

THE
GRAND SLAM

BOBBY JONES, AMERICA,
AND THE STORY OF GOLF

MARK FROST

 HYPERION

NEW YORK

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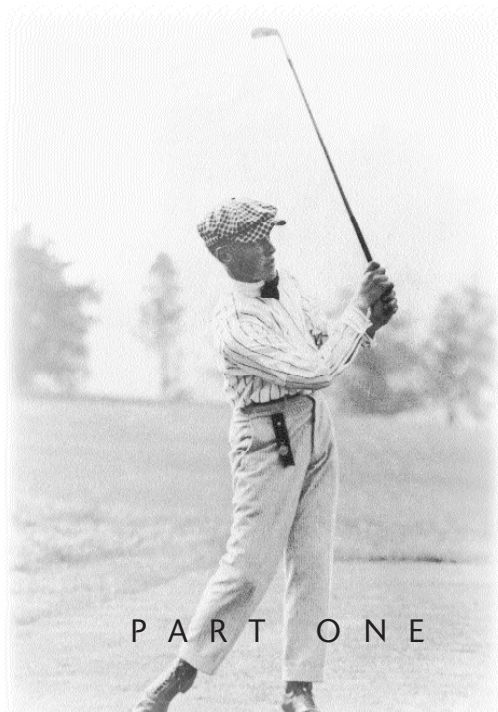
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PART ONE

EVOLUTION OF A GENIUS

No matter what happens, keep on hitting the ball.

— HARRY VARDON

CHAPTER ONE

East Lake

ON SEPTEMBER 22, 1913 America welcomed a new hero into its sporting pantheon and for the first time the broad middle of the country embraced with curiosity and enthusiasm the exotic game he'd mastered. Playing alone on rain-soaked fairways at The Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts against the two greatest golfers in the world, Francis Ouimet defeated Harry Vardon and in an eighteen hole play-off to win the United States Open Championship. The twenty year-old former caddie personified a cherished American ideal: that anyone with perseverance, modesty and backbone could rise above the limits imposed by humble beginnings to achieve greatness. Seldom discussed is how often a person's real problems begin with that success.

Lesser men might have failed a hundred ways under the pressures of Ouimet's sudden fame, but Francis stood up to that challenge and every other that life subsequently put in his path. You could find in him no trace of destructive pride, ego, false humility or spite. He was a good man, and he stayed true to the best in himself until the day he died. He never turned professional, choosing instead to focus on a business career and raising a family. In spite of which he remained a first rate player for nearly twenty years and would



Bobby Jones, age six.

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go on to win two National Amateur Championships, but in the long run his sterling character contributed even more to the development of the game than his accomplishments as a player. Golf could not have built a better ambassador in God's own laboratory.

Vardon and Ray had toured America for months leading up to the 1913 Open, facing every one of the country's finest players without suffering a loss. Victory by one or the other of them had all but been conceded before the national championship; instead, Ouimet's shocking defeat of the two British immortals made banner headlines across America and around the world. Teenaged boys in particular embraced Francis as a role model and, for once, even their parents approved. also-ran status, and give rise to a legend that casts shadows over the American sporting landscape to this day.

<i>Horton Smith</i>	72-70-142
<i>Bobby Jones</i>	71-73-144
<i>Harry Cooper</i>	72-72-144
<i>Charles Lacey</i>	74-70-144
<i>Macdonald Smith</i>	70-75-145
<i>Johnny Farrell</i>	74-72-146
<i>Whiffy Cox</i>	71-75-146
<i>Tommy Armour</i>	70-76-146
<i>Walter Hagen</i>	72-75-147

While his improbable championship spread the gospel of the game and heralded a bright future for native-born players, Francis Ouimet unknowingly served as a kind of secular stand-in for John the Baptist. The game's messiah was coming, and he was a lot closer at hand than anybody realized. A handful of other champions who followed in Ouimet's wake - chiefly amateur Charles "Chick" Evans and professional Walter Hagen - would stake legitimate claims to the title of the game's greatest player, which they craved for vastly different reasons. While Evans and Hagen made seminal contributions to the development of the sport, both would be surpassed before playing out their primes by the most important figure the game has ever known. He would emerge from

the unlikeliest ground, and only after a cast of extraordinary characters necessary to shape his formative years had assembled around him. Call it destiny or coincidence, by October of 1913 all the elements necessary for the creation of a sporting miracle had aligned, but required one last spark to ignite the subsequent chain of events. As fate, or chance, would have it, the same two players who had precipitated Francis Ouimet's triumph were about to provide that charge.

Harry Vardon and Ted Ray sailed into New York and embarked on their barnstorming exhibition tour of America in early August, 1913. Designed to climax at Brookline in September with a Vardon or Ray victory at the Open, their grand scheme unraveled on that soggy Saturday when Ouimet seized the cup for the United States. The architect of that scheme, their robber baron patron, megalomaniacal Fleet Street mogul Lord Northcliffe, sailed back to Britain bitter and empty-handed. The two defeated sportsmen, professionals to the end, declined Northcliffe's offer to join his early exit and vowed to complete an additional month of appearances, originally conceived as an extended victory march after their anticipated Open triumph. Since, as an amateur, Ouimet could receive no money for his upset, the two pros had already split the first place purse, more than enough to compensate for a few missed exhibitions. Few would have blamed them for skipping the country on the next ship out, but to their credit they honored their commitments, and, to their surprise, Harry and Ted enjoyed their time after the Open more than the hectic weeks leading up to it. The pressure was off and they went right back to winning again; this felt more like a working vacation.

Gracious in defeat, their generous public embracing of young Ouimet after the Open won them even more fans than winning might have done. Harry in particular relished the country's relaxed, class-free openness, and ever since his earlier exhibition tour in 1900 first introduced golf to much of the country, Americans had returned that affection with compound interest. Ted observed that the fierce, joyful excitement Ouimet brought to their showdown restored some of Harry's passion for the game. After years of frustration as a celebrated hero denied entry into English society's upper ranks because of his low birth, Harry viewed the sport as a job, a grind, and by his own admission had for some time been going through the motions. It was Ted's opinion that as a result of the affectionate respect paid to him by Francis and his fellow

Americans, Harry Vardon found a lasting peace inside his own skin.

A vibrant Indian summer had settled over Georgia when Harry and Ted rolled into Atlanta during the second week of October, 1913. A two-day, 72 hole match had been arranged with the best two local pros the New Center of the South had to offer: Willie Mann from Druid Hills, and Stewart Maiden of East Lake Country Club. On Saturday, October 11th, the four men teed it up at East Lake, a sprawling entertainment complex built on the site of a turn-of-the-century amusement park. National sports headlines the next day would feature the Philadelphia Athletics dismantling of the New York Giants.

In the World Series; Connie Mack's A's edged Giants ace Christy Mathewson and clinched the title in New York that afternoon four games to one, their third championship in the last four years. Reporters down south, where no professional baseball team would put down roots for nearly half a century, knew their lead story was taking shape on the fairways five miles east of downtown Atlanta.

Atlanta had come back from the dead in the fifty years since Sherman's devastating March to the Sea had razed it to the ground. Beginning life as an obscure railway crossroads called Terminus, the city had become a crucial strategic target for Union forces seeking to decimate Southern resistance. The pain and suffering of what is to this day still referred to by some there as the "War of Northern Aggression" was for thousands of Atlantians in 1913 still a living memory. Two industries drove its rapid recovery; the fifteen railroad lines that still made Atlanta the hub for transportation and trade in the South, and a fizzy, bottled refreshment that began mass manufacturing in 1892 called Coca-Cola. Originally marketed as a health tonic, America's first soft drink's rise in popularity coincided with the cultural ascendance of the soda fountain as a social gathering place. Because they were introduced to dispense a variety of drinks with therapeutic properties - many of them marketed as "patent medicines" - soda fountains were attached to a drug store or pharmacy, a puzzling proximity by the time the custom lingered far into the next century, long after the "fountains" had stopped serving anything stronger than phosphates and milk shakes. Atlanta was chosen as the state's capital in 1877 and by 1900 its population had reached 90,000.

GREATEST DEMONSTRATION IN CITY'S HISTORY MARKS GOLF KING'S RETURN TO NATIVE HEATH

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Most residents viewed the city's rise from the ashes as the region's most important resurrection; they called it "the phoenix city", a modern capitalist center built along Yankee corporate lines, without relinquishing any of the style and social graces that characterized the traditional southern way of life. Hope and pride, in short supply during the lean decades of Reconstruction, found renewed life in a city that appeared ready to put the bitterness of the Civil War behind it and shoulder a significant role in forging the young American century.

Private downtown athletic clubs served as vital gathering places for the business elites of early century American cities. In 1898 the New South's first such club, the Atlanta Athletic Club, opened for business in a three-story brownstone on Auburn Avenue, featuring a gym, courts for racquet sports and a grand dining room. A bowling alley was soon added and a traveling theatrical troupe called the Coburn Shakespearean Players put on annual performances. The club was such a success that the original sixty-seven members began looking to expand their facilities. One charter member, banker and businessman Henry Atkinson, was a close friend of Chicago business tycoon Charles Blair McDonald, a founding father of the United States Golf Association and a crucial figure in golf's American development. A Niagra Falls native, McDonald picked up the game while studying at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, where his grandfather was a member of the Royal and Ancient Golfing Society and introduced him to both Old and Young Tom Morris. Unable to find an outlet for his new passion after returning home, McDonald took matters in his own hands and founded the Chicago Golf Club, the first 18 hole course in the United States, in 1892. A tireless advocate of the sport and its character building attributes, McDonald infected thousands of others with his incurable Scottish affliction. One of those men was Henry Atkinson, who happened to own a parcel of prime country real estate just beyond the Atlanta city limits that included the old East Lake amusement park. When the Athletic Club's Vice President, flamboyant Atlanta real estate mogul George

Adair - a hopelessly hooked new golfer - approached him about acquiring the 187 acre property with the idea of creating a golf course on it, Atkinson replied, "Name your price."

Taking advantage of their civic connections, the club's board of directors convinced the Atlanta Rapid Transit Company to extend an electric streetcar line out to the shores of East Lake in early 1904 (Henry Atkinson was on the railway's board) and that July the Atlanta Athletic Club took possession of Atkinson's property. The line terminated a few steps outside the club entrance. Members hired a local architect to construct a boat and bath house on the water. Swimming and boating became the club's first official activities, a welcome respite from the brutal Southern heat in the years before air conditioning. Four clay tennis courts were laid in that first summer. Telephone service took a year to organize, a single line at the exorbitant rate of \$3 a month. More than a few backs got scratched along the way: George Adair owned a substantial tract of undeveloped land adjacent to Atlanta's first country club - as did Asa Candler, another AAC member and owner of the Coca-Cola Company - and the whole area was soon crawling with exclusive summer homes. In 1905 a primitive seven-hole golf course appeared, a stop-gap measure to satisfy early enthusiasts. The next year new club president George Adair imported an architect from Chicago named Tom Bendelow to expand the layout to a full eighteen. Ambitions for the project ran high; Henry Atkinson, who had played the original with C.B. McDonald overseas, later remarked: "I could at times even visualize the birth of another St. Andrews."

Tom Bendelow was a native Scotsman, the son of a couple who owned a pie shop in Aberdeen. He immigrated to New York in 1892, and took a job as a typesetter at the New York Herald. Although he'd played golf as a youth on the public links of Aberdeen, Bendelow stumbled into a career in the game almost entirely by accident. While setting the classifieds one day he spotted a want ad placed by a man looking for an instructor to teach the game of golf to his family on Long Island. The man turned out to be a Mr. Pratt, senior vice president of Standard Oil of New Jersey. During their initial interview, while struggling to decipher Bendelow's impenetrable Scottish brogue, Pratt decided that since this confident young man spoke with the proper accent, the game must flow in his blood like single-malt whiskey. Before teaching the Pratts how to play, Bendelow laid out a short course on the grounds of their Oyster

Harbor estate. He parlayed the presence of the Pratts on his resume into a stint as greenskeeper of New York City's first public course at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. When he remodeled the original nine-hole course and added a second nine, Tom Bendelow could legitimately call himself architect of the country's first public eighteen-hole track. Tom soon afterwards conducted the city's first golf clinic in the Berkeley Gymnasium of the Carnegie Building in New York City. In the summer of 1900, the resulting success of his Van Cortlandt course earned Bendelow an invitation to play in an exhibition in Hartford, Connecticut with Harry Vardon, who had professed admiration for Bendelow's Bronx layout during a swing through New York. When Vardon moved on to Chicago, and won the US Open at Charles Blair McDonald's Chicago Golf Club - the climax of Vardon's nine month American tour - Harry mentioned to Albert Spalding, who'd sponsored his tour, that he'd made the acquaintance of a talented new course designer.

A former star pitcher for the Boston Red Stockings, Albert Spalding had already made his fortune as America's first mass producer of sporting goods. He was the first to realize that if he could convince Americans to start playing the exotic Scottish game, there was pure gold to be mined in the manufacture and sale of golf equipment to middle-class amateurs. His boldest promotional move came in 1900 when he hired three-time British Open champion Harry Vardon to tour the country and publicize a new Spalding golf ball called the "Vardon Flyer". The ball failed to catch on, not on its own merits, but because the revolutionary solid rubber "Haskell" ball had just been introduced, rendering Harry's old gutta percha ball obsolete. Vardon's tour lost money, but the widespread public display of Harry's Olympian skills and charismatic presence still encouraged thousands to take an interest in the sport. That inspired Spalding to pursue another audacious marketing angle. But if this strategy was going to work, he needed a man who could build golf courses in a hurry. Hundreds of them.

Spalding invited Tom Bendelow to the company's headquarters in Chicago. The young Scotsman aced his interview and found himself installed as Spalding's official Golf Course Consultant. Within months he cranked up a golf-course assembly line that has never been equaled. Bendelow traveled relentlessly back and forth across the country, by rail and later in a custom touring car. He would typically arrive at dawn in the town engaging his services