

"DID YOU KNOW"

Babe Didrikson Played in the 1937 True Temper Open at Whitemarsh!

By Pete Trenham

The American Fork & Hoe Company, manufacturer of the True Temper golf shaft, and the Philadelphia PGA co-sponsored the True Temper Open in June of 1937. Along with the professionals from the Philadelphia Section there was a strong contingent of male professionals from other regions entered.

For what was a first in American men's professional golf two women were entered as well. The two women professionals were Mildred "Babe" Didrikson (later Zaharias) and Betty Hicks. Didrikson, the star of the 1932 Olympics, was not a polished golfer yet as she had only begun playing golf in 1935. The ladies were not a factor other than being in the starting field. Seven months later Didrikson played in the Los Angeles Open on the PGA Tour. Most records cite the 1938 L.A. Open as the first time a female competed against males in a PGA tournament, but it actually took place during 1937 in Philadelphia.

At that time there were very few tournaments for female golf professionals but with the help of Wilson Sporting Goods the LPGA was formed in 1947 with Didrikson, now Zaharias, a founding member.

Harry Cooper, a Texan playing out of Chicago and one of the greatest golfers to never win a major championship, shot a 30 on the last nine for an eight under par 280 and a two shot victory. First prize from the \$4,000 purse was \$900. The low professionals from the Philadelphia PGA were Jack Patroni and Jimmy Thomson. Patroni, the head professional at the Shawnee Country Club, tied for seventh at 288 and Thomson, the playing professional from Shawnee, finished eleventh with a total of 290.

