

The Ordeal of Francis Ouimet

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On September 19 at 8 A.M., the hour normally set in Britain for executions, Francis Ouimet will step on the first tee of the Old Course at St. Andrews and go through what he may well confess afterwards to have been among the more nerve-racking experiences in a long life of golf. He will "drive himself in" as Captain of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club.

American golfers may care, after making the necessary adjustments for the difference in time, to spare a thought at this moment for the ordeal of their distinguished compatriot. They may also like to imagine the scene.

The first tee is immediately below the windows of the Big Room in the solid, 100-year-old, grey clubhouse. The first and eighteenth fairways are all in one and the 18th green is immediately on your left as you face down the first hole towards the Swilcan Burn.

On the far side of the 18th fairway white posts separate the fairway from the road, and on the far side of the road is a long line of grey buildings, including St. Andrews' principal hotel, the New Club, the St. Andrews Club, and Tom Morris's shop — the last virtually unchanged from the days when Old Tom established himself there after being appointed custodian to the Club in 1865. Behind the 18th green is what used to be the Grand Hotel and is now a hostel for the University students, whose red gowns add a splash of colour to the St. Andrews scene.

The Old Course itself stretches away to the right among the sand dunes and gorse, right out as far as the estuary of the River Eden, after which is named the teasing short 11th hole which, among other things, cost Gene Sarazen the 1933 Open.

This is Public Business

The morning of September 19 will probably be grey and chilly. By 7:45

A.M. the narrow streets will be echoing to the hollow footfalls of the citizens making their way down to the course, and in a few minutes some hundreds will be lining the fairway on either side. This may be the Royal and Ancient's Captain driving himself in, but golf in St. Andrews is more than a Club affair and this will be very much a public business.

The Ordeal

On the right of the tee, pointing down the fairway, a man will be standing with a long cord and a faintly apprehensive expression. The cord will be attached to the cannon, an antiquated yard-long firing piece on two miniature wheels.

A minute or two before the hour the prisoner will be escorted out by the past Captain and other Club dignitaries, together with well-wishers exchanging jests of a somewhat forced heartiness, and will take a few practice swings on the tee.

In the meantime, the regular caddies will be stationing themselves at such points on the fairway as they fancy to give themselves the best chance of re-

OUIMET GOES IN WITH A BANG



The ancient cannon which will be fired just as Francis Ouimet tees off at St. Andrews, playing himself into office as Royal and Ancient Captain

Where Francis Ouimet Will "Drive Himself In"



The scenic features of the Royal and Ancient Clubhouse and the historic Old Course may be lost on the former Open and Amateur Champion on September 19 when he is principal in the annual ceremony. Left foreground is the first tee, with the starter's box. Right foreground, the 18th green.

triving the ball and thus being rewarded with the traditional golden sovereign which the Captain-to-be is now carrying in his pocket. Should the morning dawn fine and sunny, as, contrary to popular opinion, does often happen in Scotland, the sun will be just rising over the clubhouse and will be shining directly in their eyes, making it impossible for them to see the ball till it is almost upon them.

The position they take up is a silent but penetrating appraisal of the central figure. When the then Prince of Wales, later to be Edward VIII, drove himself in as Captain in 1922, some of the caddies, it was recorded by Sir Guy Campbell, "stood disloyally close to the tee." Francis, however, is likely to receive the tribute of observing them well down the fairway.

As the Hour Strikes

His ball will be teed by the Club's Honorary Professional, 78-year-old Willie Auchterlonie, and as the town clocks strike the hour he will make the stroke which he will have played over so many times in his mind's eye before.

The cannon—we hope, for it has been proved not wholly infallible—will boom, sending forth a satisfying shower of sparks in the dark shadow cast by the clubhouse.

Then there will be much polite applause, a scrum of scrambling figures casting themselves on the ground for the ball, and a minute or two later the handshaking and passing of the golden sovereign.

Soon afterwards the first pair will strike off in the tournament for the Medal presented by King William IV and, as the last putt is holed, unless there be a tie, the cannon will boom again to signify that the day is over. In the evening Francis, wearing his red tail-coat and, round his neck, the Queen Adelaide Medal—each of them tokens of his new office—will preside at the Club's dinner.

He will have received the highest honour which it is in power of golfers on this side of the Atlantic to bestow, and I venture to predict that no one will carry it with greater dignity and esteem.

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Compensation

Golf is the only game where the worst player gets the best of it. He obtains more out of it as regards both exercise and enjoyment, for the good players get worried over the slightest mistake, whereas the poor player makes too many mistakes to worry over them.

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE
(In Praise of Golf)

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