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SPORTS

SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE

Golf legend dies

'Bantam' Ben Hogan was fierce competitor

By RON SIKAK
Associated Press Writer

The names in the recent book detail the golfing greatness of Ben Hogan, who died Friday at 84. A photograph captured his heart and soul.

The picture shows Hogan in his follow-through, pivoting from beneath his trademark white cap to the ball from his left foot toward the final green of the 1950 U.S. Open.

Just 16 months after a near-fatal car crash, there was Hogan hitting one of the hardest shots under the supreme pressure of the U.S. Open. And he hit it perfectly, driving a 3-wood he would win the next day.

Perfection is what this quiet man spent a lifetime pursuing.

Hogan, who had colon cancer surgery two years ago and Alzheimer's disease, died at his home in Fort Worth, Texas, according to his secretary Pat Martin.

Byron Nelson, a friend for more than 70

years, said Hogan had a major stroke on Thursday.

"He once played the game like me. Hogan and me, we both had a perfect swing as he did," Nelson said.

"Ben Hogan defined the inner will that you want to win," Crivello said.

"The Hawk" was what the players called Hogan for the way he studied a course.

He was also known as "Bantam Ben" because of his size. The adoring crowd in Scotland called him "The Wee Wee Man" because of his steady demeanor.

But for anyone who followed golf, Hogan simply meant perfection.

"Old Ben had, in my opinion, the best shotmaker the game has ever seen," Jack Nicklaus said in British Columbia, where he was playing a pro-am event. "We will all miss his very much."

Sam Snead and Nicklaus were the only players to surpass Hogan's 68 career victories.

And Nicklaus and Walter Hagen were the only ones to win more than his nine major professional championships.

But no one surpassed Hogan in his dedication to the game. He was the most feared player of his time, and somehow played his best golf after the 1949 car crash that shattered his legs so he never walked without pain again.

"I never saw anybody who was as determined to make a good putt, who worked as hard and long as Ben did," Nelson said.

Playing a limited schedule because of his legs, Hogan had perhaps the greatest year ever by a professional golfer in 1950 when he played in six tournaments and won five of them, including the Masters, the U.S. Open and the British Open.

But his legs couldn't hold up for the more than 200 holes of match play Hogan would have needed to win the PGA Championship, and he did not even try for the never achieved grand slam.

Ben Hogan personified golf for many of us. PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem said Hogan was the only player to surpass Hogan's 68 career victories.

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AP Photo
Ben Hogan, shown in this 1949 photo, was a three-time legend of golf.

Negro League star reminder of past

O'Neil never got chance in Big League

By ERIC DAMSEN
Tribune Staff Writer

SOUTH BEND — There was no Negro League legend behind Black O'Neil's performance on Friday night.

"People expect that there are a lot of things that I am," the 66-year-old Negro League legend told a gathering of local youth at Conestoga Stadium. "Those people are wrong. I don't know how to hate. I can get more out of love than out of hate."

It didn't matter that he sent more black players to the former segregated Major League than any other man in history; yet never had the opportunity to play there himself.

It didn't matter that he only had the opportunity to receive an eighth-grade education, because the highest high school in his childhood home in Sarasota, Fla., was in Tampa.

It didn't matter that he'd been repeating this same, simple but powerful message for the last two decades in a largely disinterested audience.

That audience is listening now and understanding O'Neil, who was delayed Friday night at The Cove by emergency medical and police hours before and during the Silver Blazer minor-league game with Fort Wayne.

"I think the turning point was the documentary Ken Burns did," said O'Neil, who has been traveling all over the country this summer, shaking hands, signing for the cameras and giving hugs to strangers in his, the 66th anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in baseball.

O'Neil recounted "Well, in 1942, Jackie Robinson was with us when we stopped at that filling station. The filling station attendant said 'hey that was a great game you played last night. Boy did you put on a show.' Then Jackie Robinson got off the bus and headed inside."

The attendant stopped Robinson and told him in no uncertain terms he could not use the restroom.

"Well, Jackie said, 'OK, take the box out of the back.'"

"Now our bus had a 30-gallon tank on one side and a 30-gallon tank on the other. That's 100 gallons, and that attendant knew he wasn't going to get another customer who was going to buy 100 gallons of gas so he said, 'you boys go on ahead, but don't stay long.'"

From that day on, there were no filling stations where we couldn't use the restroom. There wasn't a hotel where we couldn't sleep, Jackie Robinson said 'you don't have to take it. That's what No. 42 did for us.'"

But it didn't rescue O'Neil and players like him from obscurity. While Negro League stars like Hank Aaron (Birmingham Black Barons) and Roy Campanella (Baltimore Elite Giants) followed Robinson to the majors, O'Neil won his second Negro League batting title in 1946 and helped put the Monarchs in the Negro League World Series for the second time in a five-year span.

With almost no fan base, O'Neil and the Monarchs played at Stadium Field in South Bend once. "I loved South Bend. The people really came out. I don't think you could have had any more people in there." And yet there is no apparent record of the game.

A lot of (them) engineers did good background work to get the drivers in the car."

A sure sign that the drivers are comfortable on the fastest track in the FPG CART World Series was that the top 21 were within a second of each other on their lap times.

There were a lot of guys getting towed (by other cars) out there, and that's where a lot of those speeds came from," explained Pryor, who was here in July 1996 and knew his engine while leading last year's July race with nine laps remaining.

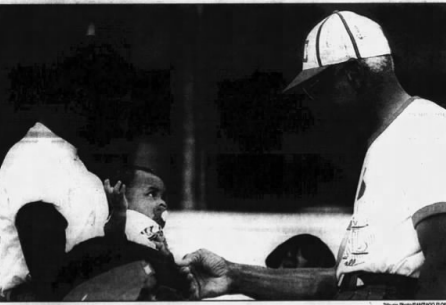
Another reason given for the higher-than-expected speeds on Friday was the track surface — especially on the right side of the track.

"The track seems real similar to last year," Pryor said. "Typically over the winter, it picks up some roughness."

Gagliardi went even further, saying "It feels smoother than last year, but that has to be the tire development again."

The top seven drivers on Friday were all on Firestone-shod cars, while two-time Michigan winner Michael Andretti (the fastest lap time) was on Goodyear tires.

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Eric Damsen, left, and 6-month-old Gabriel Stokes meet Negro League legend Buck O'Neil Friday night at Conestoga Stadium.

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AMERICAN LEGION

Leadoff batter powers Post 50 in sectional opener

14-game win streak on the line today

By FORREST MILLER
Tribune Staff Writer

What more could you ask from a leadoff batter?

A home run, two doubles and a single from Matt Busch powered South Bend Post 50 to a 6-3 victory over defending state champion Post 277 Friday at Bellefonte Park.

"I can't explain it," said Busch, a St. Joseph's High graduate headed for Indiana University where he hopes to make the baseball team as a walk-on.

"Start last good season, and he's really

"to say we are elated is an understatement. These kids all know and respect each other. I didn't like the way we started, maybe we were too respectful."

Post 50 manager Jeff Collier

practicing aggressively," said Post 50 manager Jeff Collier, whose team built a 14-game winning streak and a 26-4 record into today's second round game at noon against Michigan City Post 277, a 4-3 winner over Fort Post 140 in Friday's second game.

Jeff Busch, another St. Joe graduate, shorted down Post 277 on one hit through seven innings and finished with a five-homer.

The next time at bat, in the eighth, Busch broke the tie with an RBI single to score Eric Schuchow who had walked. Jeff Busch walked, Craig Post dropped a two-run single to left.

Eric Busch Thompson and B.J. Thompson plus an error produced another run in the ninth.

That one hit, by Jeff Busch, followed an error and contributed to a 20 lead for Post 50. Terry Matthews later scored Busch with a ground ball.

"To say we are elated is an understatement," added Collier. "These kids all know and respect each other. I didn't like the way we started, maybe we were too respectful."

Post 277 had a 10 lead with two out in the sixth inning. Matthews walked, Jeff Busch and Busch walked. Matthews walked, Jeff Busch and Busch walked.

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Stats struck out arms and walked three.

"We had our chances," said Post 277 coach Ed Maciejewski whose club stranded six in the last three innings. His club, 15-11, home Friday this afternoon at 4.

Today's first game winner owns the second game lower tonight at 8. Finals are Sunday at 8.

Post 50, Post 277 100 000 000-4 1-2 Post 277 000 000-2 1-1

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