

THE LONG GAME

NEWSLETTER OF THE
GOLF SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA



No 46, OCTOBER 2013



Geoff Vincent presents the Presidents Trophy to David Hewitt

Presidents Trophy at Royal Melbourne Golf Club

by Peter Gompertz

The last Monday in July was fine and sunny, with a slight chill, and enough of a breeze to concentrate the golfing mind, when 20 members faced the starter for the annual running of the Presidents Trophy. After 9 holes of stroke play on the West course, and some fierce side bets for bottles of wine, four competitors stood out from the field, David Hewitt with a nett 34.5, Geoff Vincent 35.5, Tony McLean, 37 and Newton Turner, 37. After a light lunch in the clubhouse these four gentlemen were declared to be the semi finalists for the sudden death matchplay, with stymies, starting on the first of the East Course.

In front of a small gallery the first match went off with David Hewitt playing two strong shots to reach the green in regulation, while Newton Turner, having taken three shots to get to the green, could not drop his long putt to halve the hole so David progressed. Back on the tee Geoff Vincents' drive found one of the fairway bunkers on the right hand of the fairway but having successfully got out of one bunker, found a greenside bunker with his shot to the green. Meanwhile after a solid drive, Tony McLean was on for two and it was not long before Geoff conceded.

Continued on page 2 >>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Page 1-2

Presidents Trophy at
Royal Melbourne Golf Club

Page 4

Bobby's Open
– Mr Jones and the shot that
defined a legend by Steven Reid

Page 3

Retraction

Page 3 & 5

Dinner at
Royal Melbourne Golf Club

Page 5

Right of Reply

Page 6-7

Clayton's Corner

Page 8

Harry Williams
An Australian Golfing Tragedy
by June Senyard

FOR THE DIARY

14th October

Golf Historians at
Woodlands Golf Club

14th November

National Hickory Championship
at Croydon Golf Club, Yering

22nd November

AGHS Hickories at
Carnarvon Golf Club NSW

25th November

Doug Bachli Trophy,
AGM and Cocktail Party



Semi-finalist on the 1st tee East

Continued from front page:

Presidents Trophy at Royal Melbourne Golf Club

Both finalists drove the ball into the left hand side of the fairway up the second with David Hewitt having the bragging rights by about 10 yards. Tony McLean then found one of the right hand fairway bunkers with, what is called in polite circles, a blocked shot. Declining to take advantage of his good fortune David then sclafted his fairway wood to within a 6 iron of the green. Tonys' ball was lying well in the bunker with enough room for his back lift but, after failing to keep his head down long enough, he drove his next shot about 6 feet into the deep, and tangly, doo doo. Not wishing to make matters worse, Tony called David over and conceded the match while still in the bunker. David then hit a 6 iron into the green but failed to hole his putt for par; and not a stymie in sight!

All four finalists, and the small gallery of devoted golf fans, then repaired to the warmth of the clubhouse and toasted the winner with glasses of his recently purchased bottle of Champagne.



Tony McLean concedes to David Hewitt

It is interesting to note that for two of the finalists it was their first attempt at winning the Presidents Trophy which should encourage some of our newer members to give it a go next year.

Have you missed a dinner but would like to hear the speech?

In most cases, when the speaker agrees, we record the after-dinner speeches at Golf Society functions.

If you have missed a dinner and would like to hear any of the presentations, they can be made available on cd for playing on computer or cd player.

Contact: The Secretary

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to

Roger Evans

Peter Morgan

Newton Turner



Mike Clayton, Stephen Pitt and Geoff Vincent

Dinner at Royal Melbourne Golf Club

by Tony McLean

The Golf Society was pleased to welcome 60 members and their guests to dinner at Royal Melbourne Golf Club on August the 26th for a very enjoyable evenings entertainment, and delighted to have Mr Stephen Pitt, CEO of Golf Australia as our guest speaker.

GSA President, Mr Geoff Vincent, welcomed all members, guests and our guest speaker, and made special welcome to John Snell, his wife Donna, Bruce Langford-Jones, Michael Clayton, and RMGC General Manager, Paul Rak.

He also took advantage of the occasion, after a short speech detailing Ian Rennicks' numerous efforts on behalf of the GSA, to present Ian with his framed Life Membership Certificate. Ian responded with a typically light hearted and humorous acceptance speech, thanking his wife Helen, for her forbearance.

The dinner itself, was once again superbly organised by Paul Rak, Andrea Watson and their team, which was duly acknowledged by the President.



Life Member Ian Rennick and Geoff Vincent

Our guest speaker, Stephen Pitt, in a wide ranging and very entertaining address, spoke initially about amateur golf in Australia.

Continued on page 4 >>

Retraction

'The Golf Society of Australia Inc who publish 'The Long Game' hereby retract the 'Letter to the Editor' which included our member's name, John Lovell, in Issue 45 and the editor of such newsletter sincerely apologises to him for such inclusion.'

Bobby's Open

– Mr Jones and the shot that defined a legend by Steven Reid

by John Hanna

It is always a pleasure to pick up a new golf book, especially when it is written by a member of the British Golf Collectors Society. Bobby's Open is written by Steven Reid who has first hand knowledge of the course in question, as he is a long standing member, and Past Captain, of Royal Lytham and St Annes. I think the fact that he is also currently the Chief Medical Officer of the R and A will have given him the medical knowledge to write about the psychological pressure facing the golfer at the heart of the story who is, of course, the famous Bobby Jones.

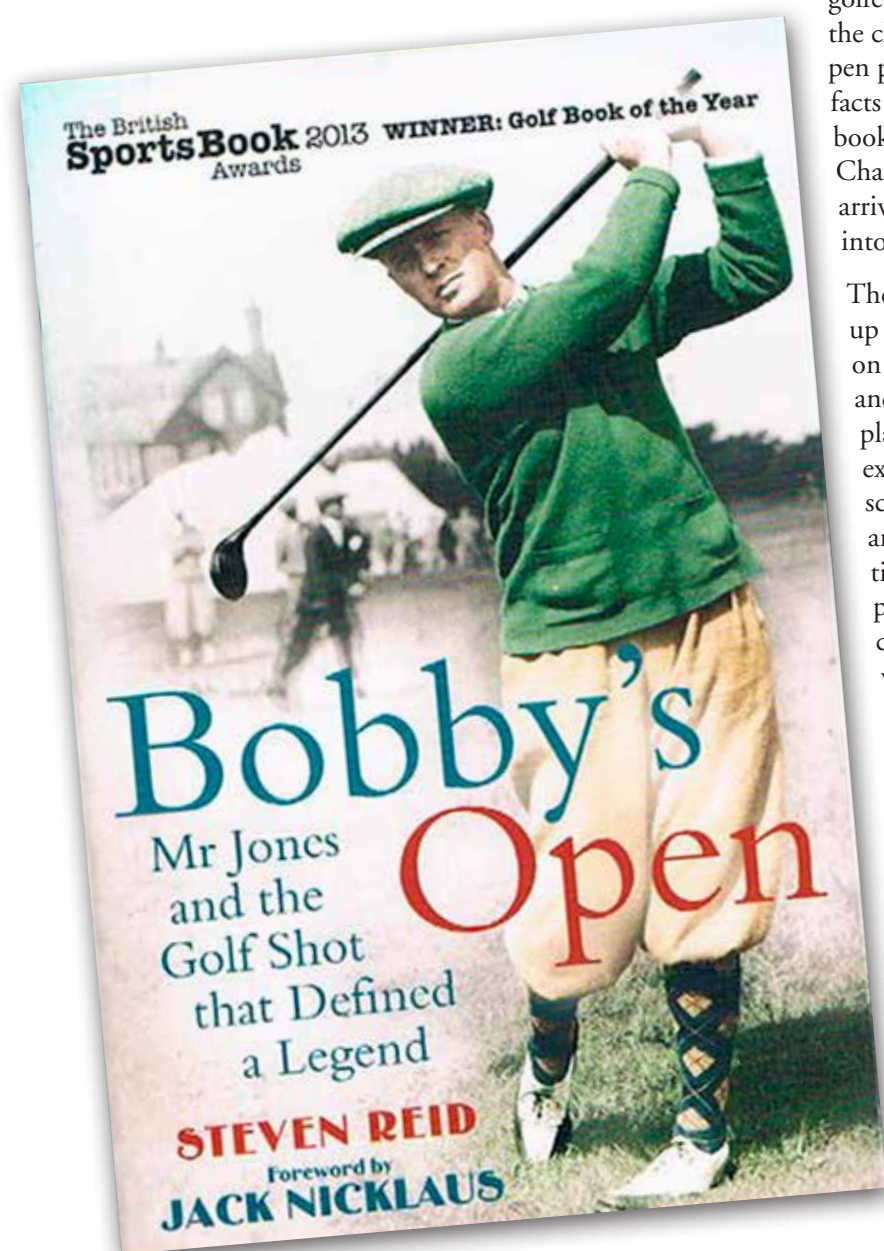
One would have thought that all that could have been written about Jones would have, and probably was, been done so in the years shortly after his Grand Slam in 1930.

Yet here is book written some eighty years after those events which is a very fresh and readable account, not just of one Open Championship, but really about one shot which, as the sub-title of the book describes as 'the golf shot which defined a legend'. This is a paperback edition of the original published in 2012 consisting of 269 pages filled with the most interesting facts. There is also a centre section filled with 30 black and white photographs.

The opening chapters deal with earlier trips Jones made to Great Britain and describe in some detail problems he had in dealing with the different conditions and also his personal issues with self doubt and nervous tension. One would never believe that a golfer of such ability would have been so nervous every time he went out to play. The scene then turns to the 1926 Open Championship at Lytham St Annes where there are assembled a gathering of top golfers from both side of the Atlantic. I liked, particularly, the chapter on 'Meet the players' where Steven draws nice pen pictures of the main players and these include some facts which are new to me. Of course it is Jones that the book is about and it tells how having won the US Open Championship and the US Amateur Championship he arrives at Lytham knowing that victory would turn him into golf's first superstar.

The play over the first two days are dealt with leading up to the final day when Jones was tied with Melhorn on a score of 144 with Hagen in second place on 145 and Watrous on 146. Given that the players had to play 36 holes on the Friday makes the story even more exciting, especially as do not go out in order of their score as they do now. Jones was paired with Watrous and by the time they come to the 17th hole they are tied. Of course anyone who has had the privilege of playing this Open course will, if they try to cut the corner of the 17th, have seen the plaque in the ground which marks the spot from which Jones played his miraculous shot. Naturally the book deals in some detail with this shot and how it affected the outcome of the championship. In discussing aspects of the shot, Steven Reid, describes the shot as one which will 'fire his reputation' – and that of the golf course – around the world'. This it most certainly did. There is a very interesting final section to the book where previously unknown correspondence between the Club and Jones in 1958 is revealed. There is a good Foreword to the book by Jack Nicklaus.

Bobby's Open won *The Times* Sporting Book of the Year for 2013 and this paperback edition is available for £8.99 from www.iconbooks.net who will advise you what the p&p is to where you live.



*Continued from page 3:
Dinner at Royal Melbourne Golf Club*

He found a number of positives to present, including the latest increase in the number of rounds played on Australian courses, the increasing participation rate, the success of My Golf, Golf Australia's national junior programme, and the excellent performances of our elite amateurs, both men and women, on the world stage.

On the negative side of Australian golf, Stephen mentioned the problem of falling membership of private golf clubs which has resulted in many Clubs facing financial pressure and looking to amalgamate.

Other problems include the high cost of club membership, especially for younger golfers, and the lengthy time away from family at weekends to play 18 holes of golf.

Stephen concluded his talk with an overview of the current objectives of the Golf Australia Board, which included expanding Golf Link, growing the game in Australia, club viability and planning for future Australian Opens.

We thank Stephen for his most entertaining and informative address.



Joan and John Worrell



Tony McLean, Di McLean and Helen Rennick

Right of Reply

Michael Sheret is attributed as writing a 'Letter to the Editor' which was published in The Long Game page 3 of Issue 45 in July 2013. Upon Michael receiving his copy in the mail he emailed, John Lovell, Geoff Vincent, Tony McLean and Peter Gompertz stating 'I am not responsible for what was actually published 'and if you have any problems with this matter you should take it up with the Editor of The Long Game'.

As the author of such letter I consider it is the author's obligation to take it up with the Editor. He either wrote the letter or it was adulterated.

In December 2009 our past-President, Ian Rennick, requested that a half page article on the Norfolk Island Golf Course be written, and such was published in Issue 33, January 2010. Reference to sources could not be included, but were made available to the Editor and as far as I am aware only one other person requested copy of same up until December 2011.

It is known that Michael did not contact Owen Walsh, Administrator, Office of the Administrator, Norfolk Island nor Bruce Baskerville, Site Manager of KAVHA, Norfolk Island.

Authorisation of reports that appeared in other golf magazines, together with other authorisations made by the committee of the Golf Society of Australia, is an area of concern.

The history of golf in Australia warrants far greater coverage than it currently receives in *The Long Game*.

John Scarth

Clayton's Corner

With Michael Clayton

Appearance Money

In the 1980s when Greg Norman was at his flying best, lining fairways six people deep, and seriously influencing television ratings, he was being paid about \$300,000 a week to play in Australia. The public got to see the best player in the world all around the country, and few of the rank and file pros begrudged Norman's fee, because they understood the magnitude and importance of his presence.

Prior to Norman's emergence, Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Gary Player and American based Australian star Bruce Devlin regularly played Australia's biggest events as a part of an arrangement their manager, Mark McCormack had with the Dunlop Slazenger Company.

They made world-class clubs and the royalties earned were no doubt significant for the time. The superstars gave obvious credibility to the tournaments, and their presence gave golfers their only chance to watch the best players in the world in the era before the televising of overseas golf. Everybody won.

Peter Thomson has always been a vocal critic of the principle of appearance fees. In 2001 he wrote in *The Age* that 'The payment of appearance fees in events that purport to be 'championships', where everyone starts on an equal footing, has forever been an embarrassment. The banning of it since 1953 has been the making of the USPGA Tour. Places such as Australia, Brazil, and

Morocco have all succumbed to the temptation to 'buy' someone's appearance.'

There are pro's and con's to Thomson's argument. In America there are a number of players, for example, who sport a Royal Bank of Canada logo on their shirts. Technically the endorsement fee is not appearance money but you can be sure that every one of them plays the RBC sponsored Canadian Open.

The US Tour also has an extraordinarily generous pension scheme that pays out millions of dollars to players when they retire.

One could argue it is appearance money by another name and that, rather than being paid out week-by-week, it comes in a massive lump at the end of one's career. Of course, everyone gets a share depending on how well they play, whereas appearance fees are the preserve of the few.

The issue though is Australia and our four significant events – the Open, the PGA Australian, the Masters and Perth International.

When Australian Tour Tournament director Andrew Langford-Jones says 'appearance money is killing our tour' it's hard to argue with the economics.

Whilst Norman's \$300,000 seemed like an awful lot of money for a week's work it pales into insignificance when compared to the \$3,000,000 that was paid to Tiger Woods to play at Kingston Heath in 2009.

The rumoured asking price for one of this season's major champions (not Adam Scott or Phil Mickelson) to play at the Australian Open this summer was 1.3 million dollars. The prize money is barely more than that and it's hardly a secret the most significant championship in the country lost money last year despite the success of the Open of 2011 when the Presidents Cup boasted a field that included Woods, Dustin Johnson, Bubba Watson and Bill Haas.

As great as Woods' golf has been and as much as he has done to boost the incomes of his contemporaries (as Arnold Palmer, Norman and Ballesteros did for previous generations in America, Australia and Europe) one legacy of Woods is the staggering escalation in fees for those a level below.

His management sets his fee somewhere around \$3,000,000. You can well make a case he is worth that. Like Norman there can be no question he sells thousands of extra tickets and turns on television sets all around the country.



The problem is the market. Woods setting his price at three million suggests to Mickelson (or more accurately, his management) he is worth 2.5. Perhaps he is. You could make that argument. That in turn makes Ernie Els and Rory McIlroy worth a million and a half. Call Sergio Garcia's manager and invite the flashy Spaniard to play at Royal Sydney, Lake Karrinyup Royal Melbourne or Royal Pines and the fee, one assumes won't be far below a million dollars.

If Woods set his price at a far more reasonable and sustainable number the rest would be forced to charge relative to him; and it hardly needs to be pointed out that they are not curing cancer or solving the crisis in the Middle East.

Thomson saw it as his responsibility, when he was one of the very best in the game, to promote the local tour and he and his great friend Kel Nagle were unstinting in their support of tournaments in both Australian and New Zealand. Of course, it was a different time and the riches of today's U.S Tour were unimaginable.

Our homegrown pros however would do well not to forget the legacy of Thomson and Nagle, and before them Norman Von Nida. There mayn't even be a tour without the foundation they built.

Now, more than ever, our best players need to come back and support, and most do, but they are not doing it for nothing and the question is whether that is sustainable. How much can we afford before the tournaments become uneconomic?

Robert Allenby has been an incredible supporter of the tour here. Adam Scott plays for well under his market value, if the 1.3 million number is right for one of the other major champions. Geoff Ogilvy, John Senden and Greg Chalmers play every summer and look like they enjoy doing it. Mark Leishman has played some fine golf in America, and he too comes back.

Jason Day, our next best-performed player behind Scott, is seemingly reluctant to play as much as the best from the past in Australia.

He is what they like to call an independent contractor and can do what he likes, but he will wear out the goodwill of the Australian fans if he makes it clear coming home for a couple of weeks to support the tour is not important to him.

In their defence, it is hardly reasonable to ask our players to play for nothing when equal, or lesser-ranked foreign players are being paid to appear.

It is critical for both golf fans and the generation of players to come for our best events to survive. To do that the economics must work, and that means the best Australian players asking for something less than the market may suggest they are worth.



Society Merchandise

Society ties, visors, ball markers and pins are available for purchase at all Society functions.

If you would like to obtain any of our logo items between functions please contact Peter Swan, whose number is in the members' handbook.



Harry Williams An Australian Golfing Tragedy

by June Senyard

After arriving back in Australia, to settle, I went to my first postcard fair. I told a dealer that I collect golf postcards and cigarette cards and he told me a story about a golfer called Harry Williams who, more interested in horse racing than winning a Saturday club comp, playing a Par round won the first 9 holes, indicated that he had lost the last 9 holes, signed his card and went to the races only to find that his square score was the best of the day.

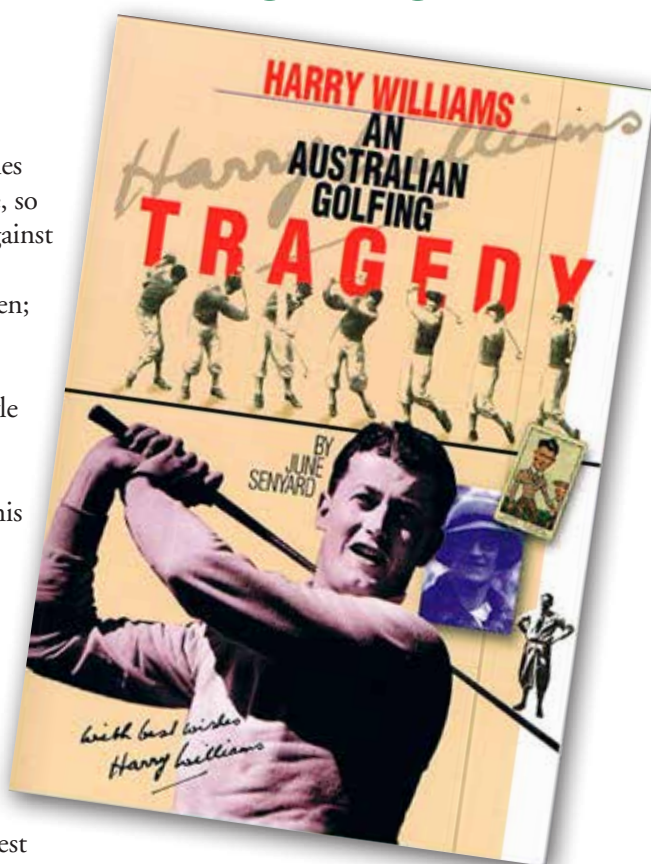
At the time I did not know that a book about Williams had been published but when I found that one had, I added it to my want list but never found a copy. Now GSA Member Graeme Ryan has re-published this fascinating tale of a talented left handed golfer of the 1930s who won the Australian Amateur at the age of 16 in the days when amateur golf was considered more newsworthy than the professional game, and often featured on the front page of the daily city newspapers.

Harry Williams had the good fortune to be born into a middling wealthy family and so was able to devote a lot of time to his game and became more than just a scratch golfer.

His talent caught the eye of promoters of exhibition matches which were 'the go' at the time, so Harry played some matches against notable American golfers like Walter Hagen and Gene Sarazen; having followed a match that Hagen was playing, Williams began to model his putting style on his hero. Sadly Harry also tried to model his lifestyle on Hagen's late night partying. This did not immediately affect his talent but was telling in the long run.

After an exhibition match featuring Harry Williams and Bill Edgar against Gene Sarazen and Helen Hicks, Sarazen announced to the crowd that Harry 'is the greatest hitter of a golf ball I have ever seen'. Privately he said to Harry 'If you come to America, I'll make you the richest left hander in the world, I'm talking a contract and a figure of US\$100,000 a year'. Harry turned him down.

Philip Larkin who almost made it to Poet Laureate in the UK wrote 'they muck (sic) you up, your Mum and Dad'. His inspiration could have been Harry's life before, and after his father's early death, and his



subsequent devotion to his mother, horse racing and booze. Put simply, the money ran out before Harry could achieve his potential.

This is a sad, sad story with some interesting references to pre - WWII golf in Australia, and is well worth reading. Available to order on line at ryanpub.com.au the book retails for A\$29.95 plus p&tp.

Peter Gompertz

The Golf Society of Australia was formed in 1982 to research and preserve the history of golf in Australia. As part of this role, the Society manages the Museum and Library for Golf Australia. Golf Australia supports the Society by providing office space and administrative assistance.