



## WHO WAS CHARLIE SIFFORD?

**GOAL:** To understand the history of Charlie Sifford

**TASKS:**

- Read the passage about Charlie Sifford
- Take the quiz

Charlie Sifford broke barriers throughout his life. He was the first African-American to earn a PGA TOUR card and the first to be inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame. But there was a time when none of that seemed possible.

Jackie Robinson's courageous integration of Major League Baseball in 1946 is widely and appropriately credited for changing the American sports landscape forever. One year later, toughened by a tour of duty in the Army's 24th Infantry, another young black man named Charlie Sifford told Robinson he planned to follow in his footsteps and compete in golf. At the time golf was a sport where the ball and the participants were equally as white.

"He asked me if I was a quitter," Sifford recalled. "He said, 'OK, if you're not a quitter, go ahead and take the challenge. If you're a quitter, there's going to be a lot of obstacles you're going to have to go through to be successful in what you're trying to do.'

"I made up my mind I was going to do it. I just did it. Everything worked out perfect."

Indeed it was Sifford who opened professional golf, a game with a "Caucasian only" rule, to blacks more than four decades ago. Without him Tiger Woods may not have been able to make his own impact on the sports world.

"He has my respect and my gratitude for the sacrifices he made to open the doors to

this great game to people of color," Woods said.

Born June 2, 1922, Sifford started in golf the only way a black kid growing up in North Carolina could in the 1930s... as a caddie. By 13, he could shoot par golf and earned 60 cents a day of which 50 cents went to his mom and 10 cents was kept to buy stogies. They became his trademark on the course.

**FUN FACT: Charlie Sifford once served as jazz singer Billy Eckstine's personal pro.**

Sifford's skin was tough enough to endure racial injustice and epithets. At the 1952 Phoenix Open, Sifford and his all-black foursome, which included the boxer Joe Louis, found excrement in the cup on the first hole, and waited nearly an hour for the cup to be replaced.

Despite all of the insults, Sifford lived up to the standard set by Robinson. He won five straight National Negro Open's from 1952-1956, all the while pushing golf's color boundaries. And he fought his battle essentially alone as he didn't have teammates. He broke barriers by breaking par.

Not until 1960, when he was 39, did Sifford earn a PGA TOUR player card. A year later, under pressure from the California attorney general, the PGA of America, which ran the TOUR at the time, dropped its "Caucasian only" membership clause.

Sifford's best years had already passed but he still won twice on the PGA TOUR. First at the 1967 Greater Hartford Open (now the Travelers Championship) and then at the 1969 Los Angeles Open (now The Genesis Invitational that is aptly hosted by Tiger Woods and his foundation).

"If you try hard enough, anything can happen," he said.

Sifford would also go on to win the 1975 Senior PGA Championship and become an original member of PGA TOUR Champions, where he won the Suntree Classic.

In 2004, Sifford became the first black golfer to break into another exclusive club. Of the 100 previously enshrined at the World Golf Hall of Fame, none were black. He was selected via the Lifetime Achievement category for his contributions to the game.

"Tonight we honor a man not just for what he accomplished on the course, but for the course he chose in life," South African legend Gary Player said as he introduced his long-time friend at the induction ceremony in St. Augustine, Fla.

Better late, than never. But that had been the story of Charlie Sifford's life.

"Man, I'm in the Hall of Fame, the World Hall of Fame," he said in his induction ceremony speech. "Don't forget that now! I'm in the World Hall of Fame with all the players. That little old golf I played was all right, wasn't it?"

## HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CHARLIE SIFFORD?

### True or False

Label Each Statement T for true or F for false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Jackie Robinson was credited for changing the American sports landscape.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Charlie Sifford told Jackie Robinson that he was going to join a sport that was less inclusive of African American's. That sport was football.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Charlie Sifford got involved with the sport of golf while young when he got a job in the golf shop as a cashier.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Sifford won the National Negro Open five straight times from 1952-1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Charlie Sifford won the 1975 Senior PGA Championship.

### Context Clues

Circle the best definition for each **bolded** term.

- 6. Sifford was the first African-American to earn a PGA TOUR card and the first to be **inducted** into the World Golf Hall of Fame.
  - A. INITIATED
  - B. BARRED FROM
  - C. SIGNED UP
  - D. SUBSCRIBED
- 7. "He has my respect and my **gratitude** for the sacrifices he made to open the doors to this great game to people of color," Woods said.
  - A. CONDEMNATION
  - B. THANKLESSNESS
  - C. GRATEFULNESS
  - D. INGRATITUDE
- 8. "He earned 60 cents a day of which 50 cents went to his mom and 10 cents was kept to buy stogies. The became his **trademark** on the course."
  - A. IDENTIFICATION
  - B. AFFECTION
  - C. VIRTUE
  - D. NATURE

## FACT OR OPINION?

Label each statement F for fact or O for opinion.

- \_\_\_ 9. *“He has my respect and my gratitude for the sacrifices he made to open the doors to this great game to people of color,” Woods said.*
- \_\_\_ 10. *Born June 2, 1922, Sifford started in golf the only way a black kid growing up in North Carolina could in the 1930s – as a caddie.*
- \_\_\_ 11. *At the 1952 Phoenix Open, Sifford and his all-black foursome, which included the boxer Joe Louis, found excrement in the cup on the first hole, and waited nearly an hour for the cup to be replaced.*
- \_\_\_ 12. *“Tonight we honor a man not just for what he accomplished on the course, but for the course he chose in life,” South African Gary Player said as he introduced his long-time friend at the induction ceremony in St. Augustine, Fla.*
- \_\_\_ 13. *‘If you’re a quitter, there’s going to be a lot of obstacles you’re going to have to go through to be successful in what you’re trying to do.’*

## CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Number these events in the order in which they occurred, from 1st to 5th.

- \_\_\_ 14. *In 2004, Sifford became the first black golfer to break into another exclusive club. (The World Golf Hall of Fame)*
- \_\_\_ 15. *Born June 2, 1922, Sifford started in golf the only way a black kid growing up in North Carolina could in the 1930s – as a caddie.*
- \_\_\_ 16. *Jackie Robinson’s courageous integration of Major League Baseball in 1946 is widely and appropriately credited for changing the American sports landscape forever.*
- \_\_\_ 17. *At age 13, in 1935, Sifford could shoot par golf.*
- \_\_\_ 18. *Not until 1960, when he was 39, did he earn a PGA TOUR player card.*