

long-forgotten Irish pro named Patrick Doyle won the tournament at 5-over-par 149, shooting 73 in the second round to come from two shots behind Hagen.

Doyle won only one other sanctioned Tour event, then settled into life as a club professional at historic courses such as the Myopia Hunt Club and the Linwood Country Club. He died at the age of 82 in 1971.

A professional event with the top touring pros was not held for another three years. Fred McLeod won the St. Augustine Open in 1921 at the Ponce, and another Jacksonville Open came to the Florida Country Club in 1922, won by George Kerrigan.

St. Augustine then took center stage for touring golf in the area and in six out of eight years, beginning in 1935, pros such as Snead and Henry Picard found an amateur partner, then competed in the St. Augustine Pro-Am.

“You’d have these pro-ams starting in Miami and they’d work their way up the coast,” said former Times-Union sports editor Fred Seely, whose father-in-law owned the house on Ortega Boulevard that included the old gun club building. “The railroad tycoons of those days, Henry Flagler and H.B. Plant, would sponsor tournaments at golf courses they financed or owned [such as the Ponce, the Breakers in Palm Beach and the Oceanside Country Club in Daytona]. Most of these players were club pros up north and they were just finding ways to make money until their courses opened in the spring.”

Pro golf returns to stay

World War II put an end to touring golf and even the major championships halted competition. But in 1945, the Jacksonville Open began a nine-year run at Brentwood and Hyde Park, with Snead winning the first two and two other members of the Hall of Fame, Cary Middlecoff and Doug Ford, combining to win three. After Lew Worsham won at Hyde Park in 1953, touring golf disappeared from Jacksonville again, this time for 12 years.

Enter John Montgomery, a Jacksonville native and executive with Southern Bell. Montgomery pushed hard for the return of golf to the area and in 1965, the Greater Jacksonville Open began at Selva Marina. One of Montgomery’s closest friends, Jack Nicklaus, made his only competitive double-eagle in the final round of the 1966 tournament (it wasn’t enough to overtake winner Doug Sanders) and a string of high-profile winners such as Sanders, Player, Tony Jacklin, Raymond Floyd, Dan Sikes, Don January and Hubert Green gave the tournament staying power.

The GJO also was played at Deerwood and Hidden Hills, with a purse that rose from \$57,500 in the first year (\$8,500 to winner Bert Weaver) to \$175,000 by 1976 (\$35,000 going Green, only \$5,000 less than the Masters offered its winner).