

SPORTING LEGENDS: JACK NICKLAUS

SPORT: GOLF

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1962 - 2005

Jack William Nicklaus (born January 21, 1940 in Columbus, Ohio), also known as "The Golden Bear", was a major force in professional golf from the 1960s to the late 1990s, and is regarded as the greatest golfer of all time.



Together with Arnold Palmer, he is credited with turning golf into the major spectator sport it has become. While Palmer brought golf into the TV era, it was the developing Nicklaus-Palmer rivalry that drove subsequent interest.

Nicklaus took up golf at the age of ten, shooting 51 for his first nine holes. He won the first of six Ohio State Junior titles at the age of twelve. While attending Ohio State University he won the U.S. Amateur title twice (1959, 1961) and an NCAA Championship (1961).

Nicklaus began his professional career in 1962 and his record of eighteen wins in major tournaments is as yet unmatched: three Open Championships, four U.S. Opens, five PGA Championships, and six Masters.

He is one of only five golfers to win all four current majors in a career, and the first of only two (the other being Tiger Woods) to have won all four majors more than once. In 1986, he became the oldest player to ever win The Masters. In all, he had 48 top-3 finishes in majors, including 19 second places and nine thirds, 56 top-5 finishes and 73 top-10 finishes.

Nicklaus's six wins at the Masters came in 1963, 1965, 1966, 1972, 1975 and 1986. His win tally is a record and he was also runner-up four times.

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Jack Nicklaus' tee-shots were famed for their pinpoint accuracy and consistency.

In the 1970s he finished in the top ten every year. He appeared in the event 45 times and made the cut 37 times. In 1998, at the age of 58 he finished an impressive sixth.

He won the U.S. Open in 1962, 1967, 1972 and 1980, and is tied with Ben Hogan, Bobby Jones and Willie Anderson for most wins. He is the only player to win the title in three different decades, and also had four runner-up finishes in his 42 appearances. He made the cut 35 times.

Nicklaus won the British Open in 1966, 1970, 1978, and was runner-up seven times. He made the cut in 32 out of 38 appearances, and from 1966 to 1980 he never finished worse than sixth.

His five wins at the PGA Championship came in 1963, 1971, 1973, 1975 and 1980. He is tied with Walter Hagen for most wins. He made the cut 27 times in 37 finishes and was runner-up four times. His 1971 victory made him the first player to win the career Grand Slam twice, an achievement which was matched by Tiger Woods at the 2005 British Open.

Nicklaus also won the prestigious Players Championship three times. He won events around the globe, including six Australian Opens (1964, 1968, 1971, 1975, 1976 and 1978).

He is second to Sam Snead on the all-time chart of players with most PGA Tour wins, having accumulated seventy-three titles. In seventeen consecutive seasons from 1962 to 1978 he always won at least one PGA Tour title and always finished in the top ten on the money list. He topped the PGA Tour money list eight times: 1964, 1965, 1967, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1976.

In 1996, Nicklaus was the first person in the history of the PGA to win the same Senior PGA Tour (now the Champions Tour) event four times.

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Nicklaus is the only player to ever win majors across 3 different decades.

He is the only person in the history of the PGA to win all of the major championships on both the PGA TOUR and Champions Tour.

In 1978, he received *Sports Illustrated* magazine's "Sportsman of the Year" award. In 1980 he was awarded the BBC Sports Personality of the Year Overseas Personality Award.

Jack Nicklaus had an unusual combination of being one of the greatest putters of all time as well as the longest hitter on the tour during his prime. He popularised the "power fade" which was his characteristic ball flight.

He is currently a leading golf course architect, in partnership with his sons and son-in-law through Nicklaus Design, and is personally responsible for well over 200 golf course designs. These include several of the world's leading courses, such as Muirfield Village, Shoal Creek, Castle Pines and the PGA Centenary Course at the Gleneagles Hotel.

Nicklaus also continues to manage the Memorial Golf Tournament he created in his home state of Ohio, which is played on a course he designed and is one of the more prestigious events on the PGA TOUR. His other interests are varied and many, and include a golf equipment company and golf academies.

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Scott Burton's Final Thought

Jack Nicklaus deserves to be considered as the greatest golfer of all-time.

The sheer consistency of his success is unparalleled, and even though Tiger Woods may one day go on to beat Nicklaus records, it is still an amazing standard to emulate.

Woods aside, it is likely that Nicklaus achievements may not be matched for another 100 years, and that is a fitting tribute to the great man.

Jack Nicklaus had the psychological duality for professional golf; he was mean and focused during match play, yet he could also switch it off where necessary to emit consummate sportsmanship as well.

He was one of a kind, and I wouldn't doubt that even to this day, he could still play a mean round of golf on one of his custom-designed courses!



Nicklaus' final hole of tournament golf in 2005 was an emotional moment for all golf fans.