



A WEE NIP

Spring/Summer 2025

Journal of the
Society of
Hickory Golfers

Playing Pine Valley with Hickories
The Hickory Golfer of The Villages
Hickories in the Heartland – Spotlight on Nebraska



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Spring/Summer 2025

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opinions, comments.

Down the Fairway... Joey Piatek

President's Note

Welcome all to the spring/summer issue of *A Wee Nip* for 2025. I would like to start by thanking all the past presidents of the Society of Hickory Golfers, but especially Joe Hollerbach, for his service, passion, and leadership the past two years. Joe had a great ability to see the big picture, and always made sure we as a board carefully considered anything that may be missing. He also made it a high priority to make the SoHG more transparent and further our mission. I hope to continue the good work he began. I know that he will continue to be involved, and for that we are thankful. Thanks again, Joe.

I would also like to thank Jim Davis for his many years of service and work on *A Wee Nip* and the many and varied hats he wears as our executive director. He is our latest Mike Brown Award recipient, and deservedly so.

2025 will be a great year for hickory golf. The Hickory Golf Association of Texas, along with the SoHG U.S. Hickory Open Committee, has been hard at work to prepare for the 18th U.S. Hickory Open at the Hot Springs Country Club in Hot Springs, Ark., so mark your calendars for Oct. 3-5.

While the USHO is our crown jewel event, as an organization we look forward to supporting and promoting many hickory events across the country and across the world, some old and some new. Please stay tuned to updates on the Worldwide Events calendar on the website. For 2025, I hope that we can both deepen and broaden a few things: our experience playing wood shafted clubs, our knowledge of club makers and characteristics, and our relationships with the people (whether living or historical) who were major influences on the pre-1935 golf era.

I hope you find the articles within as varied and interesting as our members themselves. Thanks all! *Joey*



JOEY PIATEK
President, SoHG

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On the cover...

The photo of a player blasting from a bunker at the Mid Pines Golf Club was taken in 2013 by the late Charlie Mulligan, who was a beloved caddie at the Ballyneal Golf Club in Holyoke, Colo. That club's second course is named the Mulligan Course in his honor. Mulligan was profiled in the first edition of The Golfer's Journal by writer Jim Colton. Charlie was one-of-a-kind and the people for whom he caddied never forgot the experience, his kindness and wisdom.



A word...

from the editor's desk

Jim Davis

Oh, the places you'll go...

In the last edition we followed a Canadian to Ireland, learned of a favorite course in Australia and read about the first hickory open in China.

With this spring's issue, we hear from an Indian who has become smitten with hickory golf and of a fellow in Florida's signature retirement community, The Villages, who, curiously, finds it difficult to find fellow hickory players.

SoHG Elections Committee

The Society is in need of one or two volunteers to serve on the Elections Committee. This group is charged with providing sound nominations for the board, managing the yearly elections, and helping the Society organize and carry out any special elections that may come to pass. Get involved. Your Society can use your help. Contact Joey Piatek or Jim Davis with your offer to serve on the Elections Committee. ~

We have another article from young hickory star Matthew Hoffman who writes about a remarkable visit to the legendary Pine Valley. Invitations to play that course are rare, so it is a treat to hear how he played the course with his hickories.

Matthew and a friend recently visited John Henry Williams to learn a few tricks of the trade from the skilled craftsman. Also in this edition, Williams shares a trick or two about replacing a Pyratone shaft with a hickory shaft for wood headed clubs in his Equipment Tips article.

There's a lot of variety and interest in this edition, methinks, so we hope you enjoy it.

A word of thanks to all of our members from the newest to our growing list of Lifetime members. Your support of the Society makes it possible to carry on *A Wee Nip*, our website, and the work of many people who work on the U.S. Hickory Open and maintain our equipment guidelines and playing standards.

Jim



JIM DAVIS has managed to retain an iron hold on the editorship of *A Wee Nip*. Despite rumors to the contrary, most Wee Nip staffers say he can be pleasant to work with. (Besides, nobody else wants the job.)

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K. LEONARD HICKORY GOLF





SoHG News

2025 USHO Update – Hot Springs, Ark., Oct. 3-5

Registration for the 2025 USHO is scheduled to begin April 18 and end on May 30. (As of this writing, it is difficult to tell when this edition of the *Wee Nip* will reach SoHG members.)

Practice round fee – It is important to note that the green fee for a practice round is included in the overall registration fee. However, if you cannot make the practice round, if your plans change or this does not fit your travel arrangements, just let the tournament organizers know and the fee for the practice round will be refunded. Contact Gary Krupkin at krupkinlaw@gmail.com to request a practice round refund.

The host hotel, the Arlington Hotel, is nearly completing a renovation that has the place in spectacular shape. USHO organizer Scott Pilgrim was recently in Hot Springs and stopped in to view the work. Here's his report:

"I was here in Hot Springs this weekend and stopped by The Arlington Hotel Friday evening to check on the progress of its restoration. It looks fabulous and has everything imaginable at your fingertips! The lobby was filling up for

the live music (every weekend), and the busy historic street of shops, clubs, bath houses, and restaurants is right outside the hotel door.

"This majestic hotel has hosted seven U.S. presidents, numerous movie stars, hall of fame athletes, and many other dignitaries and notable people in history. There is a "Presidential Suite," the "Ronald Reagan Room," the "Babe Ruth Room"... even an "Al Capone Suite."

"Our contracted nightly room rates for USHO participants and guests are only \$109 single and \$129 double occupancy....and these are on the weekend! The stay at The Arlington will be as special as the play in the tournament."

The USHO website – <https://ushickoryopen.org> – has been live for a couple of weeks now (though the registration page will not, or did not, go live until April 18) and has all the latest information. We'll try to make all that available on the USHO page on the SoHG website, too. 🐾



Website Payment Options

The SoHG currently uses PayPal for payments. Our website is powered by WordPress, the leading CMS (Content Management System) on the world wide web. Our website managers explain that at one time PayPal was the only option that web developers using WordPress could use to integrate payments. As both WordPress and PayPal have been around for 20+ years, this was a safe choice to make. The key benefits are that this keeps transactions safe by keeping them off the SoHG website; we don't want to store member credit card information on the site, which is a huge risk and a no-no.

PayPal offers the option to pay using a personal credit card or even a linked personal bank account. One does not have to sign up for a PayPal-sponsored credit account. Using a personal credit card through PayPal does incur a 3% merchant fee, which is a typical merchant processing fee.

Long term, the Society is exploring a payment processor called "Stripe," which is a preferred choice of website developers as it provides the best API (application programming interface). Stripe processes users' credit cards directly (with no need to sign up through a third party service like PayPal),

and there is no need for members to sign up for a 'Stripe' account. Moreover, it allows for newer payment options including Apple Pay, Google Pay and even country-specific options such as AliPay (for China), etc. However, it should be noted that the cost would shift from being paid on the member side to being paid by the SoHG, likely to be around plus or minus 3%.

So, please be assured that your website and financial teams are exploring the best options to consider as we continue to update the website and improve member benefits. 🐾

World Hickory Golf Day

The date is the first Sunday in May, in 2025 on May 4. Get out with your friends to play or, if the weather is still inclement in your region, gather at the local pub in celebration. Send us photos, too.



Mulligans –

Location of China Golf Museum

In our 2024 Autumn/Winter edition the caption for the middle photo on page 14 should read that the China Golf Museum is at the Hidden Grace Golf Club in Shenzhen.

Scottish Rovers add a pence or two for the Old Tom Morris statue project

You may have heard of the Tom Morris statue project in St Andrews. Now in place just a mashie shot away from the first tee of the Old Course, the statue, by sculptor David Annand, honors the Grand Old Man of Golf. One of the project's chief fundraisers, Ronald Sanford, was pleased to accept a donation from Cal Whitman and Angus Rollo, a traveling calamity known as the Scottish Rovers. The two travel widely for hickory golf and are very willing to hire out for musical performances at any pub that will have them. And that is a list that lengthens with every passing year. A letter from Mr. Sanford, below, describes his meeting with The Rovers and his delight in accepting a donation from the two.

In early 2024 I was introduced by Roger McStravick, the distinguished golf historian and author, via email to Cal Whitman. Cal, and I, in turn established a link, so I was aware of his long-standing friendship with Angus Rollo, both on and off the links.

That said, nothing had prepared me for our meeting outside the Golf Museum in St Andrews at 3 pm on 11th October as they wanted to give me a generous donation to support the exciting, historic Tom Morris statue project.

Tom Morris was now in position about 50 yards from the Golf Museum. The Unveiling Ceremony on 2nd October was acclaimed by the media and golfers worldwide.

So there they were, Cal and Janet and Angus in full Highland regalia and I felt I was on the movie set for "Brigadoon"

Conversation soon covered their latest hickory golf venture near Aberdeen, and their imminent performance as "The Scottish Rovers" in The Keys Bar, a legendary watering hole in St Andrews, well known to Tom Morris.

My partner, Lesley, was returning from an afternoon's Bridge and I knew a drink there was on her bucket list. However, the Scottish Rovers would be adding a new dimension, and we were not disappointed. A gin and tonic for Lesley and a pint of lager for me and, as they say in Glasgow, 'the game was on'.

The Scottish Rovers went through the Scottish Song Book at an enthusiastic pace and the atmosphere in The Keys was truly charged, and all this was happening due to the influence of the game of golf.

The music transcended cultures and boundaries and smiles and friendships were the order of the day: and thanks to Tom Morris I had met and heard The Scottish Rovers, and Lesley



SCOTTISH ROVERS MEET OLD TOM. Calvin Whitman, left, and Angus Rollo, right, met with Ronald Sanford in St. Andrews last autumn to deliver a donation for the Old Tom Statue Project. Sanford is the chief fundraiser for the project. Whitman and Rollo travel widely for hickory golf and play music at the pubs they visit along the way.

had ticked off an important bucket list item.

You cannae beat it, pure dead brilliant, by the way.

Haste ye back,

Ronald Sanford

You can still donate to the project should you wish. Search for the "Old Tom Morris - Memorial Statue" at GoFundMe.com and shoot a few pounds or dollars their way.

Cal and Angus, by the way, have already set their 2025 agenda which includes the Solway Solver pairs competition, with dates in both England and Scotland in July – Sillioth on Solway Golf Club, Southernness Golf Club and Powfoot Golf Club. They have also registered for a pairs competition at Royal Troon and Prestwick. And, of course, they'll be playing in pubs along the way. It's not all mashies and niblicks.



LOVE FOR THE ROVERS. Ronald and Lesley Sanford in the Keys Bar with a shameless promotion for the band. No doubt they were bribed with free drinks.



SPECIAL INSTRUCTOR FOR THE DAY, Breck Speed poses with his First Tee class. At right, a couple of future hickory champions on the tee.

Hickories and the First Tee

Veteran hickory golfer Breck Speed always enjoys his time with the First Tee of Central Arkansas. Monica Blake, the group's director, often invites Speed to talk with the kids about hickory golf. On this occasion, Neil Day, a former club professional and past winner of the Arkansas Hickory Open, joined him.

"Needless to say, my role was to speak on the history of golf and Neil was the person to show how to properly hit a ball with hickory clubs," Speed said. "The kids (and more than a few of their parents) spent an hour after the history presentation hitting hickories."

Central Arkansas was the "first" First Tee chapter, founded by Jack Stephens, former chairman of Augusta National.

"They have a very active schedule of events and I am proud to have assisted them numerous times over the years as they put on programs on the history of golf," Speed said.



"One time we had Sean "The Beast" Fister give a demonstration on long drives with hickory clubs. Sean was a multiple long drive national champion, and it took a special club made by Tad Moore with an extra strong shaft to survive the demonstration."

Speed said 30 Boy Scouts also were visiting that day, doing a project for a badge. "Is this the first hickory golf badge in scouting history?" he wondered. 🐾

Welcome new members!

These are members who have joined since November 2024. If we overlooked your name let us know and we'll add it to the next edition. Hometowns are added if the member included it in his/her membership data. Thank you to all who have joined as Lifetime Members and to those of you who renew at the five- and 10-year levels.

Chris Billinger, Kansas City, Mo.
Brian Borger, South Bend, Ind.
Kevin Brown, Little Rock, Ark.
Rich Bubenchik, Norwich, Ohio
Frank Carni II, The Colony, Texas
Neil Day, Little Rock, Ark.
Tony Dietl, Bainbridge Island, Wash.
Dave Feutz, Grand Rapids, Mich.
Mike Fruciano, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Gene Gregory, Neenah, Wisc.
Jeff Head, Powder Springs, Ga.
David Hicks, Alton, Ill.
Todd Himes, Sun City West, Ariz.
David Hodson, Richmond Hill, Ga.
Mark Hurlburt, East Canaan, Conn.
Tracy Joneson, Gravette, Ark.
Patrick Kaus, Peoria, Ariz.
Lorna Kenney, Sun City West, Ariz.
Thomas Kirkwood, Shawnee on Delaware, Pa.
Matthew Lopez, Pensacola, Fla.
Drake Lundeen, Bennington, Neb.
Caden Myers, Wheeling, W.Va.
Marc Oddou, Oceanside, Calif.
Patrick Orbin, Sun City West, Ariz.
Chris Peebles, Little Rock, Ark.
Tim Piatek, Munster, Ind.
Jonathan Pilgrim, Aurora, Colo.
Clay Pinson, St. Francisville, La.
Rick Pruneau, Sun City West, Ariz.
Sean Rankin, Zephyrhills, Fla.
Michael J Riso, Largo, Fla.
Michael Roach, Spring, Texas

Blair Semple, Nekoosa, Wisc.
Aaron Skinnis, Chicago, Ill.
Paul St Laurent, Sun City West, Ariz.
Joshua Yarbrough, Norman, Okla.
Jason Zack, Saint Louis, Mo.

Five-Year

Todd Williams, SW Ranches, Fla.
Jeffrey Havlock, Gulf Shores, Ala.

Lifetime Members

Dave Brown, Omaha, Neb.
George Burgland, Galesburg, Ill.
Mary Burgland, Galesburg, Ill.
William Carpenter, Louisville, Ky.
Kevin Cawley, Omaha, Neb.
Nelson Ford, McLean, Va.
Bill Geisler, Winter Springs, Fla.
Bob Georgiade, Durham, N.C.
Ross Hays, Tampa, Fla.
Roger Hill, Grand Rapids, Mich.
Will Jacoby, Louisville, Ky.
Randy Jensen, Omaha, Neb.
Jack McDonnell, Omaha, Neb.



Chuck McMullin, White Post, Va.
Charles Mitchell, Lexington, Ky.
Tad Moore, Selma, Ala.
Jeffery Olsen, Shoreline, Wash.
Skip Platt, Keswick, Va.
Rick Rechter II, Hopkinsville, Ky.
Doug Ruge, Omaha, Neb.
Breck Speed, Little Rock, Ark.
Scott Staudacher, Grand Rapids, Mich.
Tom Tracy, Star, Idaho
John Willbanks, Colleyville, Texas
Jeremy Wright, Louisville, Ky.



Correspondence

Your
Letters

The real lessons we teach

The following is a reprint of a letter written by an SoHG member to his high school golf coach. (He asked that their names may be anonymous.) The two enjoyed a chance meeting at a high school basketball game and at one point in their conversation the coach, who was more of a wrestling and football coach and admittedly knew little about golf, said he was afraid "he didn't teach him a thing." Not so, said our fellow hickory player, as you can read below. If you keep your eyes and ears open, you can learn important lessons in unexpected ways.

Dear Coach,
It was great to see you again at the Sectional Championship game. I know you were being a little tongue-in-cheek when you said you didn't teach me a thing as my golf coach, but it made me think about the things you did teach me in our four years together.

In my first year of college, my golf coach told our team that our priorities should always be: faith, family, school, and golf, in that order. I think you would agree. Today, 18 years later I can still hear your voice telling me to be a good person. Being a golf coach is hard: You can't tell your team to take a lap or hit the weightroom. You can't yell at the players to have them try harder, or focus better, like a basketball or football coach might. These coaches might be surprised to hear that sometimes the key to playing better golf is to try less. The best thing you can do as a golf coach is to provide an environment for the players to perform. You knew that

you might not be able to help us work on our grip or alignment, but you were there to remind us that we should feel thankful and excited to have the opportunity to be playing the sport that we love. Plus, you always made sure we were hydrated and had enough golf balls!

You taught me that being a good person means you represent yourself well, you listen to others, you are respectful, grateful, and somebody that people want to be around and emulate. Doing these things makes your interactions and life in general positive, fulfilling, and in a great general state of mind. You feel free and joyful, the exact state that you need to be in to play good golf, where you can focus on only the very next shot, because you know that, off-course, things are being taken care of.

You helped to teach me how to lose. I think that is one of my strengths now: the ability to cope with losing. Sometimes I tell people, "I'm the best loser you know." In life, sometimes we win, but we might lose even more, especially in golf.

In any sport, a high school coach's job isn't to turn them into college players, it is to provide them opportunities to do their best in their sport, and to prepare them to be good people and provide the foundation for a good life. If you really think you didn't teach me anything, I want to make it clear that you did: Be a good person, have your priorities in order, and always take the wins with the losses. Those are the lessons that you gifted me, among others, and I hope to pass them to my kids as well.

Your player,
'Rusty Sticks'

ON TO GREENER FAIRWAYS Fred Muller, May 1948 - February 2025

Fred Muller, of Traverse City, Mich., died peacefully at home on Feb. 3, 2025. Mr. Muller was a Grand Rapids native, high school basketball and collegiate golf champion (Georgia State Univ.). For 42 years he served as the head golf professional at Crystal Downs Country Club in Frankfort, Mich. It was in this capacity that many in the SoHG came to know him. His time at Crystal Downs allowed him to serve as a role model and mentor for young golf professionals, caddies, and employees who were fortunate enough to work for him. A gifted golfer, Mr. Muller competed on the PGA Tour, the Austra-

lian Tour, and the South American PGA Tour. In 1981, he won the Michigan Open. He always maintained a love of the treasure that is Crystal Downs. Mr. Muller had five hickory titles – two at the Belvedere Hickory Open and three at the Kingsley Club. He enjoyed working on hickory clubs. He is survived by his wife, Kay, and his children, Gaby Gillis (Tim) and Gates Muller.

Contributions in his honor may be made to the Fred Muller Scholarship Endowment Fund at the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation or to the Traverse City Junior Golf Association. He strongly believed in mentoring young men and women by making a positive impact on their lives through both education and learning the rewards of the game of golf.



Are reproduction clubs frowned upon?

Is using reproduction clubs frowned upon? If a tournament was won using reproduction clubs would that be considered in poor taste?

Thank you for your time.

J. Brickels

Since its founding in 2000, the Society of Hickory Golfers has approved the use of reproduction hickory golf clubs – approved reproductions, that is.

You will find a list of such clubs at this link: www.hickory-golfers.com/hickory-golf-equipment-guidelines/

Many modern hickory golfers find that an easy-to-acquire set of reproductions offers a quick introduction to the sport and access to hickory events.

However, it is often said that, having done so, such golfers owe it to themselves to explore building a set of original clubs. Using original clubs offers another level of appreciation of golf and the era from which our modern pursuit of hickory golf began.

It takes time to build a set of originals, though, which is why having access to reproductions is important.

Unfortunately, some modern hickory golfers have decided that using originals only is the “true and proper” way of enjoying the sport. Purists such as these dampen the fun for everyone. It’s one thing to be a purist (I, myself, tend to use mostly original clubs), but one doesn’t have to exclude others. In fact, I have one or two modern replica wooden headed clubs that I find are fun to play.

So, no, playing with replicas or reproduction clubs is not in poor taste and do not let anyone tell you that it is. There will always be a bit of a reproduction vs. original club discussion going on, with adherents for both sides. But time and again club surveys taken at the U.S. Hickory open, for example, show that a majority of players often have a mixed set of originals and replicas in their bags.

The main thing is, find clubs you like and that suit your game. Explore both originals and replicas. There are great clubs of both out there. And lots of good people to help you get outfitted.

Editor

A good word for A Wee Nip

Many thanks for another great issue of *A Wee Nip* (Autumn/Winter 2024). I always have a smile on my face when another edition appears in the mailbox.

From the story about the upcoming 2025 USHO in Hot Springs, Arkansas, the inaugural China Hickory Open to the article about “Sunshine & Hickories,” this issue was packed with good reads. I also found the articles by John Henry Williams on equipment and Matthew Hoffman on playing tips to be interesting and, more importantly, quite helpful.

I enjoy playing hickory golf with the Carolina Hickory Golf Association and am looking forward to another round at Pinehurst later this month on course No. 3. We expect a good turnout and will enjoy 18 holes of hickory golf fun. As always, a wee nip to follow on the 19th hole.

Have a Happy New Year, congratulations on being a recipient of the prestigious Mike Brown Award and again, thank you for your efforts as our editor.

Kindest regards,

Ellis Nelson
Carolina Hickory Golf Association
Wake Forest, N.C.



Thank you Ellis. The SoHG is blessed to have so many members who have taken their love of golf to much deeper levels of enjoyment and understanding. Hickory golf requires one to reach for a deeper connection to the game and that leads to a much deeper connection to our fellows who enjoy this sport with us. It’s no wonder that most members say that the friendships they have made in hickory golf are often lifetime friendships. The enjoyment and rewards of the game are somehow enhanced with a niblick and mashie in hand. None knew this better than Mike Brown and few epitomized all that is good about this sport better than he. Your dutiful editor would be derelict if he did not promise to maintain his rule over the editorial offices with a keen and demanding eye, always keeping the Wee Nip staff in a state of high alert, if not outright fear for their lives, such is the terror his dread gaze inspires. On the plus side, office parties are the stuff of legend.

Your faithful and obliging servant,
The Editor





MIKE HOBSON prepares for his daily round of hickory golf using a walking cart he made.
Photos by Brandon Atwell, courtesy The Villages Magazine.

A Passion for Hickory Golf in The Villages

This story originally appeared in the March 2025 edition of The Villages Magazine/The Villages Daily Sun, a publication for residents of The Villages, one of Florida's largest retirement communities, about 25 miles northeast of Orlando. The article is reproduced with permission. Mike Hobson and his wife, Petra, moved to The Villages in 2014 after his retirement from Plumbers Local #5 in Washington D.C. He started playing with hickories in 2010 with the Virginia Hickory Golf Association in Charlottesville. – Editor

By Jill Winters

Mike Hobson remembers watching the movie “The Greatest Game Ever Played,” which focused on the birth of modern golf. He was inspired and driven to learn more about the history of hickory golf, which can be traced back to Scotland. He wondered what it would feel like to play with hickory wood clubs in his hands — the standard clubs used by golfers in the late 19th and 20th centuries. His buddy happened to own a bunch he purchased from a yard sale but there was a problem. They didn’t have any grips on them. Mike wasn’t fazed as he put tennis racket grip tape on the shafts and they decided to go out and use them.

“You hit one and it was like ‘Oh man, that’s not going any-

where’ or hit one and go ‘Man, that is amazing,” the Village of Hadley resident said. “You learn to lower your expectations with these and just go out there and enjoy it.”

He openly admits when he gets interested in something he jumps in with both feet. He did just that searching for clubs through the internet and joining the Virginia Golf Association back home. He also came across the Society of Hickory Golfers, a national organization that is focused on preserving the traditions of the game. He estimates it takes about five years to get a complete original set of hickory clubs with the 10-yard increments you want or you can purchase an expensive reproduction set. He finds clubs online, swaps with other hickory golfers, and from those who make reproductions. Inside Mike’s garage he has his own personal work area to repair his clubs. He straightens the shafts, fixes grips and adds whipping to them.

Hickory Golf

“It is a lot more fun playing these because you have to think your way around the course. With the modern clubs, you just hit it as far as you can until you are up on the green,” he said. “Every club is like a different game. When you have a good round, it means something.”

And when you get a hole-in-one with a wooden club

you've earned bragging rights. Mike has two holes-in-one using his original set of pre-1930s wood shaft clubs. He will always remember his first ace using a special club in his bag. "I had a hole-in-one with Miss Pretty 165-yards in Virginia. Miss Pretty is not allowed to hit bad shots," he said. While playing Egret No. 4 at Evans Prairie Championship golf course, he again relied on a wooden club for another ace. "They are all lucky anyway," he joked. He also has a set from the 1950s-1960s, along with a modern-day set. In comparison, he can hit a modern 7-iron about 150 yards and his equivalent wood will go about 130 yards. It requires him to factor that in and go up a hickory club when needed. He has two other holes-in-one using modern clubs.

"These hickories are the best training aids I ever had. When I play these for three straight weeks and then go to my modern clubs with the same nice and smooth swing I go 'Oh, this game is easy,'" he said.

One of the misconceptions Mike hears about the hickory clubs is you can't play them. Mike proves them wrong, and he will even hand you a club to try it yourself. "Look at the scores of the guys that started this way. They were good golfers. I play within five or six strokes compared to my modern clubs," he said. "They won't break. I mean Bobby Jones had a 140 mile per hour swing speed and he didn't break them."

When it comes to tournament play at the historic Pinehurst Golf Course and at the 2022 U.S. Hickory Open at Mission Inn Resort in Howey-in-the-Hills, the clubs used have to be approved and exact designs of what was made during that era. It's hard to get

original woods because the wood goes bad, he said. A few times while working on the antiques, the club heads fall off because they are too soft. He even had to go through a few different types of soft golf balls to see what would work best. "The first ones they made would crack," he said. "I hit one and it went about 20 yards and cracked. It cost me a stroke, so I stopped using those."

True to the Game

Mike is part of the Florida Hickory Golfers, a local group



FAR AND SURE BEGINS WITH STRAIGHT. No first-rate shop is complete without a shaft straightener. The old wood shafts do have a tendency to warp over time. Hobson uses a device with wooden cams designed by Pat Kennedy and modified slightly by Gary Eley, both of Vermont.

of at least 40 members that preserve the pureness and authenticity of golf in the Sunshine State playing with the hickory shafted clubs on traditional golf courses. Once a month they all wear period attire, pack up their hickory clubs and gather to play courses in central and west Florida, built before the early 1930s. When they play everything is authentic all the

way down to the era-appropriate attire they wear. Mike has a closet filled with colorful knickers that go along with matching argyle socks, a sweater, bow tie and cap. When asked if he has a lucky combination, he said they are all lucky because he is lucky enough to be alive to put them on. Ironically, Mike wore his first pair of knick-



HOBSON'S SHOP is equipped to help him both maintain his clubs and create handmade golf carts.

ers before he saw "The Greatest Game Ever Played" and before he got involved with hickory golf. He walked into a golf shop in Myrtle Beach, saw the knickers and decided to try them on. "I started having a fashion show and I bought some," he laughed. "It's the whole nine yards."

When he is using his vintage clubs he wears his knickers, unless it's July and August when he sports mini knickers. He has also noticed a group in The Villages that wears knickers on the golf course, and he would like to join them, too. Mike

SEE **HOBSON**, NEXT PAGE



HOBSON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

would also love to meet others within the community who play with the clubs or want to give them a try. If you are interested, he would like you to email him at mwhmichael1@gmail.com.

He even built his own wooden hand carts to use when he is golfing. One is very top heavy and more for show, while the other was inspired by the geometry of his modern pull cart making it easier to use. There is no denying that Mike is truly enthusiastic about every aspect of hickory golf. "I love the aggravation. I thrive on aggravation," the 72-year-old said. "It all never seems to work on the same day but every now and then it does, and it is so enjoyable." ❧

SOLITARY ROUNDS. To date, Mike Hobson's hickory golf rounds at The Village have been a largely solitary affair. He hopes the recent article in the community's magazine will inspire others to join him.

Hands-on carts built to last

Mike Hobson's golf carts draw their inspiration from photos of early golf carts. "I made a stand bag from pictures I saw, then made the cart to carry the bag," he says. "I used the geometry from my modern push cart because I liked the way it handled and a four-wheeled cart is fairly stable. I had to make the cart handle removable for transporting."



MIKE HOBSON poses with his four-wheeler. The retired plumbing contractor enjoys tinkering and has a love of working with wood. He maintains his own hickory clubs and builds the carts in the shop of his Florida home. Mike often joins the Florida Hickory Golfers for hickory golf events. At left are photos he shared of his stand bags and wheeled carts.



Our Favorite Clubs

BERT COGHILL, ORLAND PARK, ILLINOIS, USA

Bert Coghill is no stranger to golf, indeed, his dad gave him a set of three cut-down hickories when he was but 5 years old. The family was surrounded by golf courses in Chicago's southwest suburbs where he grew up. In fact, they owned the 300-acre Silver Lake Golf Club with its two 18-hole courses and an executive 9-hole. Coghill began working for his father on the course at 12 years old and then full-time after graduating from college. He served as director of golf at Silver Lake for 30 years until retiring about five years ago. He and his family moved to Augusta, Ga., in 2023.

While in high school Coghill discovered he enjoyed competitive golf and played in local and state-wide tournaments. In 2009 his brother-in-law introduced him to hickories. His first tournament was that year's U.S. Hickory Open at Mimosa Hills in Morganton, N.C. He placed third in the senior division of the 2020 USHO at Happy Hollow CC in Omaha, Neb. Coghill often plays with the Wisconsin Hickory Golfers and is a four-time winner of the Michiana Hickory Open in South Bend, Ind. – Editor

I started playing replicas in 2009 and by 2011 I was finding originals to replace those replicas. I was perusing the tables while at French Lick for the USHO that year and Bill Ernst came to me with a club in hand and said, "You need to get this club. Go see Ken Holtz and pay him." This is the best investment I made towards improving my game. It is a MacGregor Bakspin jigger sold by A.L. Johnson out of Boston, probably in the late teens or early 20s. It has the Bakspin's deep grooves and a relatively short length of 36 inches and 28 degrees. The club carries about 140-145 yards in the air, but has so many other uses. The head is heavy, and deep grooves make it a prime choice for getting out of dicey lies in the rough and from fairway bunkers.

As a bonus, it performs well around the greens, particularly in the rough. I haven't seen a club similar to this one, but there must be some out there. Consider adding this club to your arsenal, if you can find one. ♡



**BAKSPIN JIGGER
MACGREGOR**

The Nebraska Hickory Golf Association, founded in 2015, grew, as so many hickory groups do, from one or two modern hickory pioneers who encouraged their friends to join. Gathering steam, and with hickory OG Randy Jensen to lead the way, Nebraska players have formed a tight bond around several core events and a firm belief in the joy of exploring the game with wooden shafted clubs. Dr. David Brown, the current chair of the Society's U.S. Hickory Open Committee and co-founder of NEHGA, shares the following account of the group's beginnings.



By Dave Brown

It should come as no surprise that much of the history of hickory golf in Nebraska is due to fellow Omahan Randy Jensen, sometimes referred to as the 'Hickory Tiger'. A founding member of the Society of Hickory Golfers, Randy has won over 60 hickory tournaments worldwide, including seven National Hickory Championships, 17 Heart of America championships (the longest running hickory tournament in the world), two Scottish Hickory Open scratch championships and four Southern Hickory 4-Ball championships (with Rob Ahlschwede). Naturally, Randy's skill and enthusiasm spun off many new players over the years, who themselves brought new players into the hickory world.

For many years, Randy owned and operated Classic Golf in midtown Omaha, specializing in classic and hickory golf club sales, repairs and refurbishment. His skill at fine tuning a hickory set to a player's needs made it much easier to get and keep new players interested in the game.

Other early Nebraska hickory players include Don Kavalec (who introduced yours truly to hickory golf in 2007); Duane Baylor, our long-time regional representative at the Golf Collectors Society (now Golf Heritage Society); and Rob Ahlschwede, who has since moved to Olympia, Wash., and is the co-founder of the very active Northwest Hickory



COUSINS AND GOLF CHAMPIONS. Randy Jensen, left, and Dr. Gary Wiren, both Omaha natives, are known for their excellence in golf. Jensen has countless hickory titles to his credit, and Wiren is a member of nine golf halls of fame, including the PGA and the World Golf Hall of Fame. He's a PGA Master Professional Instructor with innumerable honors to his name. The two are shown above at the 2010 Heart of America hickory tournament where Jensen won the Open division and Wiren the Senior Open division.

Players. We have also been blessed to have Dr. Gary Wiren (Randy's cousin and native Omahan) join us at several of our events. Dr. Wiren is a Top 100 Golf Teacher, author and world-renowned golf collector.

Hickory golf remained informal for many years in Nebraska. Those wishing to play in tournaments could make the short drive to any of the Iowa Hickory tournaments

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*SoHG Regional
Spotlight*

Hickories in the Heartland

Wild Horse Golf Club

The Cornhusker State is usually known for its productive farmland, but the region's Sand Hills have also produced golfing champions from Johnny Goodman to Randy Jensen.



organized by Bill Reed. In addition to the Heart of America event, begun in 1978 by Warren 'Ole' Olson, a former Golf Collectors Society president, Bill ran the Iowa Hickory Open at his home club, Hyperion Field Club in suburban Des Moines, a classic Tom Bendelow design. This was held each year in September on the afternoon of the Iowa/Iowa State football game, since the course was otherwise nearly vacant. It was and remains a tournament to be emulated.

In 2007, Don Kavalec convinced me to try hickory golf, and I am eternally grateful. I bought a short set of originals from Randy and started to figure out how to play those darn things. By spring 2008 I was ready to acquire a complete set and, partly through Randy and with some luck on eBay (I found the spoon I continue to use to this day), I was able to fill out a set of Stewart irons and a short mallet putter. This club search eventually turned into an addiction to George Nicoll irons (at one time I had eight full sets).

I am a marathon runner and love competition, so I registered for the 2008 Belvedere Hickory Open. Attending this tournament changed my golf life. I played well and was lucky to be in the final group with Chuck McMullin, John Sherwood, and Dr. Jay Harris. McMullin and Sherwood are



DUANE BAYLOR, left, has hosted a hickory division at the Homesteader, an annual golf event at the Beatrice Country Club, since about 2005, he estimates. He is a longtime stalwart of Nebraska hickory golf and has been a member of the SoHG since 2018; he joined the Golf Heritage Society in 1986. At right, **Drake Lundeen** was the 2024 Nebraska Hickory Open champion at the Fremont Country Club.



both co-founders of the SoHG and Dr. Harris, besides being the winner of the first U.S. Hickory Open (USHO) at Mimosa Hills CC in Morganton, N.C. (2008), was a devoted club-tinkerer and chief organizer of hickory golf in North Carolina. Being in the presence of such venerable hickory gentlemen further confirmed I had made a good choice.

The second USHO, in 2009, was again at Mimosa Hills,



2017 NEBRASKA STATE HICKORY OPEN at the Prairie Club in Valentine, Neb. From left: Doug Ruge, Pete Hanley, Griff Evans, Chris Kennedy, unknown, Shawn Carollo, unknown, unknown, Deal Hudson, John Mabry, Kevin Cawley, Dave Brown, Brian Frevert, and Mark Patterson.



NEBRASKA'S HICKORY GOLFERS are captured in their natural element, with trophies in hand or golfing with friends. In the photo at left, taken at the region's 2021 Opening Day at Elmwood Park, are the low net winners of that day: Debbie Hallock and Craig Pohlman. In the photo at right, on the putting green at the Happy Hollow Golf Club, are, from left: Dave Brown, Griff Evans, Hap Pocras, Kevin Cawley, and Rudy Thomas.



DR. KEVIN CAWLEY tees off on No. 9 at the Happy Hollow Club, site of the 2020 U.S. Hickory Open.

and I was fortunate to participate, again meeting many of the original hickory players. I was so enthused with hickory by now that I decided to change golf club memberships so that I could have a hickory friendly home course. My new "home" was Omaha's Happy Hollow Club, a 1924 design by the distinguished team of William Langford and Theodore Moreau. The club has been revised several times, most recently in 2007. It is perfect for hickory golf.

Dr. Kevin Cawley, a radiologist at my primary hospital (I'm an orthopaedic surgeon) was a member there. He immediately took up hickory golf and became even more enthusiastic than I. Other Happy Hollow members – Dr. Hap Pocras, Dr. Griff Evans, Dale Hallock, Rudy Thomas and Jack McDonnell – joined us shortly thereafter. Our director of golf, Mike Antonio, has been extremely supportive of our quest, even organizing a separate "hickory men's club" for member events. He and his staff have been instrumental in organizing hickory club events and regional and national hickory tournaments. In 2011 Happy Hollow Club began holding a hickory club championship, which we believe may be the longest running in the U.S.

My former club (Champions Club) continues to be very enthusiastic about hickory golf. Frequent players from that club include Brian Frevert, Chris Kennedy, Pete Hanley, Doug Ruge, Shawn Carollo and Mark Patterson. Most of these are very fine tournament players. Interclub matches between Happy Hollow and Champions are typical during the summer and fall.

In 2015 we recognized the need to have a more formal hickory organization to address the desire for more tournaments, including a state hickory championship. The Nebraska Hickory Golf Association became incorporated as a 501(c)(7)

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The Nebraska Hickory Golf Association Hall of Fame

2016

*Alexander Findlay
Johnny Goodman
Randy Jensen*

Tad Moore

2020

*David Hamilton
Joe Lauber
Jorgen Linse
Mike Stevens
Pehr Thermanius*

2017

*Sam Reynolds
Gary Wiren*

2018

*Warren Olson
Bill Reed*

2019

*Rob Ahlschwede
Roger Hill
Ralph Livingston III*

2022

*Archie Baird
Lionel Freedman
Johnny Henry
John Sherwood*

2023

Dave Brown



HALL OF FAMERS. In 2019, the NEGHA welcomed four new inductees into its Hickory Hall of Fame – top photo, from left, Tad Moore, Rob Ahlschwede, and Roger Hill. Ralph Livingston III, who passed away in 2013, was part of the 2019 class. In the photo above, Hall of Famers are shown in 2020 during the USHO at the Happy Hollow Club. From left are Rob Ahlschwede, Dr. Gary Wiren, Bill Reed, Mike Stevens, and Randy Jensen.

The Nebraska Sand Hills in the western part of the state is superb for links golf. The native sandy soil, open landscapes and windy conditions have given rise to many new courses.

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entity in January 2016. Attorney Dave Nelson, an avid hickory golfer, donated his skills and was elected our secretary. Kevin Cawley, the driving force in establishing the NEHGA, was elected president. Initial Board members included Randy Jensen, Dave Brown, Dale Hallock, Brian Frevert, Rudy Thomas, Mike Tiehen, Tony Tubrick, and Hap Pocras, two of whom were or would become SoHG board members. Dale Hallock now serves as our very capable president and is, as of this writing, a member of the SoHG board.

There are a number of active women hickory players in the Omaha area and several serve on our current board, including Jane Pohlman and Barb Fulbright. Additional new board members are Pete Hanley, Doug Ruge, Jack McDonnell, Duane Baylor and Craig Christenson.

The NEGHA holds at least four events each year begin-

ning with an Opening Day event at Elmwood Park (1918) in early May, followed by the Nebraska State Open in late summer, and the River City Tournament, named the Johnny Goodman Championship after the great amateur player from Omaha. The fourth has been a casual event that varies from year to year. However, in 2025, we are inaugurating what we are naming the “NeKaWa Cup,” designed to be an 18-hole individual match contest with players from Nebraska, Iowa, and Kansas.

Each year, following the River City Championship, NEGHA holds a formal dinner that includes induction of new members into the Nebraska Hickory Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame was the brainchild of Jensen and Cawley. The class of 2019 included Tad Moore, Rob Ahlschwede, Roger Hill and Ralph Livingston. Other prominent inductees include Mike Stevens, Jensen, and Dr. David Hamilton of St. Andrews.



DR. GARY WIREN, an Omaha native, is one of the golfing royalty of Nebraska hickory golf. A Master PGA Teaching Profesional, Wiren's list of honors is long and well deserved. Among his other credits, he is an author and his golf collection is featured in the 2013 book *Great Golf Collections of the World* (McDonough/Georgiady). Above, Wiren's classically smooth swing was photographed at the 2020 USHO at the Happy Hollow Club in Omaha.



TEES FOR TWO. Dale and Debbie Hallock, left, and Craig and Jane Pohlman are among NEGHA regulars. Dale is the association's current president and Jane is one of Nebraska's top amateur golfers as well as a past USHO Women's champion (2023, Inwood).

We are very lucky to have the Nebraska Sand Hills in the western part of the state, an area of superb links golf. The native sandy soil, open landscapes and windy conditions have given rise to many new courses in the past 25 years. The first was the critically acclaimed Crenshaw and Coore-designed Sand Hills Golf Club in 1995, followed by Dismal River club (Nicklaus and Doak designs), Prairie Club (Lehmann, Marsh and Hanse layouts), Wild Horse and Cap-Rock Ranch (Hanse).

We try to hold our state championship in the Sand Hills at least every other year alternating with a local course in Omaha or Lincoln. These "outstate" locations lend themselves to a nice two-day golf trip with an overnight stay including dinner and socializing.

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THE 2020 U.S. HICKORY OPEN. It was a tough year, with the Covid pandemic halting most activities. But by the time the USHO came around in early October, outdoor activities such as golf were deemed to be fairly safe. The Nebraska Hickory Golfers took every precaution and produced one of the finest USHOs in the event's history. Club members who participated in the tournament are shown in front in their red jackets.



ROB AHSCHWEDE, along with Randy Jensen, was one of the early hickory golfers in the Omaha area. Now a resident of Olympia, Wash., Ahlschweide is a co-founder of the Northwest Hickory Players.

The Nebraska Hickory Open

2016	Dismal River Club Open – Dave Brown Senior – John Mabry	2021	Omaha Field Club Open – Jason Reynolds Lady – Susan Marchese
2017	The Prairie Club Open – Dave Brown Senior – John Mabry	2022	Grand Island Riverside Open – Randy Jensen Lady – Jane Pohlman
2018	Wild Horse Golf Club Open – Doug Ruge Senior – Kevin Cawley	2023	Wild Horse Golf Club Open – Chris Kennedy Lady – Jane Pohlman
2019	Quarry Oaks Golf Club Open – Doug Ruge Senior – Griff Evans	2024	Fremont Country Club Open – Drake Lundeen Lady – Lauren McDonnell
2020	Lincoln Hillcrest Open – Jay Muller Lady – Susan Marchese Senior – Kevin Cawley		

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Nebraska had the privilege of hosting the 2020 U.S. Hickory Open, conducted at Happy Hollow Club. We were able to hold the tournament despite Covid as most regulatory restrictions on activities in Nebraska had been lifted. Kevin Cawley spearheaded the committee, with significant contributions from Hallock, McDonnell, Pocras, Hanley, and me. Participants enjoyed the excellent hospitality provided by Happy Hollow. Taylor Jones won his second USHO title, outdueling two-time USHO champ Rick Woeckener and four-time USHO champ Jeremy Moe all through day two. A birdie on 16, followed by an amazing up and down par on 17 sealed his victory. Happy Hollow Director of Golf Mike Antonio played extremely well on day two and tied for second place with Moe. Six women competed (until 2024 the largest ever women's field at a USHO) with Omahan Susan Marchese winning the gross title. Thirteen-year-old Rylee Stovall became the youngest to compete in a USHO and would later become USHO champion in 2024 at the Kenosha CC, Kenosha, Wisc.

The year 2023 proved to be a banner year for Nebraska hickory golfers in competition. Nebraska members comprised one of the largest groups at Inwood CC (Inwood, N.Y.), site of the 2023 USHO. Jane Pohlman brought home the women's title while I had the pleasure of capturing the Super Senior (70+) division.

We are looking forward to another great hickory golf year with our state championship at Quarry Oaks Golf Club in September and city championship at Happy Hollow Club in October. Dates will be posted on the SoHG website. You must be a member to participate, but membership is free! You may join us on our website at Nebraskahickorygolf.com as well as register for events. ♡



OUR FAVORITE CADDIE. Ladies of the Nebraska hickory golf region pose with an accommodating caddie. From left are Linda Smith, Jane Pohlman, Cathy Bonnesen, and Debbie Hallock. The photo was from the 2022 Nebraska State Hickory Open at Riverside Golf Club in Grand Island. Jane was the Ladies Champion.



Intentionally sliced and hooked drives

Randy Jensen is one of the true masters of the hickory golf game, indeed, golf in general. His many tournament titles and the appellation of "The Hickory Tiger" are well deserved. His 2008 book, Playing Hickory Golf, is a sui generis work on the nature of modern hickory golf and well worth the expense if you can find a copy. The following is used with permission from the chapter "Playing the Woods and Irons." – Editor

By Randy Jensen

Once watched Billy Casper play a round of golf at my home course. Billy was playing a fairly strong draw shot with about 20 yards or more of right-to-left curve on every drive. He was striking the driver beautifully, putting the ball nicely in play on all the holes, but I wondered what he was going to do when he got to hole #14 which called for a sliced or faded tee shot to miss a large willow tree in the right rough that blocked the fairway. When he got to 14, he grabbed his driver and set up for what looked like his normal hook. He started the ball to the right of the willow tree, hooking the ball just across the tree and into the left rough from where he made par.

The moral of the story is: play your own game. Don't play a fade or slice if that is not your game and don't play a hook if that is not your strong point. With that said, sometimes you may want to hit a draw or fade off the tee. There are two ways that work to move the ball to the right or left that I like.

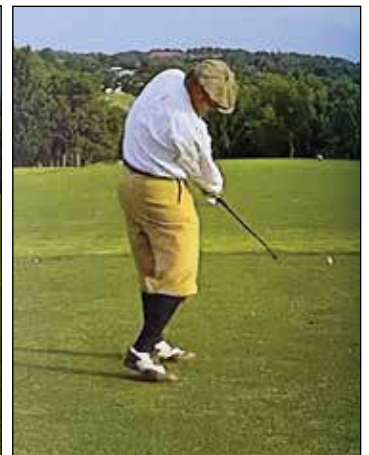
The first is simply to open or close the face just a little and then swing normally. This works well although I like the second method better and that involves just rotating your forearms more quickly on the downswing for a hook and not rotating them as much for a slice. You can get a great feel for this by assuming your golf stance, letting your arms hang down, and holding a basketball, one hand on each side with your palms parallel. This is a good drill for training in the proper forearm rotation during the swing as well.

Swing the basketball back so your arms are parallel to the ground. Your hands should rotate an extra 45 degrees so that the back of the left hand is pointing 90 degrees away from where it pointed at address and both hands are the same distance from the ground. Now swing down to impact where the back of the left hand is facing the target and then through to the finish where your arms are again parallel to

the ground and your hands are the same distance from the ground. Now for the slice or fade shot, do the backswing the same, but don't rotate your forearms in the downswing so at impact, your right hand is closer to the ground and in the follow through, the left hand is above the right hand. You can vary the amount of how "open" you swing through to create the desired left-to-right curvature of your ball.

For the hook or draw shot, the hands are just reversed on the downswing and follow through with the left hand closer to the ground at your impact position and with the right hand directly over the left in the follow through position with the arms parallel to the ground. A good analogy of this would be if you were driving a car with both hands on the steering wheel and you wanted to take a right turn, both hands would turn to the right, and for a left turn, both hands would turn to the left. For a sharp turn, you would turn your hands quite a bit and for a gentle curve in the road, you would turn your hands a small amount.

This is very much what you are doing in the golf swing. Do this fun drill with a friend at the driving range: take an iron and swing and right as you get to the top of your swing, have your friend call out either "draw" or "fade." On your downswing, turn more or less with your forearms to produce the "draw" or "fade" that your friend just called out. This has excellent applications on the golf course, as there is usually one side of your target area that you would like to avoid and a ball moving away from that area can be good. ♣



DRIVING DEMONSTRATION.

Photos from his book, Playing Hickory Golf, demonstrate champion golfer Randy Jensen's driving technique. To accomplish a draw or fade, he recommends rotating the forearms right or left as needed to get the desired movement on the ball.

It's not often we hear hickory golf news from India. However, the British held some sway there for a time and brought their favorite pastimes with them, including cricket and golf. This was sent to us by the article's author, Vikram Joshi, a writer for the *Leader-Rashtradoot*, a newspaper in Jaipur, India. It's clear that Mr. Joshi did his homework. The article is reproduced here with permission and is shown exactly as it appeared, though scaled to fit this spot. It was originally placed on the paper's "Arbit" page, used for unusual features on a variety of topics. – Editor



Vikram Joshi
Textile Technologist
& Historian

probably would be the last golf player in *Rambagh Golf Club*, who used to play with 'Ping' (a renowned American brand in golf) wood headed clubs until a few months ago until I bought 'Honma' (Hand-crafted Japanese golf club manufacturer) woods and clubs. Playing with *Ping Woods*, made from Crimson wood, was so overwhelming. The rich, deep hues of *Crimson wood* add a touch of elegance to the golfing experience, while its unique properties enhance the performance of the club. The smooth, polished surface of the wood feels exquisite in the hands, offering a comfortable grip and precise control over each swing. As the club strikes the ball, the resonance of Crimson wood produces a satisfying sound, echoing through the course. With *Ping Woods*, crafted from this exceptional material, every stroke becomes a moment of pure joy, blending artistry with the thrill of the game.

My love for old Golf Clubs was

quite popular among my golf buddies and a couple of weeks back, someone handed me old, worn out badly kept old clubs. Among them, I noticed some with wooden shafts and barely noticeable maker's name, which technically is called 'Golf Cleek and Iron maker'. As a ritual, any antique item I pick up, I first clean it to restore the honor of it. As I wiped the clubs with dry cloth, I noticed, *R-Forgan and Sons St Andrews, Made in Scotland*. Wow!!! I immediately googled the name and found out that these were rare 'Hickory Golf Clubs.'

● The Legacy of Forgan of St Andrews: Pioneers of Golf Club Craftsmanship

Forgan of St Andrews stands as the oldest golf club factory globally, tracing its origins to the early days of what would evolve into the *Royal and Ancient golf club*, custodians of the sport's traditions. In 1819, the precursor to Forgan, the Society of St Andrews Golfers, appointed Allan Robertson as a ball-maker and Hugh Philip, a skilled local carpenter, as its club-maker.

Philip, utilizing thorn, apple, and pear woods for heads, and ash and Hickory for the shafts, honed his craft to perfection, innovating play with shapes that defied convention. James Balfour-Melville lauded Philip in his *'Reminiscences of Golf,'* saying,

Hickory Dickory Dock



ARBIT PAGE HEADER appeared above the article below. Both are scaled to fit this spot.

"Of club-makers, no man has ever approached Hugh Philip." He compared owning one of Philip's clubs to possessing an ancient Cremona violin or a Toledo blade, a treasure of exquisite craftsmanship. After Philip's passing in 1856, Forgan's legacy thrived amidst competition from local rivals like Tom Morris and David Anderson & Sons, Patrick of Leven, and AG Spalding of London, which ventured into Fife to expand their endeavors.

Robert Forgan, Philip's nephew and apprentice, assumed control of the company. During his tenure, imported hickory was seasoned by the 17th fairway at St Andrews. In the Black Sheds, stacks of square-cut shafts awaited, each stack containing up to 8,000 rods. After a year of seasoning, they were meticulously shaped by hand, meeting the high demand for Forgan's clubs.

The renowned Prince of Wales paid a visit, marking a shift from Philip's original workshop to an old fisherman's house that would become the heart of the company. The introduction of saws and lathes revolutionized production, leading to mass manufacturing. The Prince was enamored with a unique set of clubs in 1864, leading to the proud display of the insignia of golf club makers to His Majesty King Edward over Forgan's door by 1902.

Robert Forgan's premature death in 1900 passed the company to his son, Thomas, who expanded the workforce before his untimely death in 1906. The business then transitioned to his sons, Lawrence and Robert. The era saw the evolution of club names, from the *Driving Putter* to the *Iron Niblick* and *Brassy*, mirroring advancements in club technology.

While Forgan's thrived, the economic downturn from falling herring stocks impacted the region, prompting many displaced from the fishing industry to find solace in golf. Forgan's expanded globally, taking orders from golf-playing nations. Locally, the family remained involved in community affairs, making significant donations to St Andrews Martyrs' Church. The Second World War brought challenges, leading to the



#GOLF



eventual acquisition of Forgan by American-owned Spalding, marking the end of an era. The factory ceased operations in 1963, with Spalding consolidating in Belfast.

The disused factory found new life as the St Andrew's Woollen Mill, offering tweed, coffee, and shortbread. In 1988, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club bought the building, refurbishing it for the 131st Open.



A bit of gamesmanship off the tee

During his early golfing career Dr. Gary Wiren published a series of newsletters titled "Thistle Dhu - Golfing Analecta for the Avid." They contained golfing wit, wisdom and advice from a variety of historical sources. The following excerpt from an October 1971 edition is taken from The Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship...The Art of Winning Games Without Actually Cheating (1948, Stephen Potter). Surely no

modern hickory golfers use this ploy...do they? – Editor

Counter Point

This phrase now used exclusively in music originally stood Number Three of the general Principles of Gamesmanship: Play Against Your Opponent's Tempo. This is one of the oldest gambits and is now almost entirely used in the form "My Slow To Your Fast."

Against a player who makes a great deal of "wanting to get on with the game," the technique is, (1) to agree, then (2) to hold things up by 15 to 20 disguised pauses. Peg-top tees for golf were introduced by Samuel in '33 for this use. The technique is to tee the ball, frame up for the shot, and then at the last moment stop, pretend to push the peg a little further in or pull it a little further out, and then start all over again. At the next hole vary this with Samuel's "Golden Perfecto" peg tee, made in such a way that the ball, after sitting still in the cup (of the tee) for two to three seconds, rolls off. Through the green, the usual procedure is to frame up for the shot and then decide on another club at the last moment.

"Note: Do not attempt to irritate partner by spending too long looking for your lost ball. This is unsporting. But good gamesmanship, which is also very good sportsmanship, can be practiced if the gamesman makes a great and irritatingly prolonged parade of spending extra time looking for his opponent's ball." ❧

Hickory Dickory Dock, CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

● Assam: Where Tea and Golf Blend Seamlessly and the Indian Golfing history.

Assam boasts a rich history of tea and golf, with tea introduced by Robert Bruce in 1823. The region harbors the world's largest concentration of tea plantations, employing a significant portion of the state's workforce. Assam tea production accounts for a substantial portion of India's total, making it a 'global tea hub.'

India's first golf course outside Great Britain emerged in Assam in 1829. The region's 'tea-tees' or golf courses within tea estates offer a unique experience, a blend of colonial heritage and natural beauty. These courses, often with nine holes, have become exotic holiday destinations, enticing tourists with the allure of tea and golf. Visitors to Assam's tea gardens immerse themselves in the region's tea culture, witnessing vast emerald-green estates. Many estates boast world-class bungalows with attached golf courses, creating a haven for tea and golf enthusiasts alike.

Forgan also made significant contributions to the global golfing community, exporting clubs to renowned sports shops like Wagle & Co in Bombay (Mumbai). Established in 1865, Wagle & Co sold golf clubs to Indian Royalties, featuring Forgan's stampings on their clubs. The Hickory clubs, which I found recently, has a stamping (Cleek) 'Wagle & Co Bombay.' This company is now transformed from an importer to an exporter of sports goods,

● Jorhat Gymkhana Club: A Storied Legacy

The Jorhat Gymkhana Club stands as Asia's oldest golf course and the world's third oldest, a testament to Assam's golfing heritage. Built in 1876 by the British, the club initially served as a 'planters' club' for Assam's tea planters. The present club, established in 1885, boasts a

lush 9-hole golf course amidst mature trees and serene water bodies. Tourists flock to Jorhat, not just for its golf but also for the horse races held at the Gymkhana Club. The Governor's Cup remains a prestigious event, attracting enthusiasts from far and wide.

● Hickory Golf: A Return to Tradition

Hickory golf, played with hickory-shafted clubs, harks back to golf's roots. Organized by various societies worldwide, hickory golf reintroduces 'feel' to the game, challenging players to restore and use vintage clubs. Proponents argue that hickory golf offers a unique experience, allowing golfers to play classic courses as they were intended. Hickory Golf Clubs offer a nostalgic charm to the game, harking back to golf's early days. With their vintage look and feel, these clubs transport players to a bygone era of the sport. Playing with hickory clubs requires a delicate touch and finesse, as they reintroduce 'feel' to the golf shot. Golfers cherish the challenge of finding and restoring these clubs for play, appreciating their historical significance. Hickory golf allows players to experience classic courses as they were meant to be played, adding a layer of authenticity and nostalgia to each

round. It's a unique and rewarding way to enjoy the timeless game of golf. Although, the modern set of golf clubs typically numbers 14, a basic hickory set has fewer clubs. The late Ralph Livingston III, one of the pioneers of modern hickory golf, recommended a six-club collection as a basic starter play set.

● *Brassie*, serves as both a driver and fairway wood, about 13-14 degrees loft.

● *Mid-Iron*, for long iron shots, about 25-27 degrees loft.

● *Mashie*, for approach shots, about 34-36 degrees loft.

● *Mashie Niblick*, short approach and pitch shots, about 43-47 degrees loft.

● *Niblick*, lofted for bunker and pitch shots, 52 -57 degrees loft.

● *Putter*, for putting.

In conclusion, Forgan of St Andrews stands as a beacon of golfing excellence, bridging the gap between tradition and innovation. From its humble beginnings in the 19th century to its global reach in the modern era, Forgan's legacy lives on through its craftsmanship and contribution to the 'great game of golf.'

|||■|

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com





Auld Gowf



Real Golf

From *The Golfer*, January 1889

A plea for the tests of match play and foursomes as the “real” heart of the ancient game.

Dr. James Gordon McPherson was an eminent man of mathematics and scholastic pursuits at St. Andrews during the mid-1800s. He also came to prominence as a formidable amateur golfer, at one time holding the medal record at the Old Course (ironic, considering the thrust of his text below). And his drives were prodigious even for that early day. McPherson was a staunch traditionalist and his opinions much regarded. His theme here decries the growing popularity of medal play opposed to match play, in particular, foursomes. He even proposes a novel method of scoring, the best holes of two rounds over the course as a qualifier for the final true test of match play. As gutty golf rises in popularity with modern hickory golfers, match play via foursomes (alternate shot) is much discussed. We invite you to read the good doctor’s opinion on what is Real Golf. Keep in mind, this is the opinion of a man writing more than a century past. Much has changed and much will continue to change. But as we explore the playing characteristics of wood shafted golf clubs and honor the traditions of those early days, some hint of Dr. McPherson’s lament for a once-vigorous and time-tested method of scoring might yet find new adherents.



By Dr. J.G. McPherson, F.R.S.E.

The game of Scotland is in danger of deteriorating by some new-fangled notions and artifices, which new players and Clubs are introducing with unreasonable keenness. The mania for record-breaking has discolored the purity of the game; distinction by scoring instead of match-playing has weakened the spirit of the contest; and the substitution of force for skill, and the corresponding alteration of the clubs and style, have lowered the standard of this fine art. Real Golf, as played in Scotland during the sixties and seventies, is to some extent a thing of the past.

Real Golf only comes out in match-playing, without thinking of a score, or breaking a record. The elements of pluck, individuality, determination, risk, and dash can only be matured in the personal encounter between two players. Scoring makes a man compete with the field, and fosters undue caution. Brilliancy in match playing can paralyze an opponent, whereas a whole field knows nothing about it. There is a decided difference in the method of play in the two cases. Quite different elements come into account. A very successful competitor for a medal is not necessarily a successful player in a tight match. Colonel Maitland Dougall beat all of his day at St. Andrews in scoring, yet he could never face Mr. Gilbert Mitchell Innes in a hole-and-hole match who was not a particularly excellent scorer. The former always arranged to have for his partner one whom he could easily beat : and this always kept him up. He was never troubled by any brilliant

play on the part of friend. He only thought of his own play. Mechanically he went to work: methodically he played his successive strokes: and pawkily did his faithful caddie pilot him through. When a slip was made, a word of encouragement from Sandy restored his equilibrium and he forgot this mistake — something which one should always give due heed to. But the Colonel could not play so well in a match for holes against a strong opponent. His fidgetiness had no dash in it. The very consciousness of being “matched” seemed to change his style altogether: he was “out of his game” in a very short time. A long putt laid dead by Mr. Innes would have staggered him; a nicely lofted stymie by Captain Stewart would have taken his breath away; any one out-driving him persistently would have shaken his nerves. Maitland Dougall was the type of the medal-player; Mitchell Innes the embodiment of the match-player.

Steadiness may be considered to be the distinguishing characteristic of medal playing, and brilliancy that of Real Golf. In a close match every stroke is watched on both sides;

on a medal day, each man looks after himself. Even “the honour” is of importance in a match for holes. If a man is in his game and drives off a brilliant ball, his opponent cannot help pressing a little so that in a considerable number of cases his equilibrium is upset. The lead has a moral power over one’s opponent; whereas it means nothing in counting strokes. Watch all the details of a keenly contested match for holes, and you will observe many little things which do not so prominently come in during a medal competition. To gain an advantage, one can risk more; because, though he should get bunkered by failure, he only loses one hole, instead of perhaps two or three strokes in a competition. If he is playing two more on the putting-green, he can run his putt hard to catch the centre of the hole, especially on a down slope, and sometimes succeeds; whereas, in medal play he has always to be cautious.

In Real Golf, too, we have one of the finest niceties of the game – playing the stymie. This is, of course, abolished in medal play. In match playing – especially at a critical moment – the nerve and skill of the player are both tested in supreme degree by this point in the game. With the billiard-table putting greens the screwing of a stymie is not easily accomplished, but lofting is correspondingly easier. In the former case there is nothing to help the screwed ball, no leaning inwards on one side of the hole or the other. In the latter case, however, the lofted ball falls certain and straight, and is not apt to spring oft, as from an irregular putting-green. It is a beautiful stroke, which requires immense practice, fine eye, strong nerve, and delicate handling. But it is told. It was one of the strong points of Real Golf.

The grand recuperative power of a first-class golfer is best shown in match play. To succeed after a losing game requires exceptional confidence in one’s staying powers. Every hole is a new contest to a great extent, and if a mistake is made, the consciousness of power will help a man to recover in a wonderful way. To make a brilliant recovery after a mistake has a stunning effect on one’s opponent. And only the match-player is conscious of that.

Real Golf is still played in the Amateur Championship. It is a series of personal contests, by holes. And we are very glad to see match play still kept up in it. The competition by strokes in the Open Championship has always had this inherent defect. In principle it does not bring out the really first player. Some modification must be made in the system to reduce to a minimum the chance of missing the best golfer. Steadiness and brilliancy should be both tested. So many

professionals enter the arena that the personal contest, as in the Amateur Championship, cannot be afforded, for they cannot spend so many days away from home. But while the less likely men can be weeded out by scoring the final contest should be by holes.

Real Golf only comes out
in match-playing, without
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encounter between two players.

To a great extent this combination of steadiness and brilliancy was maintained at the splendid competition the other day on the links of Carnoustie. The eight best scorers in the two rounds’ course were left to fight it out by holes. So far good; but there is still a defect in the system. I have no doubt that Andrew Kirkcaldy would have been one of the eight after that exceptionally brilliant display of golf in the second half of his first round. He had

foozled the first half, but no one touched his play in the second half.

What then is the remedy? I have for some years advocated a plan which may be improved upon to determine the best method of securing the Open Champion. It is this. All the

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

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competitors play two rounds, counting their strokes. But after the day's play, each competitor has the privilege of selecting the lowest numbers in the successive holes of the two rounds. If, for example, a player takes five to the first hole of the first round, by getting into the burn, and four to the same hole in the second round, he is allowed to put down 4 for the selected score. If he should take five to the second hole in each round, 5 will be the selected score for that hole. If by getting into the railway one of the rounds he takes five to the third hole, but, by brilliant play, takes three to it in the other round, he puts down 3 for the selected score of the third hole. And so on. The total of the numbers for the selected score of eighteen holes is the competitor's selected return. Very rarely does a first-class player make a fizzle at the same hole in two successive rounds; if he does he is not in his game at all, and cannot succeed. The selected score reduces to a minimum the element of chance and brings out the real power of the man in steadiness. The four best scorers would then be pitted against each other on the following day to play by holes in the semi-final; and the two victors in this would have the final struggle. Or if arrangements can be made for a three days contest as at Carnoustie, the eight players with the best selected scores of the first day could play by holes till two victors remain on the second day, and the deciding match of thirty-six holes take place on the third

day. But if two days only could be given, the plan suggested would, in my opinion be preferable to any other.

The only difficulty that occurs to me in this system is this, that in a selected score the chances are that the really excellent scorers would have the lowest selected score, that the fifth player might have the same selected score as the fourth. But in such a case some other plan might be adopted, as in competitions with the rifle. There is an arrangement for deciding who is best with a 33 out of 35 at 200 yards. And where the fourth and fifth player in the score contest have an equal selected score, then the total of the scores for the two rounds could decide between them. But such a difficulty is not insuperable by this or some other method of solution. Certainly, this plan is worthy of careful consideration.

Record breaking is one of the most damaging enemies of Real Golf. When a man comes in after a round, it is not now so much 'Well, I managed to beat him after all,' as 'I put in a 79.' Now this 79 may really mean less brilliant play than his previous day's 80 – on account of some one bad bunker-calamity in that round. Record-breaking reduced to a science takes its initiative in a man day after day playing his round or two alone, carefully scoring (of course never trying a putt over again!). When the craze is on, he thinks only of the score, while playing with a friend for holes. He writes in pencil on his shirt-sleeve the number, repeating it; while his irritated opponent will sneeringly say, "We have simply halved the hole." Nothing worries me more than this continual marking of scores and tabulating them. "Now then for the tug of war" was an old familiar expression when it was all square and three to play. Now it is: "I have 14 to beat my record."

If we bring the gentle element of banter — especially with older players as in foursome — the game is most enjoyable. This record breaking is killing to foursomes; and yet foursomes to me are now the most enjoyable of matches. We do not play for a score, but to get hole by hole — each hole the arena for a new contest. And it is delightful to have a match of this kind with four of the old school, who think of the holes, and not of the scores for the round. There is no doubt that Real Golf must be carefully protected, otherwise the mongrel caricature of the genuine game will deface it. Football and some other games have professionalism to dread, pot-hunting and gate-keeping threaten others; but record-breaking and scoring as a test of genuine play are the certain precursors of the ruin of the finest game in the world — Real Golf, as it used to be played. ❧



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Auld Gowf Schedule for 2025

Tom Johnson, host of the Foxburg Hickory Championship, writes:

2025 brings a change in the landscape of pre-1900 golf. Unfortunately, it appears the NHC, after 27 years of success, will not be held in 2025. This lost opportunity has put a dent in the competition prospects and has players searching for alternative games. There are new matches sprouting up around the country. We also see a few of the newer events becoming established and entrenched in our culture. We will review those, outlining the opportunities for 2025. I have listed several established, well-run events with comments about either the event or venue. Some events have limited field capacity, submitting your entry early is advised. Additional information for these fine events (and others) can be found on the SoHG website tournament listing. Some may have already been contested before you receive this edition of *A Wee Nip*.

April 6 – BON AIRE GOLFERS

A one-day event with both gutty and post-1900 play. Contested at Augusta Country Club and presented by Ross Snellings, it has grown the past four years. Regional players or Masters practice round patrons may find this a great way to start their week. “Augusta Hickory Champion” has a nice ring to it.

rosssnellings@gmail.com, or 706-294-6454.

April 18-19 – ODDBALL

Two full days of featherball golf played at the Hillcrest Golf Center in Washington, Ill. First day is the featherball round, the second day are the gutty contests. Dress is early 1800s, fees are nominal, and play features several games over the two days using featheries and gutties. Balls can be obtained at the event. The event is sponsored by Denny and Cathy Lane.

dennylane@gmail.com or cathylane1118@gmail.com.

June 21 – PAY IT FORWARD GUTTY CHALLENGE

Played at Thornberry Creek at Oneida. This is one of two gutty events on the Wisconsin Hickory Golfer’s schedule. The camaraderie and participation within the group is refreshing. Host is Jim “Wally” Koss.

wallywinsagin@gmail.com

July 16-18 – KEEPER OF THE SPIRIT GUTTY CHALLENGE

Held at Eagle Springs Golf Resort. and limited to 36 golfers. Wisconsin Hickory Golfer Greg Smith is the host. Eagle Springs dates to 1893 and is a treat to play. The challenging layout has several unique features, including the second, the ‘Volcano’. The Keeper of the Spirit award honors the late

Mike Just, long time hickory supporter and great friend to so many of us.

hickorysmith500@gmail.com, or 608-444-9638.

Aug. 7-9 – FOXBURG HICKORY CHAMPIONSHIP

2025 marks the 17th year that Karen and I have hosted this tournament. Foxburg Country Club, established in 1887 and yet featuring its original cut-stone sand and water boxes, is a most reverent venue for gutty golf. Add the American Golf Hall of Fame museum and this becomes a must-attend event. The course is undergoing extensive renovations and improvements. Limited to 36 players.

foxburghickory@aol.com, or 330-677-8997.

Aug. 24 – ODDBALL WEST

The Northwest Hickory Players is teaming up with Denny and Cathy Lane to present the first playing of the Oddball on the West Coast. The West Coast debut will play nine holes of featheries and nine holes of gutties at Whidbey Island’s Holmes Harbor Golf Course. Gutties (the McIntyre Park ball is required) and featheries can be purchased at the event. A \$50 non-refundable deposit is required to register. Contact event organizers for details. The experiences of similar but difficult challenges breed a connection between modern early golf players and their long-ago predecessors. Rather than discussions of 330-yard drives, and 60 degree lob shots, you will hear players speak of how they used the terrain and navigated difficult situations. Humility borne throughout the round is washed away in the afternoon’s camaraderie.

nwhickoryplayers.org/2024/12/oddball-west-august-24/

INTERNATIONAL

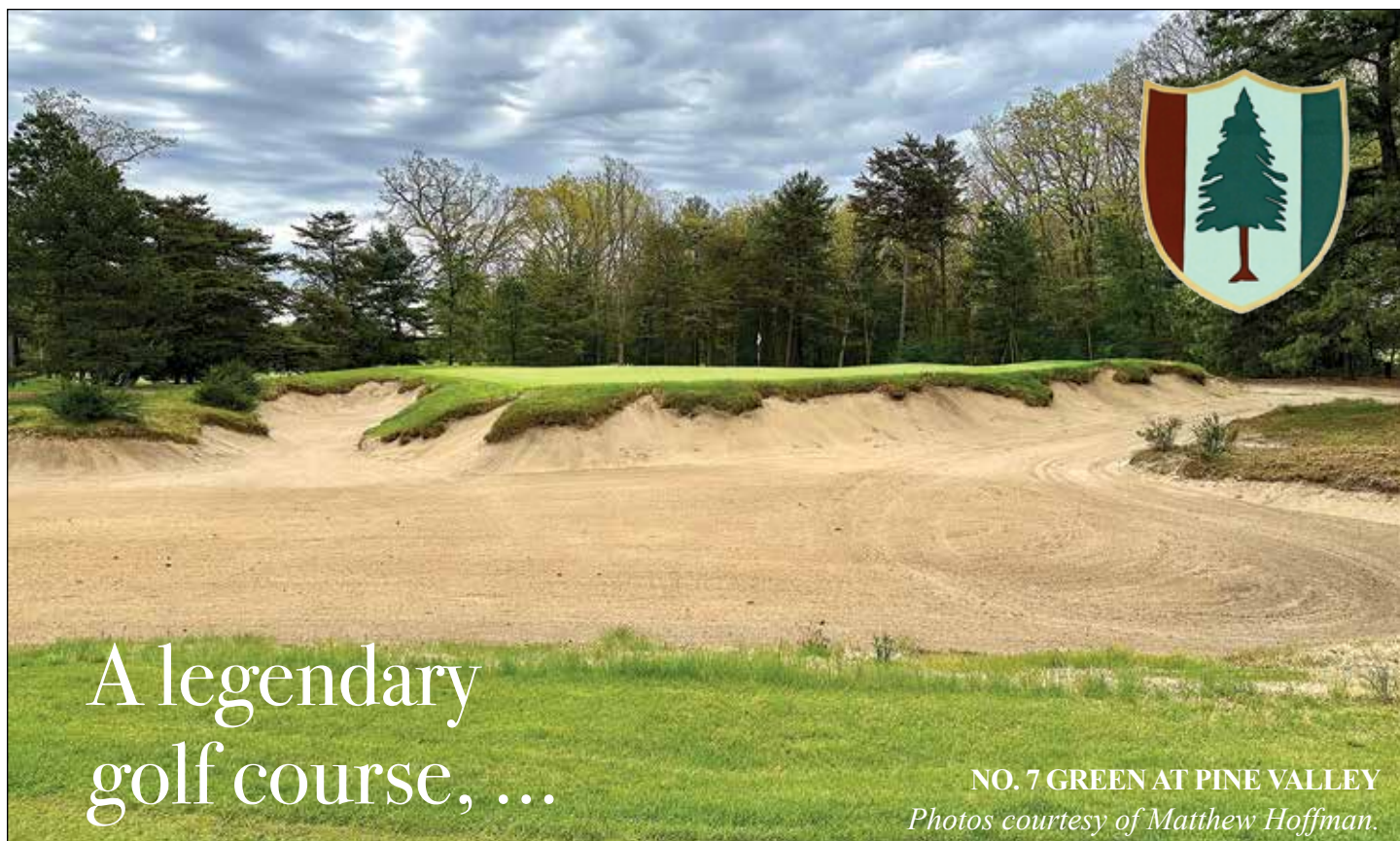
For international games, the only ones to our knowledge are those played by the Golf Historical Society of Canada which maintains a solid hickory event schedule throughout the season. The GHSC features several pre-1900 events including a Guttyfest in the early fall. I look to have additional information this and other pre-1900 events in the next printed edition of the *Wee Nip*.

<https://ghsc.ca>

ENJOYING THE 2023 PAY IT FORWARD CHALLENGE.

*From left, Karen
and Dave Long,
and George and
Lori Galligan.*





A legendary golf course, ...

NO. 7 GREEN AT PINE VALLEY

Photos courtesy of Matthew Hoffman.

...Pine Valley Golf Club was founded in 1913 by a man pursuing a dream. George Crump was a wealthy hotelier, an avid outdoorsman and a pretty fair golfer, having finished runner-up in the 1912 Philadelphia Amateur. Before that, he was among the founders of the Philadelphia Country Club and played most of his golf there. Though an avid competitor, he and his fellow Philadelphia golfers were routinely coming up short in interclub competitions and in the prestigious U.S. Amateur. Crump and his fellows wanted to do better.

A.W. Tillinghast, in an article published in The American Golfer, speculated that that lack of success may have fueled Crump's desire to create a new, more challenging course

Whatever the motivation was, Crump took action. In 1912, he sold his hotel business, bought 184 acres of sandy, rolling land in New Jersey's Pine Barrens near Clementon and moved to the site, intent upon making that vision come true. It wasn't easy. The land was rough and hilly with marshes to drain, stumps to pull and earth to move. So slow was the work that some took to calling the project "Crump's Folly."

Undaunted, Crump spent the last six years of his life and most of his fortune in turning that 'folly' into what is now regarded as the No. 1 golf course in the world.

British architect Harry S. Colt assisted Crump with the routing, but made few suggestions. When Crump died suddenly in 1918, four holes, 12-15, were uncompleted,

though they had been roughly sketched out. Merion's designer, Hugh Wilson, aided by C.H. Alison (Colt's partner) took an additional four years, but they finished the course and the full 18 opened in 1922.

Though originally regarded as one of the most penal of golf courses, Pine Valley has come to be recognized for its strategic challenges and as a preeminent model of golf course architecture.

For a one-off golf course, as it were, Crump realized his dream many times over.

Pine Valley is noted for its exclusivity (women were only admitted as members in 2021) and privacy is very much valued. Invitations to play are rare and much appreciated. In his story below, Matthew Hoffman, the 2023 U.S. Hickory Open champion (Inwood CC, Inwood, N.Y.) writes about his invitation to play the famous course in 2024 and describes the experience of taking on its legendary challenges with his hickory clubs.

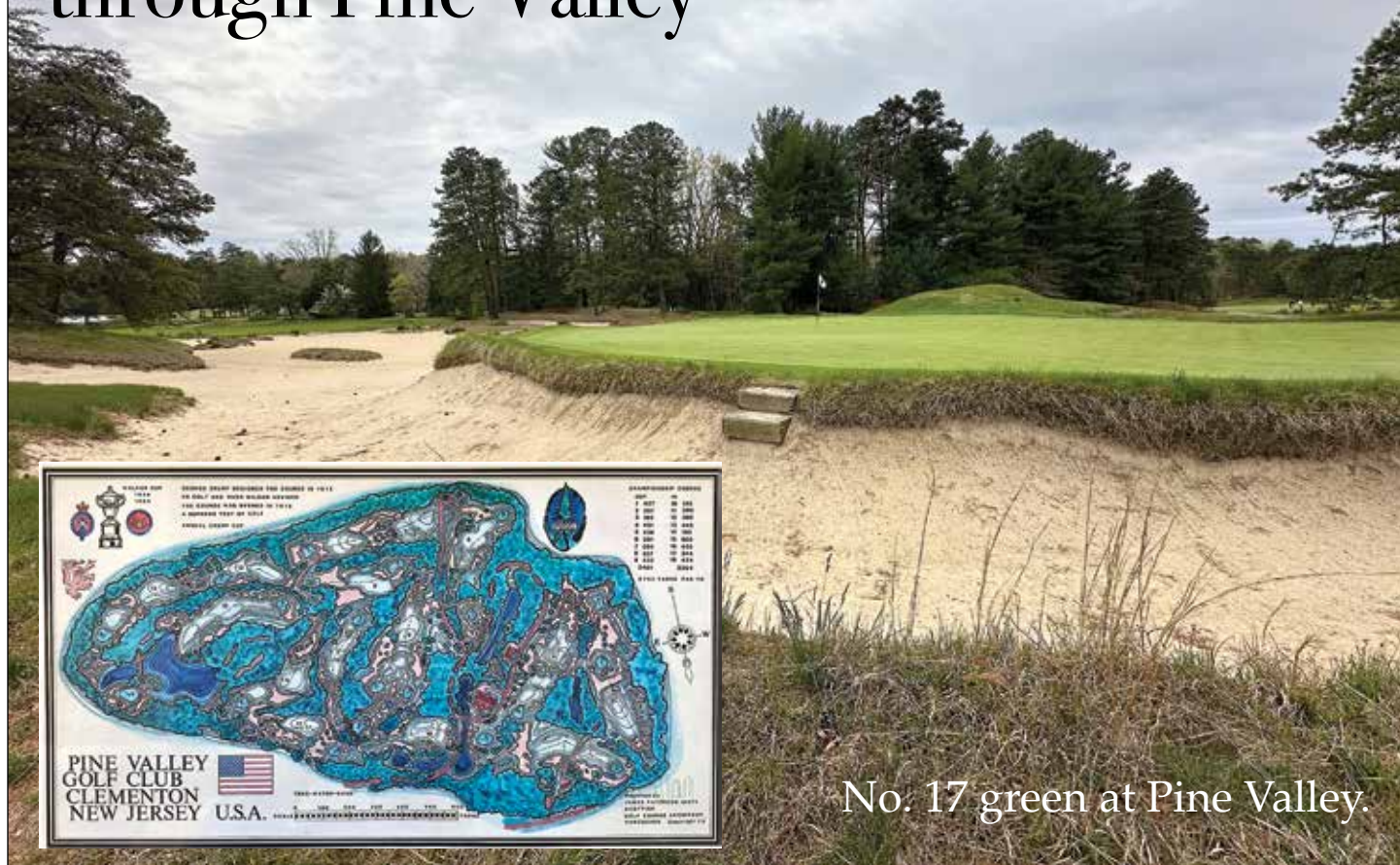
Hoffman, 27, is an assistant professional at the Greenbrier Sporting Club in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va.

— Editor



GEORGE A. CRUMP

A hickory golfer's journey through Pine Valley



No. 17 green at Pine Valley.

By Matthew Hoffman

Hickory golf has a way of immersing you in the game like nothing else. It forces you to think more, plan better, and appreciate the nuances of course architecture in a way that modern equipment sometimes allows you to overlook. At its core, hickory golf is about embracing variety, accepting the occasional bad bounce, and finding joy in the challenge. No course exemplifies these principles better than Pine Valley.

An Unexpected Invitation

My journey to Pine Valley began with a single golf lesson. John Hoffman, a member at The Greenbrier Sporting Club, brought his daughter to me for a lesson in the summer of 2023.

The rest of John's family, his wife and son, were golfers but the game hadn't quite clicked for this 11-year-old. But our lesson seemed to soften her opinion of the game, as she learned it could be fun and she had some natural ability. I think her family, John, in particular, was excited about her small change of heart.

Later that year, I found myself playing an impromptu hole

with John, his son, Johnny, and a guest. I had my hickory clubs with me, preparing for the U.S. Hickory Open, and as I took my swings, Johnny thought I was crazy while John was thrilled to see vintage clubs in action.

Fast forward to winter, and John, a member at Pine Valley, extended an invitation to visit that club in the spring of 2024. Tommy Minturn, head professional at The Greenbrier Resort, was to join me. Both of us were eager for what would be an experience of a lifetime. On April 26, I walked the fairways of what many consider the finest course in the world – with my hickories in hand.

A Welcoming Club

Though an exclusive club with members from the highest rankings of society, members, guests, and employees are treated with respect at Pine Valley. "My only job as a member is to be totally supportive of any person on property, be they a member, guest, or staff," John said.

Every person on property mirrored that attitude. I felt empowered, important, and understood. The accomplished

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



Double green on No. 8.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

men and women of Pine Valley were eager to lend an ear, a hand, a word, or a smile knowing the profound impact these small gestures can have. You know immediately that this club is different. While the members here are deservedly proud of their position on top of the golf world, there is no arrogance; rather, I found a community of great people who treat others the right way.

The service, for example, sets a high bar. The personable greetings from staff, the attentive and polished group of golf professionals, the backyard putting green, the showers, the snapper soup with sherry – everything was truly exceptional.

All of that was a foretaste of the golf to come on the world's highest ranking golf course – with my hickories.

The Short Story

Though I had been urged by my host to bring my hickories, on arrival I checked in with the pros, Charlie Raudenbush and David Clark, to ensure that playing with hickory golf clubs was acceptable. They were welcoming and supportive, and genuinely interested in the clubs. I am thankful for their support, as my experience deepened due to hickory play.



No. 9, one of the original holes on the short course.

Our golf that day began on Pine Valley's world-class Short Course. For those unfamiliar with this aspect of Pine Valley, the Short Course is a 10-hole layout designed by Tom Fazio and Ernie Ransome with extraordinary replicas of second shots on the Big Course as well as a few original holes of its own. It was the perfect way to ease the nerves and warm up the hickory sticks.

Following that round, I had a few minutes before lunch and returned to the range for a few additional swings. Hearing the unique WOOSH and THWACK of my clubs, a few members and guests stopped by and asked

about my clubs. I offered up a mashie and brassie for them to try. After a few hits and some laughter and smiles, it was clear they were intrigued both with the different feel of the clubs and the knowledge that I planned to play their golf course with my "antique" equipment. "It's still golf," I replied with a grin.

Demands on Every Shot

Pine Valley is said to be a mixture of three schools of architecture: strategic, heroic, and penal; often on the same hole. This is where the complexity of George Crump's masterpiece shows.

Pine Valley is not just difficult; it's relentlessly demanding. There is no single formula for playing well here. Every hole presents a decision, a puzzle, and a trade-off. Some form of elevation change, some form of hazard, and always a safer path. But unlike most courses, even the layup shot at Pine Valley is filled with peril.

The two par-fives – holes 7 and 15 – may as well be par-sixes. It's easy to see why they hold the first and second-handicap rankings. Precision is paramount. It's not that good shots get penalized, as they sometimes do at Pinehurst, but rather that good shots simply aren't enough.

Hickory Golf at Pine Valley

Playing hickory clubs at Pine Valley was both exhilarating and humbling. Hickories require precision, and this course demands it. The eighth hole, for instance, was the first time in the round where I truly felt at a disadvantage. This short par-four features two of the smallest greens you'll ever see, and neither provides a safe miss. The left green, which we played, was no bigger than a "wee postage stamp." From the tee, the hole appears well-suited for hickory play – no forced carry, a downhill fairway, and terrain that suggests the ball will naturally funnel to the proper angle. But the approach left little margin for error.

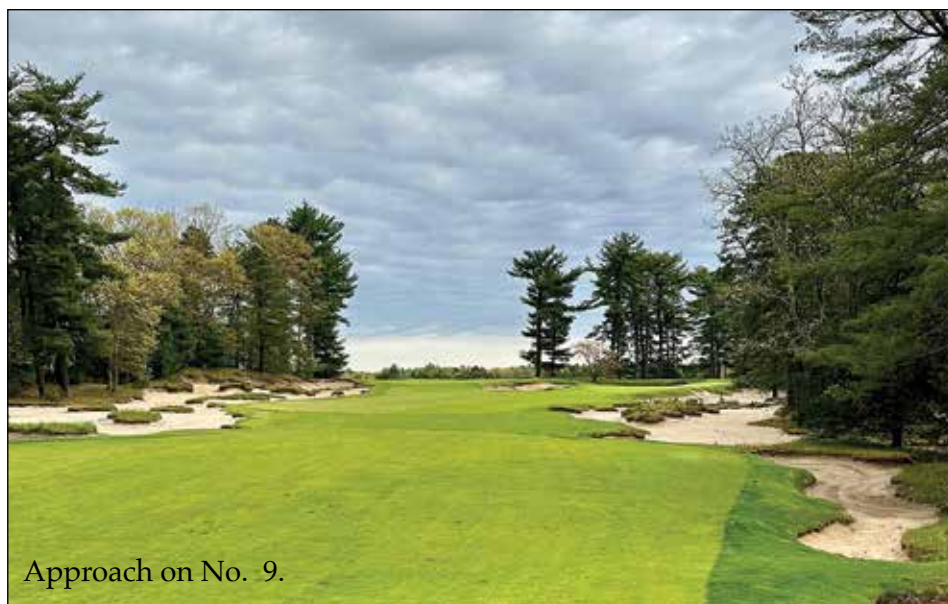
On the 13th, a 442-yard brute, a great drive still left me with a 4-wood into the green. This is where the challenge of Pine Valley becomes evident. Many modern courses reward power above all else. At Pine Valley, control is king.

Hell's Half Acre on the seventh hole is legendary – a forced carry over a vast wasteland of sand and scrub. The fairway is generous if you manage to clear that fearsome patch, but for a hickory player, the test is as much mental as it is physical. Strategy and execution have to align perfectly.

Throughout the round, I leaned on my Wilson Tuckahoe brassie, George Nicoll Recorder mashie-niblick, and



Back tee on No. 15.



Approach on No. 9.

Tom Stewart Accurate putter. These clubs performed beautifully, proving that hickory golf is not just a nostalgic pursuit but a legitimate way to challenge the game's best courses.

Sand, Strategy, and the Absence of Rakes

Pine Valley's bunkers are unlike any others. Johnny Hoffman, John's 13-year-old son and a cancer survivor with wisdom beyond his years, summed it up best: "Pine Valley's bunkers are

like the ocean; only 5% of their depths have been explored." The course has no rakes – sand is played as you find it. Some bunkers play firm, others soft, and each requires a different approach. My flanged niblick, restored by John Henry Williams (a member of the Northwest Hickory Players and a legendary club worker/restoration expert), was my savior out of the sand. On one particularly challenging bunker that seeped into the water, I found that

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Walking Pine Valley with hickories felt like stepping back in time. The course has a timeless, rugged beauty – greens that blend seamlessly into their surroundings, fairways that embrace the natural terrain, and strategic elements that test your game without feeling contrived.

No hole at Pine Valley is defenseless. The 16th should, in theory, play nicely for a hickory club, but only if you maintain discipline. Like many holes here, the bold line draws your attention and punishes the smallest miscalculation in trajectory or spin.

Despite the challenge, I played one of my best hickory rounds ever, carding a 77 – besting my modern-club score for the course on the next day. Pine Valley surprised me in many ways, but most of all, it reinforced why I love hickory golf. The game becomes more engaging, more thought-provoking, and more rewarding.

Pine Valley is a course that demands respect. Every hole deserves to be studied in its own right, and few courses can claim that. For a golfer who embraces history and tradition, playing hickories here was an experience beyond compare.

If you ever get the opportunity to play Pine Valley, take it. And if you can do it with hickories don't hesitate. You'll see the game in a whole new light. ♪

Our young professional acquitted himself quite well with hickories and no doubt earned the respect and support of his host. Perhaps the club pros as well!

On the first day, with hickory clubs, he posted a 77. This was from the Regular Tees, playing at 6557 yards.

On the second day, Matthew played two rounds with modern clubs, one before and one after lunch.

On the morning round, with modern clubs (Pings), he posted an 86 from the Back Tees, at 7181 yards.

For the afternoon round, again using modern clubs but from the Regular Tees at 6557 yards, he posted a 78.

"My hickory round included a 42 on the front and 35 on the back, with birdies on 11 and 17, and a par on the dreaded 13th," Matthew said.

The 13th at Pine Valley is widely considered one of the greatest par 4s in the world, known for its challenging layout and demanding approach shot over a large hazard, often referred to as a “Great Hazard.”

“We were the first group out the second morning, which is a whole new experience,” Matthew said. “Pace of play is strictly enforced (at Pine Valley the starting morning group must come in under 3:50) and we came in at 3:48. If I could do it again, I would save the back tees for a more relaxed afternoon round!”

Let's hope you get another opportunity, Matthew. And if that invite does arrive, I may be available should you need a fourth. Or a scorer.

Matthew's card from his hickory round....



PINE VALLEY FOURSOME. *Author and hickory golf champion Matthew Hoffman, second from left, poses with his host John Hoffman (no relation), left, Tommy Minturn, head professional at The Greenbrier Resort, and John Hoffman's son, Johnny.*

DATE <u>4/26/24</u>				M H		Net Adjusted, subject to penalties	Not like more only 35 if 45, subject to penalty	Par
SCORER _____								
ATTST _____								
Hole	Gold	Green	Black		HCP			
1	421	399	373	5	3			4
2	368	355	343	4	9			4
3	198	181	163	3	17			3
4 th	504	438	425	5	5			4
5	238	219	195	5	11			3
6	438	383	356	5	13			4
7	636	573	538	6	1			5
8	326	314	300	5	15			4
9	458	422	400	4	7			4
Out	3587	3284	3093	41				35
10	161	142	126	3	18			3
11	397	385	377	(3)	10			4
12	358	342	298	4	14			4
13	501	442	427	4	4			4
14	210	187	165	3	16			3
15	615	574	562	6	2			5
16	475	434	407	5	8			4
17	414	342	331	(3)	12			4
18	483	425	388	4	6			4
In	3614	3273	3061	35				35
Total	7201	6557	6174	77				70
Rating	76.6	73.6	71.9		HANDICAP			
Slope	155	153	150		NET			

Each player is responsible for replacement of divots and smoothing his footprints in the sand.
A flagger must play through a slower one regardless of the number of players in either match.

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Equipment TLC

By
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Retrofitting Pyratone shafts to hickory

There are a couple of things to note when trying to retrofit a Pyratone shafted wood (not irons*) to hickory. "Pyratone" is the brand name given to a celluloid-like sheath that covered early steel shafts in the mid to late 1930s.

I assume you will already have the basic power tools, clamps and so forth already in your shop. Here are two items you will need for this little project.

One is a 1/2-inch step-down tapered bit (photo at right). These you can find at any hardware store. I have fit my bit to an extension that allows me to drill different hosel lengths. Remember to use an extension the same size as the 1/2-inch diameter of the bit, otherwise the extension will not fit the hosel diameter.

The second item you will need is a 1/2-inch tapered reamer (photo at right), which can be purchased online. These are a little pricey, but well worth the cost.

The overall process is not that difficult.

Removing the shaft

The first step is removing the shaft itself. When trying to remove a steel or Pyratone shaft from a head you will encounter at least one, sometimes two, screws holding the shaft in place. Generally, the screw through the tip end of the shaft is not a problem. However, sometimes the head of the screw is covered with lead. If this is the case, a soldering iron comes in handy. Let the soldering iron soften the lead so it can be removed to expose the screw. The iron can also be used to heat the screw to aid in its removal.

The second screw is at the back of the hosel an inch or so from the bottom. This one can be a bit of a bugger. The screw is about an 1/8 of an inch long with a flat slot across the top. Modifying a small screwdriver to fit this screw will help in its removal. If all else fails you can drill down the inside of the shaft to cut this screw in half. Punch the top half down into the shaft and then punch the bottom half into the head to release the shaft. Take care to not punch the bottom half too far into the head as it only needs to travel the length of the thickness of the wall of the shaft to release the shaft from the hosel. Once both screws are out of the way you can twist the head off the shaft.

After removing the shaft, drill out the set screw hole in the back of the hosel and epoxy a small wood dowel in the hole to make the finish look smooth. Once the epoxy is cured the

fun begins. By the way, I am not a fan of re-pinning the new hickory shaft in the head. With the use of new epoxies I believe this is an unnecessary step. I do, however, recommend you scratch that portion of the shaft which is to be glued with something like a Sawsall blade. That will provide a textured surface which allows the epoxy to adhere better to the shaft and create a better bond between the shaft and the inside of the hosel.



DRILL BITS FOR THE JOB. Top photo, a 1/2-inch tapered, step-down bit. Above, a 1/2-inch tapered reamer. You'll also want an extension bit for added length, like the one shown with the reamer.

The retrofitting process

With the shaft gone, use a caliper to measure the outside diameter of the hosel of the wood and determine at what point it is 1/2-inch wide (Photo 1 next page). Mark that point with a felt tipped marker.

Use friction tape to wrap the hosel below the mark. Doing this will help prevent the hosel from splitting while drilling (Photo 2).

Next, cut the hosel above the mark to give yourself a nice clean starting point to begin drilling (Photo 3). Using the step-down bit, drill out the inside of the hosel. Drill small lengths at a time and remove the bit at each increment to discard the wood shavings.

All this should be done with the soleplate attached to the head. The reason for that is to widen the hole on the bottom of the club as well as the hole through the soleplate so the new shaft will fit snugly. Allow the step-down bit to run through the bottom of the club about 1/2- to 5/8-inch past the sole plate.



PHOTO 1. Measure with caliper.



PHOTO 2. Wrap hosel.



PHOTO 3. The drilled hosel.



PHOTO 4. Bit extends past sole plate.



PHOTO 5. Drilled hosel after using reamer.



PHOTO 6. Tip of new wood shaft.

Repeat this process using the 1/2-inch reamer. This step should also be done with the soleplate on the club. Again, drill small lengths at a time and remove the reamer at each increment to remove shavings. Any shavings left inside the hosel may split the hosel, so don't ignore this step.

The reamer, too, should extend through the bottom of the club about 1/2-inch (Photo 4). This length can be modified depending on how tapered you want to make the tip end of the shaft.

That's it. You are DONE.

It is that simple. Even so, I recommend you make a few test attempts on scrap heads before drilling a head you intend to use as a player. Go slow. Learn the process and own it. The whole thing takes about 10 to 15 minutes once you get the hang of it.

Any ideas for future articles would be greatly appreciated as I want to help you become more confident in doing your own repairs no matter how big or small your specific requirements are. Send me a note on what you would like to see in future articles to williamsjh@aol.com

All my very best to you all,
John Henry

**From the SoHG Equipment Guidelines –*
3) **RETROFITTED CLUBS.** – This category was created for clubs that were made PRIOR to Dec. 31, 1934. Any wood headed club manufactured or designed prior to 1935, regardless of shaft material originally installed at time of manufacture may be retrofitted with a wooden shaft and be permitted for play in SoHG sanctioned events. Players must establish – independently or through the retrofitter or seller of these clubs – that the heads were indeed offered before 1935. No golf club designed and manufactured after Jan. 1, 1935 will be allowed in this category. ⚡



BEFORE AND AFTER. Clubhead with new wood shaft at right.

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