

Jimmy Demaret

Jimmy Demaret was the first golfer to win three Masters, with victories in 1940, 1947, and 1950. His total of 31 wins on the PGA Tour still ranks him among the top 15 golfers in total wins. These records established Demaret's prominence in golf from the mid-

1930s through the 1980s and led to his work as the host of All-Star Golf and Shell's Wonderful World of Golf. An exuberant character, Demaret was known for his flamboyant attire and famous friends. In the year 2000, both Golf Magazine and Golf Digest named him one of the most important players ever in the game.

"Jimmy Demaret is the most underrated golfer in history. He played shots I'd never even dreamed of. Eventually, I learned them, of course, but it was Jimmy who showed them to me for the first time."

- Ben Hogan



"I first came out on tour in 1950, and Jimmy kind of took me under his wing," remembers 1960 PGA Champion Jay Hebert. "We'd drive from tournament to tournament in that big old Cadillac of his, and that was quite an education in itself. Jimmy knew everyone and had seen almost everything over the years, and he was very generous about sharing that knowledge.

"I remember going into the clubhouse in one of the first tournaments I played in that year," Hebert continues. "We went into the bar and Jimmy told me to order a '7 & 7'. I told him I'd never heard of it.

" 'Just order it, Jay, you don't have to drink the stuff,' Demaret said. 'Seagram [distillers] pays me \$25,000 a year to represent them on tour.' "

"In all the years I've been around the game of golf, it was the most perfect endorsement deal I've ever seen."

"The thing about Jimmy is that he honestly liked people," remembered Dave Marr. "In the 1957 U.S. Open at Inverness, Jimmy was in the clubhouse leading the tournament. The only guys with a chance to beat him were Doc Middlecoff and Dick Mayer. Dick made a tough twelve-footer on the last hole to win by a shot. Jimmy looked at me - and I'll never forget this - he said, 'Well, I'm glad he won it. He needs the money, you know.'

"Jimmy was absolutely sincere, too. That's just the way he was."

Demaret was a fixture at the old Bing Crosby National Pro-Am, which he won in 1952. One of the reasons he loved the tournament so much was this it gave him a chance to hang around with celebrities, many of whom were his friends.

"One year Jimmy was with Phil Harris at the bar and Harris was telling us about this new kid, Dean Martin, remembers Dave Marr. "Phil was in awe of how much he could drink.

" 'Hell, Phil, you could drink him under the table with one lip tied behind your back,' Jimmy said.

"Another time he told Phil that his face had enough wrinkles to hold a three-day rain," adds Marr.

Jimmy Demaret was chatting with friends outside the clubhouse at Augusta National during the 1964 Masters. He noticed three jets flying over the course.

"There go Jack, Arnie and Gary," he joked,

A few minutes later a series of small, propeller-driven planes flew over.

"And there go their caddies," he said.

When Jimmy Demaret died in 1983 at the age of seventy-three, many of his friends traveled to Houston for the services. His widow mentioned to one of them that she was a little concerned because she didn't know if Jimmy had left her any money.

"Are you kidding? Jimmy had money in every bank in Houston," the friend replied.

Later, someone asked why he spread his money all over town.

"He had to," the man said, laughing. "He was friends with every bank president in Houston. He didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings."