

History of Golf - Part One: The Beginnings

by George White *



Since the beginning of time, man has preoccupied himself with a stick and a rock, making his drudgery into a game.

In the earliest of times he swung the stick at the rock, propelling it towards some predetermined destination. This, it can be said, was the precursor of golf. Unfortunately, it also is the precursor to just about all the sports that require a ball and some object to propel it.

What country invented 'golf?' Many countries did. If there were sticks and objects that could be hurtled along, then there was 'golf.' Though the name didn't come into being until some time in the 15th century, there were many, many games of early man that could be called an ancestor to golf.

Nearly every area around the world has some claim to the origination of golf. Scotland, of course, has its claim. But so do China, Rome, England, France, Holland, Belgium, even Laos. Every country has a game consisting of sticks and balls, and every country is correct in its assumption that it invented the game. But there is no one country where 'golf' actually began.



Some say that it was first played by shepherds tending their flocks, passing the time by hitting rocks to targets with their shafts. Games would have developed between competing shepherds, playing across links land and back to their villages.

One theory is that fishermen on the east coast of Scotland invented the game to amuse themselves as they returned home from their boats.

Other games which included a ball, a stick and some form of a target included 'paganica' in Rome, a Celtic game called 'shinty,' and 'khi' in Laos. The Chinese claim a form of golf – ch'ui wan ("beating a ball") – was played as early as 300 BC. The Roman scribe Catullas describes the game of 'pangea' – an ancient forerunner of modern hockey and hurling.

Roman emperors in Caesar's empire apparently played the relaxing game of paganica using a bent stick to drive a soft, hair-filled or feather-stuffed ball. The use of hair-filled balls can be traced to the spread of the Roman empire, and similar balls were later used in Europe. Over the next five

centuries, the game developed on several continents.

Shepherds' implements were definitely used in games to hit rocks, we know. In 1338, German shepherds were granted special dispensation to mark their territories by striking a pebble with their crooks. The distance covered was the extent of their grazing rights, a serious use of the rules of the game.

The Irish played a very rough game called "camanachd" and the English played a game, "cambuca," in the 1300s. The goal of cambuca is unclear and it may have even been a competition between enemies with one attacking and one defending.

The late Dutch golf historian Steven J. H. van Hengel, acknowledged as one of the foremost experts of the origins of golf, believes that golf was probably a mixture of the implements used in 'chole' and the rules of 'jeu de mail,' both games imported into Holland.

Chole, which still survives in Belgium and under the name of 'soule' in Northern France, is a halfway stage between hockey and golf. A cemetery gate, a door, a big rock or other large object – often as far distant as 12 miles away – could serve as the 'goal.' One player or side would get three strokes at the object, after which the opponent or opponents would get to whack the object in the opposite direction (dechole).

The origin of the name 'golf' is believed to be the Dutch word of 'colf,' which means 'club.' In the medieval ages, golf was also known as "spel metten colve," which literally meant 'game with clubs.'

Van Hengel traced 'colf' back to Dec. 26, 1297, in the town of Loenen aan de Vecht in northern Holland. On that day, the local townsfolk played four 'holes' of the game to commemorate the relieving of the Kronenburg Castle exactly one year before. The fact that 'colf' was chosen to mark the occasion is proof that the game was already popular by that time, says Van Hengel, although he couldn't say for how long. 'Colfer,' or golfers, were a common sight in contemporary Dutch artworks, suggesting their popularity then.

'Colf' continued until the early 18th century when it suddenly fell out of fashion, to be replaced in Holland by 'kolf,' a considerably shorter game played on a course only 25 yards in length. The ball was large, about the size of a baseball, and struck to a post set at either end of the field. The object was to knock the ball from one end to the other, hit the post, and leave the ball as near to the surrounding wall as possible.

Van Hengel's theory of 'colf' eventually giving way to golf is supported by the frequent trading links between Holland and Scotland from medieval time. The game of 'colf' is believed to have traveled from east to west, across the North Sea.

The first recorded reference to 'chole,' another derivative of hockey, was made in 1353. And from this same period of time, around 1350, the stick-and-ball game of 'kofspel' was played in Holland. The Dutch called a similar game 'kolven.' From this came 'kolf,' or in England, 'gowf.'



'Het kolven' was played in the Holland and the Low Countries. It was played in open spaces and the player had to drive a ball a good distance, aiming at goal – a door or a tree, perhaps. Het kolven was played in the American colonies as early as 1657.

The earliest traces of golf being played are said to date back to 1340, where in a sketch from a stained glass window – the Great East Window – in the east wing of the Gloucester Cathedral, England, scenes of the Battle of Crecy in France showed a man apparently preparing to strike a ball in a golf-like manner. It was probably not actually golf, but the old English game of cambuca or the Flemish game of chole. This was more than 100 years earlier than the first written Scottish golf record.

The French staked their claim with a game called 'jeu de mail.' Jeu de mail was played since the 16th century; also a game called 'mail a la chicane,' another forerunner.

In 15th century London, 'pall mall' was a game that derived its name from an early playing place of another game. This contest consisted of knocking a ball from one pre-determined place to another, sometimes as far as neighboring villages. Many believe that golf emerged when pall mall was completely ousted from the towns onto the nearest common land, or land that was not owned by any individual.

Certainly, 'kolf,' as it was known in the Netherlands, or 'goff,' as it was referred to in England, was a pastime enjoyed by 15th century kings and commoners. All early fore-runners, though, resembled croquet or billiards or cricket more than golf. Unfortunately for those countries that lay claim to originating the sport, they all lacked just one thing. And it was left to the Scots to make the final refinement.

History of Golf - Part Two: The Early Years

The hole – it was the final bit that was missing in the stick-and-ball exercise. And the Scots were most likely the first to use a hole in the ground with the stick and ball. Most likely the hole was originally made by a rabbit, many thousands of which roamed the velvety linksland on the Scottish coasts.

Men on the east coast, in the Kingdom of Fife – home to St. Andrews – would hit a pebble around a course laid out by Mother Nature. Golf was far more popular on the east coast than the west coast. The difference was that the west coast was much damper, due to the persistent rains which sweep across that terrain. And the golf balls were highly susceptible to dampness, since they were stuffed with feathers.

Rabbit runs proved to be ideal fairways – an old sailing term which meant the easiest direction to navigate. The rabbits linked their burrows in the dunes by means of these runs, and foxes and hunters expanded the runs. Sheep and other animals were known to hunker down in the raw winds, wearing away the grasses and preparing the bunker areas. It became a wonderful place to play, with fairways and bunkers and, of course, a hole that was in place already, thanks to the proliferation of rabbits.

The sandy playing areas also were good for something else – tees which were used to begin play and to continue play after each hole. Early golfers scooped sand to make a tiny platform for their initial shots.

For all these reasons, Scotland is widely considered to be birthplace of golf. And it began haphazardly, a way of hitting a pebble or other roundish object into a hole by means of a stick or club.

It is known that golf was played at St. Andrews before the founding of the university there in 1403, and there is sufficient evidence that it was being played in one form or another in Scotland as much as a century before that, about 1300.



By 1457, the game of 'gowf' or 'golfe' (as it was known in the British Isles) was so firmly established in Scotland, and its playing so widespread, that King James II had an Act of Scottish Parliament to ban it on Sundays so as to preserve the skills of archery. He declared that "fute-ball (soccer) and Golfe be utterly cryit doune, and nocht useit!" 'Fute-ball' had been banned by his father, King James I, in 1424.

The English were a constant threat and the Scots were inferior to the English in matters of the bow and arrow. Residents of Aberdeen, St. Andrews and Leith on the east coast were the main culprits – they played and played. That was the first documented reference to today's game – the edicts of Parliament in 1457. In many parts of Scotland's east coast, parishioners were constantly being punished for playing golf "at the time of the preaching of the Sermon."

Two more attempts were made to restrict the playing of 'gowf,' James III banning it again in 1470 and 1493 – although the people largely ignored it. And the Scots finally had to pay the consequences. At the Battle of Flodden Field in 1513, the Scots were assaulted by English bowmen and were no match for them. England routed the Scots, who had spent so much time playing golf.

Kirk Session (church court) records in the 16th and 17th centuries contain many references to men playing at the 'gowf.' At St. Andrews in 1599, miscreants were fined small sums for the first two offenses before use of "the repentance pillar." After that, the culprits were "deprived of office" – excommunicated from the church.

King James IV (King James I of England), the grandson of the king who originally tried to ban the sport, also tried to prevent the playing of golf. But he, too, found it hopeless and gave up, eventually beginning to play the game himself. The Treaty of Glasgow lifted the ban in 1502.

James has the first recorded purchase of a set of golf clubs, also in 1502, his treasurer paying 14 shillings to an archery bow-maker in Perth, Scotland. Records of his expenses show that from then on, there was a steady stream of bills paid from his royal account for golf clubs and golf balls. History also records several lost bets that were debited from the royal bank account.

King James IV played in the first officially documented match, pitting himself against the Earl of Bothwell in 1504.

It was during this 16th century that it became firmly established on Scotland's East Coast. By this time, the game had gained respectability among high society and was even played by Mary Queen of Scots. She played golf with one of her attendants, Mary Seton. Seton won one match with the queen and was presented with a famous necklace.



Mary Queen of Scots

Mary Queen of Scots eventually was executed after a golf match. She played golf at Seton House shortly after the mysterious murder of her husband, Lord Darnley, in 1567. Did she commit the murder? Circumstantial evidence suggests she did, though it never was proven. But at the least, many thought her playing golf during the mourning period was just unacceptable, and she herself was put to death shortly thereafter.

During this period golf was expanding to England. Political powers in that country provided for land grants to the links – narrow strips of land only a couple of hundred yards wide that connected the sea to the villages. These “links” proved to be ideal golf areas, what with the spongy surfaces and the seaside vegetation.

Membership to the clubs and golfing societies which suddenly flourished carried a considerable amount of prestige. “Gentlemen Golfers” were considered privileged groups who played a “legal, honorable, and respectful sport.”

It was the royal acceptance of the game that helped spread it throughout the country and beyond. Golf had spread as far north as Montrose in Scotland and inland to Perth, Scotland, by the beginning of the 16th century. It was most likely taken there by James IV.

The earliest centers of golf all had associations with royalty. In the case of St. Andrews, the two pillars of Scottish society were located there – education and the church. St. Andrews is Scotland's oldest seat of learning, and it was also a powerful church stronghold.

Scotland's capital city of Edinburgh was the seat of the Scottish court, and golf was intertwined throughout the city aided by the royals. The Scottish towns of Dunfermillon and Perth also had royal palaces and they, too, developed strong golf connections.

By the start of the 17th century, golf was actively pursued from the southeast of Scotland and beyond to the far north, to the remote Orkney Islands.

The premier golf course of the time was at Leith. Indeed, King Charles II was busily engaged in a round at Leith when he got the news of the Irish Rebellion of 1642.

Leith was also important 41 years later, in 1682, when the first international golf match was played. The Duke of York and George Patterson played the match representing Scotland, defeating two English noblemen. Indeed, the game of golf has been primarily an activity of upper-class citizens for much of its existence.

History of Golf - Part Three: The 18th and 19th Centuries

The sport of golf, which seemed like such a staple in Britain in the 1600s and early 1700s, slowly faded in the latter 1700s. The Industrial Revolution was about to blossom, towns were expanding, and the old links were quickly being gobbled up for more industrious pursuits.

Town centers decayed, along with town finances. Epidemics swept through the countryside and many old courses were turned into burial plots. Men slowly migrated to the numerous factories that were constantly springing up, working many overtime hours. Sundays were the only off-days, a time just long enough to rest from the back-breaking work and get ready for Mondays.

The sport might well have died altogether were not for the Freemasons. Their enthusiasm alone virtually sustained the game from extinction. For about 100 years, from 1750 to 1850, they played the game with regularity. Golfing societies slowly formed, which were mostly members of the Freemasons. Royalty played very little or none at all during this period, but golf was kept alive by the Freemason groups.

Edinburgh, Scotland, claimed the first golfing society. The Gentlemen Golfers – later known as the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers and today in residence at Muirfield – claim their club was already under way in 1744, when they petitioned the city of Edinburgh for a “silver club” for annual competition on the Links at Leith. Leith was a port town only a short distance from Edinburgh. This was followed in 1754 by the gentlemen of St. Andrews, Scotland, banding together to form the St. Andrews Golf Club. St. Andrews is today known as the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews.

The Royal Burgess Golfing Society of Edinburgh also puts forth a claim to have been the first golf club. They claim to have been in existence since 1735, but those claims appear largely unsubstantiated. At any rate, the earliest golf societies seemed to be as preoccupied with dining as they were with golf. Numerous references in the early journals are made to dinners and not many to golf. Such would be the nature of the Freemasons, who were very big on pomp and circumstance and such fineries as meals served just so.

St. Andrews eventually became the traditional center of all golf, thanks partly to a publicity stunt. The Society of St. Andrews Golfers had an open competition – everyone was invited, regardless if he were a member of the society or not. St. Andrews contributed a silver club to the winner. In a short time, St. Andrews became the premier golfing town. And in 1764, when the St. Andrews course finally settled on 18 holes (down from its previous 22), 18 became the accepted number for all golf courses.

With golf spreading across city boundaries and matches being played among competitors from several regions, written rules began to appear. The first such written set is for the Edinburgh competition by the Gentleman Golfers in 1744:

1. You must Tee your Ball within a Club’s length of the Hole;
2. Your Tee (area from which the ball was hit) must be on the ground;
3. You are not to change the Ball which you Strike off the Tee before that hole is played out;

4. You are not to remove any Stones, Bones any Break Club, for the sake of playing your Ball, except of the fair Green, & that only with one Club's length of your Ball;
5. If your Ball come among Watter or any Wattery filth, you are at liberty to take out your Ball & bringing it behind the hazard and teeing it, you may play it with any Club and allow your adversary a stroke;
6. If your Balls be found anywhere touching one another you are to lift the first ball till you play the last;
7. At holeing you are to play your Ball honestly for the hole, and not to play upon your adversary's ball, not lying in your way to the hole;
8. If you shou'd lose your Ball, by its being taken up or any other way you are to go back to the Spot, where you struck last, & drop another Ball. And allow your adversary a Stroke for the misfortune;
9. No man at holeing his Ball is to be allow'd to mark his way to the hole with his Club or anything else;
10. If a Ball be stopp'd by any person, horse or dog, or anything else, the Ball so stopp'd must be played where it lyes;
11. If you draw your Club, in order to strike & proceed so far in your stroke, as to be bringing down your Club; if then your Club shall break in any way, it is to be accounted a stroke;
12. He whose Ball lyes farthest from the hole is obliged to play first;
13. Neither Trench, Ditch or Dyke, made for the preservation of the Links, nor the Scholar's Holes or the Soldier's Lines, Shall be accounted a hazard. But the ball is to be taken out Teed and play'd with any Iron Club.

The Gentleman Golfers of Edinburgh were the first to exercise control of a links. They leased the Leith Links in 1787 at the rate of 37 pounds per year, primarily to control the cattle which grazed here. Others in town leased the links to pasture animals, and though the golfers were tolerant, they did not like the idea of unlimited numbers of cattle on their "course."

About the year 1830, though, golf had reached its absolute low point. Interest in golf at Leith had ebbed. The Gentlemen Golfers – later known as the Honorable Company of Golfers – was about to drown in a sea of debts. The military invaded the links, and with it the town citizens followed, trampling the course, and now numerous sheep followed.

In 1834 the Edinburgh golf clubhouse was sold to pay off huge debts owed by the Gentleman Golfers. The town of St. Andrews sold its course in 1799 to, of all things, a rabbit breeder. Estimates were that only 20 rounds a day were played there on a good day. Golf also declined in the west coast of Scotland. The Glasgow Herald reported in 1854 that, "We have lost one of the oldest of our Scotch games, viz. the Golf, which used to be regularly played upon the Green of Glasgow, not only by boys, but also by many of our first-class citizens."

The gents of wealth, however, kept the game alive during this period. They weren't beholden to the factory hours. Almost single-handedly they – many of which were Freemasons – persisted in their games, even branching out to playing in the summers. Golf in Scotland had been largely a winter game, the summers devoted to crop-growing.

Along about 1850, though, the sport was on the rebound. Wages improved. The epidemics faded out. After 1850, the textile industries which abounded in Britain gave time off from work – two

weeks was the standard, as well as Saturday afternoons. The Victorian Age was on the horizon, a time in which morals were greatly improved. Health and attention to sobriety were now the watchwords.

Eventually, the golfers of St. Andrews were able to rescue their course back from the rabbit warrens. In 1821, James Cheape of Strathtryum bought the links and saved the Old Course for golf. The introduction of the gutta percha ball around 1850 took the place of the old featherie, making golf cheaper for all. Railroads were coming into being, making it much easier to get to outlying courses.

The invention of the mower was critical. Before, it was hardly possible to play in the summer on inland courses because the grass would grow to such unwieldy lengths. It was cut back, when possible, by scythes. In most areas, cattle and grazing sheep kept the terrain leveled enough in the winter so that balls were not lost. But by 1840, the lawnmower started appearing at courses.

The St. Andrews Society of Golfers reached royal status in 1834. Murray Belshes had approached King William IV asking him to be their patron. The King not only agreed, but permitted the Society to rename itself "The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews." St. Andrews has since become known as the "Home of Golf," since the Edinburgh golfers had left Leith and had yet to re-establish itself. There was no challenge to the claims of St. Andrews.

From that time on, the authority of the Royal and Ancient has been undisputed, with the exception of North America where the United States Golf Association is the preeminent authority. It was time for yet another era in golf.

History of Golf - Part Four: The First Heroes

When you spoke the word 'professional' in the early 1800s, you were referring to a professional caddie. The caddies were the only group that made a living from the game. They carried the clubs, certainly, but in 1800 they did so much more. In Robert Browning's book "A History of Golf" he describes the early caddie as "his patron's guide, philosopher, and his friend, his instructor when he was off his game, and co-arbiter with the opposition caddie in all disputes."

Caddies were, in short, usually the best players. The best known in the early 1800s was David Robertson of St. Andrews. He was known as a "senior caddie," whose duties were primarily to carry for the captain of St. Andrews on important occasions.

Robertson was the last of the senior caddies. His son, Allan Robertson, was also a caddie as a youth, but he emerged as the first great professional player.

The Robertsons were also ball-makers, carefully stuffing feathers into leather spheroids. But Allan was an exceptional golfer. In a series of famous matches watched by one of Scotland's largest sporting crowds of the 19th century, he teamed with his assistant, Tom (Old Tom) Morris, to play the Dunn brothers, Willie and Jamie of Musselburgh.

The four were to play a trio of matches in 1849, the first to be at the Dunn's course at

Musselburgh. The second was at St. Andrews, the home of Robertson and Morris. The third was at the neutral location of North Berwick. The matches were each to be 20 holes, and at stake was 400 pounds – a huge sum in those days. Of course, side-bets were made from the spectators totaling many times more than that.

The Dunns won the first match easily on their home course, 13 and 12, principally because Robertson played poorly. Allan and Tom barely won the second match at St. Andrews. And at North Berwick in the decider, Robertson and Morris were down four with but eight holes to play.

Then, in one of the great comebacks in golf history, Robertson and Morris rallied to win six holes in a row, taking the match 2-up and winning the series, 2-1.

It was a great golfing tandem, the old master Robertson and his apprentice Morris. However, they would split friendships before too long over a dispute about golf balls. Robertson was a featherie man all the way. Morris had begun to use the gutta percha ball, which had come into widespread use in the middle of the 1800s.

The gutta percha was much superior to the featherie, hard as opposed to the soft ball which was subject to abuse by so many objects along the ground. Robertson, remember, was a ball-maker and did not want to see the age of the featherie come to an end. The dispute caused a split between the two which lasted the remainder of Robertson's life. However, the featherie was doomed with the gutta percha quickly taking over as the ball of choice – Robertson's angry protests notwithstanding.

Robertson did, however, make one contribution to the game, the effects of which are still felt today. Previous to Robertson, the iron club was used strictly to extricate oneself from difficult lies. The rest of the clubs were used to score, and they all had wooden faces. Robertson introduced the iron as the way to approach the green. No longer would golfers use woods with their greater mass only for extrication from ruts and such.

The first inter-Scotland club matches were played in 1857, signaling the end of the great private match-play competitions. St. Andrews was the location and Royal Blackheath was the winner of the 11-club meeting, each club fielding two-man teams.

The world would wait until 1860 for the first British Open to be played. The first year only eight players competed and there was nothing "open" about this meeting – all eight entries were professionals. Willie Park was the champion, his 174 two strokes better than Old Tom Morris.

The first Open was held at Prestwick with its 12 holes. Players went around the course three times in a single day for the 36-hole match. Park received no prize money, only a large red leather-and-silver belt. Interestingly, the word 'caddie' and 'professional' in this era were used interchangeably.

With no prize money, there had to be some reason for the golfers to come to Prestwick. And indeed, the Prestwick club tournament was held that week. It offered a great opportunity for the professionals to caddie and earn extra money – which they did.

The second Open, though, in 1861, was open to everyone – amateur and pro alike. Old Tom Morris won that one and he also won in 1863. By now he was the premier player, winning four of the next six tournaments. His streak was finally broken by his son, Young Tom Morris. Young Tom was a golfing prodigy, much the same as Bobby Jones in the early 1900s. Young Morris first began playing matches when he was only 13, and by the time he was 16 he played in his first British Open.

Young Tom won in 1868 on his third try, then proceeded to win the next three in succession – four in all. He won by remarkable scores – 157 for 36 holes in his first win, which beat the field by 13 shots. He won by an average of nine strokes during his four-year reign as British Open champion – exceptional for a 36-hole tournament. Morris’ score of 149 in 1870 was a record for the gutta percha ball. It remained unbroken until Jack White’s victory 34 years later.



Alas, though, death claimed Young Tom when he was just 24 years old, after his fourth British Open victory. His wife had just died in childbirth, and many believe Morris died of a broken heart. He succumbed on Christmas Day of 1874.

The first 12 Opens were played at Prestwick, a club that never intended to monopolize the proceedings forever. Therefore, St. Andrews stepped in 1873 and from thereafter a rota was arranged.

Tom 'Young
Tom' Morris

An interesting incident occurred in 1876 when an oversight occurred and the St. Andrews committee forgot to reserve tee times Saturday for the Open. Thus, the competitors were mixed in with couples and others out for 18 holes on a pleasant day. To make matters worse, the tee sheet was quite crowded, which caused a myriad of problems for the competitors, who still had to complete 36 holes.

The latter part of the 19th century saw an explosion of golf in England and Ireland. Through it all, however, the men who played in these tournaments remained first of all equipment manufacturers and caddies, giving lessons to others. Not until the Parks, Willie and Willie Jr., did a golfer attempt to live off what he had won at tournaments.

That was because the British Open for many years paid precious little. The first year, as noted, there was only the belt and no prize money. Not until 1892 did the prize money total 100 pounds – about \$150.

Nor was the belt of much value. Willie Park, Jr., returned it to the Royal & Ancient after he won it, saying that if the cheap medal was the best the society could do, the members had best keep it themselves.

History of Golf - Part Five: America and Golf

It is not known for certain when golf came to America — only that when it got a toehold in the 20th century, America became the world leader in great players.

The earliest known reference to golf in America is a Dutch ordinance at Fort Orange — later Albany, N.Y. — in 1659. “A History of Golf” by Robert Browning gives a translation of the edict:

“The Honourable Commissary and Magistrates of Fort Orange and the village of Bererwyck, having heard divers (diverse) complaints from burghers of this place against the practice of playing golf along the streets, which causes great damage to the windows of the houses, and also exposes people to the danger of being injured and is contrary to the freedom of the public streets;

“Therefore their honours, wishing to prevent the same, hereby forbid all persons to play golf in the streets, under the penalty of forfeiture of Fl. 25 for each person who shall be found doing so.”

There is much belief that what was played was not Scottish golf, however, but the Dutch game of kolven. Browning writes that, “There is no reason to suppose that kolven as played in the Dutch colony in 1659 differed in any respect from the Dutch kolven already described in Chapter III (a game played on ice, told in the origination of the game of golf.)”

Another reference to the game is an advertisement in Rivington’s Royal Gazette, a New York newspaper, in 1779. This ad confirms the tradition of golf being played by Scottish officers in New York during the period of the Revolutionary War.

This ad stated: “To the GOLF PLAYERS — The Season for this pleasant and healthy Exercise now advancing, Gentleman may be furnished with excellent CLUBS and the veritable Caledonian BALLS, by enquiring at the Printer’s.”

Recent research into records at the port of Leith show that clubs and balls were shipped the colonies as early as 1743. A shipment of 96 clubs and 432 balls were sent to Charleston, S.C., that year. And in 1786 the South Carolina Golf Club was established, followed by the Savannah Golf Club in 1795. In 1811, a Miss Eliza Johnston issued an invitation to her wedding at the Savannah Golf Club.

Did they refer to golf as we know it? We don’t know — there is nary a newspaper account in this era that a match was actually played, nor are there golf relics. Golf was the rage in Scotland at this time and some theorize that the people of South Carolina were merely copying names which were European. Others hold firm to the belief that golf was actually being played in America.

At any rate, the War of 1812 pitting the U.S. against Britain effectively killed the game in America for decades. Golf was seen as British and would not be in favor in the United States for 80 years or so.

The first North American golf club, therefore, was not in the United States. Three-hole courses had sprung up in Montreal and Quebec, brought to the area by a military ship’s officers from Scotland. And on Nov. 4, 1873, the Royal Montreal Golf Club was born. It would be 15 years before a similar golf club was established in the United States.

Russell Montague of Pittsburgh, who studied as a young man in Britain, founded a course in 1884. He and several of his golf-loving colleagues enthusiastically participated, but they eventually moved away and play was discontinued in 1910. A Scot, J. Hamilton Gillespie, brought golf to Sarasota, Fla., in 1885. His two-hole course in the middle of town was revolutionary at the time, but it, too, failed to survive.

Which brings to the scene one John Reid, a New Yorker from Scotland who had often seen the game played while a youngster growing up on Scotland's seaside links. Reid settled in Yonkers, N.Y., and became an executive with an iron foundry.

He learned that in 1887 friend and fellow Scot Robert Lockhart was going to Scotland on a business trip. Reid requested that Lockhart order some clubs and balls while at St. Andrews, which Lockhart did. When the shipment of six clubs and balls arrived in the winter, Lockhart excitedly went to the Hudson River, which was iced over, and hit a few shots. Then he delivered the implements to Reid.

Reid had intended to wait to play until warmer weather in the spring, but on Feb. 22, 1888, he was home for the holiday of Washington's Birthday. The day was clear with relatively mild temperatures, so Reid hurriedly got together a few of his friends and laid out a three-hole course in a Yonkers cow pasture.

The little group was smitten, and when summer came, they built six holes and moved to a nearby 30-acre site. In November of 1888, they formed an informal club — the St. Andrews Golf Club. As it developed, it was the first surviving golf club in America.

The Shinnecock Hills club gets credit as the first to have a real course built on rural turf. The area chosen was along of the Great Peconic Bay on Eastern Long Island and shares were sold at \$100 each. A clubhouse was erected and in 1891 play commenced.

The first 18-hole course in America was the Chicago Golf Club, built in 1893. And in 1894, the first national amateur events were played.

That summer the Newport (R.I.) sent out invitations and 20 players attended to compete at medal play. Charles Blair Macdonald, who was to gain fame as a course architect, was heavily favored and shot 89 in the opening round. In the final 18 holes, however, he struggled fitfully and shot 100, handing the tournament to W.G. Lawrence. Macdonald was upset, claiming the tournament should have been settled by match play, not medal.

A month later, Macdonald was one of 28 players to compete in a national tourney at St. Andrew's. He managed to get all the way to the finals, where he lost to Laurence Stoddard in a playoff when Macdonald sliced his tee shot into a cornfield. His excuse this time was that he was ill.

Such controversies caused the United States Golf Association to be formed on Dec. 22, 1894. Representatives of five clubs were invited — St. Andrew's, Shinnecock Hills, Chicago Golf Club, Newport and The Country Club at Brookline, Mass. Macdonald finally won the event, played at Newport, routing Charlie Sands, 12 and 11 in the first U.S. Amateur.

One day later, 10 pros and one amateur took over the course to play the first U.S. Open. The Open was strictly an afterthought, the Amateur considered to be where the real competition was. Horace Rawlins, an Englishman, won. And one month later, Mrs. Charles S. Brown won the U.S. Amateur, arranged on short notice and played in Hempstead N.Y.

Golf in America had indeed begun.

By 1900, the explosion of the game in America was complete. Proof was that, at the turn of the century, there were more golf clubs in the United States than there were in Britain.

History of Golf - Part Six: Golf Since 1900

Americans were taking rapidly to the game of golf as the 20th century began, taught ever so enthusiastically by Scots who crossed the Atlantic for the sole purpose of instructing their Yankee cousins. Many times the knowledge of the Scot regarding golf wasn't particularly savvy, but he did know more than the fellow (or madam) he was teaching.

And for a while, the British were the ones who did all the winning in America. 'The Great Triumvirate' — Harry Vardon, J.H. Taylor and James Braid — toured repeatedly and were consistent winners. These three ruled golf from 1894 until 1914.

American golf took a giant step toward world-wide recognition with the victory in the U.S. Open by 20-year-old amateur Francis Ouimet. Vardon and Ted Ray were the overwhelming favorites, but Ouimet took them into an extra day for an 18-hole playoff and beat them both.

An American, John J. McDermott, had made history by becoming the first home-grown winner of the U.S. Open in 1911, then repeated in 1912. Prior to 1911, the first 16 Opens were won by British golfers.

Brash upstart Walter Hagen became the first great American professional. Not only did he play throughout the country, but also in Europe — in Scotland, England and France. It was almost solely through his efforts that the professional golfer achieved 'gentleman' status. Told by haughty club members in Europe that professionals must change in the pro shop and not the country club, Hagen insisted on pulling his limousine up to the club's front door to dress. Perplexed club members hurriedly relented, establishing a new tradition for the professionals. Hagen won two U.S. Opens, four British Opens and four PGAs.

The PGA of America was founded in 1916 when a group of professionals met in New York to form the organization. Their first championship was held later that year with Jim Barnes defeating Jock Hutchinson, 1-up, in match play. The PGA continued as a match-play championship until 1958, when it became stroke play.

Two great golfers were born in 1902, Gene Sarazen in Harrison, N.Y., on Feb. 27 and Bobby Jones in Atlanta March 17. Jones founded the Masters tournament in Augusta, Ga., in 1934, and Sarazen hit there the most famous shot ever played — a double eagle on the 15th hole during his win in 1935.

Jones was a brilliant player who retired at the age of 28 after winning all four legs of the then-grand slam in 1930. He was an amateur throughout his playing career, which lasted only from 1923 to '30.

What was even more amazing about Jones is that he was becoming educated as he was playing. He majored in English literature while earning a degree at Georgia Tech, though he also studied mathematics, physics, engineering, geography and chemistry while there. He then went to Harvard and got his law degree. All the while, he was the best golfer in the world for the seven years from age 21 to 28.

Actually, Jones began playing major championships when he entered the U.S. Amateur — then considered a major because most of the best players were amateurs — at age 14. He exploded onto the scene with a boom when he led the field in the first qualifying round. He wouldn't actually win the Amateur until 1924, a year after he won his first U.S. Open in 1923.

Jones would win 13 major championships, highlighted by his swan song quartet in 1930. In that year, he won the British Amateur (then a major) and the British Open, as well as the U.S. Amateur and U.S. Open. He then halted his tournament play and focused on buying the property upon which he would establish Augusta National. His tournament would become the Masters.

Because of his education and outside activities, Jones never could concentrate solely on golf. He averaged playing in championships only three months a year, and only played in seven tournaments outside of the majors between '23 and '30.

Three players were born in 1912 — Byron Nelson, Sam Snead and Ben Hogan — and each had a tremendous impact on golf in the 20th century. Nelson set an all-time record of 11 consecutive wins in 1945, a total of 18 victories that year. Snead set the all-time record of 81 wins and won the 1965 Greater Greensboro Open at the age of 52 years and 10 months — another Tour record.

Hogan is regarded by some as the game's best player. He won four U.S. Opens, two PGAs, two Masters and the only British Open he ever played — setting a course record at Carnoustie though it was the only time he ever saw it. In 1953 he won three legs of the Grand Slam — Masters, U.S. Open and British Open — and couldn't return from Britain in time to play the fourth, the PGA.

Arnold Palmer began a cycle of great players born every 10 years when he was born in 1929, followed by Jack Nicklaus in 1940 and Tom Watson the latter part of 1949. Palmer had a tremendous influence on the popularity of the game, winning 60 times and boosting television coverage when it needed it most — at the end of the '50s and start of the '60s. He, along with Nicklaus and Gary Player, became known as the "Big Three" of golf in the '60s and played numerous exhibitions together.

Nicklaus is the man generally recognized as the greatest ever to play the game. He won an astounding 70 times, including 18 professional majors, more than any other golfer. He won his final major at the age of 46 — the 1986 Masters — in an unbelievable career that stretched from 1962 to the Senior Tour age of 50 in 1990.

Watson won 34 times and dominated in the late '70s and early '80s. Player, a South African who is the most successful player on the world scene, won 21 times on the PGA Tour.

The stage was set for a new hero when Tiger Woods came upon the scene in 1996. He won eight times in 1999, nine times in 2000, and won the four major championships in succession in 2000-

2001, starting with the U.S. Open in 2000. Should his career be as successful in his 30s and 40s as it has been in his 20s, he will assume the mantle of “best player ever.”

History of Golf - Part Seven: Women and Golf

Women have played a very large part in the history of golf, even before the last half of the 20th century when they finally achieved equality with men. Records of ladies playing golf exist all the way back to the time of Mary Queen of Scots.

Mary, you may recollect, was one of the first known golfers of either sex back in the mid-1500s. Her husband was murdered in 1567 and there was rather strong suspicion that Mary was the culprit. Mary herself was ultimately beheaded because of the incident.

The next 200 years are clouded in anonymity. Women certainly played the sport, but because of a strong bias toward male players, woman golfers are not mentioned in any writings.

Golfing ladies do not rate another mention until 1792. It is known that the women of Musselburgh were avid golfers — a letter of that date mentions women and the rules and duties of the club. And in 1810, a proposal was made to present gifts to the winning female golfer at the club.



Mary Queen of Scots

St. Andrews appears to have had the first ladies’ club, formed in 1867. In 1868, Britain’s Westward Ho and North Devon followed suit. Women, however, were generally confined to courses of their own, many containing some short putting holes and a couple of longer ones requiring a drive of approximately 80 yards. The courses were so much shorter because of the outfits the women were obliged to wear — “the postures and gestures requisite for a full swing are not particularly graceful when the player is clad in female dress,” said one contemporary writer.

In America around the turn of the century, male-only golf clubs were known as “Eveless Edens,” wrote Liz Kahn in her book, “The LPGA: The Unauthorized Version.” In spite of this, women’s golf was becoming exceedingly popular. British amateur champion May Hezlet wrote in a book published in 1907, “It is now generally acknowledged that golf is a game — par excellence — for women. It is essentially a game for women: the exercise is splendid without being unduly violent, as is sometimes the case in hockey or tennis.”

The USGA held the first American Women’s Amateur Championship in 1895 with 13 entries. Only one round was played and the winner was Mrs. Charles S. Brown of Shinnecock Hills, who went round in 132 strokes. This was a nine-hole course that the women played twice. Mrs. Brown took an 11 on the first hole, but recovered to shoot 69 the front nine and 63 the second.

The British Ladies’ Championship was played in 1893 following the formation of the Ladies’ Golf Union. Thirty-one women competed at the match-play event, won by the great British amateur Lady Margaret Scott.

Englishman Harold Hilton commented of Rhona Adair, an exceptional turn-of-the-century

women's golfer, that, "Miss Adair stands up to the ball in a manner quite worthy of any of the sterner sex. There is a determination and firmness in her address to the ball which is most fascinating to watch. Lady players, as a rule, appear to persuade the ball on its way; Miss Adair, on the contrary, avoids any such constrictions on her methods by hitting it very hard indeed."

Such was written by Lewine Mair in her book, "100 Years of Women's Golf."

Two English women, Cecil Leitch and Joyce Wethered, dominated the British golfing scene for the next two decades. And after World War I, Wethered voiced the opinion that the changing fashions for golfing women led to a huge improvement in their scores.

"I just wish that trousers had been in vogue in my day, as skirts were such a problem," said Weathered. "They would fall just above the ankle, and you had to be very careful that they were tight enough not to flap, yet loose enough to let you take up your stance. Trousers apart, the only practical garment has to be a short skirt such as the Americans now wear."

Weathered was such an accomplished golfer that only about half a dozen men were believed to be her equal.

The outstanding American woman of the era was Glenna Collett Vare. Most of her competition came from Alexa Stirling — who played much of her childhood golf with Bobby Jones — Edith Cummings, Marion Hollins, Maureen Orcutt, Miriam Burns, Virginia Van Wie, Mary K. Browne, Helen Hicks and Lillian Hyde.

The first women professionals began to appear in the 1920s and '30s. Helen MacDonald was the first woman to sign with an equipment company, Hillerich & Bradsby, in 1924. The first to promote a manufacturer's products and give golf clinics was Helen Hicks, who joined Wilson Sporting Goods in 1934.

Only four tournaments were open to American women in the 1930s — the Hardscrabble Open in Arkansas, the Texas Open, the Western Open in Chicago and the Titleholders in Augusta, Ga. Patty Berg was the first woman to win a check at a golf tournament, the Woman's Western Golf Association in 1941 which carried a purse of \$100,000.

The Women's Professional Golf Association was formed in America in 1944 and existed for six years. Spurred on by Hope Seignious, who paid the bills with her wealthy father's money, the tour foundered because of a lack of sources for revenue.

The U.S. Women's Open began in 1946. And in 1947, Babe Zaharias became a professional. She had been an outstanding amateur, as well as a great Olympic track athlete. She was the impetus behind the inauguration of the Ladies Professional Golf Association, formed upon the demise of the WPGA in 1950.

Fred Corcoran ran the organization for the women with Berg the first president. The rest of the founders were Zaharias, Hicks, Betty Jameson, Helen Dettwiler, Betty Mims White, Alice Bauer, Bettye Danoff, Marlene Bauer Hagge, Opal Hill, Sally Sessions, Marilynn Smith and Peggy Kirk Bell.

The LPGA played 14 events its first season, and by 1952 had risen to 21 events. Mickey Wright, perhaps the greatest player, joined the tour in 1955 and helped gain much-needed publicity for the tour. Kathy Whitworth, another great, joined in 1958 and eventually rang up 88 tournament titles.

JoAnne Carner was a rookie in 1970, Nancy Lopez followed in 1978. Lopez won five consecutive tournaments and nine titles in all that year. The following season she won eight times.

The LPGA today is a prosperous organization of 34 tournaments with approximately \$40 million in purses — an average of \$1.19 million per outing.

History of Golf - Part Eight: African-Americans and Golf

No one knows for certain who started golf. But everybody knows who plays it now — everyone does.

From all walks of life, from every corner of the globe come men and women who play the game. From the six courses of Botswana and its 1,100 golfers to Japan with its 12 million to the U.S. with more than 1,000 courses and 25 million golfers, golf has arrived. The game is played by all — Maoris of New Zealand, Hispanics of the Caribbean and Mexico, natives of Fiji, Hawaiians and Japanese and Koreans.

Nowhere has the game been played with more determination — and under more imposing odds — than with the African-American population in the United States. Blacks were assumed to caddie for their slavemasters in the South in the days of slavery, and they took up the game in large numbers in the early 1900s.

The golf tee, in fact, was invented by African-American George F. Grant in 1899. Grant was a dentist by trade and he took up golf after the Civil War. The patent office gave him a trademark on his invention of the tee, but he never marketed it. He shared some with friends and playing partners, but most he kept squirreled away in his home. He died in 1910 without accumulating much wealth from the invention, leaving those who followed him to amass the fortunes from the golf tee.

John J. Shippen, Jr., was an early golfing pioneer who played in the second U.S. Open. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he was only 16 years old in 1896 when the Open was played at Shinnecock Hills on Long Island. His father was sent by the church to minister to the Shinnecock Indians, and young Shippen met Scottish pro Willie Dunn when he was just 12 years old.

Shippen became quite a proficient player, rising to the position of assistant pro at Shinnecock Hills under Dunn. When the Open came to Shinnecock, he decided to enter after much prodding from members. The field of 35 was almost entirely foreign-born. When they learned Shippen, who was a light-skinned black, was in the field, a boycott immediately was planned.

Two reports are given on the solution offered by Theodore Havemeyer, the president of the

USGA. One is that Havemeyer claimed Shippen was half Shinnecock Indian, which made his race of less importance. Another is that Havemeyer told the golfers that, yes, Shippen was black, and if the competition included but one player and that was Shippen, it would go on.

Regardless of what was told to the field, the tournament did proceed and Shippen played. He was tied for first place at the end of Day 1, but on the second he struggled on the par-4 13th and took an 11. He eventually finished seven strokes behind winner James Foulis. He would, however, play in four more U.S. Opens.

Another prominent early African-American was Joe Bartholomew, who grew up in New Orleans and entered the caddie ranks by the age of seven in 1887. He became an exceptional player, attended college in New York to study golf course architecture, and eventually returned home to ply his trade.

He designed several courses in New Orleans, but because Bartholomew was black, many members of the courses refused to let him play what he had designed.

John Brooks Dendy was very poor as a child in the 1920s, but he wanted to be a golfer. He collected several metal clubheads. He fashioned shafts out of broomhandles and played with the clubs for several years. He won the Southern Open at 18, then won it two more times — in 1934 and 1936.

Racism and prejudice were still rampant over the country, of course, and in 1925 an organization for black golfers was founded — the United Golfers Association. The African-Americans were not even considered for play in white tournaments. That slowly began to change, however — with Bill Spiller and Ted Rhodes, and finally with Charlie Sifford.

Spiller was raised in the Tulsa, Okla., area after having been born in 1913. He went to college at Wiley in Texas, then moved to Southern California. An exceptional player, Spiller was repeatedly foiled in his attempts to play professionally. He developed friendships with many white pros, some of whom (Jimmy Demaret, Johnny Bulla) made valiant efforts to get him into tournaments where he could compete against the great pros of the era.

Solely because he was black, though, Spiller was omitted. And not just Spiller, but also Rhodes, another great golfer. The former heavyweight boxing champion, Joe Louis, worked his way into the white establishment because of his fame, playing in several tournaments in the 1950s. He had begun to play in 1935 and lost to Max Schmeling in 1936, many believe, because he was focused too much on golf and not enough on boxing.

The PGA of America contained a clause which was written into the bylaws in 1943, stating, “Professional golfers of the Caucasian race, over the age of eighteen years, residing in North or South America, and who have served at least five years in the profession (either in the capacity of a professional or in the employ of a professional as his assistant) shall be eligible for membership.”

In 1948, rumblings began, rumblings which one day would strike the clause down. Only three tournaments allowed black players to compete — the Canadian Open, the Tam O’Shanter All-

American in Chicago and the Los Angeles Open. Tournaments which were heretofore known as "Opens," meaning tournaments which supposedly were open to everyone, often changed their names to "Invitationals" to exclude black players.

A provision in the PGA rules stated that anyone who finished in the top 60 was eligible to play the next week. Spiller and Rhodes did so in the 1948 L.A. Open and went on to Oakland, which was the next tour stop. They were incensed when they were not allowed to play and filed suit against the PGA.

Their attorney, Jonathan Rowell, was persuaded by the PGA that the situation was about to change and dropped the case. It didn't. But Demaret, Jackie Burke and Leland Gibson constantly campaigned for the black players to their fellow pros. And in 1961, the Caucasians-only rule finally came to a head.

By now, Spiller was reduced to caddying to earn money. One day in Los Angeles, a gentleman for whom he caddied asked Spiller why did not play. Spiller told the man, Harry Braverman, about "the clause."

Braverman advised Spiller to write to the California Attorney General, Stanley Mosk. An incredulous Mosk told the PGA that they could no longer play an event on a public course in California, then wrote the attorneys general of most other States with the same information.

The PGA finally bowed to the waves of negative publicity in November of 1961, canceling the clause. Charlie Sifford, Pete Brown, Lee Elder and many others were free to tee it up in a tournament. They endured much abuse and were refused many public services in the towns where they played, but played on regardless.

Brown was the first African-American to win a tournament when he won the Waco Turner Open near Ardmore, Okla., 1964. Sifford won the 1967 Greater Hartford Open and the 1969 L.A. Open. Lee Elder in 1975 was the first black to play in the Masters.

Since then, others have blazed the trail. Calvin Peete, Jim Dent, Jim Thorpe and others have joined the PGA Tour. Walter Morgan and Bobby Strobe have joined the Senior Tour, among others.

One player, though, may be destined to become the greatest player of all, black or white. The man's name? To no one's surprise, Tiger Woods.

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