

BILLIE ROWE'S NOTEBOOK

History Putted Across Hartford's Green Acres

HARTFORD, Conn. — In 1967 Charlie Sifford putted himself into golf history as the first Afro-American to win a regularly scheduled Professional Golfers Association tournament. He shot a 16-under par (272) to win the 16th annual, what was then, The Greater Hartford Open. His cash prize was \$20,000 out of a total purse of \$100,000. Today that same event, known throughout the golfing world as "The Sammy Davis, Jr. Greater Hartford Open," offers a total purse of \$600,000 and the winning share for a four day trot from tee to green, 72-times, will gross him \$108,000. Since Charlie Sifford's historic win, the top Black tee-man, Lee Elder, who almost won in '72, but bowed to Lee Trevino in a sudden death playoff, and Calvin Peete, the sweet swinging fairway artist, have won in excess of \$150,000 traversing the GHO green acres. Thirteen years ago it fanfared another page into golf's history book. It became the first major tee/green stop to name its tournament in honor of an Afro-American superstar to become "The Sammy Davis, Jr. Greater Hartford Open."

And my how it has grown from those earlier wineless days of no roses and the \$15,000 purses of its first thru 15th annual Insurance City Open tournaments. And even the \$100,000 top money change over of the late sixties, 71 and 72.

The Sammy Davis Jr. Greater Hartford Open is one of the biggest and greatest seasonal events this Connecticut city has calendared. It not only attracts record crowds, it also affords the city a major

opportunity to glitter in the national spotlight on the eyelanes of the CBS-network which rides hi on the Nielsen charts with the live tee to green drive. To add spice to his usual wooing "Mr. D" produced a magnificent show at the Civic Center. It was so'ooo big Liza Minelli was the opening act, Jerry Lewis introduced Bob Hope and the man himself intro'ed '84's last half "Miss America," Suzette Charles who's not just beautiful, but talented to a full measure. Like that commercial goes: "It's like no other event in the world. And by the bye: if memory serves correctly it was on the Hartford links that pioneer golfer Teddy Rhodes made sports history. He was our first to play a PGA scheduled event. Though declared ineligible in PGA events, he finished fifth, among four others, and collected \$55 as a participant in the 3rd Insurance City Open. Just to keep the historical line in order, the tournament is now "Canon GHO Sammy Davis Jr. Greater Hartford Open." And if you don't think that S big, 70th place in the tee to green contest will pay \$1,200 which is half of what Ted Kroll got for winning in '52 and \$565 more than Peter Brown received for a 14th place finish in '72.

NEWSY PEOPLE & THINGS — The lovely and talented Suzette Charles has said "yes" to young and handsome Dino Meminger. He's Sammy Davis, Jr.'s lighting director and she's '84's last half "Miss America." Good luck young people, tie a knot that will last . . . The amazing Willie Mays is still a magnetic personality. In fact so much so there were more diners than tables at his "Say Hey" Foundation 3rd annual Celebrity Tournament. Held at the posh Briar Hall Country

Club, his home away from home, it attracted enough superstars to line the walls of several Sports Hall of Fame. Mike Gross really did an organizing job on this one for his favorite fella. Gordie Howe, Monte Irwin, Cal Abrams, Willard Marshall, Paul Blair, Larry Doby, Bob Taylor, Tommy Agee, Sal Maglie, Julius LaRosa and Bill McCreary were among the many who traversed from tees to greens to dinner tables . . . Sparky Martin and Henry Nash are burning over the treatment their Subrena agency received from singer Sade. They informed that they offered her the same contract with better conditions for handling her quest for fame, yet she

inked with an ofay outfit. Which by the way, is now seeking their help to get her started on the proper turn. Received a marvelous letter from Eva Jessye, but need more space to eye level details. Would you believe she's 90 and still looking for something theatrical to do . . . Panama Francis' card from Pescara Italia is all raves over the acceptance of the Savoy Sultans.

CONVERSATION ROWE — Happy that the NAACP has put the Wax Works on the front burners of its "Fair Share" campaign. It's hi-time that those record moguls hear that we are tired being partied and are now ready to talk partnership. All the Black press get out of the

tallow factories are their press releases, seldom if ever an ad. While the Association is at it there's no harm in giving the Hook to some of the Bros and Sisters who have been guarding the doors long enough to be considered "The Enemy Within." And that's no pun Dr. Ben Hooks, just a brag to the wise . . . What is this being eared about that one of its biggest sponsorer is developing a chill about continuing to play the monied tune for the '86 "Kool Jazz Festival?" A letter here from Mrs. Vida Cordon, Rocky Mount, N.C. extolling the worth and work of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorotity, Inc. Epsilon Gamma Zeta Chapter. She seeks wide

support for that group's Nov. Blue Revue, which is its traditional scholarship fun and fundraiser. She is also sponsoring Joi Treva Alston in the contest for "Miss Blue Revue." . . . If the mail was faster this piece could have been before your eyes earlier. Though surrendered by danger on location in Israel in the midst of the Lebanon/Syria/terrorist tension, Louis Gossett Jr. cards he's having a grand time. Top cast in "The Iron Eagle," he's getting an eye closeup of the good and bad in human kind: He said that hate and death are the neighbors of innocent peop. . . . STAY LOOSE . . . Billy Rowe is a syndicated columnist.



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