

The Golf Chronicles

Golf Stories from the Pennsylvania Heartland

Byron Nelson
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1937-39



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Vive la France!

Following completion of the British Ladies Championship, the American team members traveled to France to play a match against that country's finest golfers. The site was the St. Germain course, a tree-lined test of golf in Paris' western suburbs covering 6,300 yards for a par 73.

Helen Hicks, playing in a practice round, equaled the course record with a splendid 76. **Maureen Orcutt** posted 78 and **Glenna Collett**, playing with **Edwin Vare** of Philadelphia, whom she would marry in 1931, scored 77.

The American team easily defeated their French counterparts, 10 ½ to 4 ½. The Americans won three of the five morning Scotch foursome alternate shot matches and took seven of ten afternoon singles matches with one tied.

The French team's two morning wins came against the American's most formidable players. The French pairing of **Mlle. Simone Thion de la Chaume** and **Mme. Vigliano**, vice president of the French Ladies' Golf Union, defeated Miss Collett and **Bernice Wall** by 2 and 1. Miss Orcutt, playing with **Hazel Martelle**, lost 4 and 3 to the French side of **Mme. Munier** and **Mlle. Esmond**.

The most interesting singles match pitted Miss Collette against Mlle. de la Chaume, the 1927 British Ladies' Amateur champion. Miss Collette won a well-contested match, 2 and 1. Miss Orcutt defeated **Mme. P. Munier**, 8 and 6. **Helen Hicks** won 8 and 7 against **Mlle. Manette le Blan**, the 1928 British champion.

Other U.S. players to win singles matches were **Virginia Van Wie**, **Mrs. Leo Federman**, **Louise Fordyce** and **Peggy Wattles**. Americans **Mrs. O.S. Hill** and **Mrs. Stewart Hanley** lost their matches.

Edith Quier did not play in the morning. She tied her afternoon singles match against **Mme. Simone du Waddell**. Miss Quier trailed her French opponent by two down with three to play. She finished strongly, with three consecutive pars to square the match on the final green.



Glenna Collett married Edwin Vare in 1931.

This is another in a series of Golf Chronicles articles about **Edith Quier**, Berks County's first national and international golf star. Stories about Miss Quier appeared in *The Golf Chronicles* Nos. 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96 and 109.

Close but no Yorktown

Edith Quier was among 16 Americans who played in the 1930 British Ladies' Open Amateur Championship. A record field of 179 players competed at Formby Golf Club starting May 12. The original 18 holes at Formby were designed by **Willie Park, Jr.**, who designed Berkshire Country Club's golf course.

Since the first playing in 1893, no American had won the British championship. **Glenna Collett** came close, losing the final match, 3 and 1, to **Joyce Wethered** in 1929 at St. Andrews. She was America's best

hope for winning in 1930, a task that seemed a little easier because Miss Wethered was not defending her title, having retired from championship golf.

Maureen Orcutt, **Helen Hicks** and **Virginia Van Wie** were also considered strong American contenders.

The Americans had been practicing at Formby since their loss in the team matches at Sunningdale on May 1. Newspapers reported that they were acclimating to the pace of the greens and to playing in gusty conditions. By luck of the draw, no Americans would play against one another in the first round.

Saturday, May 10

The Liverpool Daily covered the run-up to the amateur championship, the first to be played at the Formby course. The 16 Americans represented the largest number of Yanks ever entered. The local golf fans were eager to see **Glenna Collett** and the other American players.

A noted absences in addition to Miss Wethered, a four-time winner, was **Miss Cecil Leitch**, who also had four titles and had retired from championship golf. France's two former winners, **Mlle. Simone Thion de la Chaume**, 1927, and **Mlle. Manette Le Blan**, 1928, were also absent.

The players spent Saturday making final preparations for Monday's first round matches. Some received instructions from professionals, some from fathers, brothers or husbands. The Americans worked with American professionals **Leo Diegel** and **Horton Smith**, both of whom had played in a tournament at Southampton the previous week. **Helen Hicks**, the youngest American at 19, was not on the links owing to an illness.

Miss Collett told an Associated Press writer that she liked the Formby course and was playing as well as she could hope. She showed great form in a practice round, posting 71 on the par 73, 6,300 yard layout that winds through the sand dunes skirting the Irish Sea.

Four of the Americans enlivened the day by staging a mixed fourball match. On the one side were **Horton Smith** and **Edith Quier** going up against **Leo Diegel** and **Bernice Wall**.

The match was described as one of wit and humor that entertained a small gallery. Little Miss Wall was not playing at all well and Leo Diegel was erratic with his long shots.

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"That's right, you get the eagles and pars. I can't play at all," said Leo to Bernice as her ball kicked off a bunker on to the green.

At the next hole, Miss Wall, having missed a short shot, called across the green to Miss Quier, "Have they got a ping-pong table on the Berengaria? I think I can play that game." [Editor's note: *The Berengaria was the ship that transported the players from New York to England.*]

Horton Smith remarked to Miss Quier as she hit a good drive, "I'll say that's a very respectable shot." On the next tee, while Miss Wall was in the middle of her back swing, Smith exclaimed, "Nice shot!"

In spite of the light-hearted manner of playing, the match produced some good golf.

Although Smith and Miss Quier were two up after eight, Diegel and Miss Wall rallied on the home-ward nine only to be beaten on the final green.

Horton Smith won the first Masters Tournament in 1934. He also won in '36. **Leo Diegel** won the PGA Championship in 1928 and '29. Both are members of the World Golf Hall of Fame.

Following Saturday's golf, the Americans were invited to tea by the Mayor of Southport.

Monday, May 12

Monday's session was hampered by cold, rainy conditions but the skies cleared for the afternoon

play, although there was still the nip of a strong breeze. First-round matches began at 8:30 a.m., the players going off in pairs every five minutes.

Eight Americans drew first-round byes and advanced to the second round without hitting a shot: Glenna Collett, Rosalie Knapp, Mrs. Lee Mida, Mrs. Leo Federman, Virginia Holaderber, Grace Barclay, Virginia Van Wie and Mrs. Stewart Hanley.

Edith Quier won her first-round match easily, defeating **Dotty Marshall**, 4 and 3. In all, twelve Americans, including the "big four" of Glenna Collett, Maureen Orcutt, Helen Hicks and Virginia Van Wie, won. Miss Collett won impressively from Miss Kitty Beard, never losing a hole in an 8 and 6 victory.



Diana Fishwick, left, won the 1930 British Ladies' Championship, over Glenna Collett, right.

Tuesday, May 13

Edith Quier won two matches to advance. In the morning, she defeated Mrs. H.C. Sturgess-Wells, 2 up. Her afternoon victory came at the expense of Mrs. F. Cautley, by 3 and 2. **Maureen Orcutt** and **Helen Hicks** won their matches to advance to the next round. Miss Hicks had an easy time in her matches, dispatching Barbara Law and Mrs. J.A. Hardicker, both by 7 and 5.

Glenna Collett defeated Mary Beard, 4 and 3, in the morning and earned a hard-fought victory in the afternoon round against Molly Gourlay. Anticipation was keen for this match as Miss Gourlay had bested Miss Collett, 1-up, in the team matches played at Sunningdale earlier in the month. Miss Collett turned the tables and defeated Miss Gourlay in 21 holes.

After Tuesday's play the field was cut to 32 players, with seven Americans still vying for the trophy. *The Liverpool Post and Mercury* reported favorably on the play of **Edith Quier**. Writing in the May 14 issue, the reporter **V.A.S. Beanland** opined that:

*"The American menace becomes more formidable as the ranks are thinned. Originally there were a core or so of challengers from across the Atlantic in a field of about 170. Now after the weeding-out process, seven Americans are among the last thirty-two and those seven include the "big five," for **Miss Edith Quier**, of Berkshire Country Club, must be included with those acknowledged leaders of the invasion, Miss Collett, Miss Orcutt, Miss Van Wie and Miss Hicks, with the label 'dangerous' attached to their golfing kit."*

Wednesday, May 14

Wednesday's fourth and fifth rounds were played in brilliant sunshine before a gallery of 5,000. At the end of the day, eight competitors remained.

Two American hopefuls bowed out in the morning round. **Edith Quier** lost to Daisy Ferguson, playing out of Royal County Down Golf Club in Northern Ireland, one down, and **Virginia Van Wie** was defeated by Kathleen McDonald in 19 holes.

Maureen Orcutt, a morning-round winner, lost in the afternoon to Enid Wilson, 6 and 4. Miss Wilson would go on to win the British championship in 1931, '32 and '33.



*Helen Hicks earned the nickname **Hard Hitting Helen** from the British press.*

Miss Hicks, who held a dormie 3 lead, was extended to 19 holes before winning her morning round against Mrs. Percy Garon. The Americans continued their sterling play in the afternoon round, their only loss coming when Miss Hicks defeated fellow American **Mrs. Leo Federman**, 4 and 3.

Glenna Collett posted a 2-up victory against Hilda Cameron in the morning round. The match

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was even after 16, but Glenna finished 4-4 to Miss Cameron's 6-6 for the win. In the afternoon, she beat Enid Wilson by 1-up.

Thursday, May 15

The quarter- and semi-final matches were played in rainy, windy conditions. **Glenna Collett** and **Helen Hicks**, dubbed Hard Hitting Helen by the British press because of her long drives, represented America's last hope for a first-time British victory.

Glenna continued her drive through the field with a hard-won 1-up victory over the Scottish champion, Miss Hilda Cameron. Miss Collett was 2-up at the turn but her opponent evened the match after 16 holes. Glenna took the 17th hole; a half on the final gave her the win.

Miss Hicks ran aground against Enid Wilson, who led 4-up at the turn on a outgoing 36. Miss Hicks could get no closer and the match ended on the 14th hole, Miss Wilson a 5 and 4 victor. The Liverpool Evening Express reported that Miss Wilson wore a brown leather jacket but no hat. Miss Hicks wore her usual fawn beret and a canary-colored leather jacket.

The other morning wins went to Miss Kathleen McDonald and Miss Diana Fishwick, who posted a 1-up win over Daisy Ferguson, conqueror of Edith Quier the previous day.

The British press considered the afternoon semi-final contest between Miss Collett and Miss Wilson to be the match that would decide the championship and Britain's last chance to prevent the trophy from crossing the Atlantic. The scribes did not hold the remaining British semi-finalists, Miss Fishwick and Miss McDonald, as threats to win the title.

Glenna Collett was the sole American to take to the course for the semi-final matches. Glenna faced Enid Wilson, who had already beaten American stalwarts **Maureen Orcutt** and **Helen Hicks**. Miss Wilson seemed to have all in her favor; she was playing in front of her fellow countrymen and women and she exhibited a mastery of the front nine that saw her build insurmountable leads. No opponent had taken her beyond the 14th green. Miss Collett, in contrast, played well enough to win but not spectacularly and allowed several inferior players to extend her to the limit.

Miss Collett led early but never by more than 1-up. Miss Wilson finally stirred the home gallery by taking her first lead on the 14th hole. But she was playing Glenna Collett. Glenna of the four U.S. amateur titles. Glenna who would win her country's



Diana Fishwick shows her championship golfing and sartorial style.

championship twice more. Glenna who won 59 of the 60 matches she played in 1924.

Miss Wilson erred grievously on the 16th hole with a shot out of bounds. The match was back to even. With the tension great, both players missed holeable putts on 17 and trod to the 18th tee with the match all square.

Both players hit excellent drives and fine second shots that left Miss Wilson 30 feet past the pin and Miss Collett 9 feet to the right. Miss Wilson's two-putt four was no match for Glenna's three. On to the finals for the American champion.

In the other semi-final, Miss McDonald succumbed to Miss Fishwick. Young Diana went out in 37 to lead 5-up, winning by 5 and 4. The stage was set for a championship final pitting the U.S. against England, experience against youth.

In an interview before the championship match, Miss Collett told the Associated Press that she expected a hard battle but was hopeful of winning the title. She sized up her opponent as having "a strong short game who is just young enough to probably not be affected by the importance of her role."

"My putting was better Thursday than Wednesday," she said, but added that it still lacked form, partly because the greens were faster than back home.

Miss Collett said she found it difficult to play at times because the crowds run ahead to follow shots and make it impossible to see the flight of the ball.

"I stand still after the shot and I am often bumped or pushed, but of course unintentionally."

Championship Match, Friday, May 16

Glenna Collett squared off against 19-year-old **Diana Fishwick** in the 36-hole championship match played on a warm, sunny day.

Miss Collett was the 5-1 choice in Britain's legal sports betting books. Experience would prevail over the novice, was the reasoning.

And failed reasoning it was. Diana grabbed the lead on the ninth hole and led 3-up after 12 and 5-up after 18, all but sealing Miss Collett's doom and her hope of becoming the first American to win the title. Diana led 6-up after 24 holes, but Glenna rallied back to 3-down after 32 holes. That was as close as she got. When Glenna took a double-bogey 6 on the 33rd hole the match was over and Miss Fishwick was the champion by 4 and 3. Miss Fishwick, so full of promise as an 19-year-old champion, never again won the title.

Miss Collett earned her second consecutive runner-up finish in the British championship. Although she would become a six-time U.S. champion, she never won the British title.

The Ladies' British Open Amateur Championship, now known as the Women's Amateur Championship, was first played in 1893. Not until 1947 did an American take the title, that winner being the great **Babe Didrikson Zaharias**. **Louise Suggs** won the following year but since then, only six Americans have won.