers along the way. While this book has some sad realities of just living life, he was so genuine, fun, and good at his craft that you can't help but put his flaws aside and join the ranks of innumerable professional golfers who have praised him for his vision, bravado, and realistically for expanding the realm of professional golfers and opening doors that previously were very closed. I bought a set of Walter Hagen clubs from Dicks Sporting goods and decided to delve a bit into this unknown fellow and what I got was a wonderful history lesson in golf, sportsmanship, business acumen, and how to enjoy life to the fullest.

Wonderful and compelling story of the founder of professional golf as we've known it. Great man, not without his problems but who isn't? As I read on, I wondered if he and Arnold Palmer would become friends. The end will bring you to tears. Liked this book very much - it put many things in place for me.

Sir Walter is a great book for someone interested in the history of golf. Walter Hagen made as much a difference as Arnie, Jack and Tiger in his day. He was the first to do a lot of things in golf including

mamingolf a profession. We owe Sir Walter a lot

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