

Golfing Memories

by Lionel Emond

My first encounter with the game in Montreal was in the 1940s, when I caddied at the Municipal Golf course. Being at that time some 80 lbs or so, I was assigned a golfer with a huge leather bag loaded with clubs. I followed him and his party around for nine holes and received, at the end, a quarter for my efforts! That marked the first and last time that I ever caddied.

In the early fifties, I acquired an old golf set at a garage sale. It was a ladies' set, vintage 1930, which had a selection of steel shafted irons, including a classical putter with a solid metal shank. The driver was, at best, functional.

With this set of clubs, over the next 10-15 years I occasionally joined friends from work on golf outings. I developed a certain primitive style and was a duffer who enjoyed the camaraderie and fresh air of these outings!

Frankly, it was somewhat lonesome at times, because on teeing off I usually hooked the ball to the far left, onto the parallel fairway with players coming in the opposite direction. Hence, the only players I would meet were those on the adjacent fairway! I only met up with my own group when I finally was able to head down to the targeted hole.

Another problem was that, with my inaccuracy in teeing off, there were times when, on a narrow course, rather than lose a number of balls, I would delegate a friend to tee off on my behalf. Mind you, losing a ball into the surrounding rough didn't bother me that much as it gave me a chance to explore the vegetation, as well as my delight in locating other lost balls!

In the early 60s I lived in Sherbrooke, while working in Bromptonville. I received a membership at the Sherbrooke Country Club, which was adjacent to our street. The first use of my membership was when taking my two older children with me on a quiet Saturday morning. This, I felt, would introduce them to a new sport, as well as give my spouse, Libby, a Saturday morning break. Imagine my chagrin when I was challenged by the Club attendant and barred from having the youngsters with me on the course. Added to that, when I retrieved my club bag from the locker room I noticed a shiny new putter therein. When I questioned the attendant, he replied that he was doing me a favour, as well as obtaining my

classic putter for his own collection of ancient clubs! Needless to say, I chewed him out, and received the return of my favorite club! I departed the Club and never returned to use my Club pass.

I recall some delightful outings with friends in the late 50s and 60s. I remember a time at the North Hatley course, when I came within 2 inches of a hole-in-one! It was enjoyable as we stashed beer containers in the open streams on the course, which we visited at every opportunity.

Frankly, I started off golf, despite my inferior equipment, with a natural style. Unfortunately, I visited an old classmate of mine who lived in Thetford Mines and who was a good golfer. He took me out on the local course, rented me a leather bag full of clubs, and proceeded to teach me the game. From that time onwards, my golf game was confused: while trying to apply his teaching, which conflicted with my earlier natural style, the game had become an unenjoyable struggle.

So I converted my skills to my ultimate pleasures, namely tennis and squash, which over the next 60 years were my favourite sports. In the last five years, I have switched to badminton, to favour my wrist which became too sore to handle the heavier squash and tennis racquets. I believe that, aside from the clubhouse companionship and the fresh air of the fairways, golf is a masochistic game, where one struggles against oneself, instead of enjoying the one-on-one competition experienced in racquet sports.

I did return to the golf scene in the 70s when I was in Ontario. I accompanied my youngest son and his buddy to the nearby Islington Golf Course, where they wanted to collect beverage cans and bottles thrown into the wood by the players. I went along to help them in their task. The supply of discarded cans was sparse, which disappointed the youngsters.

While near one of the holes, there suddenly appeared from the air a ball which rolled up onto the green. One of the lads scooted out and collected the ball, and gleefully scampered off home. Bringing up the rear was yours truly, carried away by the act, too stunned to regroup, until we arrived back home and the appropriate lecture could be given!

Happy golfing!
