

TED RAY - GOLFER AND MAN

by

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British

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EDWARD R. G. Ray was a native of the Channel Islands like his great contemporary, Harry Vardon. He was born on the twenty-eighth of March, 1877. Until people got to know him, they called him Mr. Ray. To his friends he was never anything but "Ted."

He went to England as a young man and eventually became professional attached to the Ganton Golf Club in Yorkshire, having been appointed to succeed Harry Vardon there on the latter's removal to the South Herts Golf Club at Totteridge. In 1912, on the formation of the Oxhey Golf Club near Watford in Hertfordshire, Ted Ray was appointed professional to that Club. He served there until his retirement, which was caused by ill health, in 1941. He died August 26, 1943, and was buried in the Watford Parish Churchyard.

Let me recall briefly the record of this giant who won the USGA Open the first time it was played at the Inverness Club, in Toledo, Ohio, (scene of this year's Open).

Ted Ray won the British Open Championship at Muirfield in 1912 and was runner-up, equal with Archie Compston, at Prestwick in 1925.

Tied with Ouimet

In 1913, he tied for first place in the United States Open Championship with his friend Harry Vardon, and a young gentleman named Francis Ouimet. As everyone knows, the young gentleman in question won the play-off and is happily still with us, held in esteem and affection on both sides of the Atlantic, for the immense services he has rendered to the game.

In 1920, Ted won the United States Open Championship at Inverness, where the



TED RAY

Championship is being held again this month.

He played for Great Britain versus the United States in 1921 and 1926, and captained Great Britain in the first Ryder Cup match in 1927.

It should be remembered, I think, that Ted was playing his best golf during the great days of Harry Vardon, James Braid and J. H. Taylor. His record shows that he came very near them in the quality of his golf and at times triumphed over all of them.

Boon to Cartoonists

The golf he played in his best days invariably appealed to the spectators, both in America and the British Isles. He drove vast distances, often deep into the rough. But his powers of recovery were immense

and his prowess with his niblick became legendary. His recoveries with that club from seemingly impossible places had to be seen to be believed. Almost invariably, too, he smoked a pipe when playing. Ted's niblick and pipe were a perfect godsend to the cartoonists of his day.

Ray stood well over six feet, was big in proportion, and very strong. Never a stylist like Harry Vardon, he had a long and slow swing and stood like a rock. At the end of a full shot, however, especially with wood, his finish appeared anything but classic; for after the ball had been hit he was often to be seen standing with only his right foot on the ground and his left foot in the air. But this finish was deceptive, for at that vital split second when his club face met with the ball, his position was, in fact, entirely correct and orthodox.

Ted was never a good teacher of the game. Indeed, he disliked giving lessons and I think he realized that it was not in him to impart instruction to others. When asked for advice on, for example, the drive, his main contribution consisted in the words "it 'em 'ard, mate, like I do." If the pupil complained that he *did* hit hard but still did not obtain the desired result, Ted's comment was, "Well, then, it 'em 'arder." There ended the lesson.

There was one department of the game, however, in which he could give valuable advice and that was in putting. He was a beautiful putter with a most delicate touch, something one did not expect to see after his violent assaults on the ball with woods and long irons. Incidentally, he was a very good billiards player, where his wonderful touch put him far above the average.

I saw very little of Ted's play when he was at his best. It was only during the last ten years of his life, when I was Secretary to the Oxhey Golf Club, that I knew him well.

I do remember one occasion, however, when I was watching an exhibition match at a club on the south coast in which he was taking part. His partner had put him deep in touch on the left of the 17th green, and the ball was found only with considerable difficulty amongst the trees and thick

undergrowth. Ted, in the plus-fours he always wore, niblick in hand and pipe in mouth, his hat firmly crammed on his head, disappeared from view. All we could see was a swaying of branches and all we could hear was a distant muttering of words, which were, perhaps fortunately, unintelligible. Then a sudden crash, bits of heather and saplings shot forth, and the ball was seen to be on the green. After the ball came Ted, having lost his hat, but with his pipe still firmly between his teeth.

Friends from the States

I played many games with Ted while I was at Oxhey, often in foursomes in which he was a most admirable and forbearing partner. In those days we had many visitors at the Club from America who came to see Ted—as often as not just to shake him by hand and to have a chat, remembering him as a popular visitor to their own country.

Ted's friend, Harry Vardon, would often come over to talk over old times with him and to join him in a tankard or so of beer.

He loved an argument and would often start one for no apparent reason, but it must be admitted that he had not a strong sense of humor.

Many a time, in the evenings when golf was finished for the day, you would find him surrounded by half a dozen of his friends amongst the club members. Leaning forward in his chair he would be laying down the law, driving home his arguments with an admonitory forefinger, or, at more critical moments removing his pipe from his mouth and shaking it at the man who had dared to dispute what he had just said.

Ted was loved by many, respected by all, and his friends were to be found in all walks of life. He was entirely straightforward in all his dealings, and a very loveable character. Throughout his life he served faithfully and well the game he loved and the members of the Clubs where he was professional.

There were giants in those days and Ted was one of them.