



John Hughes  
1945

# CAUCASIANS / ONLY



*Solomon Hughes, the PGA, and the 1948 St. Paul Open Golf Tournament*

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From 1943 to 1961, an era marked by intense struggles against racial discrimination and segregation in the United States, the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) resolutely excluded African Americans from participating in its tournaments. No matter that the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954) struck down segregation in public schools and gave impetus to court actions on segregation at community-owned and tax-supported golf courses.<sup>1</sup> No matter that the civil rights movement surged to prominence in the 1950s, boldly attacking Jim Crow restrictions throughout the South. No matter that Jackie Robinson's dramatic entry into major league baseball broke the color line in the national game. Dodging and weaving, the PGA leadership remained obdurate to change until, finally, it could no longer escape the nation's new legal and social reality.

Following Tiger Woods's stunning success as a professional golfer and his pointed reminders about the tough times African American golfers endured before him, sportswriters and historians have spotlighted the fight these golfers waged against the PGA's racial restrictions

in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>2</sup> The stories of neglected heroes such as Bill Spiller, Ted Rhodes, and Charlie Sifford, as well as those who supported them, notably boxer Joe Louis and Los Angeles civil rights activist Maggie Hathaway, are now well told.

Yet, others who played important roles in ending segregation on the PGA tour have not yet had their due. Minneapolis golf professional Solomon Hughes, a top player on the United Golfers' Association (UGA) tour, did battle with the PGA when he attempted to enter the 1948 St. Paul Open tournament.<sup>3</sup> Hughes's story reflects the bitter experiences of Spiller and Rhodes at California's Richmond Open earlier that same year and expands the story of the PGA's discriminatory policies during the postwar era.

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LEFT: Minneapolis's Solomon Hughes in 1948, the year he tried to enter the St. Paul Open





*In 1935 Hughes (wearing tie) received the National Negro Golf championship trophy from former (and future) winner John Dendy at Pleasantville, New York.*

**Born in 1908, Hughes grew up in Gadsden, Alabama, and, like many African Americans, learned to play golf by caddying.** He carried bags at the local country club and soon assumed the duties of caddy master and assistant in the pro shop. Despite Alabama's rigid segregation and racial codes in the 1930s, young Hughes gave golf lessons to both men and women club members. Eddie Miller, a white pro golfer of regional fame, befriended Hughes and helped him develop his golfing skills.<sup>4</sup>

By the early 1930s Hughes played well enough to compete as a professional in events sponsored by the UGA, known as golf's "chittlin' circuit." Formed in the late 1920s, the UGA was a national association for African American golfers. The UGA sponsored the National Negro Open, and in 1935, at age 26, Hughes captured the championship at Pleasantville, New York. He would continue to rank as one of the top players in UGA tournaments into the late 1940s. Hughes won the 1945 Joe Louis Open in Detroit and the Midwest Open in Toledo, as well as the Des Moines Open. As a rival of Robert "Pat" Ball (perhaps the best pre-World War II African American golfer), Howard Wheeler, Zeke Hartsfield, and Clyde Martin, Hughes stood out, according to golfer Joe "Roach" Delancy, as a "stylist who was one of the best swingers in golf we had."<sup>5</sup>

Hughes made such a strong mark on the UGA circuit in the 1930s that he attracted the friendship of heavy-weight boxing champ Joe Louis, who loved to play golf and gamble for high stakes on the course. When Louis volunteered for service during World War II, his tour of duty brought him to Alabama's Ft. McClelland, located near enough to Gadsden to arrange frequent visits with Hughes and his wife, Bessie. Louis's celebrity status made it possible for him to leave the army base at night with few objections, and he often headed to the Hughes house to play golf and take lessons. Sugar Ray Robinson, the future welterweight and middleweight champion, also serving in the army, frequently accompanied Louis. (According to Bessie Hughes, Robinson would listen to her play the piano because he couldn't see himself "hitting a small ball and chasing after it." But after Hughes gave him lessons, Robinson, too, became "hooked on golf.")<sup>6</sup>

The three men remained close long after the war, and Louis asked Hughes in 1945 to travel with him. The "Brown Bomber," whose generosity was well known, liked having a top golfer on his payroll to help improve his game and be his partner in money matches. Hughes had to decline the champ's invitation because he had moved from Gadsden to Minneapolis in 1943 with Bessie and his two young children. Nevertheless, Hughes occasionally traveled with Louis and his retinue in the years that followed, and Louis continued to visit the Hughes family in Minneapolis.<sup>7</sup>

## **A letter to Hughes from boyhood friend**

Tommy Adair, then living in Minneapolis, spurred Hughes's move from Alabama. Adair convinced Hughes that he could work in the northern city as a golf professional. Disgusted with segregation, Hughes wanted his growing family to have access to a good education and public facilities including parks, beaches, and golf courses. Minneapolis seemed to promise that and more.<sup>8</sup>

When Hughes arrived in the city, however, no public course or private country club would hire him as a golf pro. Undaunted, he joined the Twin Cities Golf Club, an association of African American golfers, and offered golf lessons to anyone requesting help. To make ends meet he worked as a Pullman porter for the Great Northern Rail-

way. After the war, Hughes and his brother, Fern, played key roles in integrating Minneapolis's Hiawatha Golf Course clubhouse. Most African American golfers played at this public course, and their taxes supported it, but they could not enter the clubhouse—even for a drink of water. Bessie Hughes recalled that the brothers worked quietly to end this discrimination.<sup>9</sup>

### By 1948, now 40 years old, Hughes still competed

as a golf pro, playing in as many national tournaments and local matches as work and family responsibilities permitted. He kept up friendships with top black golfers, including Ted Rhodes, who had accepted the spot Louis had offered Hughes as “personal pro” and traveling partner. Rhodes would help set the stage for events at the 1948 St. Paul Open.

Rhodes ranked as one of the top African American golfers of the late 1940s. His stylish swing and outstanding wedge play gave him the best chance of finishing high in PGA tour events—if he could have entered them.<sup>10</sup>

Rhodes grew up in Nashville and had his start in golf as a caddy. Before joining the navy, he competed in the 1943 Joe Louis Open. Louis recognized a raw golfing talent and after the war urged Rhodes to leave Nashville for Los Angeles, which offered more opportunities to develop his talent. Once on the champ's payroll, Rhodes devoted his time to becoming a golf professional. In 13 months during 1946 and 1947, Rhodes won six straight UGA tournaments, capping off this string of victories with a win at the 1947 Joe Louis Open. Among his closest competitors was Solomon Hughes, who finished third.<sup>11</sup>

The two men established a close friendship, and Rhodes visited the Hughes household in south Minneapolis when he played in the Twin Cities. No surprise, then, that Rhodes would consider Hughes's suggestion to enter the 1948 St. Paul Open. What made Rhodes's decision more than a simple chance to stay with a friend can be traced to events in California earlier that year.

The Los Angeles Open, George May's Tam O'Shanter tournament in Chicago, and the Canadian Open were the only major golf tournaments of the time that allowed black golfers as competitors. (The Western Open and the U.S. Open had no race restrictions, but they were not friendly venues for African Americans.)<sup>12</sup>

In early January, Rhodes and Bill Spiller finished twenty-first and thirty-fourth in a field of 66 at the Los Angeles Open, held that year at the Riviera Country Club. In the first round, Spiller shot 68, tying Ben Hogan for second place. Both Spiller and Rhodes ended the tournament among the top 60 golfers. According to the rules of the following week's Open at Richmond, California, the two had automatically qualified for the event. So had Madison Gunther, by virtue of his showing in the qualifying round. But the three golfers would not have the opportunity to play in the tournament.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike the popular Los Angeles Open, tournaments like the Richmond Open could not easily buck PGA rules that prohibited black golfers. As Al Barkow explains in his history of the PGA tour, the Los Angeles Open, like the Tam O'Shanter, “had more clout—a big purse—and could call its own shots about who could play.”<sup>14</sup> The Richmond Open—and the St. Paul Open, to a lesser extent—were not national headline events, and they needed PGA cosponsorship to attract better players and larger galleries of spectators, who paid to watch.

After completing practice rounds, Spiller, Rhodes, and Gunther received word from a PGA official that they would not be allowed to play. The reason? They were not



*Hughes with boxer Joe Louis after winning the 1945 Joe Louis Open in Detroit*

members of the PGA, which, of course, they could not join because of their race. The PGA had maintained a Caucasians-only policy since its founding in 1916. Ironically, not until 1943, when African American soldiers were fighting for their country, did the PGA update its constitution and insert Article 3, which required that members be of the “Caucasian race.”<sup>15</sup>

Unwilling to let the PGA’s prejudices deter him from playing, Spiller fought back. He led the others in a direct assault on the policy by hiring John Rowell, an African American lawyer from Oakland, who filed a \$250,000 lawsuit against the PGA. The suit cited the PGA for denying the three pro golfers an opportunity to earn a living through its Caucasians-only rule that barred them from the Richmond Open.<sup>16</sup>

Never before threatened so boldly, PGA leaders scurried to find a way to avoid the suit and the bad publicity it brought. What happened at the St. Paul Open in mid-August 1948 would soon make the PGA’s search for a favorable solution more urgent.

## The St. Paul Open, sponsored by the city’s

Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees), had been a good stop for pros since the inaugural tournament in 1930. Played at Keller Golf Course—a publicly owned and supported 18-hole course just north of the city—the Open promised a reasonably good payday for top finishers. In 1948 tournament promoters attracted Jimmy Demaret, who had just won the Tam O’Shanter, and other tour stars including Lloyd Mangrum, Jim Turnesa, George Fazio, Ed Furgol, Johnny Bulla, and Ellsworth Vines.<sup>17</sup>

In early July, a month before the St. Paul Open, Sol Hughes had played host to Joe Louis at the Elks’ Midwest Golf Tournament. Sponsored by an African American chapter of the fraternal organization, the Elks’ tournament was held at the Superior Golf Club, now Brookview in Golden Valley.<sup>18</sup>

At the Elks’ event Louis and Hughes likely discussed the pending lawsuit against the PGA and might have concluded that the St. Paul Open would be a good opportunity to apply more pressure. On the surface, it seemed a promising moment. In mid-July aspiring senatorial candidate Hubert H. Humphrey, mayor of Minneapolis, delivered a passionate and widely reported speech on civil rights to the Democratic National Convention. At the same time, Governor Luther W. Youngdahl continued his push to prohibit discrimination in the Minnesota National Guard. On the local sports scene, the hometown

Saints had started the 1948 season with Roy Campanella, a top player from the Negro leagues, behind the plate. According to Bessie Hughes, however, as her husband prepared to send in entry fees to the St. Paul Open for himself and Ted Rhodes, he “expected his entry would be refused.”<sup>19</sup> It was.

The St. Paul Jaycees, the Open’s sponsoring organization since 1930, returned the entry fees on August 8. Five days later, the *Minneapolis Spokesman*, a weekly African American newspaper, headlined on page one: “‘Open’ Bars Top Golfers.” The news account laid out the story of discrimination for its readers and included an editorial box, “Too Hot to Handle,” which ripped into the major Twin Cities’ newspapers’ failure to run “a single line” about the “barring of two top flight Negro golfers until 48 hours after the facts were known.” Singling out the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *St. Paul Dispatch*, the *Spokesman* suggested that a “little editorializing and other polite ‘pressure’ . . . might have changed the Ku Klux Klan attitudes of the P.G.A. and the St. Paul Open sponsors would have avoided the impression that they cooperate with an outfit that practices blatant race discrimination.” The editorial also put the finger on a fact of political and social life that African Americans recently arrived in northern urban areas had discovered. As the *Spokesman*’s editorial writer observed: “It’s apparently one thing to editorially deplore race discrimination practiced against Negroes miles away in the South, but still another matter to stand up against similar practices when found right here on our doorstep.”<sup>20</sup>

Finally, on Saturday, August 14, the *Minneapolis Star* published tardy comments on the incident. After characterizing the PGA as “a union with a closed shop,” its editorial concluded that Hughes and Rhodes had “the sympathy of many Twin Cities persons.” Regrettably, the *Star* concluded, “Until the PGA changes its rules nationally there is not much that can be done about an individual tournament.”<sup>21</sup>

The *Star*’s editorial did not sit well with the newsroom at the *Spokesman*. In the next week’s issue, editor Cecil E. Newman fired back. He wrote that the tournament at Keller Golf Course had been advertised as an “open,” not an “invitational”—and that the tickets printed for the event proved his contention. Newman charged that not until Hughes and Rhodes had sent in their entries did the PGA change the tournament’s designation to an invitational.<sup>22</sup>

The *Spokesman* editor also pointed out that many PGA players had just finished playing in the Tam O’Shanter,





*Spectators watching the St. Paul Open at Keller golf course, 1935*

where the best golfers in the nation, “Negro and white, had competed for a lot more money [a \$10,000 first prize] than was offered at Keller.” He publicly questioned whether the PGA would boldly require its pros to withdraw from the St. Paul Open because “not even the PGA” would have the nerve to “brave the ire” of an area as big as the Twin Cities.

Newman ended with another criticism directed at the cities’ major newspapers and St. Paul civic leaders, charging that with some “intestinal fortitude,” as well as the willingness to lose money for principle, the Twin Cities could have kept its reputation for being “one of the most enlightened areas . . . in the matter of race tolerance and interracial cooperation.”

Certainly, Newman knew the real truth on this score. St. Paul and Minneapolis were hardly enlightened on racial matters in the late 1940s. Only 1 to 2 percent of the Twin Cities’ population was African American, and they were unofficially segregated in neighborhoods through housing covenants and the inability to secure bank loans.

Gentlemen’s agreements restricted access to employment beyond the lowest levels and kept African Americans out of certain restaurants and churches. Some medical doctors resisted taking black patients for fear of being labeled “black doctors.”<sup>23</sup>

Identified in the *Spokesman’s* news articles as bringing the discrimination against Hughes and Rhodes to light was Whitney M. Young, youthful St. Paul Urban League official and a new member of the St. Paul Jaycees. (Young later had a distinguished career as director of the National Urban League and a civil rights leader.) Given Young’s position within the tightly knit Twin Cities African American community, he was surely aware of the golfers’ intent to play in the golf tournament. Several weeks before the tournament started, Young had reportedly asked Jaycee officials if the tournament would truly be open to all qualifiers, and Jaycee officials told him it would be.<sup>24</sup>

Hughes probably contacted Young after August 8, when the entry fees were returned. Young then called Bill



Cecil Newman's *Spokesman* criticized the PGA's decision to bar Sol Hughes and Ted Rhodes from the St. Paul Open.

McMahon, chairman of the tournament committee, who told him that Hughes and Rhodes hadn't been "invited" but hastened to add that this was merely "oversight" on the committee's part. Apparently, McMahon hadn't checked with PGA officials before his conversation with Young, for a new rationale immediately issued from the Jaycees' headquarters: Rhodes and Hughes were not members of the PGA, and, therefore, they could not play even if invited.

The PGA had now set itself up for another embarrassing test of its whites-only tournament policy. Not only did this new challenge create bad publicity, but it came at a critical moment for the organization. The lawsuit in California had PGA leaders worried. As George May, outspoken sponsor of the Tam O'Shanter, had warned PGA president Ed Dudley, "If the PGA doesn't strike its Caucasian clause from the bylaws, somebody's going to get caught by the State's anti-discrimination laws."<sup>25</sup>

Young continued to apply pressure and called Ben Ridder, publisher of the *St. Paul Dispatch* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Ridder admitted the PGA policy appeared unjust but didn't want to commit his newspaper against it. He preferred not to risk "wrecking" the golf tournament, a major event supported by the St. Paul business community. The publisher cautioned that the PGA might withdraw its players if pushed too far. In contrast to the

*Minneapolis Star* editorial, the Ridder papers remained mum on the controversy brewing in their own town except for a brief paragraph on Wednesday, August 11.<sup>26</sup>

In the meantime the *Spokesman* learned when the story broke that a sports reporter for the St. Paul papers had placed a phone call to Tom Crane, executive secretary of the PGA in Chicago. Crane gave him the party line: "All participants must have signed a player's agreement with the PGA."<sup>27</sup>

Mayor Edward Delaney of St. Paul also called Crane, but the PGA official refused to allow the Jaycees to invite Hughes and Rhodes to play. Crane told the mayor that if the two played, it would place the PGA in jeopardy regarding the pending suit in California, especially since Rhodes was one of the complainants. Delaney then took the position that any new contract for the St. Paul Open with Keller should specifically include an anti-Jim Crow clause.<sup>28</sup>

Most of Tuesday afternoon, August 10, and into the night, the mayor, tournament officials, and Whitney Young met, attempting to "solve the problem." The attempt fizzled, despite the fact that the *Spokesman* hinted that the city of St. Paul could face a legal suit if anyone had cared to press the issue. For a variety of reasons, no one did.<sup>29</sup>

First, the real problem was not the city of St. Paul, but the PGA. Second, legal action would have been expensive



and likely not concluded in a short period of time (and Rhodes was already a party in the Richmond lawsuit). Third, assistance from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—usually an important player—seemed unlikely because the issue paled in comparison to the organization’s larger goal of school desegregation and the more encompassing actions against segregated public facilities. As one historian explained it, “The troubles of a few men trying to break into the professional ranks of what many considered a minor sport probably weren’t viewed as ‘of national importance.’”<sup>30</sup>

On behalf of the would-be St. Paul golfers, the Urban League’s Young told the *Spokesman*, “I feel that the local Junior Chamber officials are making themselves a party to discrimination,” but Young could do no more than bow to the realities of the situation. The tournament was about to begin, substantial money had been invested, and St. Paul officials, Jaycees, and newspapers did not want to throw a monkey wrench in the gears of civic boosterism. The Jaycees publicly opposed the PGA’s exclusionary cause and urged reform but ultimately more feared losing cosponsorship of the Open. Young also probably wanted to avoid alienating liberal whites in St. Paul who contributed money to the Urban League.<sup>31</sup>



The St. Paul Open proceeded without further incident, and participating white pros played to record crowds. Keller lived up to its reputation as “always one of the fastest, easiest tracks on the pro tour, a course where scores were often in the 60s.” (On his way to the tournament’s championship—and a purse totaling \$2,450—Jimmy Demaret recorded three rounds in the 60s.) Denied an opportunity to compete at St. Paul, Rhodes and Hughes moved on to Indianapolis where they played in the UGA National Open. Rhodes won it. A week later, he captured the title at the first Windy City Open in Chicago, another event aimed at African American golfers.<sup>32</sup>

As for the PGA, it managed to avoid any action during the St. Paul Open that might have jeopardized its position in the California lawsuit. On September 20, the PGA wriggled free of the suit when attorney Rowell persuaded Spiller and Rhodes to drop the case in return for a PGA pledge to end its discriminatory policies. The PGA later reneged, however, by adopting the term “Open Invitational” to describe its cosponsored tournament events. Over the next few years most of its tournaments became invitationals, which meant they were now exclusive events. For African Americans like Hughes, Rhodes, and Spiller, PGA cosponsored tournaments would not be “open,” and most club and organizational sponsors would continue withholding invitations to black golfers for years to come.<sup>33</sup>

### Three years after the 1948 tournament,

Hughes once again took up his quest to integrate the St. Paul Open. When he sent in his entry fees in 1951, it was with the support of some Jaycees. Hughes received an invitation to play and filled out the application. Tournament director Ken C. Webb forwarded the application to Tom Crane, still executive secretary of the PGA in Chicago, with a letter urging that Hughes be allowed to play and citing his qualifications as a professional golfer.<sup>34</sup>

Crane’s reply on behalf of the PGA politely acknowledged Hughes as a “very fine player and gentleman” who had played in “certain local and national tournaments.” But Crane reminded the Jaycees that the “St. Paul Invitational Open Tournament . . . is a ‘limited field’ event” and “participation . . . is restricted under the contract.” As part of that contract, a player had to be a member of the

*The St. Paul Urban League’s Whitney Young (left) applied pressure to the PGA and local daily newspapers.*





*Twin Cities golfers participated in annual tournaments such as the 1953 National Negro Open at Theodore Wirth golf course and Jimmy Slemmons's Upper Midwest Bronze tournament*

Louis loved golf, and with diligence and training he had improved enough to take the UGA amateur title in 1951. Because he was a celebrity, Louis received an invitation to play in the 1952 San Diego Open, but the sponsors of the tournament, like the Jaycees in St. Paul, had not counted on the continued mulishness of the PGA. The week before the tournament began, the PGA ruled that Louis could not play at San Diego, and it also rejected Bill Spiller, the black pro who had made it into the tournament by competing in qualifying rounds. It was a replay of the 1948 Richmond and St. Paul Opens, only the PGA did not put Louis and Spiller down for the count.

To start off what Louis called “the biggest fight of his life,” he softened up his opponent, PGA president Horton Smith, with a couple of well-placed publicity hits. The champ phoned national newspaper columnist and radio personality Walter Winchell to give him the story. Winchell exclaimed, “Who the hell is Horton Smith? He must be another Hitler.” Winchell then aired the incident on his nationwide radio program. Following up, Louis paid a visit to sports reporters at the *San Diego Union*, where he repeated Winchell’s earlier analogy comparing the unfortunate Smith to Hitler.<sup>37</sup>

When Smith showed up in San Diego, he met with Louis and some white PGA golf professionals to work out a compromise. Smith decided that Louis could play in the tournament by virtue of his amateur status but that Spiller, a pro, could not. To play in a PGA-cosponsored tournament, African American pros would have to be PGA members.<sup>38</sup>

Spiller had joined the San Diego meeting after Jimmy Demaret alerted him to the situation. Before Spiller made an angry exit, he threatened a lawsuit similar to the one filed after the Richmond Open. The next morning he delayed the starting round of the tournament by refusing to move off the first tee until Louis persuaded him to end his protest. Spiller commented, “I play for money. Joe, here, he just plays for fun.”<sup>39</sup>

On the weekend, Smith announced a new plan: limited participation by black pro golfers in PGA-cosponsored tournaments would be allowed, but with several restrictions. Golfers like Spiller and Rhodes, if selected for an “approved list,” could be invited to a cosponsored tournament as one of 10 PGA players exempt from qualifying or

PGA or be an “Approved PGA Tournament Player.” Hughes, of course, could not meet these qualifications.

The *St. Paul Recorder’s* postscript to this account lambasted the PGA, charging that the organization’s discrimination against Hughes demonstrated a “lack of patriotism” and was “a reflection of the intelligence of the men who compose its membership and its officers.” But the issue died quietly, without more than passing mention in major St. Paul and Minneapolis dailies. Bessie Hughes remembered, “One had to use a microscope to find an account of it.”<sup>35</sup>

The following year would be different, largely because of events occurring early in 1952 on the PGA tournament swing through California. As golf historian John Kennedy observed, things changed when Joe Louis, one of the “most famous athletes of his time, climbed into the ring with the Professional Golfers’ Association of America in 1952, and immediately threw a haymaker. It got everybody’s attention.”<sup>36</sup>

the 10 invited to qualify. The realities of racial prejudice and segregation in the United States would, of course, limit this compromise to a few tournaments, since tournament sponsors had no obligation to extend invitations. In addition, the PGA stubbornly maintained its Caucasians-only clause for membership in the organization. It would be almost a decade before the deeply traditional and conservative PGA leadership would move to strike that discriminatory clause from its constitution. Even then, the PGA acted only in response to increasingly bad publicity and to threats by California's Attorney General Stanley Mosk that he would bar the PGA from sponsoring tournaments in the state.<sup>40</sup>

**The protest against the PGA in San Diego** would have an effect on the 1952 St. Paul Open. Now the St. Paul Jaycees could extend invitations to African American golfers like Hughes and Rhodes. And they did exactly that.

By summer the Jaycees had been on record for more than a year as opposing the PGA's exclusion of black golfers. The group had demonstrated a year earlier, as well, that it would welcome professionals like Hughes and Rhodes as participants in the Open. Prior to the tournament the Jaycees extended invitations to Hughes and Rhodes specifically. Bill Spiller also received an invitation, and rumor had it that Joe Louis would play as an amateur.<sup>41</sup>



Without fanfare Hughes and Rhodes teed off on the first day, each playing in a threesome with white golfers. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* made no mention of past discrimination as it reported on the tournament throughout the week, noting that if Rhodes's "putter grows hot . . . he could lead the way." Sol Hughes was described as "Minnesota's leading Negro professional."<sup>42</sup>

Later in the week, the *Pioneer Press* asked Rhodes if "Negroes will make a surge into golf like into baseball?" Rhodes doubted that would be the case. "This isn't baseball," and it took money "to get into the game." Using himself as an example, Rhodes also revealed to the reporter that he hadn't played enough tournaments like the St. Paul Open to shake "the pressure and the tension."

In fact, Hughes and Rhodes did not play well in 1952. Both men returned the following year, when Rhodes shot a 66 in the opening round and finished in a three-way tie for sixth place, pocketing \$600. Hughes, now age 45 and with his best golf behind him, failed to qualify.<sup>43</sup>

**After the 1953 St. Paul Open, Solomon Hughes** continued to play in UGA events and local tournaments. He supported his wife, three daughters, and son with a variety of jobs, all the while continuing to offer golf lessons for the public at local courses.<sup>44</sup>

Hughes died in 1987, too early for him to see Tiger Woods manhandle the PGA tour and win the Masters at Augusta in 1997. But he did live to see some of the golfers he knew and had played against, like Ted Rhodes and Charlie Sifford, earn success on the PGA tour. In 1959 Sifford became the first black to receive a PGA card as an "approved" player, status usually reserved for foreign golfers, and in 1969 he became the first to win a major PGA event, the Los Angeles Open.<sup>45</sup>

Hughes, along with many of his contemporaries on the old UGA circuit, probably wondered what might have been. He surely knew that his challenge at the 1948 St. Paul Open helped speed the eventual rescinding of the PGA's Caucasians-only clause in 1961. Thanks in part to Hughes's efforts, African American pro golfers would not have to follow a segregated path to the first tee. □

*On July 4, 1952, the Pioneer Press announced Ted Rhodes's and Sol Hughes's participation in the St. Paul Open at Keller.*





*Hughes (center), denied professional competitions, continued to teach Twin Cities golfers.*

## Notes

1. Sec. 1, Art. III, PGA constitution and bylaws, adopted 1943, read: "Professional golfers of the Caucasian race . . . who have served at least five years in the profession . . . shall be eligible for membership." For legal decisions, see *Holmes v. City of Atlanta*, 350 US 879 (1955) and *New Orleans City Park Improvement Ass'n v. Detiege*, 252 F.2d 122 (5th Cir. 1958). Court cases had little effect because many communities, particularly in the South, avoided and delayed change; see Marvin P. Dawkins and Graham C. Kinloch, *African American Golfers During the Jim Crow Era* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2000).

2. For example, see Pete McDaniel, *Uneven Lies: The Heroic Story of African Americans in Golf* (Greenwich, CN: American Golfer, 2000); Calvin H. Sinnette, *Forbidden Fairways: African Americans and the Game of Golf* (Chelsea, MI: Sleeping Bear Press, 1998); John H. Kennedy, *A Course of Their Own: A History of African American Golfers* (Kansas City: Andrews

McMeel, 2000). These accounts build on Al Barkow, *Getting to the Dance Floor: An Oral History of American Golf* (New York: Atheneum, 1986), and Andrew S. Young, *Negro Firsts in Sports* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1963).

3. Other restrictions at cosponsored PGA "Open" tournaments typically limited spots to golfers who had finished in the top 60 at a previous tournament or received sponsors' invitations to play.

4. Joyce A. Hughes, "Solomon Hughes Sr.," manuscript in author's possession, Sept. 2000.

5. Quoted in Dawkins and Kinloch, *African American Golfers*, 104. On UGA history, see Sinnette, *Forbidden Fairways*, 56–59, 75–77, and Dawkins and Kinloch, *African American Golfers*, 21–22, 35–64, 104.

6. Bessie Hughes contends that her husband was Louis's first golf teacher in the 1930s. Bessie Hughes and Solomon Hughes Jr., interview by author, tape recording,

Aug. 2000, Minneapolis.

7. Bessie and Solomon Hughes Jr. interview.

8. Hughes, "Solomon Hughes Sr."

9. Hughes, "Solomon Hughes Sr.," Joyce Hughes to author, Aug. 12, 2001. African Americans could golf at public courses, including Keller, Phalen, and Como in St. Paul and Hiawatha and Theodore Wirth in Minneapolis, but they were frequently denied use of the clubhouses.

10. See Dave Anderson, "Ted Rhodes: Forgotten Trailblazer," *Golf Digest*, Apr. 1998, p. 183–90.

11. Sinnette, *Forbidden Fairways*, 84–91.

12. Al Barkow, *Golf's Golden Grind: The History of the Tour* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 208.

13. See Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 49–64.

14. Barkow, *Golf's Golden Grind*, 208.

15. The PGA's written policy excluding black golfers originated in the organization's discussion about women applying for

membership; see Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 20–21.

16. Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 49–64, gives the most complete account of this incident.

17. See *Minneapolis Star* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press* sports sections in weeks leading up to the tournament.

18. *St. Paul Recorder*, Aug. 6, 7, 1948, p. 1, reported on Louis's visit to Minnesota for the Elks' tournament and listed Sol Hughes as tournament chairman.

19. Bessie Hughes interview, Aug. 2000.

20. *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Aug. 13, 1948, p. 4.

21. *Minneapolis Star*, Aug. 14, 1948, p. 6, quoted in *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Aug. 20, 1948, p. 4.

22. Here and two paragraphs below, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Aug. 20, 1948, p. 4. Editor Newman lived a few doors away from the Hughes family on Fourth Avenue South at this time.

23. See, for example, Nancy J. Weiss, *Whitney Young, Jr., and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 38–47.

24. Here and below, *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Aug. 13, 1948, p. 1, 4.

25. Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 57.

26. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Aug. 11, 1948; *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Aug. 13, 1948, p. 1.

27. *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Aug. 13, 1948, p. 1. African American golfer Robert

“Pat” Ball of Evanston, Illinois, had played in the St. Paul Open in 1934, undetected by the PGA, which “probably didn’t think there were any African American golfers in Minnesota to play”; James Griffin, “Looking Back,” *Insight* (St. Paul), Mar. 7–13, 1994, p. 1c, 4c. Ball won the UGA championship in 1927, 1929, 1934, and 1941.

28. *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Aug. 13, 1948, p. 1.

29. *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Aug. 13, 1948, p. 1. The city could have found itself on the hot seat because of a similar case decided in July 1948 against the city of Warren, Ohio, which had leased a public swimming pool to an organization that discriminated against African Americans; *Culver v. City of Warren* 84 Ohio App. 373, 83 NE 2d 82.

30. Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 61.

31. *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Aug. 13, 1948, p. 4.

32. Barkow, *Golf's Golden Grind*, 213; James E. Kelley, *Minnesota Golf: 75 Years of Tournament History* (Minneapolis: O. H. Dahlen, 1976); *Kansas City Call*, Aug.–Sept. 1948.

33. Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 64; see pages 49–64 for a full account of the legal maneuverings between the PGA and Rowell. Sinette, *Forbidden Fairways*, 127, describes the effect of the PGA's terminology: “Besides being an oxymoronic contradiction in terms, the new name allowed a host club to refuse to ‘invite’ a black golfer to an event, whereupon the PGA could wring its hands and declare it had no control over a private club's policies.” See also Al Barkow, “The Jackie Robinsons of Pro Golf,” at <http://services.golfweb.com/library/barkow/barkow970212.html>.

34. Here and below, Tom Crane to Ken C. Webb, reprinted in *St. Paul Recorder*, July 27, 1951, p. 1. The St. Paul Open was not held in 1949 because the Western Open was scheduled for Keller that summer. No mention of Hughes attempting to enter the 1950 Open appeared in local newspapers.

35. *St. Paul Recorder*, July 27, 1951, p. 1; Bessie Hughes interview.

36. For accounts of the San Diego Open controversy, see Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 65–84; Barkow, *Golf's Golden Grind*, 212–13.

37. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jan. 16, 1952,

in Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 69–70, 263; *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1952, p. 15.

38. Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 75–80; *San Diego Union*, Jan. 15, 1952.

39. Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 80; *New York Times*, Jan. 18, 1952.

40. Kennedy, *Course of Their Own*, 80–83; *New York Times*, Jan. 18, p. 31, Jan. 19, p. 19, Jan. 20, p. 85—all 1952. The PGA set up a “Negro Steering Committee” composed of Louis, Spiller, Rhodes, Howard Wheeler, and Eural Clark to provide a list of African American golfers that tournament cosponsors might choose to invite to their events.

41. *Minneapolis Spokesman*, July 4, 1952, p. 1. By that time the NAACP also had moved into the picture, threatening to take the PGA to court and seek an injunction to halt tournament play if it continued the discrimination; *Insight*, Mar. 7–13, 1994, p. 1c, 4c.

42. Here and below, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 4–10, 1952, quotes on July 10, 1952, p. 16.

43. *Insight*, Mar. 7–13, 1994, p. 1c, 4c.

44. Bessie finished an interrupted high-school education after raising her children. She received a B.A. degree from Augsburg College in Minneapolis at age 59 and taught in the public-school system, receiving an Alumni Achievement Award from her alma mater.

Bessie and Solomon had four children. Alabama-born Antoinette (“Toni”), now deceased, a weather reporter for WTCN-TV from 1969 to 1978, was the first African American on a Minnesota television-news broadcast. Also born in Alabama was Joyce, who joined the University of Minnesota Law School in 1971 as the first African American female tenure-track law professor at any white law school in the country. She is currently professor of law at Northwestern University Law School, Chicago. Born in Minnesota were Shirley, a senior vice-president at Ceridian Corporation in Bloomington, and Solomon Jr., a musician and educator.

45. Lenwood Robinson, *Skins and Grins: The Plight of the Black American Golfer* (Evanston: Chicago Spectrum Press, 1997), 26; Arthur R. Ashe, *Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African-American Athlete, Since 1946* (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 151.



*Hughes in Gadsden, Alabama, about 1935*

*The photos of Hughes are courtesy Bessie Hughes; all the others are from the Minnesota Historical Society collections.*





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