

# THE CURTIS CUP IN A BRITISH HOME

by

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*Member of British Isles  
Curtis Cup Team  
1950-52-54,*

*English Champion 1951-53*

**S**HORTLY after five o'clock on the afternoon of June 9, Mrs. Roy Smith (known better on both sides of the Atlantic as the former Miss Frances Stephens), holed a 15 inch putt on the last green of Prince's Golf Course, Sandwich, England. As the ball dropped into the hole, the tension snapped in a roar of triumph from several thousand spectators.

The Curtis Cup was once more in British hands.

Mrs. Smith's putt had closed out a 1-up victory over Miss Polly Riley. It provided Britain with the last point needed for a victory over the United States, 5 matches to 4, in the two-day series.

## *Weather A Factor*

The match had started on as vile a June day as I can remember. The wind, which had blown consistently from the south throughout the practice week, had veered to the northwest, bringing steady, chilling rain. Those who thought this would favor the British were soon disillusioned. The Americans adapted themselves to the change in the course, managed somehow to keep warm, and hit the ball low and straight through the gale.

At lunch-time in the first day's foursomes, the Match was slightly in Britain's favor—one contest was all square, and the British were 2 up in both of the two others.

But as the afternoon went on, hopes of a British lead disappeared.

In the top match, Mrs. Jessie Valentine and Miss Philomena Garvey were conceding some 35 yards in two full shots to Miss Pat Lesser and Miss Wiffi Smith. They had had a chance to win the last three holes before lunch, but shortish putts went astray and though they hung on in the

afternoon, the fates did not forgive and they lost, 2 and 1.

It is not often that British golfers out-play Americans on the greens, but the superb judgment of Mrs. Smith and Miss Elizabeth Price on the fast and tricky greens was the deciding factor in their match with Miss Barbara Romack and Miss Polly Riley. The British pair won, 5 and 3.

The last match was rather a tragedy for the home side. The young British players, Miss Janette Robertson and Miss Veronica Anstey, who had played regularly together in Australia last year, delighted us by establishing a five-hole lead by the 14th over Mrs. Philip Cudone and Miss Mary Ann Downey. Then came disaster.

Miss Anstey, who covered herself with glory in the Antipodes, has almost inevitably suffered from something of a reaction since her return. Her method is not yet entirely sound and did not stand up to the testing conditions and the strain of the occasion. The lead began to slip and the American pair, keeping up a steady pressure, won 12 out of the next 18 holes for victory by 6 and 4.

## *Outlook Pessimistic*

With a 2-1 deficit in the foursomes, there was such pessimism in the British camp that a leading journalist, a Scot moreover, gave me 4-1 against. And indeed, looking at the order for the singles, it was difficult to see where four wins were to come from.

Saturday was a comparatively pleasant day. The gale had dropped to a strong breeze, and the sun appeared from time to time. Once again the British Isles got away to a good start. After nine holes the score



*Wide World Photo*

Mrs. Sloan M. Bolton, Captain of the British Curtis Cup Team, holds the trophy for her victorious teammates to admire. The 5-to-4 victory over the United States marked the second time a British Team has won the trophy in nine attempts. From left to right: Miss Veronica Anstey, Mrs. Nigel Howard, Miss Angela Ward, Miss Elizabeth Price, Mrs. Roy Smith, Mrs. Bolton, Miss Philomena Garvey, Miss Janette Robertson and Mrs. George Valentine.

board showed: all square, 1 down, 3 up, 2 up, 4 up, 4 up; and our hopes soared again.

By lunch the position was less encouraging. Mrs. Valentine had dropped to 2 down against Miss Lesser, and looked tired. Miss Garvey had missed the chance to get ahead of Miss Wiffi Smith before the latter settled down, and was also 2 down. Mrs. Roy Smith, who had forged ahead while Miss Riley tacked from one side of the course to the other, was pulled back to all square by the Texan's homeward 35.

Miss Romack had got into her stride and was now 2 up against Miss Robertson. But Miss Angela Ward, who off the course is a most refreshing and engaging person, bubbling with vitality, had played her first international match in a state of cool con-

centration and composure, and with a round of 73 now stood 5 up on Miss Downey. Miss Price, to whom the hole must have looked rather like a large bucket, was round in 71 and gave Miss Jane Nelson no chance at all.

After lunch I went out with the Smith-Riley match. Soon after the start the great news came back to us that Miss Valentine had won the first three holes, and as the afternoon went on it became clear that she was confounding the critics and achieving one of the greatest victories of a great career.

Miss Wiffi Smith and Miss Romack, probably the two best stylists on the American team, were out in 34 and 35, respectively, and that was two points in the bag for the U. S. A. Behind them, Miss Ward kept

her head and her lead. Though Miss Nelson, to her great credit, went on getting her figures, she could make no real impression on Miss Price.

### Smith-Riley Match

So the issue was clear. Everything depended on Mrs. Smith and Miss Riley, both small in build, but each in her own way the greatest competitor on her side. Miss Riley's aggressive, determined temperament is obvious to everyone who watches her play golf; Mrs. Smith's relentless will-to-win is concealed under a quiet, almost modest demeanor.

It was fitting that these two, each undefeated in Curtis Cup singles play, should carry the burden of directly deciding the fate of the trophy. How they did so is already golfing history.

In an atmosphere of mounting excitement, which even to a spectator was hardly bearable, they completed the last 12 holes in par and one over par, respectively. It was a truly magnificent performance and the cheers on the 36th green were not only for a great British winner but for a most gallant American loser.

American golfers may feel that we get over-excited at the winning of a Curtis

Cup Match. I hope they will be patient with us and remember that out of 15 international golf matches against the U. S. A. for the Walker, Curtis and Ryder Cups since the war, we have won only one other, the 1952 Curtis Cup match at Muirfield. Although that win was perhaps even more thrilling because it was the first ever, this last was really a greater victory. The standard of golf was far higher, the issue was in the balance up to the very last putt, and our team proved that, contrary to general belief, it is possible to be behind on the foursomes and yet beat the United States.

It only remains to add that, as one would expect under the captaincy of two such delightful people as Mrs. Harrison Flippin, of the United States, and Mrs. S. M. Bolton, the two teams fulfilled the primary purpose of the donors of the Cup in furthering good relations between the golfers of the United States and the British Isles.

When the British team comes to the States in 1958, they will be trying to score their first away win; but, should they fail, we cannot ask more than that they will be as gracious and sporting in defeat as the Americans at Prince's.

## 1956 INTERNATIONAL MATCH FOR THE CURTIS CUP

Held at Prince's Golf Club, Sandwich Bay, Kent, England

June 8 and 9

### FOURSOMES

UNITED STATES		Points	BRITISH ISLES		Points
Miss Patricia Lesser and Miss Margaret Smith (2 and 1) .....	1		Mrs. George Valentine and Miss Philomena Garvey .....	0	
Miss Polly Riley and Miss Barbara Romack .....	0		Mrs. Roy Smith and Miss Elizabeth Price (5 and 3) .....	1	
Miss Mary Ann Downey and Mrs. Philip J. Cudone (6 and 4) .....	1		Miss Janette Robertson and Miss Veronica Anstey .....	0	
Total .....	2		Total .....	1	

### SINGLES

Miss Patricia Lesser .....	0	Mrs. George Valentine (6 and 4) .....	1
Miss Margaret Smith (9 and 8) .....	1	Miss Philomena Garvey .....	0
Miss Polly Riley .....	0	Mrs. Roy Smith (1 up) .....	1
Miss Barbara Romack (6 and 4) .....	1	Miss Janette Robertson .....	0
Miss Mary Ann Downey .....	0	Miss Angela Ward (4 and 3) .....	1
Miss Jane Nelson .....	0	Miss Elizabeth Price (7 and 6) .....	1
Total .....	2	Total .....	4
Grand Total—United States .....	4	Grand Total—British Isles .....	5
Captain—Mrs. Harrison F. Flippin		Captain—Mrs. Sloan Bolton	
		Reserve—Mrs. Nigel Howard	