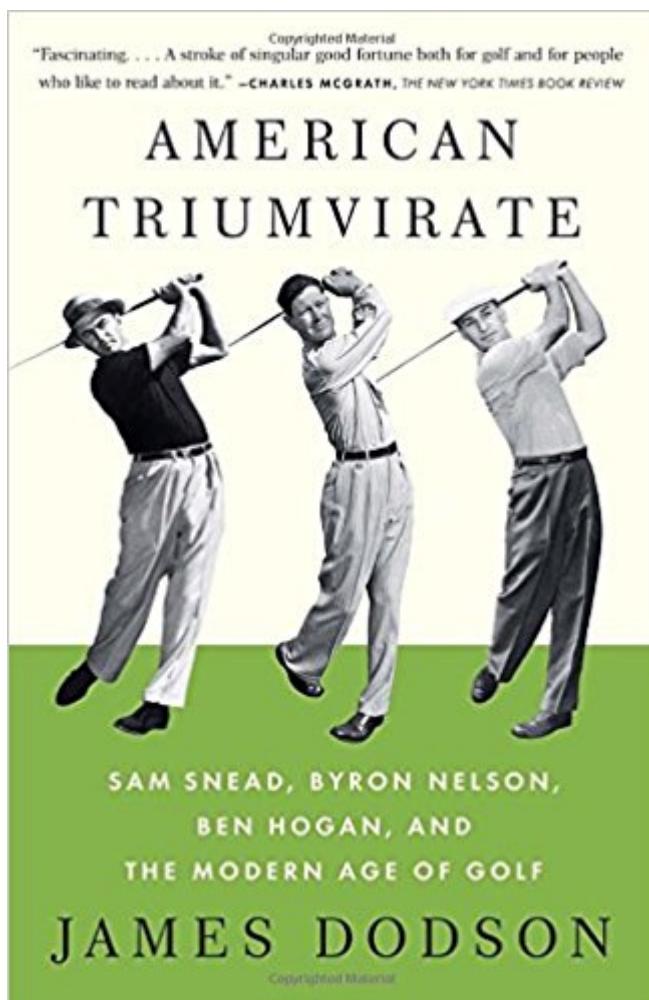


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# American Triumvirate: Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, Ben Hogan, And The Modern Age Of Golf



## Synopsis

With compelling detail and pure passion, James Dodson recounts the singular brilliance of three golf titans and how they saved the professional tour and created the game as we know it today. During the Depression golf was in crisis. As a spectator sport it was on the verge of extinction. This was the unhappy prospect facing Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, and Ben Hogan – “two dirt-poor boys from Texas and another from Virginia, who had dedicated themselves to the sport. But then lightning struck, and from the late thirties into the fifties these three men were so thoroughly dominant that they transformed both how the game was played and how society regarded it. Paving the way for the subsequent popularity of players from Arnold Palmer to Tiger Woods, they were, and will always remain, a triumvirate for the ages.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Evokes an era when golf was more vivid and less corporate....Dodson manages to reanimate his chosen three. His book makes a convincing case that Snead, Nelson and Hogan really did usher in the modern era of golf – “because of the quality of their play and the dramatic nature of their rivalry” and it’s also a fascinating biographical account of three gifted, unusual men....That all three should come along at the same time and that their lives should interweave so intricately – “one or another of them was always on top of the leader board, it seems – is almost uncanny, a stroke of singular good fortune both for golf and for people who like to read about it.” – Charles McGrath, The New York Times Book Review – The research is thorough and meticulous. The writing is superb – If you love golf, this book should be on your shelf." – The Tampa Tribune – Ben

Hogan, Sam Snead and Byron Nelson will always be long remembered as giants of the game. Jim's depiction of them magnifies the brilliance of the three, who strangely enough we all born in the year 1912. What a year! "Ben Crenshaw" read it at night, and saw Hogan, Snead and Nelson in my dreams. American Triumvirate is populated by giants, roaming the country in big American-made cars in search of greatness. I'm only sorry Herb Wind isn't around to enjoy it. Jim Dodson has stepped right into the dean's old shoes. "Michael Bamberger" James Dodson brings his formidable skills as a raconteur and historian to this rich and sweeping narrative that will engage and move you. His breezy tone made me feel I was with him as he chatted with Hogan, Nelson, and Snead. American Triumvirate is a major contribution to golf's literature. To read it is to appreciate the power of storytelling in the hands of a master, and what a cast of characters! This singular chronicler of the game "its people, its culture, its tapestry" "has done it again." "Lorne Rubenstein, author of *Moe and Me: Encounters with Moe Norman, Golf's Mysterious Genius*" "Golf is enriched by its history. Thankfully we have writers like Jim Dodson, who with his great love of the game and exceptional writing ability allows the reader to experience the golfing life of three of the game's greatest players as they bring awareness of the professional game to the level we know today." "Barney Adams, founder and chairman, Adams Golf" "is always a pleasure to welcome a new book from James Dodson" "without doubt one of the best golf writers". But in American Triumvirate, he has almost outdone himself. Filled to the brim with biographical tidbits, insightful golf history and loving portraits of these golfing musketeers in the early years of professional golf history, Dodson's book captures it all in a readable and exciting narrative. He seems to have interviewed everyone who knew them, and the stories and anecdotes make us feel like we're right there watching their near perfect golf swings over and over again. "Tom Lavoie, Shelf Awareness

James Dodson is the editor of *O. Henry* and *PineStraw* magazines and an award-winning writer-in-residence at The Pilot newspaper. He is the author of Ben Hogan's authorized biography and worked with Arnold Palmer on his, and his other best-selling books include *Final Rounds*, *The Dewsweepers*, and *A Son of the Game*. He wrote a column for *Golf Magazine* for nearly twenty years, and in 2011 he received the Donald Ross Award from the American Society of Golf Course Architects for his contribution to golf literature. In observance of the 100th anniversary of the births of Hogan, Snead and Nelson, American Triumvirate was adapted into a tribute documentary that aired on Golf Channel in September 2012, with a script by the author.

I know I won't be the only one that bought this book hoping to get yet another glimpse at Ben Hogan's life. Having read the majority of anything related to the man, I went into this reading with an open mind, knowing the majority of what I would read would either be a rehash or if I was lucky, a different perspective on the now historic events of his life. I wasn't disappointed with the Ben Hogan portions of the book, and although they were mostly very well known details, I did find a gem or two along the way. Again, I expected that - what I didn't expect was to get a much better glimpse at another one of my very favorite golfers, Mr. Sam Snead. While Byron's role in the book is somewhat diminished simply because he bowed out of this triumvirate early on, Snead shares the spotlight with Hogan in a way that I would venture to say might have pleased him. The undertones in the book are obvious, although they amounted to good friends in the end, Sam Snead took on the role of Hogan's principal rival/motivator once Lord Byron decided to hang up his clubs for quite literally, greener pastures. I've read a few books on Snead, and countless stories on his life on tour but before this book I hadn't read an autobiography on the man and didn't have enough context to truly see the incredible rivalry Sam and Ben had and how they influenced each other during their time as Golf's undisputed titans. Great read for fans of both players but it can drag a bit since it's also a historical piece that more or less documents all the notables achievements of all three men's careers.

What a wonderful Book!! Maybe the best golf book ever written. Dodson brings The Modern Age Of Golf right into one's life. One feels as if he grew up with Sam, Ben, and Byron, met and understood them and their families, and was present when they grew old and they were no longer of this world. If you love history and if you love golf you will love American Triumvirate. JJ

It's been almost 30 years ago now, but I can still remember it clearly. I was at the D.A. Weibring Pro/Am in Quincy, Illinois, where I grew up and was a bit of a golfer myself. I was walking down one of the cart paths at Quincy Country Club, where the tournament was being held. The bulk of the action was elsewhere at the moment and the path was quiet, when I came across an older man sitting alone in a golf cart. I recognized him right away, and for the next 10 minutes or so, until someone came to get him, I had a quiet conversation about golf with Byron Nelson. Before he left, he signed my cap, which I can see from here as I write, sitting on the top of one of my bookshelves, as it has ever since the day I met him. I mention this anecdote, not because it is my only real brush with golfing greatness, but because I thought of it often as I read Mr. Dodson's triple biography of Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, and Ben Hogan. When you meet someone in life, even for a few

minutes, and then encounter them in print, if the person you read about doesn't jibe with your experience then it is difficult to accept and enjoy what you're reading. Fortunately, the good-natured gentleman that Dodson describes as Byron Nelson easily reflected my image of him and made this book a pleasure to read. I knew a bit about golf's great stars before reading this--more about Nelson and Hogan than Snead--but I learned much in this well-researched, well-told biography. I knew little about their respective youths, from their closeness in age to the physical proximity of Nelson and Hogan as young caddies at the same club. Most interesting to me was how professional golf was conducted in those pre- and post-WWII days with the rise and fall of various clubs and tournaments, and the lengths golfers sometimes had to go to pursue their careers. It is amazing when you consider how big a business golf is today. (For someone whose has been fortunate enough to go to the Masters on one occasion, it is also wonderful to read about the start of the tournament and the development of its traditions.) Dodson has chosen his subjects well. Not only are they joined together historically in their sport with their incredible achievements, but their sharply contrasting personalities and approaches to the game make this book fascinating. Anyone who has an interest in golf and its history would be well advised to read *American Triumvirate*.

Well timed on the 100 year anniversary of the birth of these 3 legends. The author again (this is the 2nd book of his I have read) does not disappoint and finally has captured, in tandem, the careers of these remarkable individuals, as they occurred, side by side, thereby putting the reader in the moment. The narrative never loses sight of the bigger picture, setting the events against the backdrop of world events and the perpetual impact it was having to the course professional golf was charting. What I enjoyed also was that the author merely mentions the swing mechanics and issues of these wonderful but distinctively diverse golfers, rather than delve too deeply into this subject, thereby keeping the theme intact. Furthermore, the presentation in hardcover, is splendid. The only minor negative I would mention, but I stress minor to the point of microscopic, is the photos included in the book are what keen golf readers have seen in countless books, magazines and articles, and offer no new or fresh visuals. However, the book is a must read, going so far for me to say it would serve as the definitive on the subject.

If you're a golfer with even a modicum of interest in your game's history you'll enjoy this little treatise to three of golf's greatest historical figures. I hadn't been aware that all three of these men - Ben Hogan, Byron Nelson, and Sam Snead - were born in the same year: 1912. Nor did I know that Hogan and Nelson had gotten their start in the game looping at the same course in Texas. My only

criticism of the book is that I had trouble following the timeline. It would have been great to have a chart showing the tournaments the book was referring to so I could put each event in its historical context. Of course, I only read the Kindle version. Maybe the print edition included such information. With that caveat, I recommend the book highly. Golfers will find it both entertaining and informative.

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