The Golf Chronicles

Golf Stories from the Pennsylvania Heartland

Byron Nelson
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1937-39

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RCC's Portrush Connection

Reading connections can pop up anywhere, a lesson learned in May 2016 by a group of touring golfers who played at Royal Portrush Golf Club in Country Antrim, Northern Ireland. Portrush is the only course outside of England and Scotland to host the British Open, in 1951 when Ehgland's **Max Faulkner** won the Claret Jug. The Open Championship returns to Royal Portrush in 2019.

The touring golfers included RCC members **Tim Daly**, **Guy McKeone**, **Don Hadley** and **Matt Hadley**, and **Matt McKeone**, a Moselem Springs GC member.

The Portrush clubhouse features an open stair case. The back wall is about 20 feet high and sports a large wooden panel that honors the winners of the important tournaments played there, beginning with the 1892 Irish Amateur championship.

The most interesting entry for our Reading-based party is the 2011 Senior British Amateur Championship, won by **Chip Lutz**, a two-time RCC club champion, nine-time Berks amateur champion and current LedgeRock Golf Club member. Lutz also won the British Senior Amateur in 2012 and the 2015 U.S. Senior Amateur championship.

When I mentioned the Portrush-Reading connection to **Chris**, my caddy, he immediately gushed, "Ah, Chip! He's a grand fellow!" I didn't even have to mention Chip's name; Chris knew immediately who I was talking about.

Turns out that one of Chris' mates—that's like a BFF—caddied for Lutz when he won the 2011 senior amateur.

In addition to its championship golf course and the adjacent Rathmore Golf Club—home of **Graeme McDowell**—the town of Portrush has nurtured three major champions: **Fred Daly**, the first Irishman to win the British Open (1947), **Darren Clarke**, the 2011 British Open winner, and McDowell, the 2010 U.S. Open champion. Clarke still lives in Portrush.

As we traversed the course, Chris the caddy pointed out **Gary McDowell**, Graeme's brother, a greenskeeper at Royal Portrush.

***Chip Lutz** shares space with some of the golfing world's best.*

*The golfers and caddies enjoy a breezy Northern Irish spring day as **Matt McKeone** plays from the third tee at Royal Portrush. The Straits of Moyle, connecting the Irish Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, is in the background.*

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*Portrush caddies pose in front of the clubhouse. **Chris**, on the left, remembers **Chip Lutz** fondly.*

***Graeme McDowell** learned the game at the Rathmore Golf Club, which is intertwined with the Portrush links. In preparation for the 2019 Open Championship, The R & A is building two new holes for the Portrush championship course to replace the lackluster 17th and 18th holes. They borrowed the land from Rathmore, which played as a 16-hole course in May of 2016, albeit at a reduced rate.*

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