



King of Clubs: The Great Golf Marathon of 1938

Jim Ducibella

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It began as a Depression-era, winner-take-all challenge between two Chicago stockbrokers, one of them a flamboyant daredevil with more guts than money and the other with more money than sense. It erupted into a national news story, one never told in its entirety—until *King of Clubs: The Great Golf Marathon of 1938*.

In September 1938, thirty-two-year-old J. Smith Ferebee agreed to play 600 holes of golf in eight cities, from Los Angeles to New York, over four consecutive days. The ordeal meant playing more than thirty-three rounds in just ninety-six hours.

The stakes: Ferebee's friend and former business partner Fred Tuerk agreed that if Ferebee succeeded, he would pay on Ferebee's behalf a \$20,000 mortgage on 296 acres of waterfront Virginia land. If Ferebee lost, he would surrender to Tuerk his ownership stake in the property. Brokers on LaSalle Street in Chicago piled up bets. Before long, the marathon was estimated to be worth \$100,000, or well more than \$1 million today.

Playing despite a severe leg injury, Ferebee faced one obstacle after another, including a gambler's brazen sabotage attempt in Philadelphia. He started the morning rounds before dawn and ended the afternoon rounds in darkness, with lighting provided by spectators' cars, local fire departments, or flares. Remarkably, Ferebee never lost a ball.

Combining the appeal of *Seabiscuit* and *The Greatest Game Ever Played*, *King of Clubs* will amaze and entertain readers from opening drive to final putt.

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