

Issue Overview: Is golf a sport?

By procon.org, adapted by Newsela staff on 12.22.16

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TOP: Michelle Wie during the third round of the LPGA LOTTE Championship on April 18, 2014; Jamie Squire/Getty Images. MIDDLE: Sunday golfers on a Scottish course being discovered by the village pastor, from the 17th century painting "During the Time of the Sermons" by J.C. Dollman; Bettmann/Contributor via Getty Images; Gold medalist Inbee Park of Korea on Day 15 of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games; Scott Halleran/Getty Images.

Golf is a huge business in the United States. More than 24 million people are players. A 2016 poll found that nearly 1 in 5 Americans call themselves golf fans. This number is down slightly from 2015. For a long time, people have disagreed about whether golf is a sport or a game.

On one side of the argument, people say that golf meets the dictionary definition of a sport, because it is a physical, athletic activity. They add that golf is recognized as a sport by sporting goods companies, athletic groups, fans, and the media. Also, they say that golf's inclusion in the Olympics in 2016 is more proof that it is sport.

On the other side, people say that golf is a game, not a sport. They say golf is not a very physical activity and can be played well by people who are overweight or injured. Also, golf was only recently added to the Olympics. For more than 100 years it was not included in the Olympic Games.

Early History Of Golf

The beginnings of golf aren't exactly known. However, the version that people play today is thought to have started in Scotland in the 1300s.

In the 1400s, people in Scotland were obsessed with golf. King James II was worried it was interfering with bow and arrow practice, which was needed to help protect Scotland against the English. He banned golf in 1457. The ban lasted until 1502. King James IV was the first to buy golf equipment that year. He became a dedicated golfer.



In 1764, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews (R&A) started an 18-hole golf course. Today, this is the standard number of holes for a round of golf. In 1897, the R&A was given the authority to determine the rules of golf.

The first golf club in America was built in 1888 in New York.

Definition Of Sport

The question of whether golf is a sport centers on the meaning of the word "sport." Most dictionaries say sports are physical activities that may be competitive.

Bernard Suits is an author who writes about sports. He once listed the qualities that all sports must have. He said a sport is a game of skill, not of luck. It must require physical skill. Lastly, it must be widely known, and must be formally organized in some way. For example, most sports need a league to set the rules that everyone will follow.

Golf In The Olympics

For many, the Olympic Games serve as a measurement for whether an activity should be called a sport. Golf was first included in the Olympics in 1900. However, it was removed shortly thereafter because of a lack of participation and conflict with other golf events.

Through the years, there were several attempts to bring golf back to the Olympics. It wasn't until the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil that golf returned.



Some say the return of golf does not prove that it is a sport. Rather, they say, it only proves that the Olympics wanted to benefit from the star power of famous golfers like Tiger Woods.

Golf Industry

The business of golf has a large financial impact. The Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) estimates that it provides more than 2 million jobs in the U.S. It also raises more than \$3.5 billion for charity each year.

In America, the PGA is made up of 27,000 male and female professional golfers. As of 2012, there were 15,751 golf courses in the United States. In 2007, the number of golf courses closing began to outnumber new courses just opening.

Supreme Court Ruling In Golf Case

In 2001, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the PGA had to allow golfer Casey Martin to use a golf cart in tournaments. They ruled this way against PGA's claim that walking is an important part of golf competition. Martin was born with a disease that became worse over time. It left him unable to walk across a golf course.

The court said the heart of the game is to use clubs to move a ball from the ground to a hole with as few strokes as possible. The court did not think a golf cart would change this. The court also said that golf is not completely determined by someone's abilities. Weather, for example, can shape the outcome.

Athletes?

The disagreement continues today. Those who think golf is a sport point to pro-golfers like Woods, who are strong and fit. Those who disagree point to golfers like John Daly. He is a successful pro golfer who once had health problems.

So is golf a sport? According to Popular Science magazine, the answer depends on who you ask -- and whether that person owns a set of golf clubs.

Source: golf.procon.org

Quiz

- 1 Select the sentence from the section "Golf Industry" that suggests golf popularity may be going down.
- (A) The Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) estimates that it provides more than 2 million jobs in the U.S.
 - (B) It also raises more than \$3.5 billion for charity each year.
 - (C) In America, the PGA is made up of 27,000 male and female professional golfers.
 - (D) In 2007, the number of golf courses closing began to outnumber new courses just opening.
- 2 Based on information in the article, which of these statements is TRUE?
- (A) Whether or not golf is considered a sport, it will always be featured in the Olympics.
 - (B) Whether or not golf is considered a sport, it currently creates a lot of jobs for the U.S.
 - (C) Whether or not golf is considered a sport, it has a fan base that is steadily growing.
 - (D) Whether or not golf is considered a sport, it started in the U.S. and has spread around the world.
- 3 According to the article, how have players like Tiger Woods and John Daly affected the question about whether golf is a sport?
- (A) These players are physically fit and athletic, which proves that golf is a sport.
 - (B) These players have had physical limitations, which proves that golf is not a sport.
 - (C) These players are physically very different, which makes the question more complicated.
 - (D) These players are physically very different, which proves that golf should not be considered neither a sport or a game.
- 4 Fill in the blank.
- The author mainly explains the issue of whether golf is a sport or not by...
- (A) presenting both sides of the issue and then taking the side of golf being a sport
 - (B) presenting both sides of the issue and then taking the side of golf not being a sport
 - (C) presenting both sides of the issue and then remaining neutral about golf being a sport or not
 - (D) presenting both sides of the issue and then questioning whether or not this is a true issue