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Georg Pahl took this picture of golfers Walter Hagen and Horton Smith as they were competing in Germany during May of 1929 (about five months before the Wall Street Market Crash). The photo is maintained by the German Federal Archives (where it has this description): "Berlin, golf championships. The golf championships on the golf course in Wannsee near Berlin! World champion Walter Hagen (left) America and Horton Smith (right) America, the strongest pair in the International Golf Championship." Online via Bundesarchiv, [Bild 102-07807](#); License: [CC-BY-SA 3.0](#)

Walter Hagen and Bobby Jones would appear on any golfer's list of the top players in the history of golf. Who were these legendary figures?

"The Haig," born in 1892, began his flamboyant career at a time when country clubs (especially in England) would not allow professional golfers to enter a clubhouse through the front door. Employed to teach wealthy members, professionals like Walter Hagen were treated more like servants of the club than masters of the game.

Refusing to be intimidated by such rules, Hagen (the son of a blacksmith) is widely credited with raising the status of professional golf. Winning his first U.S. Open at age 21 (in 1914), he was the first athlete to make a million dollars in his sport. As his friend and rival, Gene Sarazen, once said:

*It was Walter who made professional golf what it is.*

It wasn't his swing that made "The Haig" great. He played many bad shots every year. It was his calm demeanor on the green that carried him to victory time and again. He won 22 consecutive USPGA matches - still a record.

Twenty-five years after he won his first National Championship, Walter Hagen was honored by all of the top names in golf. Many of the congratulatory letters he received still exist. His autographs are available to view on-line.

His personal life was more of a struggle, however. Despite two failed marriages (Margaret, his first wife, was the mother of his son, Walter Jr.) and other hardships (his grandson, Walter III, died at age 15 in a target shooting accident), Walter Hagen lived life to the fullest:

*I never hurry. I never worry. Always stop to smell the flowers along the way. It is later than you think.*

His second wife, Edna Strauss, had a slightly different observation after she divorced him in 1927:

*Unless a woman is a golf addict herself, she should never marry a confirmed golfer. It can only go on the rocks. Walter lived golf, asleep and awake. Before dinner and after he was practicing strokes in the living room.*

Walter Hagen's main rival was Bobby Jones. His "greatest thrill in golf" stemmed from his defeat of Jones in a 1926 challenge match. Yet, in 1950 (when Jones won more votes than Hagen to become the greatest golfer in the first half of the century), "The Haig" observed:

*I would have voted for Jones myself. He was marvelous.*

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WALTER-HAGEN-Bagger-Vance-and-the-Bhagavad-Gita>

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## Media Stream



### Walter Hagen at Age 21

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Margaret Hagen and Walter Hagen, Jr.

Image courtesy, Detroit News.

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### Edna Strauss

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### Walter Hagen and Bobby Jones

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