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GOLF

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A DAY IN  
THE LIFE OF  
A CLUB PRO

**SPECIAL:**

**6 WINNING PRO POINTERS BY THE GREAT WALTER HAGEN!**

Escaping From Trouble... Winning Matches... Playing From Rough  
Pitching From Tight Lies... The Chipping Grip... The Relaxed Putter



"Dad never expected much of me as a golfer," says Walter, Jr.

# DAD

By Walter Hagen, Jr.

Think you've heard all the Hagen stories? The most fabled character in the annals of golf is discussed here by the man who knows him best.

ONE DAY 21 years ago my dad was playing an exhibition in Madras, India, during one of his frequent round-the-world junkets, when it suddenly occurred to him that it was my birthday—my twenty-first. I was then a student at Notre Dame, and had not seen Dad for several months, although I followed his exploits religiously in the newspapers and poured over his letters and cablegrams, which turned up, like Dad himself, at odd moments in odd places under the oddest circumstances.

When this sudden thought occurred to Dad, he dropped everything to rush to the local cable office. A little short of time, and slightly out of breath, Dad asked the manager of the office if he had any stock congratulatory messages that might save The Haig the trouble of penning one of his own. The manager replied that, yes, he had a book full of congratulatory messages.

"Send the whole book!" The Haig ordered with a toss of his hand, and then he added to it a few sentimental words of his own to the effect of how glad he was that I had finally reached my majority.

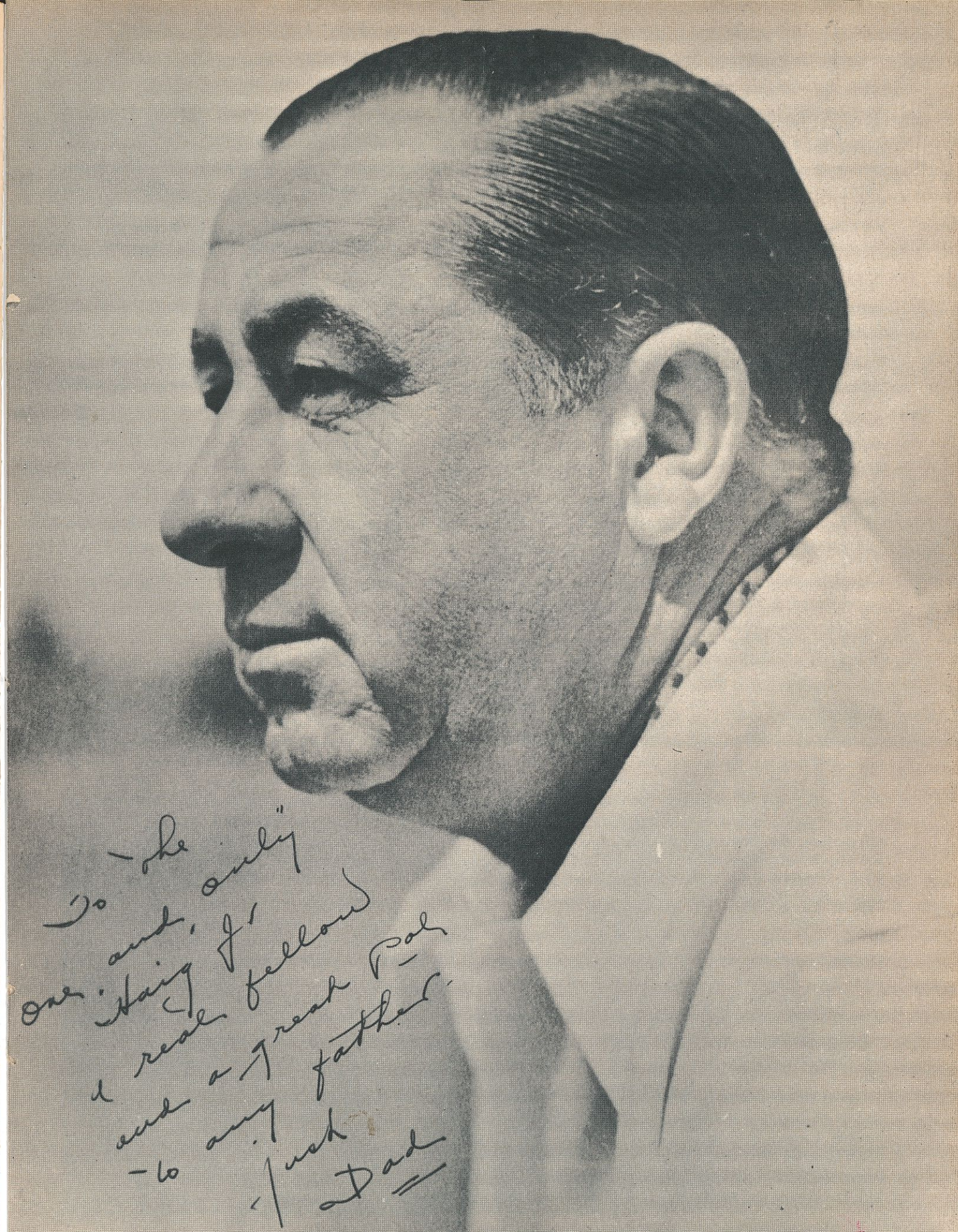
The message I opened in my room at Notre Dame was eight pages long. Since the whole book had been sent, I was congratulated for, among other accomplishments, my silver wedding anniversary, the birth of a daughter, and the celebration of a Bar Mitzvah. And then, at the end, there were those sentimental words about my twenty-first birthday. It was a baffling message, to say the least.

That night I sat down and wrote a letter thanking Dad for his thoughtfulness. "I appreciate the cable a lot," I wrote, "but I am a little confused. I have certainly not reached my silver wedding anniversary, because, as you well know, I'm not even married. Obviously, I have not given birth to a daughter. And we are not celebrating Bar Mitzvahs at Notre Dame this year.

"Furthermore, Dad, I'm only 20 years old!"

This anecdote, I think, pretty well sums up my dad, The Haig, as everybody, including myself, calls him. At the height of his career he was the most improbable figure in sports. By playing a game that was then regarded as strictly for plutocrats, he raised the whole social and economic standard of professional athletes, not only in America but throughout the world, almost singlehanded. Dad earned more money than Babe Ruth—an estimated \$1,400,000—and spent more than the entire Yankee outfield. But he never regretted a dollar of it.

As a father, Dad was then just as improbable a figure. Although he was my father, my most vivid picture of him has him dressed in a polo coat the size of a pup tent, a highball in one hand and a movie star in the other. (He and my mother divorced when I was quite young, and after I grew up Dad and I frequently double-dated.) He was larger than life to me, because I saw his name in headlines more often than I saw him in person. While trying to be a father to me, The Haig was busy playing more than 2500 golf courses throughout the world, winning more than 75 tournaments and championships, in-



*So - the  
one and only  
one Haig Jr.  
a real fellow  
and a great pal  
- to any father  
- just  
Dad*

cluding five PGA's (four of them in a row), five Western Opens, four British Opens, two National Opens and, when they were top tournaments in golf, four Metropolitan Opens, one Canadian Open, and one French Open. From 1913 to 1936, hardly a year went by when The Haig did not have a title to place after his name.

Like a lot of men of action, my dad had a paternal philosophy that children should learn by doing and not by being told. We were living in Detroit when I was eight years old, and I remember one summer day asking if I could see the Tigers play at Briggs Stadium. The Haig got me a seat in Mickey Cochrane's private box, gave me \$10 for hot dogs, soda pop and popcorn, and then left me to my own devices.

After the game, I returned to Dad's suite at the Book-Cadillac. "Where's my change?" he asked. I didn't (or, rather, couldn't) answer, but then Dad didn't need an answer. All he had to do was look at the shade of green on my face and the bulge of my tummy, the rumbles from which kept me up all night. Actually, I suspect, that's what Dad wanted. The Haig knew a boy who had learned his lesson when he saw one.

When I was ten my dad was making a series of Mack Sennett comedies in Hollywood. To "grow me up a little," as he put it, he had me make the trip from Detroit to Hollywood by myself. And what a trip it was! I purchased a set of aviator's goggles and spent every day on the observation platform of the last Pullman car leaning over the rail to watch the steam engine spew its cinders and smoke all over the prairies and mountains. I defy another ten-year-old to have had the fun I had on that trip, what with no one to tell me what to do and what not to do. And that, too, was the way The Haig wanted things.

My dad bought me my first car—an Austin coupe—when I was twelve. In those days you could get a driver's permit at such a ridiculous age, but there weren't many 12-year-olds who owned their own automobile. "I think you are old enough to act like a man," said The Haig, however, "and to drive like one. If you're not, it will be your funeral. I'll only have to send flowers once."

Most people, of course, would say my dad acted rashly. But the fact remains that on trips to Chicago, Toledo, Columbus, Rochester and Buffalo—at the age of twelve, mind you—I had no accidents and received no traffic tickets. In fact, it was ten years later before I ever got stopped by the police, and that was for a minor speeding violation. My father may have been rash, but he had a way of making a young boy's urge to be a man work for him.

I spent the summer of my thirteenth year traveling with Dad as he played a series of exhibitions, averaging six matches a week, from Maine to Ohio and then down to South Carolina. My duties were to oversee the care of the luggage—16 assorted bags, fifteen of which were filled with the clothes that had made my dad the best-dressed

golfer who ever graced a fairway. At each stop the bags had to be counted on and off the train and in and out of the many cabs we needed to transport them all to hotels.

When we arrived at our rooms, I would send the golf shoes which The Haig had chosen for the day, plus the regular shoes which he had chosen to be worn that evening, to a bootblack to be polished. Then, I sent two pairs of trousers to the valet for pressing, for my dad would sooner have been caught without his trousers than be seen in them unpressed. Then I would send for a barber, who would trim The Haig's hair and shave his beard in the hotel room. Now that I think of it, I had never seen my dad in a regular barber shop until he moved to Traverse City, Michigan, only a few years ago. He now sometimes goes to a local shop on a warm afternoon, mainly to sleep in the chair. And often as not, you will find the barber asleep in the chair next to The Haig's.

But to get back to that summer of my thirteenth year: I learned that summer of some of The Haig's unusual ideas. His notions about trains, for example. The best train connection, to The Haig's way of thinking, was always the last train out of town, irrespective of any early-morning changes that might have to be made in order to reach his final destination. And although that early morning change often proved to be the case, The Haig never lost faith in his belief that "the last train is the best train."

After his match, The Haig would sit around the locker-room with the other members of his foursome to commiserate with them for the sound trouncing he had in all probability just given them. Then he would go off to a cocktail party somewhere, and follow this affair up with dinner at a local nightclub. Then, on the run, he would return to his hotel just in time to catch the last train.

On the following day, I would start counting the baggage all over again. It was quite a summer, that one of my thirteenth year, and I saw a great deal of America. But, unfortunately, I saw it all at night.

My dad was the most unbeatable personality I have ever known. Naturally, I couldn't be expected to beat him at golf, but since I fancied myself the star hockey player at Manlius Military School, in upstate New York, I felt confident that I could outskate him. I was wrong, however. The only time I ever saw Dad on skates was at Belle Isle, in Detroit. I got my skates on first and had started etching a few circles on the ice. Then The Haig stepped on the ice warily. I felt a little sorry for the old man when I saw his ankles bend, so I glided over to help him steady himself. Suddenly, The Haig took off down the ice, a blurred figure skating past, around, and in front of me. Then he challenged me to a race. Dad won, despite the fact he thought he ought to skate backwards to make the match even.

My dad played only one set of tennis in his life. Yet during that set he managed (Continued on page 64)



The Haig's flamboyant manner on a golf course was matched by his flashy way of dressing. Always the fashion plate, he would travel with as many as 15 bags of clothes.

A world-traveler, par excellence, Hagen played more than 2500 courses, won over 75 tournaments. Below, he accepts cup from Prince of Wales after winning a British Open.



Hagen's attention from a match with Gene Sarazen, left, is momentarily diverted as he seems to be trying to discover source of a joke among the giggling belles in his gallery.

## DAD . . .

(Continued from page 25)

to whip a quarter-finalist in the Michigan Boys Championship.

At pocket billiards my dad was regarded as a terror even among the oldest habitués of the billiard room at the Detroit Athletic Club.

At baseball he once pitched five hitless innings for the Watershmet Michigan Indians against a team of semi-pros. I know, because I saw the game.

At polo Dad was once first-rate with a mallet despite the fact his horsemanship left much to be desired. He is an expert fisherman who has caught almost every fresh-water fish imaginable. He has hunted mountain lions in the Far West, shot grouse on the Scottish moors, tracked tigers in India, safaried across Africa, and chased jackrabbits in Australia. He was, in fact, an expert in almost every sport he undertook—except one. He has yet to learn how to swim.

As a world traveler—the likes of which golf has never known—my dad

conducted himself with the social aplomb of a grand duke. He went first-class all the way. In 1929, for instance, Dad took me in tow when he journeyed to Muirfield, Scotland, to win the last of his four British Opens. We left New York with \$12,000. Seven weeks later we were on the boat coming home with only \$27 between us, and that I had won on deck games. With typical bravura, Dad had given his prize check to his caddie.

When we reached New York, Dad pulled me aside and borrowed the \$27 I had in my pocket. He gave \$22 of it to the steward—with apologies. He gave the remaining \$5 to the porters who put his luggage in a cab.

When we arrived at the Delmonico Hotel, on Park Avenue, our total worth was exactly zero. Dad had no bank account on which he could write a check, and had not even the change to pay the cab drivers. Even at fifteen I was aware of the gravity of the situation, and was visibly shaking with fear. But I underestimated the presence of The Haig. He walked to the front desk with a swagger and demanded two large suites on the twenty-seventh floor, informing the clerk

that he would be giving a party for the press that evening. Then, almost as though it were an afterthought, he told the clerk to pay the cab drivers and to send \$500 to his suite for pocket money. "Make sure it's all in new bills!" he added. "And put the whole business on my account."

My dad had a way of pulling things off in the grand manner, and his grandness went far beyond bluffing his way past hotel clerks. These ways of his are, in fact, still a favorite topic of conversation among old pros. One of my particularly favorite stories is told by George Smith, an old pro-friend of The Haig's from Buffalo, New York.

It seems that many years ago, when George was a fledgling pro at his first club, The Haig and Horton Smith were booked to play against George and another local pro. As it happened, George drew The Haig as a partner. The match was a tight one, and naturally George was as nervous as any young pro would be under the circumstances. At the seventeenth, the match was all-even.

As they strolled to the eighteenth tee, The Haig took George aside. "George," he said in that off-hand

way of his, "nobody cares what I do here. But everybody is pulling for you. You're the local pro, and you've really played well. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. On the eighteenth I'm going to top my drive, pick up, and then you'll play the hole alone.

"If you lose the hole to Horton, there'll be no onus on you—you're supposed to lose. But if you win or even tie him, you'll be a hero. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose."

Accordingly, The Haig topped his drive, and then announced loudly enough for everyone in the gallery to hear: "Caddie! Pick my ball up! George will play for our side."

And, indeed, George did play for The Haig's side. He halved the hole with Smith and tied the match. Then The Haig took everybody inside for a drink, after which a party took place until Dad had to catch the last train out of town.

One of the really magnificent things about The Haig as a father was that he never really expected anything of me as a golfer. He learned not to expect anything at a very early stage of

our relationship. While at Manlius Military School—where Dad often used to stop by and take on the entire golf team, playing their best ball in occasional matches—I entered the Eastern Interscholastic Championship. The Haig attended as a member of the gallery. This occasion was a newspaperman's dream, and the reporters interviewed both The Haig and me at some length before the event started.

When I finished my qualifying round, I walked into the clubhouse, where I found The Haig, beaming with anticipation, while the photographers stood by to catch the momentous occasion of a new Hagen coming into his own. "What did you have?" said Dad as I strolled into the clubhouse. "Come on, boy! Out with it! What did you have?" The glare of the flashbulbs was blinding.

"Ninety-six," I answered. As I say, The Haig learned early not to expect anything of me as a golfer.

Despite the fact I had none of The Haig's talent for golf, many people often get us confused. Our physical resemblance is striking. During

World War II, I was stationed in England for a while, waiting to be shipped to France, and was engaged to play an exhibition match for the Red Cross. At the end of 34 holes, my partner and I were dormie-2. He then proceeded to birdie the seventeenth and I proceeded to birdie the eighteenth—a typical Hagen finish. As I was walking through the excited crowd to the clubhouse, I was stopped by an elderly lady who took me by the arm and said, "Mr. Hagen, it was wonderful to see you again. You wouldn't remember me, but I saw you play at Hoylake."

Dad had last played at Hoylake in 1924—when I was six years old—but I didn't have the heart to tell her. Actually, these cases of mistaken identity happen all the time, except, of course, among those who saw The Haig at his best. Just last month I was playing a round of golf with a man who had watched Dad win a number of his many championships. "You look exactly like your dad," he commented, "but you sure can't play the way he did." He was right, of course. After all, who the hell could?

"NEEDLES"

by John Gallagher



"You're kidding!"

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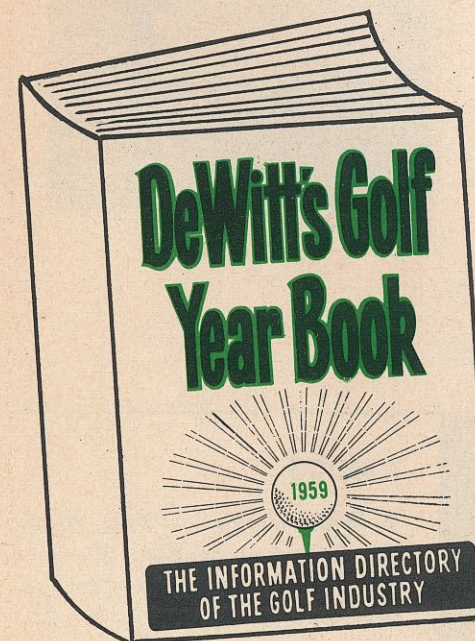
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