

The Brassie

23 January 2004

Volume 2, Issue 1

Captains Corner with Peter Read

This year it was our turn to host the interstate hickory challenge against The Golf Society from Melbourne. The challenge was held at Royal Sydney on Thursday 13 November. The weather on the day was excellent for golf, overcast and a little on the cool side. The event is decided by match play with seven players per side.

The Captain came up against a very good golfer from Victoria in Noel Terry (Handicap 4 Royal Melbourne), an excellent hitter of the golf ball, even with hickory clubs. Noel had played for Victoria a number of times and was the Victorian Junior Champion in his youth. The match was decided on the final hole in favor of Victoria.

The match between John Fletcher (NSW) and Ken Terry (Vic) produced some stories worth reporting. At the first hole, both players just missed the green; John chipped about 30 feet past the hole leaving a tricky down hill putt. Ken chipped to within 3 feet. After stalking the putt for some minutes, John promptly sank the thirty footer and with the advantage of a stroke, went 1 up.

Off to the second, John hit a tree with his tee shot; it rebounded to the other side of the fairway in a sandy lie behind some trees. Ken hit a long ball down the middle. John played a little chip and run back onto the fairway, and still away, he hit another shot up the fairway. Then Ken played his second – a screamer up the middle; John played his fourth into a fairway bunker some 80 metres short of the green and a nice bunker shot saw him on the green in five, about 50 feet from the pin.

Ken was through the green for three and on in four, about 8 feet from the pin. Same story; John stalked the putt for some minutes then promptly sank the 50 footer, for a six. Ken was staggering about the green in total dismay and missed his putt, but holed the return to scrape a half; Fletcher still one up.

John won a couple more holes, when we came to the eighth hole, with Fletcher holding the advantage at dormy three. But his attacking flair brought him undone. After a fair drive, John hit his second to the right of the green in a sandy lie at the base of a tree, a great gaping bunker between his ball and the elevated green, with overhanging pine branches in the way. No one, not even the great Bobby Jones could escape this predicament.

Once again, he stalked the problem; to the green, back to the ball, close look at the lie, a couple of times he looked to the heavens, there was no escape. Then he took his trusty niblick, waggled his stance, one look toward the green and with great control, hit the ball into the branches of the pine tree with such precision that the ball lost all speed and fell to the green like a duck shot out of the sky. Needless to say, two putts later and John having halved the hole, his opponent shook hands and conceded, badly beaten by the golfer with a much better share of the luck.

The final result saw NSW defeat Victoria 4 matches to 3. The other individual results were Ross Howard defeated Darryl Cox 1up after

The following photos were supplied by our intrepid "box brownie man" Owen from the November match with our Victorian friends and "foes" at Royal Sydney.



Left to right, Tom Moore, Keith Wood, Billy McWilliam and Bruce Scott



Left to right, Noel Terry, John Fletcher, Peter Read and Ken Terry

Captain's Corner with Peter Read

being dormie 2. Barry Leithhead defeated Jean Gilbert 3/2. Des Froneman defeated Ross Baker 3/2. Tom Moore lost to Keith Wood 2 down. Henry Patterson lost to Cliff George 2 down.

This year was very special in that Ross Howard and his father, Al donated a trophy to be used as the perpetual prize for the interstate challenge. Al's father, Tom Howard won the trophy for his victory in the 1921 NSW Amateur Championship, which by coincidence, was also played at Royal Sydney. Al Howard attended Royal Sydney during the day and with his other son Terry, drove out onto the course in a buggy to watch the play. He later made a wonderful speech when presenting the trophy to the Society.

During discussions with Keith Wood, President of The Golf Society Melbourne and other member of their Society, I advised them that we had been playing the Australian Hickory Shaft Championship in NSW since 1991 and further, that winners had come from NSW, Victoria and England.

I suggested that it might be an opportune time to start rotating the Australian Championship between States. During the dinner, I formally offered Victoria opportunity to host the next Australian Hickory Shaft Championship, which they accepted. The issue of reciprocal rights was also discussed and agreed in principle, to be ratified at each Society's next meeting.

The Captain has had many sleepless nights deliberating over the issue of replica hickory clubs being used in competition. The results from recent competitions and all other data the Captain could obtain were closely studied in assessing this very delicate issue. The Captain has concluded that the clubs used really have no bearing on the outcome of the event and any clubs fitted with hickory/wooden shafts be allowed in GCSA events. Golf is a game for people of integrity. Always keep in mind that golf is a game to be played, not won.

The Dan Cullen Trophy

The 2-ball Ambrose to decide the Dan Cullen Trophy will be held at Long Reef Gold Club over 10 holes on Friday 13th February. Hit off is 3pm with drinks, presentation and a barbecue after the game. Make sure you attend this premier event at a fabulous seaside golf ideally suited to play with hickory clubs. The cost is \$55 including green fees, drinks and dinner. Will Cullen Snr. and Jnr. reproduce the form that won them fame last year? Will lefties Read and Leithhead again sink Fletcher-like putts to repeat their 2002 victory? Will some apple cart upsetters emerge to claim the victory? Be there to feel the hot competition and the cool sea breeze on your face.

Call Tom Moore (9871 2798) or Captain Peter Read (9871 3728) with your booking.

Thoughts on playing with Hickory clubs, with Dan Cullen Jnr.

Dan Cullen Jnr, the son of GCSA's Patron, grew up with golf. He played from the age of six with a cut down hickory club and is a member at the NSW Club where he plays off a handicap of six. Dan Jnr, like his dad, is a big man – over 6 feet tall and 115kgs, with the big hands at give light touch around the greens. He de-



Left to right, Des Froneman, Darryl Cox, Ross Howard and Ross Baker



Left to right, Jean Gilbert, Cliff George, Henry Paterson and Barry Leithhead

Thoughts on Playing with Hickory Clubs with Dan Cullen Jr.

scribes himself as a risk-taking golfer. Dan Jnr had a big year in 1979 when he was champion of both the NSW and St Michaels clubs. He first played an event with hickories in the 2002 Dan Cullen Trophy at Longreef, with his dad and they won the 2-ball Ambrose event. They plan to defend the title again at Longreef on Friday 13th February.

The Brassie caught up with Dan Jnr after the Societies' Challenge at RSGC for his comments about playing with hickories, which he regards as initially a novelty that verges on art that quickly creates a real appreciation for the skill of old time golfers. Most of all though, playing with hickories, on the shots when it all comes together, brings the sound club on the ball and the feel of shaft in the hands, the way it ought to be.

"I really enjoy playing with the clubs and each one is uniquely different. The weight and swing weight especially seems to make a lot of difference. If the club feels too "light" then it's hard to get any distance with it. For example, each of my mashies, and I have several, goes a slightly different distance. So I carry a "long" mashie and a "short" mashie for different length shots. I hope I am not making it too complicated for myself by doing so but with only seven clubs in the bag, it should be simpler. That is not always the case.

The premium is on hitting it straight, as the distance you get is quite less than with modern clubs. They are "unforgiving" in the way that if you don't hit them in the middle of the club (which is closer to the hosel than you think) they tend to mis hit easily and twist in your hand, especially if you catch it on the toe. You have to swing MUCH slower than you think. Don't even try to go after a drive - they seem to slice off to the right. You have to "wait" for the clubhead and then it's fast hand and wrist action that seems to do the trick in perfecting the cor-

rect shot. You really must play within yourself and it takes a lot of self control and self discipline to do so. You really have to position your ball not only off the tee but to "miss" the greens in the right spots.

There could be a lesson here for how we play our modern clubs, where the forgiving nature of these clubs tends to mean we can ignore the basics. An occasional return to hickories brings those basics right back into play, helps you to sort out a few things out and your modern game improves as a result.

Try to minimise your divots on your shots. Not only do you lose clubhead speed and the irons can dig in, you can easily break a shaft. Don't go for "miracle" shots or recoveries. You can't hit the ball hard enough to hit a huge slice or hook with them or even a high one. It seems easier to slice them than hook them. By this I mean to do it deliberately. (Accidental slices and hooks are equally easy, says the Editor.) The slices/fades don't bend as far as with modern clubs, I guess because you can't impart as much side spin on the ball.

They are also unforgiving around the greens with the sharp edges on the irons (which can help you though sometimes) digging into the turf easily and resulting in a duffed shot more easily than with modern equipment. Without the benefit of a lob wedge, some shots over bunkers and the like are extremely difficult.

The combination of these factors makes you appreciate how good the old golfers were who HAD to play with them. No wonder they (like Bill Mac and Dad) are not that shook on playing them again!!! It is really amazing to see the scores shot with hickories in the old days.

Finally, on the replica club debate I reckon that the use of replicas probably should be allowed. One day all the "old" clubs will be gone and

Thoughts on Playing with Hickory Clubs with Dan Cullen Jr.

so let's not hasten this day and enjoy them as much as we can. So if that means substituting replicas, or even one of them in your set to protect an old warrior, then so be it. I haven't used the replicas yet but suspect they would be easier to hit. However, a lot of times golf depends on the guy hanging onto the end of the club not the manufacturer. Remember you still have to putt!!! And it seems it doesn't matter what you use for that these days.

HARRY'S COLLECTION OF CUPS COMES HOME

Norm Moore, long time friend and Caddie of legendary Sydney golfer Harry Sinclair, has donated six silver cups won by Harry to the Golf Museum.

Harry's amateur record is very impressive:

- Runner up NSW Amateur Championship 1923 and 1924.
- Moore Park Golf Club Champion 1924 and 1925.
- Australian Amateur Championship 1924

and 25.

- NSW Amateur Championship 1925
- Queensland Amateur Championship 1925.
- Queensland Open Championship 1925.
- Queensland Foursomes Championship 1925.
- NSW Foursomes Championship 1925.
- Australian Foursomes Championship 1925 with A.W. Jackson.

Harry turned Professional in 1926 and toured Britain with Fred Popplewell, Tom Howard and Carnegie Clark. As a Professional, Harry was runner up to Rufus Stewart in the Australian Open of 1927 and won the Queensland Open in 1931.

In 1939, Harry joined the Army, was captured by the Japanese and spent 3 years in Changi Prisoner of War Camp. Harry became blind due to malnourishment in Changi. But after a couple of years of good food and attention, his sight returned and he became Professional at the Avoca Golf Club in Randwick. He handed in his scorecard on June 15, 1988.

Protect your valuable Investment !

The Golf Collectors Society is pleased to announce a valuation, repair and restoration service for Hickory Clubs. This unique service is for individuals and clubs that want to understand and conserve their collections. There might be hidden treasures in your collection that can be identified by a proper identification and valuation.

Have your clubs professionally valued and authentically repaired or restored to their former glory. You may have a friend who would appreciate the gift of having their collection appraised.

Reasonable rates apply and a percentage of the fees go to the Collectors Society. Contact Tom Moore for further details.

GOOD BUYING AT THE MUSEUM SHOP

The Brassie missed the Christmas shopping frenzy but there are good things to buy at the Museum. We have a number of beautiful inscribed drinking glasses with the Collectors Logo for \$12 each. We also have "Strata" golf balls with the Collectors logo at \$72 per dozen or in a sleeve of three for \$18. These make great presents.

Clubs, balls and driving distance

How far can you drive the ball? This has to be one of the most asked questions and often one of the least important. We know about new drivers, special balls, clubhead speed and Tiger Woods. What do we know about long hitters with hickory shafted clubs, like Ted Ray?

Ray was a good friend of Harry Vardon – they both came from the Island of Jersey and as professionals, often played together. There was plenty of talk about long driving in the book, "The Greatest Game Ever Played" about the 1913 US Open at Brookline, won by the 20 year-old amateur, Francis Ouimet in the play-off with Vardon and Ray. Vardon and Ray also played off for the 1920 US Open at Inverness, Ohio, with Ray the victor.

Ray, like Dan Cullen Jnr, was a big man and was a long driver. The 7th at Inverness, was a 334 yard hole with a chasm forming the dogleg. Ray attempted the 275-yard carry in all four rounds, made it and birdied each time. The remarkable features of Ray's play were his long hitting, violent recovery play and good putting, all with his pipe between his teeth! When full out, he swayed into the ball and finished off balance. His advice to someone who asked about getting more length: "Hit it a bloody sight harder, mate!" (Extract from 'The Who's Who of Golf' by Peter Allis)

Harry Vardon refers in his book, "How to Play Golf" to 'rising to the glory of long hitting' suggesting that 'the brassie from the tee is the easiest full shot in the realm of golf and the accomplishment of it always affords the thrill of pleasure and encouragement'.

Vardon contrasts sweeping the ball off the tee with hitting the ball, and then says: *The natural method of getting into position for hitting with a stick or any other instrument is to have it behind your head so you can lash round strongly with it. Well, you want to lash round at the golf ball, but it is essential to exercise restraint as the club begins to come down. It must be travelling at the fastest pace at the moment of impact. To make it do so is the art of the swing. It is the knack of producing the sweeping motion with the power behind it.* In summarising his seven golden rules for driving, he says: 6. *Don't be afraid to hit hard; if you are swinging correctly, hard hitting is not "pressing".*

Al Howard has the following comment: *"Long hitters have been recorded at 250 yards plus, but it should be noted that the fairways in those days were not watered, lacked today's depth of grass cover, hence very hard, so resulted in lots of run. Many top golfers of those days hit the ball with a high draw / hook (Bobby Jones in particular) and the ball probably landed (depending on prevailing wind) at 210-220 yards and ran 40-50 yards due to the condition of the fairway, and the top spin on the ball.*

Also note that some of our group currently using the balata balls can drive the ball 200 plus metres (220 yards) on the fly, but landing on watered fairways, hence little run. Most current golfers tend to fade the ball, so over spin / topspin is also negated".

2003-4 Subscriptions are OVERDUE!!

If you haven't paid the subs for this year, it's time to continue your support for GCSA with \$30. The members are an important recognition of our history and the money helps to keep the communication going. If the box below is coloured PINK, it means you are overdue.

GCSA Membership Renewal or Application

Use this form to renew your membership or to invite new members to share the fun of hickory golf.

Complete the details and send a cheque for \$30 (+ \$20 joining fee) to:

GCSA, PO Box 23 Glenorie NSW 2157

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Club:

Handicap:

*The Brassie is the publication of The Golf Collectors Society of Australia
respecting and conserving the history of Golf.*