

Slammin' Sammy Snead

Samuel Jackson Snead (May 27, 1912 – May 23, 2002) was an American professional golfer who was one of the top players in the world for the better part of four decades (having won PGA of America and Senior PGA Tour events over six decades) and widely regarded as one of the greatest players of all time. Snead was awarded a record 94 gold medallions, for wins in PGA of America (referred to by most as the PGA) Tour events and later credited with winning a record 82 PGA Tour events, including seven majors. He never won the U.S. Open, though he was runner-up four times. Snead was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1974.

Snead's nicknames included "The Slammer", "Slammin' Sammy Snead", and "The Long Ball Hitter from West Virginia", and he was admired by many for having a "perfect swing", which generated many imitators. Snead was famed for his folksy image, wearing a straw hat, and making such statements as "Keep close count of your nickels and dimes, stay away from whiskey, and never concede a putt." and "There are no short hitters on the tour anymore, just long and unbelievably long." Fellow West Virginia Golf Hall of Fame Inductee Bill Campbell has said of Snead, "He was the best natural player ever. He had the eye of an eagle, the grace of a leopard and the strength of a lion." Gary Player once said that, "I don't think there's any question in my mind that Sam Snead had the greatest golf swing of any human being that ever lived". Jack Nicklaus said that Snead's swing was, "so perfect."

Born in Ashwood, VA, Snead began caddying at age seven at The Homestead's Old Course in Hot Springs. He worked as an assistant pro at The Homestead at 17 in 1929, then moved to the Cascades Course and turned professional in 1934. During the depression, Snead self taught himself the game of golf from a set of clubs carved from tree limbs. Snead joined the PGA Tour in 1936, and achieved immediate success by winning the West Virginia Closed Pro tournament. In 1936, he won two matches at the Meadow Brook Club, earning a \$10,000 prize. This gave him the money he needed to start playing professionally full-time. In 1944, he became resident playing professional at The Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, and maintained ties to Hot Springs and The Homestead all of his life. During the winter, he was resident playing pro at the Boca Raton Resort from 1956–1969. Each spring he returned to the Mid-Atlantic, stopping at The Masters Tournament on his way back.

Snead served in the U.S. Navy during World War II from 1942 to 1944. He was an athletic specialist in Cmdr. Gene Tunney's program in San Diego, and was given a medical discharge for a back injury in September 1944. Snead appeared as himself in an episode of The Phil Silvers Show, The Colonel Breaks Par, in 1957.

