



# Recollections

The official Newsletter of the Golf Society of Australia

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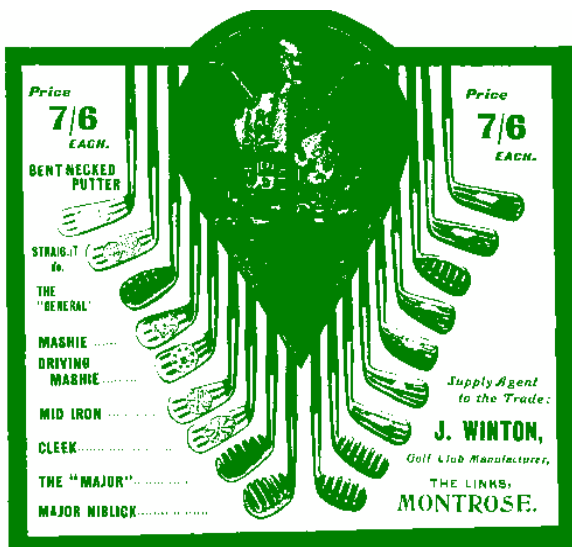
## Our first Newsletter

This sample Newsletter has been compiled very quickly to be available for members at the dinner to be held at Commonwealth Golf Club on 15th November, 1996. The Golf Society is extremely grateful to the Golf Collectors Society of USA who have kindly permitted us to use material from their "Bulletin". The Committee of Golf Society envisage substantial local input to future editions of the publication. On this occasion, most of the material has been derived from external sources. Every care has been taken to avoid any copyright issues associated with sourcing this material. We sincerely hope that Members enjoy reading the articles and provide feedback to direct our future efforts. We would be particularly pleased to include members contributions in future issues. The success or otherwise of this venture lies very much in our collective hands so please involve yourself if you find the material interesting and send us your contributions - over to you.

John Lindsay,

Editor

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## Adopting the Hickory Mindset

(Extracted from "The Bulletin" Number 125)

By Pete Georgiady

One unique aspect of our spirited Society is reflected in the activity affectionately named the Hickory Hacker. From early in the existence of the Society we have had a preoccupation not just with collecting old clubs but reinstating their use.

Enjoyable Hickory Hacking is a combination of attributes. First is the sense of history provided by using serviceable antiques. Next is the acquired appreciation of the differences in the characteristics of wooden and steel shafted golf clubs. This results in a real world lesson in the changes in golf equipment over the last 100 years. Last, but not least, is the fellowship enjoyed by those of us of the same ilk, participating in the royal and ancient sport.

As my son so incredulously exclaimed after hitting a perfect 260 yard brassie shot, "You're not supposed to be able to hit that far with hickories!" I reminded him that a good swing makes the shot, not the club, mentally lamenting on the many shortcomings of my own tortured swing.

The first aspect of playing with the antiques is the weighting of the club, which in turn, alters the swing. Hickories are heavier through the shaft which lightens the head and provides a different swing weight than modern steel shafts. The "sharps" of the hickory circuit have all adopted a sweeping swing rather than today's impact strike. The earliest film footage of action golf, played by Vardon and Braid, demonstrates a loose fluid handling of the club.

Obvious differences include a loss of distance from tee shots, slight for low handicappers, greater for we true

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hacks. The short game suffers less since, regardless of equipment, a player's touch is so very important. Another exception is bunker play. Most of us don't have the luxury of playing with a flanged sole Hagen (Sarazen??..Ed) sand wedge and must make do with a standard old niblick. The lack of bounce in the sand is another adjustment to be made when playing with hickory, but the problem is far from being insurmountable.

One of the important steps towards playing hickory hacker golf is the assembly of a good play set. It entails finding enough serviceable clubs with limited historical and financial value to get around 18 holes. We choose clubs that will cause no financial trauma should they break. As a secondary consideration they should feel good.

The more dedicated players find serviceable clubs and restore them to near perfect condition. Again, these clubs are not generally worth great sums of money....Wood shafts and heads get refinished and weatherproofed; grips are customised and often weight is added to the woods.

One practitioner to Hickory Hacking is Ralph Livingston. Beside examining the clubs for obvious damage such as hairline cracks, Ralph offers these tips for those looking to increase the level of their competitiveness with good equipment.

"The most important thing to look for in a club is how it feels in your hands. Set up with, swing it. If it feels right it will probably play well". Ralph says it should have a reasonable amount of weight; not too heavy or light. Make sure its the right length and lie. Nearly as important is the shaft. Some players constantly look for very firm, stiff wood shafts. Ralph says that this is not necessarily good for the average golfer. Whippy, flexible shafts are just as serviceable but your swing must be timed as well. This is where the sweeping motion becomes very important. The perfectly timed swing with the whippy shaft doesn't require a lot of force to propel the ball a considerable distance. Just remember there is a difference between swinging and hitting.

Because each shaft has individual characteristics, a slightly different swing might be needed for each club. Top notch golfers of old all agreed that the shaft was the most important part of the club. When a good shaft broke, a replacement shaft could rarely duplicate the feel of a favourite club. One exception here is the

use of laminated bamboo shafts, especially the Buchart Nicholls patent clubs of which there seems to be a good supply, which maintain a fairly even degree of flex and torque from club to club. Although not part of the club selection process, a few other suggestions will contribute to the overall enjoyment of Hickory Hacker golf -

- ◆ Solid two and three piece balls "kill" club faces. You will play better and have less chance of damaging clubs by using a "balata" covered wound ball.
- ◆ When your ball is in deep rough, don't attempt to dig it out with a strongly hit wood or long iron. Advance the ball by flipping it out with a niblick or loftier, or use a longer iron with only about 70% swing. Long grass will destroy wood shafts in time.
- ◆ Bunker shots can be made by using a standard niblick and laying the face wide open. Ralph advises opening the face to what you think is the right angle. If that is not enough open it some more.
- ◆ For the truly serious player, Ralph suggests testing many clubs before arriving at a play set. Hitting practice balls will give you an indication if there are faults. But the true test of a club is to play actual golf to find if it can deliver the shot you need.

Golfers of 100 years ago purchased clubs one at a time, looking for that perfect club with a special feel. No thought was given to how a set looked; the utility of every club was far more important. Golf literature is full of tales telling of a golfer's love for a prized club. We've lost that sense of pride in steel shafted clubs, and that may be one reason that we get so much pleasure from returning to the hickories.

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## Old “A” and “B” at it again

(Extracted from “The Bulletin” Number 106)

By Gerald E. Hall

....It has long been the standard practice to use “A” and “B” as either fellow competitors, opponents or partners in discussing various rules situations.

I began research in my library regarding “A” and “B” and, behold, in 1807 in James Grierson’s *Delineations of St Andrews*, on page 225 in a chapter, “A Company of Golfers”, Grierson writes as follows:

“Thus suppose A and B to be engaged in a match. A plays off, and then B. A’s ball lies farthest behind, and therefore, by the rules of the game, he is obliged to play again. This is called playing one more, or the odds. But A misses his ball or sends it to only so short a distance that it is not so near the mark as B’s. A must therefore play a third time, and this is called playing two more; and should it so happen that, even at this stroke, he does not get his ball laid nearer to the hole than that of B, he must then play three more, and so on.

When B then plays, he is said to play one off three; and if he plays a second time, in order to get before it, he is said to play one off two; and if a third time, one off one, or the like. The whichsoever of the two plays first again, plays the odds. But if when B played one off two, or one off three, A had been to play next, he would have then played two more, or three more respectively.....”

Obviously old “A” and “B” have been involved in many legal entanglements over the years on the golf links of the world. Ed.

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From an interview published in *Sports Illustrated*,

## Jack Nicklaus’ Understatement

September 12, 1960.

“I’ve got a job selling insurance. I like the work, and I’m considering a career in it ..... I’m working on straight commission. Being on my own hours will let me finish school and play golf too. The way I figure it I’ll eventually have to make \$25,000 a year to be able to afford to play in the major tournaments. That’s a lot, but I think it will work out.”

## That Old “Carnoustie” Bend

(Excerpt from *Golfing*, May 1940)

It’s funny how some of the oldest ideas in golf club construction keep reviving, and then get scientific endorsement. The old Carnoustie bend that put a convex curve on the shafts of putters, is among the latest of a hundred putter ideas getting a play.

Dr. Robert Dyer, the MD whose popular lectures on the physiology and psychology of golf instruction have stirred up the pros, says the Carnoustie warp was from the empiric application of sound physiology. Hands held at more of a horizontal angle from the body rather than quite vertically, as in the case of the usual putter, do not have as much tendency to roll and make putting uncertain, points out Dr. Dyer.

(Excerpt from *Golf Illustrated* - March 1901)

## A Mechanical Sand Box

Several forms of made up tees, to dispense with the ancient sand tee, are on the market; but experienced players still prefer a sand tee to any other.

The enthusiastic golfer, however, who plays in all kinds of weather, is aware of the difficulties of obtaining suitable sand from the existing types of tee boxes. Picture him immuring his hand in a puddle of sand and water on a wet day before his fingers reach the slightly moist sand, and fancy him pushing his fingernails through “frost baked” sand on a frosty day; and “sun baked” sand on a hot one, to obtain sand of the necessary adhesiveness underneath.

The early months of the new century are to see the remedy for these discomforts to golfers. A mechanical sand box has been invented by Mr. Gilbert Little, a member of Sandwell Park and Harlech Clubs. Mr. Little began golf on the Edgbaston Links, at Warley, about two years ago, and has since played regularly at Sandwell Park, where, in common with golfers on all courses, he experienced the discomforts attending the obtaining of sand from the present types of boxes.

The remedy he has provided consists of a water-tight box, fitted on two standards. The box may be any size, but the experimental one made is 15” long, 12” deep, and 10” wide at the top, tapering to 2” at the bottom.

In the bottom he arranges a spiral conveyor, on the spindle of which a hand wheel is fastened, and the golfer, or his caddie, by moving this hand wheel half a

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turn, makes the spiral revolve half a pitch, and thereby delivers sufficient sand for a tee with a finger basin-like receptacle cast on the end of the sand-box. The sand, being delivered from the bottom of the box, always ensures the suitable degree of moistness, and, at the same time, the mechanical action of the conveyor agitating the sand prevents it from “caking”, “setting”, or “puddling” in hot, frosty, or wet weather.

Mr. Little’s patent mechanical sand tee appliance therefore will meet a want on golf courses. The patentee is presenting the first 18 to Sandwell Park Club in recognition of the suggestions made to him by Mr. Harold Walker, the popular Hon. secretary at Sandwell.

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(Excerpt from *The Golfers’ Magazine*, March 1914)

## Ball Markings

In considering the cause of rapid spinning of a golf ball during flight, one might first consider a few points in regard to the “markings” on the balls.

In the early days of the game, the balls were made of compressed feathers covered with leather. Not having seen one of these we must suppose that they had a surface about like our baseballs of today. Uniformity of flight seems to have been absent, a tendency to “duck” rapidly towards earth being present, resulting in shorter “carry” and longer “run” than the balls of today.

Anyone who has used a repainted ball which has received too much paint, so filling up the markings, will have noticed the “ducking” tendency of the smoother surfaced ball.

Soon after the gutta percha ball came into use someone discovered that a ball which had been “hacked up” in use flew more uniformly and carried longer than the smooth ball, and this led to the first style of markings, this being to mark up the ball’s surface with a flat hammer. This developed into the “cross lines” style of the old gutty ball.

Then came the “pimple” or “bramble” marking, the argument being that the pimples caught more of the air in friction as the ball flew; and, finally, came the “dimple” or recessed marking, a few years ago, with its many variations today.

The dimple marked ball soars or carries much longer than one pimple marking, because during the

enormous velocity of spin only the points of the pimples are acted upon by the air, while outer circle of the dimple catches the air, giving a much larger “circle” of friction on the air for each dimple in the ball. This action depends on the direction of the spin, and the speed of the spin.

Players who can remember the first trial of a dimple ball will remember the peculiar manner in which the ball continued to rise, or seemed to hang a moment in the air at the end of its flight after the instant when the eye had become accustomed to see the older pimple style of ball start its fall earthwards.

This is the soaring effect peculiar to the dimple ball, and we suppose that this must have been a continuously increasing tendency, as markings were improved from the earliest gutty balls to the dimple of today, with its many variations of “arch”, “zome”, “crescent”, “star”, etc.

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What do members think about this draft? Should we continue with a publication in this form? What should it be called? Should it contain local news? The

## What about the future ?

following list might be helpful in your thinking about possible inclusions -

- ◆ President’s column
- ◆ Calendar of Golf Society events
- ◆ Calendar of major golfing events
- ◆ News from interstate groups
- ◆ Classified advertisements (of golfing memorabilia)
- ◆ A Quiz
- ◆ Letters to the Editor
- ◆ Reports on Golf Society events (after the event)
- ◆ Book reviews, etc.

Please forward your comments to the Editor or call John Lindsay on (03) 9521 6809.