

The Haj, Part II

Seven Men's Journey to the Birthplace of Golf



Dan Marco, Jeff Brinegar, Don Cross and John Gurke on the Swilcan Bridge at St. Andrews.

Editor's Note: "The Haj, Part I" appeared in the March issue of On Course. When last heard from, our "hajis" were bound for St. Andrews to play the Old Course with greenkeeper Eddie Adams.

The Old Course was originally a 22-hole track, 11 out and 11 back. In 1764, the Society of St. Andrews Golfers decided that some holes were too short and combined them. The reduced course of 18 holes created what became the standard round of golf throughout the world. The path through the whin bushes was so narrow that golfers played to the same holes going out and coming back, so in the 19th century, two holes were placed on each green to relieve the congestion. Today, seven double greens remain, all of which are enormous and can take upwards of an hour-and-a-half to mow. White flags still mark the outward nine and red flags denote coming back home.



Hajis Don Cross, Jeff Brinegar, Mike Mumper, John Gurke, Dan Marco, Dave Radaj and Dave Blomquist outside the birthplace of Donald Ross in Dornoch.

The history of the course, the enduring memories of 26 Open Championships contested there (and the famous chokes by golfers not normally prone to do so), the presence of townspeople walking about its grounds while play is ongoing—all factor into the state of nervous elation when the golfer stands on the first tee under the looming shadow of the Royal and Ancient Clubhouse and contemplates his drive. Once our group was announced, that nervous elation transformed (in my own experience) to outright uncontrolled shaking. It is said that when President Dwight D. Eisenhower played the Old Course, he had such a case of the jitters that he skipped the first hole and proceeded directly to no. 2. Had I known this was an option, I'd have gladly done the same, as after three shots—the first ending up directly left of the tee in the Valley of Sin adjacent to the 18th green, the second striking a Renault parked on the street a good hundred yards left of the intended target, and the third coming to rest in the Swilcan Burn—I was off to a very bad start, and my caddie was having second thoughts about his decision to wake up this day. It took a good five holes and considerable coaxing and "clubbing" from my caddie to get past that debacle, and I was able to settle down and enjoy the ride finally.

None of us made it through unscathed, as we each experienced an assortment of the 112 bunkers, the occasional four-putts and a few walks through the whins and gorse in search of our errant shots. The revetted bunkers were the deepest we had encountered—built that way to prevent the sand from blowing out—and had their own identities, with names like Hell, the Coffins, Cat's Trap and Grave. When dinner conversation shifted to maintenance practices, Eddie told us that bunkers were raked two to three times per week, prompting one of

(continued on page 22)

our more astute minds to inquire, "By hand?" No, John, we drop Sand Pros in with a crane . . .

No course on our tour more than the Old Course exemplified the importance of a good caddie to play guide through the round. Most every hazard is hidden (mainly because the course was originally played in a clockwise direction, then was reversed when Old Tom created a separate green for the first hole); every shot—although offering several different options for a successful outcome—needs the expertise of an experienced sidekick to show the way; and every putt requires both a speed and line, as the greens are sadistically tricky to read. And what a fine lot the Scottish caddies are! They are exactly as you would imagine, caricatures of the grizzled Scotsman, and poster-boys for the anti-smoking advertisements that warn not of the risk of cancer, but of the dangers of premature skin aging and tooth yellowing. Their ability to judge distance by the club needed as opposed to the yardage (especially on the Old Course and at Muirfield, where sprinkler heads are covered with green carpet to conceal them from cameras) is just one example of their talents. Another bonus is their almost uncanny ability to find golf balls in the most difficult of places, from rocky crag to thorny gorse to waist-deep rough. It is a matter of pride for a caddie to have you play the same ball all 18 holes, and if a ball seems hopelessly lost, his compadres will soon be joining him, forming a line as they wade through whatever trouble their employer has



The first hole at St. Andrews.

found to locate the ball. They are grizzled, yes, but they bring a sense of humor to the course that I imagine keeps them sane during the four hours they are forced to spend with golfers the likes of us. When one of our group hit a tee shot into an area NOT intended for tee shots to land in, and uttered, "Uh oh, what's down there?", the snappy reply was, "A Taytleist one, I hoop." Myself, thinking I had just happened upon an agreeable caddie by sheer luck as he answered all of my questions with, "Oh, aye," later realized he was in fact saying, "oh why?" (as in, oh why did I get him, oh why did he come here, and oh why is God mad at me?).

So onward we toiled, through Heathery and High, Short and End,

through the Long Hole and the Road Hole with its famous round-ruining Road Bunker, and the spectacular finish at Tom Morris: the 18th hole, home of the Swilcan Bridge and the Valley of Sin—the ancient spires of the University, the Royal and Ancient Clubhouse and a gallery of townsfolk forming the dramatic backdrop. And then it was over, and off we went to the St. Andrews Golf Club (my unfortunate Renault still parked in front) as guests of Eddie, where the rounds were dissected, lies told and embalming fluids consumed by those of us who felt as if we had died. A night on the town followed, and after much debate as to the actual width of the first and 18th fairways, a late-night/early-morning pacing-off proved once and for all that Ian Baker-Finch had to hook his ball 112 yards (give or take) due left to achieve his infamous OB shot off the first tee.

Our luck with the October weather had held up reasonably well to this point, but all that would soon change. Tuesday brought rain, sleet, snow, wind and more rain on the new Kingsbarns Golf Links, just six miles down the road from the revered Old Course. The weather was so bad that even the caddies stayed home, but that didn't stop this group. Although Kingsbarns only opened in July of 2000, the design of Americans Kyle Phillips and Mark Parsinen, golf has been played on the site since at least



St. Andrews—the Old Course and the old city.

1793, and areas of the course incorporate parts of the original layout, including a meandering burn dating from at least the 1600s and a bridge built of hewn stone 300 years ago by French POWs from the Napoleonic Wars—both features accidentally unearthed by bulldozers during the layout's construction. None of us were too excited about including this "new" course in our itinerary of historic courses, but after lugging our bags through 17 holes of steady rain and constant gale-force winds (the remaining hole providing us with a lovely face-pelting sleet), we were all converts. All 18 holes offered vistas of the North Sea (and in some cases, the North Sea offered an unfortunate resting place for our less-than-inspired shots), incredible changes in elevation, and all the subtle charms of the renowned and revered courses we had played previously. The only difference was that it was the first links course we had played that was routed such that each nine ended up at the clubhouse—a welcome sight on this day, as the time spent between nines was utilized to dry our clothes and



The thick gorse at St. Andrews.

warm our bellies. The course was fair, rewarding aggressive drive lines with contours and angles that released toward the hole, and with 17 of the 18 holes offering "ramp-up" approaches. With the exception of the par-3 15th, where the green lies precariously perched on a point of rocky

land jutting into the sea, only the spectacular 18th hole had a forced carry—over the ancient burn and historic bridge onto the final green. What made this course even more amazing was the fact that it was not built on linksland. The entire site is a

(continued on page 24)



St. Andrews' famous Hell Bunker.

man-made links, which entailed moving more than 300,000 cubic yards of sand and planting it all to native grasses (though you would not know it by playing it). It was a soggy-dog day, but the group was in unison in praising Kingsbarns as one of our favorites (or should I say favourites?).

After the tearful (it was cold and windy) farewells to Jack and Mary at the Dunvegan, we loaded into Murdo's Ark for the final leg of the tour—a stay in the historic capital city of Edinburgh (Ed-in-budda) and rounds on the West Links of North Berwick and Muirfield. Our first stop was in North Berwick on another miserable day of rain and sleet. The club, established in 1832, owes very little of its design to man, having been formed almost totally by Mother Nature. The original course was only six holes, but was lengthened to 18 in 1877, leaving the original stone boundary wall (called the March Dyke) in place and in play on several holes. Our first impression upon arriving was how the first and 18th holes resembled those at the Old Course, sharing a broad expanse of fairway bordered by a white rail fence, a public road intersecting it for access to the ocean, and—dear God—a line of cars parked perilously close to the 18th green (not to worry,



No. 12 at Kingsbarns.

though, as the green fee covers the mandatory Visiting Golfers Insurance policy). Our next impression was that we were all going to freeze our rears off. But once our caddies arrived (I think three showed up) and the round began, it was impossible not to warm up to this great course.

Every hole, beginning with Point Garry Out to Quarry to Mizzentop, from Eastward Ho! to Bos'ns Locker to Pit, from Redan on

in to Home, had something memorable and unique. Redan, the 15th hole, is the model by which all similar par 3s are based—the original “redan” hole. The name comes from the Crimean War, when the British captured a Russian-held fort, or in the local dialect, *redan*. The current Oxford Dictionary defines *redan* as “fort—a work having two faces forming a salient towards the enemy.” The Pit is another unique golf hole, where



Kingsbarns' front nine and the North Sea.

after hitting a perfectly-placed tee shot, you must play a short chip over the stone wall guarding the sunken green. The next hole, Gate, was another beauty—a par 4 where you must get your tee shot airborne quickly to avoid the wall that crosses in front of the tee, and then negotiate your second shot to a green that is elevated six feet in front and at the rear, with a gully in the middle at fairway level. One unfortunate group member's tee shot (okay—Marco's) hit the wall, caromed backward and came to rest about 100 yards behind the tee.

It's funny to think that these types of conditions and hazards—the walls, the pit bunkers, the patches of unkempt vegetation, the animal droppings, the not-so-perfect lies—would be intolerable to the golfers who play our own courses here; but in Scotland they are accepted as part of the game. To Scots, golf is not about perfection, but about making do with what you have in front of you, and by accepting the “rub of the green.” This is as much a part of their game as it is the governing philosophy of their daily lives—don't moan about your bad luck, because there is no bad luck. Just put a smile on your face, deal with it and move on. This philosophy is the main reason a game of golf in Scotland takes three-and-a-half hours to play, as opposed to the excruciating five-plus-hour rounds we have become accustomed to here.

“Onward, gentlemen!” hollered Murdo, so back into the Ark we went



No. 2 at North Berwick.

and on to Edinburgh and the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Now this hotel was nothing like the previous two “pubs” we had stayed in. Although the exterior façade indeed appeared old (like everything else in Scotland, it has to either be 800 years old, or at least appear that way), the interior was very modern, with actual drywall in the rooms, computer kiosks and phones with buttons as opposed to dials. This phenomenon led to a discussion on the level of poverty a Scottish vinyl-siding salesman must live in, as there is no vinyl siding in Scotland. Now the stone salesman, on the other hand, probably lives in a castle—everything is made of

stone, including streets, buildings, fences, even phone booths. This observation prompted the reflection, “They need some new stuff over here.” A walk about the stone streets of the city took us to the Edinburgh Castle (a stone structure just up the road), which sits precariously on a huge hill with many stones overlooking the entire city made of stone. The panoramic view of Edinburgh, with its countless stone spires, brought visions of Charles Dickens' London to mind—the entire city had the aura of being in a time warp. The trip back into history put everyone in the mood for our final day of golf—a 36-hole odyssey on the revered Muirfield Links.

The Old Tom Morris-designed Muirfield, the Links of the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, has been situated in its present location in Gullane since it opened in 1891. However, the Company itself is the oldest golf club on record, having been founded in 1744. This group of men wrote the original Thirteen Articles (the first rules of golf), which were adopted 10 years later by the St. Andrews Society of Golfers, later to become the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews. The Company began playing golf on the Leith links outside of Edinburgh, but when it became too populated, they moved down the road to a nine-hole course beside the



The Pit is the 13th hole at North Berwick.

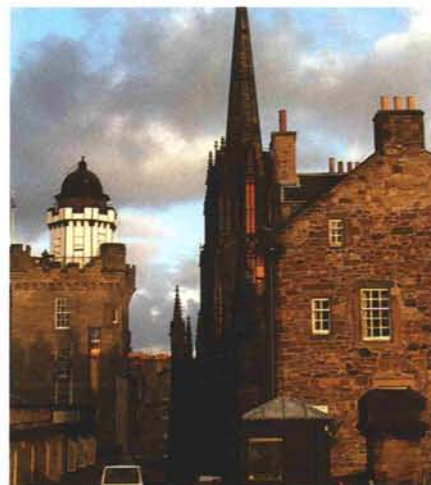
(continued on page 26)

race track in Musselburgh. This, too, became overcrowded eventually, and again they moved, this time for good to the site of the East Lothian horse races on the Hundred Acres Park at Muirfield. The name “muir” was the tenant farmers’ jargon for a track of unenclosed and uncultivated land often affected with marshy areas—thus the name Muirfield.

Since the move, 15 Open Championships have been contested on the links, and it was here that the first 72-hole championship format was adopted (in 1892). Muirfield was also the first links designed in two loops of nine holes, the first nine going clockwise around the perimeter, the second nine contained within the first, running counterclockwise. This design, with no three successive holes playing in the same direction, makes the winds off the Firth of Forth affect shot-making from all angles throughout the course. We found the course to be just as it is proclaimed—perhaps the fairest test of golf of all of Britain’s great and historic courses. All the dangers are visible, and its difficulty lies not in trickery, but in its length, its ball-magnet bunkers and its unyielding rough. Luckily for us, the wind was

not a factor this day, and we were treated to a beautiful sunny day with 18 holes of two-ball and 18 of alternate shot (the Muirfield tradition), with an outstanding lunch in the men’s grill room in between (where coat and tie are required attire, and the dessert station was a must-visit).

Our final night of the journey was spent back in Edinburgh, with a gourmet dinner at the Dubh Prais (complete with Haggis for the brave souls) and the warming of pub stools afterward. On this night, one of the few where all seven of us were together in one place (a pub, of course), we reflected on our experience, talked of our favorite courses and dubbed each man a particular member of Scottish royalty, based on his behavior during the trip. At this point, my notes were fairly illegible, but the names jotted down included Sir Sweats-a-lot, the Earl of Ears, the Vicar of Vulgarly, the Count of Conservatism, the Duke of Duck Hook and the Baron of Brora, who was accorded rule over the Fiefdom of Flatulence (an area of the bus where only he would sit). Alas, all good things must come to an end, and it was off to bed before the trip to Glasgow and the flight home. As luck



Edinburgh.

would have it, while we were delayed in Heathrow the last of the Concorde flew in and we had a bird’s-eye view from our terminal of the museum-bound planes’ final flights.

The long flight home offered the chance to reflect on what we had experienced, and what the “haj” to our profession’s beginnings had meant to each of us as individuals and as golf course superintendents. I can not speak for the others, but for me this experience was, in several respects, an awakening. It was an



No. 14 at North Berwick—a little long means a lotta trouble.

inspirational look into the past, and more specifically at how the game we love has been so meticulously preserved in its primordial form for these past centuries in Scotland. It reminded me that, when I look out my office window on a nasty October morning and see a threesome battling wind and sleet, with umbrellas inverted and rainsuits slicked, maybe they are not the idiots I am thinking they are—maybe they are the purists who actually **get** it. Just maybe they are the rare birds who see golf as a challenge not only against the course, but against the elements as well. Maybe I'll join them next time. The journey was also a bittersweet reminder of what we have done with the game on our side of the world—how we have contrived to change it. Perhaps the differences between golf in Scotland and golf here can be explained by the differences in our cultures and our history—perhaps it is a classic example of an international generation gap. If this is indeed the case, then why wouldn't the game be played differently here than it is over there? Still, upon returning and looking at my golf course, with its rip-rapped pond banks, its razor-sharp bunker edges, its 2≤ rough, its mowing stripes defining every con-



Muirfield at sunset.

tour, its trees, and its overabundance of accessories and “conveniences,” I felt the longing to get back to Scotland and once again experience the game as it has been played there since its ancient beginnings. I felt the need for another haj.



About the Photos

The author wishes to thank Glyn Satterley, a renowned professional photographer of Scottish golf courses and landscapes, for allowing the use of the stunning golf course images in this article. For information on these and all of Glyn's golf and sporting photography, visit www.glynsatterley.com.



No. 13 at Muirfield.

mb marine biochemists

a Division of Advantis Technologies, Inc.

Professional Aquatic Management

- **Aquatic Plant and Algae Control**
 - Treatment Programs
 - Biological Control Programs
- **Water Quality Assessment**
 - Dissolved Oxygen
 - Nutrient Levels
- **Aeration Systems**
 - Custom Designs, Sales and Service
- **Surface Floating Fountains**
 - Aqua Master® & Kasco®
- **Fisheries Management**
 - Surveys and Stocking
- **Wetlands Mitigation**
 - Herbicide Management
- **Professional Consultants**

809 Hicks Drive Suite A, Elburn, IL 60119
Phone (630) 365-1720 Fax (630) 365-1721
Voice Mail (800) 558-5106 Ext. 106

visit us at our website: www.marinebiochemists.com

S O D

Sod That Fits Your Course To A Tee

All varieties available as washed sod, traditionally cut sod or big roll sod.

Your Single Source for:

Bentgrass Varieties

- Penncross Bentgrass Sod
- Pennlinks Bentgrass Sod
- Penneagle Bentgrass Sod
- L-93 Bentgrass Sod

Low Mow Varieties

- XL2000 Bluegrass Blend
- Bluegrass Fescue Blend

We can custom grow to your specifications, please inquire.

Member:
Midwest
Sod Council

HESOD NURSERY INC.

South Suburban Sales Depot
3900 West 167th Street,
Markham, IL 60426
708-596-7200

North Suburban Sales Depot
29800 North Highway 12,
Wauconda, IL 60084
847-526-2300

WWW.HESOD.COM

PRECISION BLENDED TOP DRESSING

Custom blended to your specifications
by our modern equipment.

*Buy when you need –
Eliminate costly storage*

We sell an air-dried, uniform and
free flowing top dressing.

ASK THE MAN WHO HAS USED IT.

HENRY FRENZER

Area Code 847
658-5303

620 Webster St.
Algonquin, IL
60102

MOMENTUM™

The Next Generation of Broadleaf Weed Control

A Premium Selective Herbicide Exclusively from
LESCO



- New, improved chemistry formulation combines TIPA 2,4-D, triclopyr and clopyralid acid for highly effective control with virtually no odor
- Fast acting - dandelions and clover curl within hours of application
- Better and broader spectrum weed control than most other popular broadleaf herbicides

LESCO®

800-321-5325
www.lesco.com

LESCO is a registered trademark and Momentum is a trademark of LESCO Technologies, LLC

A Win-Win Proposition: Extending Midwest Membership to Our Assistants

Every year, the MAGCS Membership Committee starts anew and comes together to discuss issues pertaining to membership. How many members are there? What constituencies are represented? What are the benefits of belonging to the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents? How can we get more to join and reap the benefits of our Association?

While having this discussion, the Membership Committee honed in on one statistic that seemed glaring. Currently, the MAGCS has 284 class A/B (superintendent) members. Yet we count only 122 class C (assistant superintendent) members. Why aren't these two numbers closer together? What are the benefits of assistants belonging to the MAGCS? How does having an assistant participating benefit the superintendent?

Why do we have so many more superintendent members than assistant members?

The real answer is, we don't know for sure.

It could be for financial reasons. Sometimes a company or club does not provide this benefit. If so, maybe the assistant does not feel he or she can afford the dues. We believe that the benefits of membership, which will be discussed later, are an asset to the assistant's professional career that far outweigh the cost. Keep in mind, too, that it is not necessary to have dual membership in GCSAA for class C members of MAGCS.

Our biggest fear is that an individual superintendent does not know how an assistant's membership benefits not only that assistant, but also him or herself. If you as a superintendent fall into that category, think about all that you get out of membership in an organization that has come together for the purposes of fellowship, learning, sharing ideas and advancing the profession.

What are the benefits of belonging to the MAGCS?

The Association confers many benefits upon its members, such as:

1. Continuing Education

We believe that education is vital in our ever-changing field. Furthermore, it is imperative to talk and discuss new ideas, techniques and products with our peers. On an ongoing basis, the Association provides a diverse array of educational opportunities. One of our most-frequented avenues of education is at our monthly meetings. These meetings feature invited speakers who discuss new and innovative ideas and techniques in the area of turf management. In the off-season, the MAGCS sponsors seminars and conferences pertaining to our industry as well. Further education is not only important for you, the superintendents. Encouraging your assistants to learn more can only help them be better at their jobs.

2. Leadership Opportunities/Committees

A newly created committee in the Midwest is the Class C Advisory Council. It comprises assistant superintendents who are willing to participate and have their bosses' approval to do so. This group of individuals fulfills several important functions for the MAGCS. First, via their Council chair who acts as

(continued on page 30)

We believe that the benefits of MAGCS membership are an asset to the assistant superintendent's professional career that far outweigh the cost.

liaison to the Board, they represent the assistants of the Midwest. Second, the class C group takes on special projects as appointed by the Executive Board and Board of Directors. Both in giving a voice to the class C constituency and by planning and implementing various tasks, members of the Council gain valuable experience in leadership and management.

Another great way for assistants to get involved with MAGCS is by writing articles for our monthly magazine, *On Course*. Completing an article can be a beneficial learning experience for the assistant and is meaningful to our readers. Assistants are a largely untapped source of viewpoints and ideas that would be beneficial to our membership. Superintendents, please encourage assistants to join the Association and start writing. The article does not have to be about turf but can focus on safety, travel, hobbies, a unique experience or anything else that is interesting. If you as an assistant would like to write, but need some guidance on topics, please contact the

Editorial Committee chairperson, Scott Witte.

Finally, the Midwest sponsors many committees that pertain to all aspects of the Association. Most of these committees would encourage assistants' participation. Again, assistants could provide a needed and different perspective on how we do things and make our Association better for all.

3. Social/Golf Outings

It just so happens that a number of our members partake in golf at monthly meetings, during the temperate season obviously. These golf events provide a great opportunity to play at the many beautiful courses around Chicago. They also give assistants a chance to meet other members and exchange ideas. Also, assistants attending golf meetings will be included in the assembly itself and whatever refreshments—usually lunch—that are offered.

Towards the end of the golf season, the MAGCS holds an outing where the proceeds go for the college scholarships given out annu-

ally. These scholarships go to children or grandchildren of members and are need- and merit-based. Since the Class C Advisory Council has assumed ownership of managing this event, it also serves as the class C golf championship.

In November/December each year, we take time to appreciate what we have and to thank the people behind us. No, not the people on the course, the ones at home. Behind a great superintendent or assistant is often a wonderful, very patient spouse. So one weekend night, we invite all members and their spouses/significant others to enjoy a nice formal dinner-dance at that year's host club. This is a small way to enjoy each other's company and give all the chance to get to know the people who are with us in our great profession.

4. Career Development

How does the MAGCS promote career development? When we asked other superintendents this question, we got many responses but one idea was clear: opportunities

Wild Goose Chase™



We think our new name says it all — it's what we do! With **Wild Goose Chase™** you'll receive the same great service and integrated solutions you did when we were *Migratory Bird Management*. Call Sue Hagberg, President, at **708.448.8878**. Remember, if we don't answer our phone it's because we're on another Wild Goose Chase! You may also visit our web site at www.wildgoosechasers.net. Or, e-mail us at mbmgoose@covad.net.

Wild Goose Chase™
Time To Fly!



Delivering Total Solutions



Programs Tailored to Fit What You Need

Contact Simplot Partners:

Tim Keating (630) 514-8997
Scot Spier (630) 546-0222
A. J. Huey (630) 514-8745

5300 Katrine Avenue, Downers Grove, IL 60515
Phone (630) 963-8787

www.simplotpartners.com

© 2002 J. R. Simplot Company. All rights reserved.