

Britain's New Triumvirate

Some First Hand Impressions of the Great Trio, Duncan, Mitchell and Ray

By J. S. Worthington



Underwood & Underwood



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This trio of players bids fair to step into the shoes of Vardon, Taylor and Braid in British professional golf. Left, Ted Ray; Center, Abe Mitchell; Right, George Duncan



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more of a name than a game. Then it was in 1890 an English boy had the temerity to successfully attack the Scottish stronghold. We refer to John Ball, Jr., who defeated the Scottish legions at Musselburgh. Two years later Ball's clubmate, Harold Hilton, pierced the Scottish defense, causing consternation in the camp of dwellers in the North.

No sooner had they recovered from the shock of the Ball-Hilton affair than there appeared on the golfing horizon another youthful aspirant for championship honors, J. H. Taylor from Westward Ho! This light-haired boy of slender build but determined features proceeded to get busy without loss of time and in rapid succession walked off with two championships in 1894 and 1895. This was bad for Scotland, but worse was to follow, for suddenly out of a clear sky appeared another Englishman, eclipsing Taylor's triumphs by winning three out of the next four championships. None other than the great Harry Vardon, with his faultless style and overlapping grip.

The Rise of Braid

BUT just to prove that Scotland was still on the map James Braid, with his crashing drives and superb cleek and iron play, stepped into the breach and called a halt. Then ensued a mighty struggle for supremacy between these three super players, with the result that in the year 1913, in addition to innumerable successes both at home and abroad, they were each credited with five open championship victories. There was one more championship to be played before the world disaster. Prestwick, in Scotland, was the meeting place. There it was that Harry Vardon achieved his life's ambition, triumphing

over his great rivals by winning his sixth British open championship, a feat which has never been equalled.

It will be seen that during a period of twenty-one years, Vardon, Braid and Taylor had accomplished the splendid record of winning on no less than sixteen occasions. Then came the war and with it five long years of terrible strain and anxiety and the passing of the great Triumvirate.

Their mantle has fallen on younger shoulders, three men acknowledged to be the best golfers in Great Britain at the present time. Compared to the old Triumvirate they still have their spurs to win but they have already done enough to prove their great skill and ability. We refer of course to George Duncan, Ted Ray and Abe Mitchell, like the old Triumvirate, the new is composed of two Englishmen and one Scotchman.

To most American golfers, Ted Ray is a familiar figure. They have watched his mag-

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AFTER a long, brilliant and almost uninterrupted run, the great Triumvirate has stepped aside to give place to three younger men.

During the splendid reign of Harry Vardon, James Braid and J. H. Taylor, spread over a period of sixteen years, they were the acknowledged three greatest golfers in the world and their fame has spread to every corner of the earth's surface. Nearly every honor fell to the lot of one or other of these superb players, and they triumphed over every opposition.

Moreover, not only because of their matchless skill but more especially by reason of their having so faithfully and honorably upheld the best traditions of the grand old game, are they held in the very highest esteem of their fellow countrymen. Their names will live in history.

Although for centuries golf in Scotland had been the sport of Kings and commoners alike, yet to the untraveled Englishman it was

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nificent, driving and deadly putting, chief factors in his victory at Toledo last July in the American Open Championship, with his team-mate Harry Vardon finishing only one stroke to the bad, Ray won the British Open Championship at Muirfield in 1912 with the low average of 73¾ for each of the four rounds of the course. And last year at Deal he was only three strokes more than George Duncan, the winner.

Ray, like Vardon, hails from the Jersey Isles, which have produced so many fine golfers. He is a most consistent player, the chief feature of his game being the extreme length he obtains with his wooden clubs and his wonderful recoveries. With his trusty battle-axe, in the guise of a ponderous niblick, he can extricate the ball from almost hopeless situations. Neither trees, rocks nor jungle grass have any terrors for big Ted Ray, for with his faithful niblick he can remove mountains. Whenever he puts two hundred and twenty pounds of thew and sinew into one of these niblick strokes, something has got to go and the gallery is amazed at the results.

Ted Ray is a splendid all-round player, a dangerous opponent and a most interesting player to watch. He delights in going for almost impossible carries from the tee and wherever you go there will be pointed out to you one or more of his tremendous wallops. A dog-leg hole with a forest intervening is what mostly appeals to him. He invariably takes the short cut. It was his ability to carry the corner of the wood at the seventh at Toledo that helped him win the championship. In every one of his four rounds he registered a three, one under par.

Sizing Up Duncan

GEORGE DUNCAN, the present British open champion, is considered by many the best golfer on the other side. He is thirty-six years old and, like most British professionals, began his career in the capacity of a caddie. When we first saw him play he had rather a flat swing, but later, inspired probably by the beautiful style of Harry Vardon, he adopted an upright swing.

Duncan is a great shot maker with all his clubs. His driving is very long, mostly carry; he is complete master of the mashie and an expert push-stroke player. Although perhaps not one of the great putters of the day, yet at times he is very deadly and like all the rest of his game, he putts with such rapidity as to apparently border on the careless. He seems to just walk up to the ball and hit it without any fussing about and surveying the line from every point of the compass. But during those few moments when he is walking up to the ball he has taken everything into calculation and there is nothing more to be done except hit the ball and, moreover, he always gives it a chance.

He is probably the fastest first-class player in the game. Not that he races round the course but he wastes no time whatever either from the tee or through the green. He walks right up to the ball and before the gallery, which is accustomed to some preliminary wagging of the club or consultation with the caddie, is aware of it, the ball is speeding on its long and accurate journey. He is the only player we have ever seen who never shifts his feet when he has once taken up his stance. He just steps into his stance and away goes the ball. It is a matter of a few seconds, and gener-

ally the gallery has not had time to settle down before the stroke is made.

Duncan has been knocking at the door of championship golf for some years. He would play brilliantly for perhaps three out of the four rounds, but there was always that one bad round which put him out of the running. Even at Deal last year he appeared to be hopelessly out of it when he could do no better than two 80's, but on the second day he came back with two splendid rounds of 71 and 72 after being thirteen strokes behind Abe Mitchell, who was leading the field on the first day's play. Duncan is not of the robust build, weighing only about one hundred and fifty-five pounds, and has small hands and wrists, but there are very few who can outdrive him. He is one of the world's great players and a most interesting golfer to watch.

Concerning Abe Mitchell

THE last of the new triumvirate is Abe Mitchell, one, if not the longest driver in captivity. It's a heartbreaking business driving against Abe. Not merely because the ball bores its way into the far horizon and appears to obtain a new lease of life after you think it is dying away, but every ball he hits is struck plumb in the middle of his seventeen-ounce driver and crashes off the club like a shot from a gun. It seems to take all the strength out of your arms and leaves you weak and limp. And, to make matters worse, practically every shot is the same, generally right down the middle.

The so-called two-shot hole is a rare bird as far as Abe is concerned, and we have often wondered why he does not content himself with three clubs, a driver, mashie and putter. Mitchell played for some years as an amateur, with a great ambition to win the amateur championship, in which he was all but successful, when at Westward Ho! in 1912 he lost to John Ball at the thirty-seventh hole.

Going to the thirty-sixth hole Mitchell was dormie. They both got good drives away and followed them up with two good iron shots across the burn. Ball overran the green a few yards. Mitchell to the left on the far side of the green. Ball ran up about four feet short, Mitchell's approach putt was five feet past. He missed coming back and ball holed. The first hole at Westward Ho! with the wind against, as it was, was just made for Mitchell. He could get home in two, whereas Ball with two of his best would be fifty yards short.

Mitchell had the honor, went out for a screamer and landed into a trap on the left side of the course. Ball was straight down the fairway. Mitchell waded into the deep-faced trap and tried for a long shot out. The ball rebounded off the face of the bunker against his body, costing him the hole and the championship. Shortly afterwards he joined the professional ranks and took up a position at the Sonning Club.

Mitchell is exceptionally strong, with wrists of steel and a wonderful development of his back muscles, to which latter more than anything else he attributes the great length of his driving. He is very compactly built and uses the old palm grip. His short game is sound and his putting for the most part is distinctly good. He takes the game very seriously and is a very determined player. Many consider that, day in and day out, Mitchell is the greatest player in the world.

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