Untitled Essay, Research Paper

Golf, outdoor game in which individual players use specially designed clubs to propel a small, hard ball over a field of play known as a course or links. The object of the game is to advance the ball around the course using as few strokes as possible.The Golf CourseA golf course is divided into 18 sections, called holes. The standard course is about 6500 to 7000 yd (about 5900 to 6400 m). The individual holes may vary in length from 100 to 600 yd (about 90 to 550 m). Each hole has at one end a starting point known as a tee and, imbedded in the ground at the other end and marked by a flag, a cup or cylindrical container (also called a hole) into which the ball must be propelled in order to complete play at each hole. The cup is usually made of metal or plastic, 4.2 in (10.8 cm) in diameter, and at least 4 in (10 cm) deep.Play begins at the first tee, a level area of turf, generally raised slightly above the surrounding terrain. From here each player tries to drive the ball onto the fairway, or main part of the golf course, a carefully tended strip of land, 30 to 100 yd (about 27 to 90 m) wide, on which the grass has been cut to provide a good playing surface for the ball. On either side of the fairway is the rough, which consists of areas covered with long grass, bushes, or trees, and which sometimes contains sandy, rough, or marshy areas that compel golfers to use additional skill and judgment in playing their shots. In the absence of such natural obstacles, artificial hazards may be constructed. These include bunkers, also known as traps, which are hollows dug in the earth and usually filled with loose sand; mounds and other earthen embankments; and water hazards, such as ditches, creeks, ponds, or lakes. At the far end of the fairway from the tee is the putting green, an area of closely cropped grass surrounding the hole or cup. The smooth surface of the putting green is designed to facilitate the progress of the ball into the cup after the ball has been given a tap or gentle stroke known as a putt.Golf Strokes and Golf ClubsIn addition to the putt, the specialized stroke used on the green, two main types of shots are used in playing each hole: the drive, which is a long shot from the tee onto the fairway; and the approach shot, which is the shot used to hit the ball onto the green. Both types demand great accuracy. Shots of various lengths are played with different clubs, according to the distance to be covered and the lie (position) of the ball. A standard set of 14 golf clubs (the maximum that may be carried in tournament play), is divided into two main types: those known as woods, with heads made of wood or metal; and those known as irons, with heads made of forged steel, usually chromium plated. The shafts of both types usually are made of metal and sometimes of fiberglass. Formerly, each club was known by a distinctive name, but today most are designated by numbers. The woods are customarily numbered 1 through 5, the irons 1 through 9. The putter, an iron, has retained its name. In addition to the numbered irons are the utility clubs, including the sand wedge and the pitching wedge, used on medium-range shots to loft the ball high into the air and limit its roll to a short distance after landing.The clubs are variously used in achieving distance, height, or accurate placement of the ball; the angle at which the striking surface is set on the shaft of the club determines the trajectory of the ball. For making drives and distance shots on the fairway, the woods (No. 1, or driver; No. 2; No. 3; No. 4; and No. 5) and the so-called long irons (No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3) are used. For the initial drive of each hole, the ball is teed up-that is, placed on a small wooden, rubber, or plastic peg, known as a tee, which the players carry with them. This lifts the ball at least 0.5 in (1.3 cm) off the ground, allowing the head of the club to strike the ball with maximum force. For long, low shots on the fairway, the No. 2 wood is used, and for long, high shots the No. 3, No. 4, and No. 5 woods are employed. Other approach shots to the green, generally of a shorter range, are played with irons. For even shorter approaches, known as chip shots, the same irons are used but with a shorter swing. The putter normally is used only on the green or the apron (a fringe of less smooth grass) of the green.Forms of CompetitionTwo basic forms of competition exist in golf: match play and medal play (also known as stroke play). In match play the player (or, if more than one player, the team) taking the fewer number of strokes to sink the ball into any particular hole-called holing out-is the winner of the hole; the contest is won by the player or team winning the most holes. If each player or team takes the same number of strokes on any hole, the hole is said to be halved (tied). A final score of 9 and 8 in match play means that the winner was 9 holes ahead with only 8 left to play, sufficient to clinch victory in the match. When the match goes tied until the last hole, the winning score is 1 up.In medal play, now the more popular kind of play in major tournaments, the winner of the contest is the team or player taking the fewest strokes over the total number of holes agreed upon. Although a round usually consists of 9 or 18 holes, the play in championship contests covers 18, 36, 54, or 72 holes. In medal play, ties are decided by playoff rounds.The term par refers to the number of properly played strokes an expert golfer would be expected to use in completing a particular hole without mishap. The aggregate for all of the holes is called par for the course. Par is based primarily on the number of strokes necessary to reach the green, plus two putts. Par for a single hole is three strokes for a hole of 250 yd (229 m) or less for men, and 210 yd (192 m) or less for women; four strokes for a hole from 251 to 470 yd (230 to 430 m) for men, and 211 to 400 yd (193 to 366 m) for women; and five strokes for a hole of 471 yd (431 m) or more for men, and 401 yd (367 m) or more for women. In addition, for women, par is six strokes for a hole of 576 yd (527 m) or more. Occasionally, on a par-three hole, a player makes a hole in one-that is, drives the ball from the tee into the cup in one stroke-although this is rare. A score of one less than par is referred to as a birdie, and two less than par (for example, a score of three on a par-five hole) is called an eagle. Three strokes less than par is known as a double eagle. One stroke over par is called a bogey; two over par is a double bogey.HistorySome historians believe that golf originated in the Netherlands (the Dutch word kolf means “club”), but the Romans had a game played with a bent stick and a ball made of feathers that may have been the original source of the game. It has been fairly well established, however, that the game actually was devised by the Scots in the 14th or 15th century. The game became so popular in Scotland that in order to keep people from playing golf and football during time that should have been employed in practicing archery, a military necessity, the Scottish parliament in 1457 passed a law prohibiting both games. The Scottish people, however, largely ignored this and similar laws, and early in the 16th century James IV, king of Scotland, took up the game of golf. His granddaughter Mary, later Mary, queen of Scots, played the game in France, where she was educated. The young men who attended her on the golf links were known as cadets (pupils); the term was adopted later in Scotland and England and became caddy or caddie. (Caddies, once an integral feature of the game, have now been superseded on many courses by golf carts and buggies.) In England the game was made popular by the attention given it by James VI of Scotland, later James I of England, and his son Charles I.In the 18th century the first golf associations were established; they included the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers (founded 1744); the St. Andrews Society of Golfers (1754), which in 1834 took its present name, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews; and the Royal Blackheath (1766), near London, where, according to tradition, golf was introduced to England in 1608. The first clubs established outside Great Britain were the Calcutta Golf Club of East India (1829) and the Royal Bombay Club (1842). The first golf club established in the western hemisphere was Canada’s Royal Montr?al Golf Club, founded in 1873. It is believed by some that golf was played in North America during the colonial period (17th and 18th centuries), but no documented proof of this has been advanced. In 1888 the St. Andrews Golf Club of Yonkers, New York, was established. Some authorities say this is the oldest continuously existing golf club in the United States. The popularity of the game in the United States and Great Britain reached great heights by the 1920s and steadily increased over the years, fostered by television. In the United States alone, more than 14,000 golf courses serve more than 24 million people who play golf at least once a year. Golf is also popular in continental Europe, Canada, South Africa, Australia, Japan, and many other parts of the world.Rules and RegulationsThe rules of play for golf are numerous and complex. They include a code of etiquette for behavior on the green.The game was originally played with a ball made of feathers tightly packed in a leather cover. About 1850 a ball made of gutta-percha came into use. Gutta-percha is a milky liquid, derived principally from Malaysian trees, that hardens after being boiled and cooled. About 1901 a ball with a rubber core enclosed in gutta-percha, similar to the ball in use today, was developed. The pitted surface of modern golf balls acts to stabilize flight. Golf balls must have a diameter of no less than 1.68 in (4.27 cm) and weigh not more than 1.62 oz (45.93 g).Governing BodiesThe organizations that establish golf rules for the world are the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews and the United States Golf Association (USGA), founded in 1894 and located in Far Hills, New Jersey. Before 1913, golf in the United States was played chiefly by people of wealth. In 1913, however, after a former caddie from the United States named Francis Ouimet won a victory over two outstanding British professionals in the U.S. open championship tournament (open to amateurs and professionals), golf came to the attention of the American public in general. The Professional Golfers’ Association of America (PGA) was organized in 1916, and annual tournaments were started during the same year. The PGA is headquartered in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. Currently, there are more than 23,000 members of the PGA, most of whom assist amateur players as club or resort instructors; and each year several hundred professional players tour the country competing in major tournaments. The Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), headquartered in Daytona Beach, Florida, numbers more than 800 club instructors, along with several hundred tournament players. Major professional tours include the PGA (for men), the LPGA (for women), and the Seniors tour (for men over the age of 50).TournamentsEach year many golf tournaments take place. The most important professional tournaments for men are the Masters, the U.S. Open, the British Open, and the PGA Championship. Collectively these four events form the grand slam of golf. Until 1960 the grand slam was considered to be the U.S. Open, the British Open, the U.S. Amateur, and the British Amateur, but with the increasing importance of professional golf in the mid-20th century, the Masters and the PGA Championship gained preeminence over the two amateur tournaments. However, the U.S. and British amateurs remain important events for nonprofessionals. For women the four professional tournaments forming the grand slam are the LPGA Championship, the U.S. Women’s Open, the du Maurier Classic, and the Dinah Shore. The most important amateur events for women are the U.S. Women’s Amateur and the British Women’s Amateur Championship.International matches are also played. The Walker Cup (for men) and the Curtis Cup (for women) are contests between amateur golfers from the United States and Great Britain. The Ryder Cup (for men) and the Solheim Cup (for women) are contests between professional golfers from the United States and the rest of the world. (Before 1979 the Ryder Cup was contested only between American and British teams.) World competition tournaments for men also include the Eisenhower Cup for amateurs, the World Cup for professionals, and the Shun Nomura Trophy and the Francis H. I. Brown International Team Match Trophy for seniors. World competition tournaments for women also include the Espirito Santo Trophy.The most famous feat in the history of golf was achieved by the American amateur player Bobby Jones, who in 1930 achieved the grand slam of golf at the time by winning the British Open, the British Amateur, the U.S. Open, and the U.S. Amateur. No other player has ever won the grand slam in golf. One of the greatest women players of all time was Babe Didrikson Zaharias, an American who competed both as an amateur and as a professional. Other outstanding golfers include American players Walter Hagen, Gene Sarazen, Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Nancy Lopez, Kathy Whitworth, Tom Watson, JoAnne Carner, Pat Bradley, Lee Trevino, Patty Sheehan, Patty Berg, and Mickey Wright; British players Harry Vardon and Nick Faldo; Australian player Greg Norman; South African players Nick Price and Gary Player; and Spanish player Severiano Ballesteros.Other Forms of GolfVariations of golf, many of which can be played at night under lights, are developed from time to time: Miniature golf, a putting game on fancifully designed courses, became popular in the 1930s. Special putting greens and driving ranges combine practice and recreation. Pitch and putt is a shorter version of the standard game.