

THE DIARY OF A STARTER

BY BOB POOLE

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- There is a rumour – long held – the starter is the keeper of all Dunany’s secrets.
- If you’re expecting to find them here, disappointment awaits.
- Perhaps the book club might consider a publication of its own – “Secrets the Starter Never Told!”.

1. THE NIGHT BEFORE

- Tomorrow is the start. Day one in the little shack. Better get some rest.
- Still, can’t miss Clear Lake card night. It’s going to be a late one. Maybe just have half un gros Ex.
- Past midnight. Jeff: “Why not stay over? It’s a one-minute jog to the course.”
- “Fine. But you don’t have an alarm... Can’t afford a black eye the first day”.
- It had been a tough interview. It was rumoured there was at least one other candidate.
- Check out that job description. Possibly created by one of the big shooters from Alcan?
- Okay. Rise and shine when you hear the birds singing. First light and you’re off.

2. MONDAY TO FRIDAY

- Oh oh, the jays are squawking. Better get a move on.
- Man it’s quiet. There’s no one here. Wait awhile... someone will show up.
- Seems like an hour has passed. Guess I’ll go home and check the time.
- 6:00 a.m.! Not a total disaster - time for another couple hours shut eye.

- Those were the days big Olds filled the parking lot. The music on the car radio was, if not the King, the Everly Bros.
- It was a time when fathers spent the weekdays in the city. Mothers decamped for the cottage, kids and dog in tow, as soon as school finished.
- Monday to Friday at DCC belonged to the ladies.

- Well not totally. Here come my first customers. Two elderly gentlemen. Old (apologies) Mr. Wiele. Fresh from his 5:00 a.m. dip... in his Jean Stein brand bathing suit.
- His sidekick? Rene Raguin. Pipe clenched firmly, Rene hit his first tee shot.
- Up the first hole ... you could see little puffs of smoke, all the way to the green.

- An hour passed. Finally, some ladies. A foursome. Dorothy, Peggy, Betty and Mrs. Dauber. Looks like a match. Dorothy’s got her game face on.
- It was good to see the ladies out. In many ways, the club owed its existence to Dunany ladies. From getting its start, to all forms of assistance and contributions through the years. In many ways, all Dunany owed its existence to these women. They had always been its heart and soul.
- And they came to play as long as those hills did not present an insurmountable challenge.
- What a treat it was for the starter to hear their memories, the history of Dunany and yes even occasionally a mild off colour joke or two.

- Before long, the next generation of 'ladies' started to arrive. Some of the older girls to begin learning the game. Others just to "hang out". What was there to do after swimming and golf? Soon a new ritual took hold at the Starter's shack. Cards. The game was honeymoon bridge,
- quickly renamed two-handed bridge. The girls learned the game at the feet of one of the local card sharks.
- At first, they could not win... more experience the answer. But the next afternoon and the next back they came. Here an admission is required. The Starter does have one secret to divulge. He was long practiced in the shady art of dealing off the bottom. Shame. No quit in those young ladies though, already showing the determination they'd need to conquer the fairway game. The challenge to undo that shameful Starter turned into a whole summer of fun.
- The rest of the first day was uneventful. After filling the ball washer what else is there to do? Sit back and admire those three holes.
- Late afternoon, two more groups arrived. Checked themselves in. Why do golfers always seem to be in such a cheery mood? (At least until that first tee shot. Watch out for the rough on the left.)
- It wasn't quitting time on day one, before it dawned on the Starter. Welcome. Have a good game. Really this seems like more of a p.r. job.
- Only years later, working as a Walmart greeter, would the Starter realize how valuable his experience had been.

3. THE WEEKEND

- At last. After a long week, slaving in the steaming city.
- The men arrived in a steady stream. It got busy. But for a curious Starter, you could get an education, just by eavesdropping. Business deals, legal battles, stock trading, even sport management.
- Gord and Ken first to arrive. "They should have kicked a field goal".
- Next came the airline pilots. Cool.
- Doug and Ken. "Did you see? Siesta Gold was up a buck eighty".
- The Wynns, the Moore's, the Leggetts, the Woods, the Parsons, in different combos.
- These were the weekend warriors.
- Then there were the real warriors. Clarence Neil, every bit as much a DCC fixture as the moose. And a great tease of the young ones. "Are you playing the 1st hole or the 6th hole?".
- Not to forget his running mates. Messrs Gauley and Cleary. Was it 25 cents a ball or 25 cents for four?
- For the men, the golfing event of the season had finally arrived. The Club Championship. There would be the usual challengers. Reg. Whirlybird. And numerous others.
- But on these occasions, Clear Lake's version of the Everly Bros, Bob and Phil would make one of their rare appearances. They were the perennial favourites to win. There was only one real question. Which one would best the other?
- Imagine the Starter's excitement. Winning the lottery to caddy for R.E. Golf tips. Even an introduction to golf psychology. A poor shot? "What did you do that for Robert?".
- At the end of the four rounds, pay day. Caddy fees, extravagant tips. A couple of more years like this and that old '46 Volvo will be parked in the Starter's driveway.

4. SEVEN DAYS A WEEK

- Weekdays. The Ladies. Weekends. The City Men.
- Seven days a week belonged to the juniors.
- Pretty much they could come and go as they pleased. Some signed in early in the morning. It was like having a day pass – 9, 18, 27, as many holes as their young legs could transport them up and down those hills. If hunger struck, it was over to Mrs. Townsend's for a quick Joe Louis and Cream Soda (white please).
- There was no mistaking the skill of these juniors. To them golf came naturally. Most were self taught. With some polishing by one of the club's members, Mr. Reg Leggett.
- An aside. Is it possible the reverse C descended from Mr. Leggett? His was a perfectly tailored golf swing, instantly recognizable as he hit his second shot on the 6th.
- It was easy to spot a junior from the four lakes. By their own special swing. A swing Miss Underhill came to dub "The Dunany Swing".
- John and John. Rob and Ron. John and Bill. Jeff and Jimmy. Each semi-pro. There were even some big hitters. Keith, it might be a good idea to play the 1st before the 9th. By the end of summer, the gang was well tuned to challenge those strong farm boys from Lachute G & CC. Or even those professionally managed slicksters from Whitlock.
- Then came the Garth Fish. The girls. The boys. In keen competition. You're in trouble lads if you have to give any strokes to those girls. To a one, they possessed a smooth swing and wonderful tempo. They gave no quarter to the boys. Is there any place, other than the middle of the fairway? And when you get to the green, well it's lights out.
- Judy and Joy, Marilyn, Joan, Ann, Barb, Helen. And without doubt their tiny leader. The only teenager in the country to have played 36 holes. Barefoot. Bless your gentle soul Ann.

- No one from that era quite made it to the PGA. It didn't matter. In Dunany they learned the love of the game. And the joy of a round with a best buddy.

- Would it be a surprise to any, that the younger generation came to believe DCC belonged to them? True, they loaned it back to the adults on certain days and occasions. But the rest of the time was theirs. A fantasy? Perhaps not. For that may have been precisely what the grown-ups would have had them believe.

5. FREE TIME

- What was a Starter to do with spare time? Golf. Followed by more golf.
- It was the most anticipated event of the Junior Golf season. The finals of the Garth Fish. Many came to witness, juniors and adults alike. The pro from Rosemere came to assess Dunany talent.
- The Golf Whizz vs the Starter. The Starter's nerves were strung taught. The Whizz was a better putter than Biller Casper. Don't worry said the Starter's caddy, Mr. Wiele, it's in the bag. I'll go to work on the Whizz's mental state. By the third hole, he won't be able to grip the putter.
- #1, halved. #2 Starter 1 up. #3, now supremely (overly) confident, the Starter called for his 8 iron. More than a club short of the green. Lesson learned. Performing for the crowd won't get your name on the trophy.
- By the 4th, Mr. Wiele's strategy was working as predicted. Small problem. The Starter couldn't get the tee in the ground. The Whizz? Totally unfazed.

- And so it went. 1 up, 1 down. Until the 9th hole. All square.
- The Starter had the honours. A good drive. Down the bottom of the hill. The Whizz miss hit his drive. Would his ball even make it over the hill?
- There was the Whizz's ball, perched precariously on the side of the hill. Give me my 3 wood the Whizz said to his caddy. Maybe that's why they call it a 3 wood. The ball never got more than three feet off the ground.
- It appeared the ball might imbed itself in the bank. But slowly it unscrewed itself and clambered onto the green. And rolled. And rolled. Until it came to a full stop. One foot from the hole.
- The shot heard around the four lakes.
- The Starter was finished.

6. OVERTIME

- No not overtime pay. But overtime nonetheless.
- Sharp at 7 p.m. Open up the clubhouse for teen night.
- Imagine putting the Starter in charge. What was that expression from the old days... something about a fox and a clubhouse? The author of this scheme was never revealed, but the Board approved it. The proof was right there in the Starter's job description. In hindsight, the idea may have deserved more credit. Keep the kids off the street.
- The girls have arrived. Hoping to listen to some Brenda Lee. Maybe a dance or two. Maybe even meet that new friend of Gord's. Alas, things didn't always work out as hoped. Girls in a line on one side of the club house. Boys on the other.
- Man, those boys. Old Port cigars lit up. Cards shuffled. Poker? No. Gin? No. Bridge. Nothing less for those sophisticates. Future Bridge Masters, no doubt.
- And so the evening went. Wandering off into the night. The boys muttering about the missed grand slam. The girls? Well, just muttering.
- Still, it wouldn't be long before the girls would have their revenge. Party Night.
- And if the gang was really lucky, a live appearance by a popular band. The Johnny P. Skiffle Band. Lead Guitar J.W. Washtub G.F. Washboard R.P. Listen to Johnny belting out "Does Your Chewing Gum Lose its Flavour on the Bed Post Overnight?" What a night!
- Now the girls came alive. Jive, jitterbug, the night long. Impromptu sing alongs. And finally... boys who didn't smell like Old Port.
- No one left disappointed.
- Unless it was the Starter. Rebuffed one more time.

7. NIGHTFALL

- To those of the era who have gone before, may you rest in sweet Dunany peace. You won't be forgotten.
- To the starters of the first one hundred, may you forever have the will to hold this place in the reverence it so deserves.
- And to the starters in the next one hundred, may you find room in your hearts for Dunany. For the round is much too short and sweet to let it slip away.