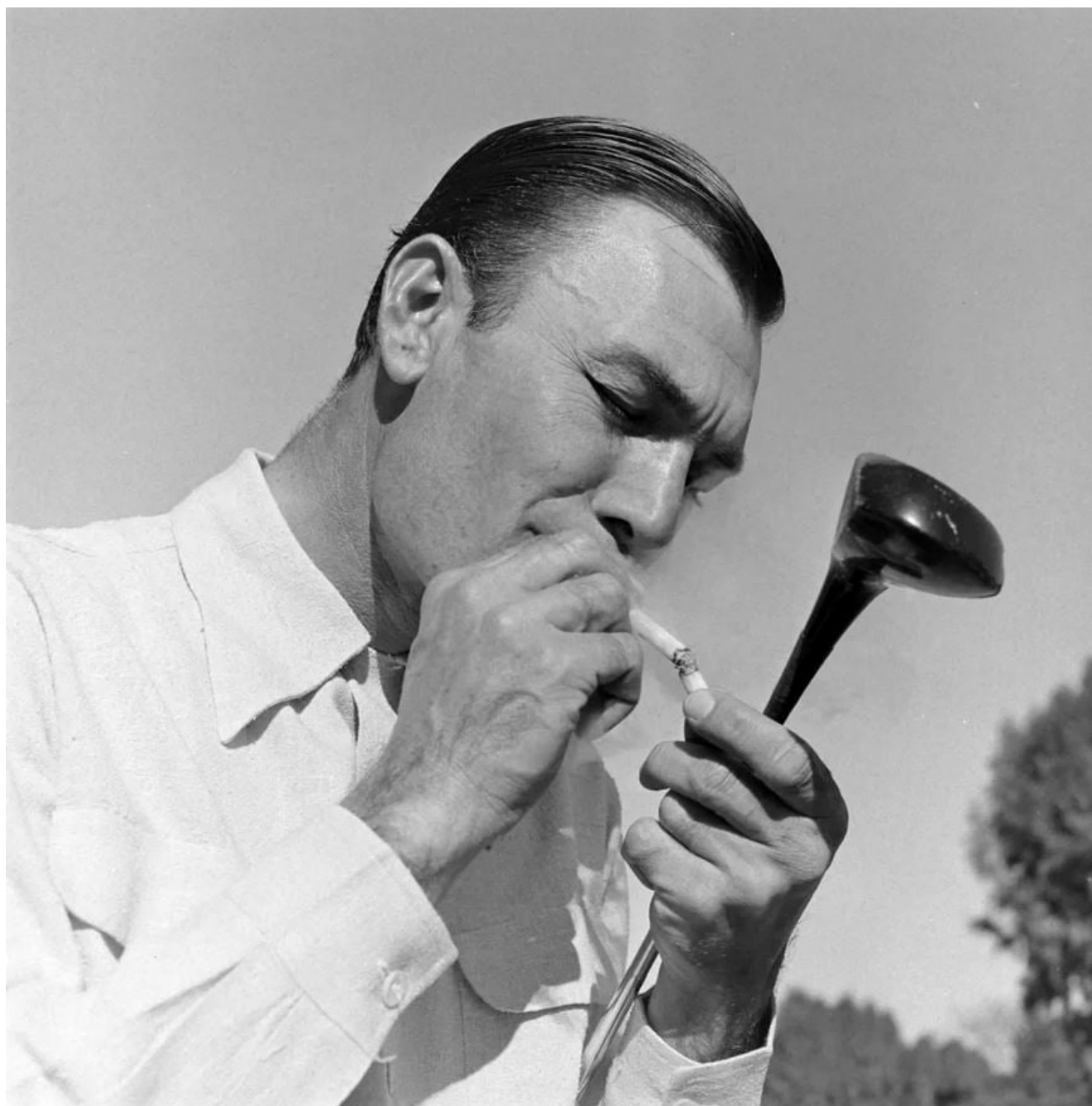


95 and Not Dead Yet: Puff the Magic Golfer

by [Reg Green](#) (July 2024)



Ben Hogan

The no-smoking rules at a local golf course are to be more rigorously enforced, I read in the paper this week. I wonder

how the committee would feel about a memory I have of Ben Hogan, paired with Sam Snead—two legends almost within touching distance—in the Canada Cup (now the World Cup) in a different era from today.

The match, in 1956 at Wentworth near London, is remembered mainly for the fourth hole of the last round where Hogan's second shot dropped agonizingly into a bunker sixty feet from the pin—from where he holed out! (holed out!!) for an eagle three. And added a grin to the crowd to show he'd planned it all that way to relieve the tedium.

I missed that mythological moment but he gave me a different memory to treasure when one of his shots flew off course, ending at a grove of impossibly high trees standing between it and the green from where the only way out was to take an extra stroke by playing a simple shot back to the fairway.

He had other ideas, however, and thoughtfully pulling out a pack of Chesterfields, took a leisurely puff, squinted through the trees (oh, no, Ben, please don't!) and, muscles rippling, lofted the ball in an unbelievably steep arc over the rampart of branches to land close enough to the hole to shake free of this pesky interruption to the American team's march to victory. A sigh went up from the crowd like the one Dante gave when he first saw Beatrice.

I've heard of too many people scarcely able to breathe because of lungs destroyed by smoking to want to promote tobacco in the slightest way but if it can help bring off miracles like that there must be something to be said for it.

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Reg Green is an economics journalist who was born in England

and worked for the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Times of London*. He emigrated to the US in 1970. His books include *The Nicholas Effect* and his website is nicholasgreen.org.

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