



GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER®

THE INSIDE REPORT ON WORLD GOLF

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Dear Subscriber:

... a new star, the star of sand and heather, has arisen out of the darkness, and a whole generation of new courses, which really are golf and not a good or even bad imitation of it, have sprung into being.

Bernard Darwin, THE GOLF COURSES OF THE BRITISH ISLES, 1910

THE HEATHLAND OF SURREY AND BERKSHIRE — little more than an hour's drive from Claridge's in central London — was created long ago by landowners felling trees to open grazing areas for animals. This caused the sandy soil's nutrient levels to decrease (no falling leaves) and the soil acidity to increase thus suiting plants such as heather and gorse that were previously limited to coasts, cliff tops, and mountainsides.

For golfers and those building new courses in England during the late 19th century, sandy heathland afforded exceptional non-seaside golf ground. Its location near London also provided interest, funding, and the talent which resulted in the creation of many of the finest and most pleasing golf courses anywhere in the world. The Berkshire, Sunningdale, Walton Heath, Swinley Forest, Worplesdon, West Hill, Woking, Royal Wimbledon, Royal Blackheath... Easy access to these courses, as well as those further south on the channel coast, makes London the greatest golf city in the world.

From this remarkable group of excellence in golf course design, it is often the 3 Ws — Worplesdon, West Hill, and Woking — that are considered the most important trinity. For this reason, and this issue, we attempt to describe Woking, considered by some to be "the jewel of Surrey heathland golf", because of its age, design evolution, approach to fast play, and recent restoration.

Woking G.C. Surrey

Built in 1893 by "a few mad barristers [who] were trying to carve [a course] by main force out of a swamp thickly covered with gorse and heather", Woking is considered by some to be the place where strategic *design* first appeared in the ancient game. This happened when club

members John Low and Stuart Paton built a bunker in the center of the 4th hole fairway driving zone of Tom Dunn's original design. For years Mr. Low and Mr. Paton continually manipulated all elements of the course. Bernard Darwin, a Woking member, referred to Mr. Paton as the Mussolini of Woking because of his ardent and unauthorized meddling. From the Club brochure:

From an architectural perspective, the widely admired ingenuity of Messrs. Paton and Low's 4th hole bunkering stands out. A brave innovation and one widely regarded as being ahead of its time, but it's only one of the great intricacies of Woking that has seen architects and great players wax lyrically about the course over the years.

Apparently, Woking members, after a little grumbling when Messrs Low and Paton instituted new changes,

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Woking G.C.

LIV's World Ranking Problems

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would settle down and ultimately accept the alterations as ingenious and the course as more entertaining than ever. The point was that a player should use his own head as well as the club head; or “the course should punish not just poor shots, but poor risk assessment”.

Sir Peter Allen, writing in *PLAY THE BEST COURSES*, told the story about Mr. Darwin’s reaction after missing his fourth short putt on the 4th: “He rolled in agony on the turf, biting it as he went, and then made the impassioned cry ‘and now God perhaps you are satisfied.’”

Mr. Darwin wrote in *THE GOLF COURSES OF THE BRITISH ISLES*:

[Woking] is the oldest and still one of the best of [the heathery courses]. Indeed, although my judgment may not be strictly an impartial one, I think [Woking] is still the pleasantest of all upon which to play, and the golf is undeniably interesting. It does lack something of the bigness of Sunningdale or Walton Heath, which have been laid out on an altogether grander scale. ... The keenest golfer among my acquaintances said to me the other day that, whatever anybody might say, Sandwich and Woking were the two pleasantest places for a game of golf, and though there is no resemblance between the two courses, I think his verdict is a sound one.

Woking’s architect, Tom Dunn (1849 - 1902), was born in Blackheath, near London. At age 21, he became the professional at Wimbledon, where the course had been laid out by his father, Old Willie Dunn. In his first year he returned the course to eighteen holes from the seven to which it had been reduced. Later he would work as the professional at North Berwick (Scotland), Tooting Bec (near London), and others.

He was the most prolific course designer of his time. In *THE GOLF COURSE* written by Ronald E. Whitten and Geoffrey S. Cornish, Mr. Dunn is described as having produced courses that were “inexpensive and serviceable”. He was the first to work on inland rather than links sites. His sales pitch always included the words, “God meant this site to be a golf course.”

He was married to Isabel Gourlay, who was known as “the greatest woman golfer of her day”. She was a descen-

dant of the golf instructors to the Kings of Scotland and ball makers to the royal family of Great Britain.

The 137 courses for which Mr. Dunn is credited were built in England, France, Scotland, and the Netherlands. More than once he traveled to the United States to visit his brother and sons, but never designed an American course. His remodeling work included North Berwick, Littlestone, and Cork.

From the back (black) tees, Woking is comfortable at 6,606 yards, par 70. The out nine includes two 3s and no 5s; while the in nine has two 3s and two 5s.

An account of the home hole illustrates pleasing scale of the course and the manner in which golf is played at Woking:

The last hole is a mild enough par four (362 yards) but you can slice or shank a very

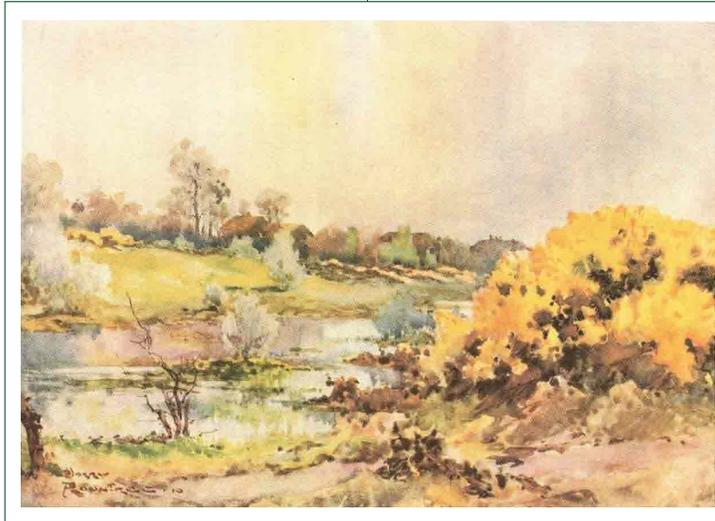
bad second into a pond on the right of the green. Shots have been played to this green from the clubhouse roof, notably by C.H. Alison [of Colt & Alison fame] in the university match in 1904, getting him a half. In the London Amateur Foursomes, a third shot has been holed through a tiny gap in the branches of the huge holly tree which guarded, and still guards, the left of the green. The ball was apparently hit into the heart of the bush, came out, and ran slowly into the hole. A subsequent search reported that the hole in the bush had disappeared.

Bobby Jones, as a member of the 1926 Walker Cup team, played his first ever matches on English soil at Woking when the U.S. team lost to the Moles Golfing Society 6 to 3.

When heathland is no longer cleared it reverts over time back to forest and the gorse and heather diminish due to more fertile conditions caused by falling leaves. For this reason, Woking instituted a plan a couple years ago to restore heathland characteristics to their property by clearing substantial areas of trees. Heather is beginning to return due to the reduced soil fertility.

Visiting Woking G.C.

The Club welcomes visitors on weekdays, subject to



HARRY ROUNTREE. *Woking*. c.1910.

availability. It can be reached from London's Waterloo Station by southwest trains that stop at either Woking or Brookwood, where taxis are available. The Club is 25 miles from Heathrow Airport. The physical address is: Pond Road, Hook Heath, Woking GU22 0JZ.

Woking is principally a two ball course, which means a three hour round for singles or foursomes. They do have times on Tuesdays and Fridays when visiting three or four balls are permitted.

Call the professional, Carl Bianco, to make arrangements on 01483 760053, or e-mail proshop@woking-golfclub.co.uk. The club's website address is <https://www.wokinggolfclub.co.uk>

Green fees run £140 from April through October and £100 for the rest of the year.

This year, Woking was ranked by GOLF WORLD as 45th among the top 100 courses in Great Britain and Ireland.

COMMENTARY

Shortcomings for LIV Inclusion in the Official World Golf Ranking

THE BAFFLING ASPECT of LIV Golf's attempt to fangle a positive outcome from the Official World Golf Ranking (OWGR) procedure is that it is happening at all. Either LIV a. failed to anticipate the importance of their players being included in the ranking; b. does not care if their players are excluded; or c. has an alternative, obscure legal path to being included.

As U.S. District Judge Beth Labson Freeman, Northern District of California, wrote when denying three LIV players' requests for a restraining order that would have allowed them to play in the Tour Championship:

Plaintiffs' contention that they will irreparably lose future sponsorship opportunities and career status is undermined by Plaintiffs' evidence that LIV Golf offers a refreshing new extremely fan-friendly business model that will lead to an improved broadcast output and entertainment experience compared to the staid old golf world built by PGA Tour.

If LIV Golf is elite golf's future, what do Plaintiffs care about the dust-collecting trophies of a bygone era?

Except, of course, they do.

It is easy to imagine that excluding LIV players from the world ranking will be fatal to LIV's long term effort to attract the very best players and to bring their brand of golf to the game's most important professional stages, which are the major championships. Without major championship appearances a slow fade of interest may take place. As we have written since the beginning of LIV's pettish and bougie appearance, their players' inclusion in major championship fields is the most important element for authenticating LIV as a professional tour worthy of an audience's attention—far more influential than the publicity derived from simply paying stupid money for name players.

Without world ranking points—and, by extension, being world ranked—the players who LIV purchased from among the top forty or so players in the world will slowly drop in the ranking, and may, for that reason, lose exemptions into the major championships, and may possibly fail—for that reason and yet-to-be-determined criteria—to meet requirements necessary for entering the major championships' qualifying processes.

Dustin Johnson was ranked 13th in the world when he signed with LIV last June. At this writing he has dropped to 23rd. Patrick Reed has slipped from 36th to 50th; Bryson DeChambeau from 28th to 43rd.

Mr. Johnson and his LIV compatriots seem to have sold their access to the top echelons of the professional game while still at the pinnacle of their abilities to perform there. Do not forget Mr. Johnson's view of the LIV controversy and noise: "I don't read. I don't look at it. It doesn't bother me because obviously, everyone has their own opinion and I have mine, and the only one I care about is mine." He may soon be concerned with the OWGR's opinion and decision.

Adam Scott put it succinctly last month before the Presidents Cup: "Why am I still on the PGA Tour? Because it suits me best to be on the PGA Tour; it's as simple as that, really. There's one thing I think I haven't grasped is giving up my entire professional life of trying to achieve these things [major wins] here and just leaving it behind. I'm obviously not ready to do that. I may never be [ready] ... to be clear. I just think that seems to be a hurdle that—well, it hasn't really presented itself to me anyway."

LIV cannot purchase the OWGR authentication they must have to be seriously respected or they would already have done so. On Sept. 16 they organized the submission of a letter from their entire roster of players to OWGR Chairman Peter Dawson asking him to immediately begin awarding them world ranking points and to do so retroactively. Despite the hysteria the LIV players and their tour might like to create in order to gain access to

OWGR, that is an unproductive tactic. Simply demanding and stamping their feet will not make it happen.

A look at some of the criteria that are compulsive for a prospective tour to be included in the OWGR illustrates, in a rather riveting way, just how short-sighted LIV Golf has been in qualifying for inclusion:

Those seeking inclusion in the OWGR must play 72-hole competitions — with a very few special individual exceptions. The competitions must include a 36-hole cut regardless of whether 54 or 72 holes are being played. LIV's tournaments are 54 [LIV] hole competitions.

The prospective tour's competitive fields must average 75 players over the course of the tour's season. They must have an open qualifying school before the start of each season. LIV has maintained that their relegation plan satisfies this requirement. That plan calls for the relegation of the bottom four players from their roster at the end of 2023; and the addition of new players by way of a qualifying tournament.

Prospective tours must also provide access for local players to play in Monday qualifiers at each of the applying tour's tournaments; and an opportunity must be provided for a prospective tour's players to move to the tour of one of the six members of the International Federation of PGA Tours. Those member tours are the European Tour, Japan Golf Tour Organization, PGA Tour, PGA Tour of Australasia, and the Sunshine Tour [Southern and East Africa].

Prospective tours must also provide for the inclusion and promotion of non-discriminatory practices. The Saudi Arabian connection makes this questionable, as

does the PGA Tour's connection to their China series and the China series itself.

A prospective tour seeking admittance to the OWGR system must meet these guidelines for at least one year prior to inclusion. The approval process goes first to a ten member technical committee to help the applicant resolve issues that may not comply with the rules. Following that process, the application is considered by a seven member board of governors. The governors include PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan, DP World Tour CEO Keith Pelley, USGA CEO Mike Whan, R&A CEO Martin Slumbers, PGA of America executive director Seth Waugh, Augusta National Golf Club executive director Will Jones and Keith Waters, who represents the International Federation of PGA Tours.

LIV Golf CEO Greg Norman has stated that governors who have stated reservations about LIV have demonstrated a conflict of interest and, therefore, should recuse themselves from participating in this decision. That is unlikely.

The likelihood of LIV Golf satisfying all the changes necessary for OWGR approval is also unlikely. Even if they are included, a period of probation would follow for a number of years. Violations or reversion to old practices would void the OWGR accreditation.

LIV is doomed to play in a world they argue is better, louder, richer, and more desirable. However the world ranking issue unfolds, it will be a loud and disappointing contest for LIV Golf because the competition will be better elsewhere—primarily at the major championships where LIV will, for the most part, not be present. This will go on longer than most people care for and until the Saudis finally realize they cannot have what they want even though they are willing to overpay dearly to have it.

For J.H.W.:



In all my life, nothing ever quite matched the perfect joy of that moment. My school lay in ruins and the river beckoned with the promise of stolen days.

Billy (Sebastian Rice Edwards)
HOPE AND GLORY, 1987

Yours vry truly,

Gary A. Galyean
Editor & Publisher

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