

The Shot Heard Around the World

Andrew Wood

It was during the second Masters tournament, in 1935, that the story of a single, remarkable shot was heard around the world. It not only immortalized the man who made it, but also established the Masters as a major tournament when the shot was described in the pages of every widely read newspaper in every country where golf was played. Strange as it may seem to us, in these days of global television coverage and huge crowds, this fabled moment in golf's history was observed by only a handful of spectators. One famous and highly respected writer said he had talked to hundreds of people during his lifetime who claimed to have witnessed the historic shot. He found this strange, not to say amusing, since he, together with Bobby Jones, was one of only 20 or so people who were actually present at the time! Most of the spectators were following or tournament leaders Wood and Picard.

It was a little before 5:30 when Gene Sarazen, partnered with Walter Hagen, came to Augusta's par five, 15th hole. Sarazen hit a beautiful drive, with just enough draw to keep the ball bounding down the fairway like a scared rabbit until it came to rest just 220 yards from the green. As he strode down the fairway toward his ball, a massive roar erupted from the 18th green. Within minutes the word had filtered back to the spot where Sarazen was approaching his second shot. Craig Wood had made a magnificent birdie three at the 18th, giving him a total of 282. When he heard this, Sarazen turned to Stovepipe, his lanky old caddie, and asked, "What do I need to win?" Hagen, who was no longer in contention, stifled a chuckle, but Stovepipe replied, "You need four straight threes Mr. Gene, that will do it." Four straight threes meant an eagle, a par and two birdies, but Sarazen felt up to the challenge.

His confidence must have wilted as he drew level with his ball and found it laying on bare ground in the back of a small divot. Although the yardage called for a 3-wood, Sarazen decided, because of the lie, he would have to hit a 4-wood. At this point Sarazen remembered the lucky ring that had been given to him in his hotel lobby the night before. He pulled it from his pocket and rubbed it over Stovepipe's head to arouse its powers. Sarazen would later comment that it wasn't a matter of invoking magical powers, but of breaking the tension of the situation and helping him to relax before taking up his stance beside the ball.

The combination of the lie, the distance he had to cover and the club he had to use, required Sarazen to hood the face of the club a few degrees, and put into his swing every ounce of strength his body could muster. He struck it dead center and the ball shot toward the pin, never rising more than 30 feet above the ground. It carried the water hazard by several feet and hopped toward the cup. The small gallery at greenside exploded, jumping in the air and cheering wildly, as the ball disappeared into the cup. Sarazen had achieved that rarest of golfing feats, a double-eagle, a two on a par five, and he had done so under the greatest possible pressure. History had been made and the Masters at Augusta National was to become one of golf's four major championships.

When Sarazen reached the green he could hear a young man arguing on the scorer's telephone about what had happened. The boy was insisting that Sarazen had made a two on the 15th, a par five, and not on the 16th, a par three. Craig Wood could only wait in the club house as Sarazen played the last three holes in par to tie him at 282. In a play off the next day, Sarazen emerged the winner and donned the coveted green jacket!

Excerpted from [The Traits of Champions](#) by Andrew Wood & Brian Tracy