



# Newsletter

**An official publication of the Golf Society of Australia**

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## From the President

Welcome to the first issue of the Golf Society of Australia's Newsletter. It marks a milestone in the progress of our Society and will be a prime vehicle for keeping members informed of activities as well as presenting articles of consequence on all aspects of golf. Members are invited to contribute. It is a happy coincidence that the members handbook has been printed and distributed.

Within the handbook members will find our Society's objectives as well as those of the AGU Museum Committee with whom we are associated. A vital role of our Society is to maintain the Museum at Golf Australia House as the premier golf museum in the country. Accordingly a "wish list" is being established to fulfill this objective. Suggestions from members will be appreciated.

Preserving artifacts and memorabilia is the visible evidence of golf's development. The implements used in the game and the rules by which the game is played can be displayed, but, the all important essential spirit of the game is an intangible which can only be passed on from generation to generation on the course. Beholden to the spirit is the tenet of playing the ball as it lies. It is a practice which needs protection just as the spirit of amateurism needs protection from the ever increasing financial temptations and resulting competitive attitudes. These insidious and intrusive influences are permeating a wonderful sport, the great spirit of which is essentially dependent upon the honesty and integrity of the player.

Thus the first item on my "wish list" is a principle. I would like to think that true amateurism will remain the guiding light of golf.

Daryl Cox, President

## The 1997 Program

Your Committee has determined the following program of events for 1997 -

5th February	Hickory Day, Kingston Heath
14th March	Don Lawrence Trophy, Frankston
21st May	Dinner, Royal Melbourne
14th August	Dinner, Victoria
12th November	Douglas Bachli Trophy, AGM and Dinner, Commonwealth

Full details have been or will be provided by mail prior to the events. Please note that the May, August and November dates may not yet have been finalised with the venue clubs. The Committee hopes that all members enjoy the above opportunities to join together and share our enjoyment of golf.

## From the Editor

Thanks to those who provided feedback on the draft newsletter called *Recollections* handed out at Commonwealth in November. You will note that this first official release has been renamed. We have been discussing an appropriate name for this Newsletter and members' thoughts would be welcomed. Some of the suggested names are -

Golf Torque  
Evergreen  
Slowly back  
As it was  
Past, present and future

We feel that the name "*Recollections*" showed a historical focus which ignores the Society's present and future role. What do you think?

John Lindsay, Editor

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## Acknowledgements

The Society is extremely grateful to the Golf Collectors' Society of USA who have kindly permitted us to use material from their "Bulletin". Any such material will, of course, carry an appropriate acknowledgement. We have approached several other kindred organisations overseas and hope to be able to draw even more widely on the vast amount of material published by them.

## Golf Trivia Quiz

*(Answers on Page 4)*

1. Why was Severiano Ballesteros disqualified at the 1980 US Open?
2. In 1900, Margaret Abbott became the only female golfer ever to have won what golfing event?
3. The first British Amateur Championship was played for before the first Open. True or false?
4. From the following list identify any course NOT located in Scotland -  
Aberdour  
Aberdovey  
Aberfeldy  
Aberfoyle  
Aberlady  
Abersoch
5. The first non british winner of the Open Championship was from-  
(a) Australia  
(b) USA  
(c) Canada  
(d) Ireland  
(e) France
6. In the 1990 US Masters, Nick Faldo did not receive the green jacket from the defending champion. Why?
7. St Andrews, Prestwick and Musselburgh were the venues for the first 31 Open Championships. The next year it was played elsewhere. Where?
8. What is so unusual about the Llanymyech Course in the UK?
9. The Royal North Devon Golf Club known as Westward Ho! is located near Northam in Devon. Where is the Eastward Ho! course?
10. What remarkable thing happened to David Feherty on the green at Wentworth in 1993?

## Hickory Day

The annual "Hickory Day" was held on 5th February at Kingston Heath Golf Club. Only a small number of members and guests participated due to the extremely hot weather experienced on the day. There were no entrants in the Burtta Cheney Trophy. The results of the Frank Shepherd Trophy were Mike Fitchett and Pat Field with a score of 13 points. The trophy for best guest was won by Ben Davey of Royal Melbourne Golf Club. The Editor was amongst those deterred by the heat but those attending advise that a good time was had by all!

## Don Lawrence Trophy

The second Don Lawrence trophy event was held at Frankston Golf Club on Friday 14th March 1997. It was a lovely day and a fast course brought very good scores for the 4BBB Stableford event. Grace and David Rew won on a countback from last year's winners, June Griffith and Bruce Langford-Jones with a score of 49 points. They also won the best outward 9 with 26 points; Barry and Gloria Donaldson won the best inward 9 with 25 points.

The event was well attended with 40 playing and others coming to enjoy the evening barbecue. Mrs Muriel Lawrence was on hand to present the trophy which recognises the contribution her late husband made to golf.

## What makes a "Classic Club" a Classic Club ?

By Jeffrey B. Ellis (Extracted from Bulletin No. 89)

During the early 1970's, I attended Brigham Young University as a member of its golf team. This was the same college golf team that Johnny Miller had played on earlier in the 1960's. After he turned professional, Johnny, being the fine individual that he is, never forgot his roots and would occasionally stop in to Provo, Utah and spend some time with the golf team. I can remember him doing this each year while I was there. To our delight, he would give a few individual lessons to each of the players. Just as I remember the personal instruction I received from him, I can also remember all the comments he received from my teammates about his clubs. Most were drooling over his Tommy Armour "this" or his MacGregor "that". Even his old Bullseye putter was fondly admired.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

(Continued from Page 2)

Back in 1974 I knew next to nothing about Tommy Armour, not to mention the clubs that bore his name. But the pros did. When my teammates would peruse the clubs in Miller's bag the comments were very positive. "They don't make them like this anymore" and "I'd sure like to find one like yours" were common statements made even at this time. So, it came to my

attention as a young man in college that "new" isn't necessarily "better". After all, Miller had just used his MacGregor clubs, made during the 1950's to win the 1973 U.S. Open with a final round of 63. This score still stands as the best finish by a U.S. Open champion.

I relate this experience as it demonstrates the original basis of the classic club; the reason for their initial rise to stature. *The tour pro*. More and more in the past decade, the better golfer began noticing what the professional golfers on tour were using for their personal clubs, especially the ones they *weren't* paid to play. (Usually a touring pro who is under contract to play a certain brand of clubs only *has* to carry from 7 to 11 clubs of that make in his bag, depending on his particular arrangement. This would leave the pro to his personal choice when selecting what driver, putter, and sand wedge, etc. he would use.)

The most obvious example of this is Jack Nicklaus. While he was, in fact, on the MacGregor Staff, he wasn't using the "latest and greatest" in golf clubs. Anyone who looked in his bag from April of 1967 through most of 1975 would have seen the same basic clubs: 1967 MacGregor VIP irons, either a Tommy Armour 693 or 945 Eye-O-Matic driver made between 1949 and 1955, and of course his most famous "Sportsman, George Low Wizard 600" putter last made in 1962. Knowing this, anyone who wanted to use exactly the same irons, driver or putter that Nicklaus used had a problem. Once the irons he was using went out of production in 1968, all the clubs in his bag were no longer available from their respective manufacturers. Therefore a "customer" was simply left to enter into the world of "used clubs", but only if they had a lot of money in their pocket. Since *many* people wanted to have clubs "just like Nicklaus", the cost of obtaining them grew. Hence, a market was born.

While this is a simple illustration, is not an isolated example. In reality, it wasn't just the clubs that Jack Nicklaus used that started the classic club market. People had other stars they liked. Much of the time during the last decade, the best putter on tour was

considered by many to be Ben Crenshaw. He achieved this reputation using a Wilson putter that has long been out of production. He's also not the only person to use this particular putter model. In fact, this type of putter has been used a lot on tour.

People also noticed quite a few other clubs used by touring pros that have been out of production for some time. Clubs like the MacGregor, Tommy Armour putters made from 1939 through 1967, MacGregor drivers and fairways woods made basically between 1949 and 1965, and certain Wilson pitching and sand wedges made at various points in time throughout a 40 year period from the middle 1930's to the middle 1970's. Of course, a few other brands such as Spalding, Power-Bilt, Golfcraft, Hogan, etc. have seen some of their out-of-production equipment continue in use by some of the best players in the world. So, upon further examination it is found that in addition to the three top pros already named, such great pros as Watson, Trevino, Palmer, Irwin, Sutton, Norman, Wadkins, Bean, Langer, Stadler, and Graham, etc., etc., have all, many times through their careers, used a few clubs long since out of production. These clubs were noted and became "classics".

Another way to look at this is to do so with the attitude that "the proof is in the pudding". In other words, if a famous professional likes a club so well that he chooses to use it, without remuneration, over all the other clubs available to him, it stands to reason that it must be a truly fine golf club. Of course, it is recognised that golf clubs don't hit good shots, people do. However, it also needs to be recognised that only the "appropriate club" will allow a golfer to hit his "best shots": to play up to his or her full abilities. Of course, that "club" will be different for different golfers.

So, once a notable segment of the golfing population became aware of what their favourite pro was using for his driver, wedge, putter, etc., they would try to locate identical clubs. Inasmuch as many of the clubs were out of production the "classic club" dealer started to appear to fill the demand.

As the term "classic club" might relate to the golfer today, it has evolved into a somewhat different meaning. Instead of being based *solely* on what out-of-production club a particular pro is using, it is based more upon form and function. Good function being the natural result of good form.

When it became recognised that some of the greatest golfers in the world were using an occasional "old

(Continued from page 3)

Club”, the golf club market came to understand “why”. While these clubs are 20, 30, even 50 years old, some of them are considered by many to be the epitome of design- the best looking and constructed clubs around. (The term “constructed”, as just used, doesn’t mean durability. It has to do with materials used in construction as they relate to a golf club as well as the shape of the club itself.) People have tried to improve on them, but haven’t. (Certainly there have been advances in golf equipment, but outside of improved tolerances, most of these advances only relate to the senior, lady, and high handicap golfer.) Everything from changing the materials in construction to radically altering the shape of the golf club itself has been tried. While some of these changes have found acceptance, not everyone agrees with them or finds them “better”. Consequently, we are seeing the old classics being copied and re-marketed. Even then many of these “remakes” aren’t deemed to be of the same quality as the old original “classics”. (I’m not going to get into a long discussion of old persimmon vs new persimmon or laminated wood, etc. Suffice it to say that the older clubs have their following with their reasons.)

So, as the classic club is defined *today* it has to do with recognising the quality in an old club. Quality that will translate into performance. Remember, that was the initial premise for the classic golf club. The *tour pro* accepted its quality. There is also some historical basis for making a club a classic such as Nicklaus’ George Low putter which he used to win 18 of his 20 major championships. However, for the most part this isn’t a factor. It’s the usefulness of the club itself - its inherent qualities as they relate to the better golfer.

While most of the clubs that are termed classics were made at various points between 1937 and 1970, not all clubs made during this time qualify as “classics”. Most are just used clubs. One should also note that not all “classics” are good classics. Condition is of the utmost importance. Also, there were variances from one club to the next within the same model made by the same company. Most classic collectors have seen a few otherwise nice MacGregor drivers, in original condition, with just a bit too much “hook face.”

As the classic market has evolved to its present position today, most of the interest continues to centre in woods, wedges, and putters. Classic irons which once were an active part in the classic market have slowed considerably. This is due to the fact that you can actually demonstrate how, mostly through improved tolerances, a newer set of irons can be

constructed to be better than a set of irons 20 or 30 years old. It should be remembered that it is only within a set of irons that the relationship of one club to the next is so critical. (The more consistently each iron hits a ball in distance and trajectory, along with equal increments from one iron to the next, is what gives meaning as to how good a set of irons is.) It is the use of better tolerances in construction that provide a more evenly matched set. Distance alone is not the main issue. After all, would you rather hit a 6 iron on the green 25 feet from the hole or a 5 iron on the green 3 feet from the hole?

In conclusion, you will note there is nothing quantitative I can do or that can be done to measure one club against another to prove which is better. People who are supporters of classic clubs and employ their use always seem to talk about “feel”. They refer to that aspect of a classic club as being well above any other “regular” club. How can this be measured? Also, what kind of measurement can you give to the club that inspires great feelings of confidence when a golfer is called upon to use it. After all, it’s a fact of life that if a club looks good to the golfer he has a better chance of hitting it well, all other things being equal.

## Answers to Golf Trivia Quiz

1. He arrived late for his hit off time.
2. She won the Olympic Gold Medal for golf.
3. False, the Amateur Championship commenced in 1885, 25 years after the first Open.
4. Aberdovey and Abersoch are in Wales.
5. France. Arnaud Massy won in 1907.
6. Nick Faldo was the defending champion.
7. Muirfield. It was also the first time the Open was played over 72 holes.
8. Fifteen holes are in Wales, three in England.
9. Felixstowe, Suffolk
10. He was bitten by a snake!

