

Mis-Match

A wacky threesome shoots, swings and casts its way into historical infamy.



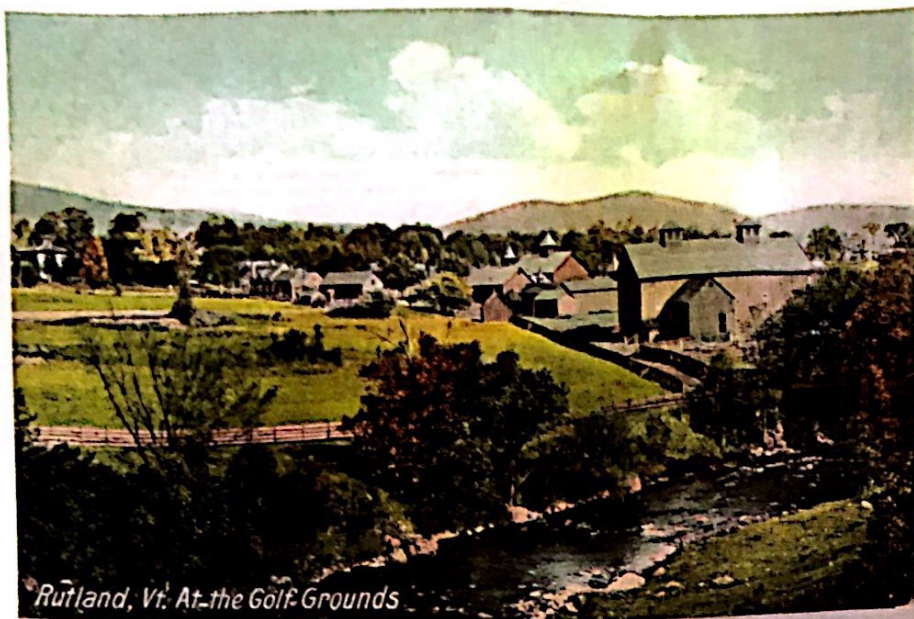
*"A golfer,
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One of the strangest matches in Vermont golf history gets underway at the Rutland Country Club during the 1929 season.

The first recorded match of its kind took place in Musselburgh, Scotland, on November 1, 1828—pitting an accomplished golfer against a precision archer. Sixty years later, even Old Tom Morris of St. Andrews fell prey to such tom-foolery when challenged by the Reverend J. H. Tait—chaplain to the Royal Archers and an avid archer himself—over the links at Luffness. History shows that golfers have always been at the ready to test their skills against one another—it's when the desire for dominance spreads to other

recreational persuasions that things can approach the realm of foolishness.

A match that was staged at the Rutland Country Club on August 13, 1929, took the dog and pony show even one step further—adding a fisherman to round out the threesome. It was a demonstration that drew considerable attention according to the *Rutland*



Rutland, Vt. At the Golf Grounds

The grounds of the Rutland Country Club were used to pasture horses, grow apples and harvest hay—and then the golfing public came along.

Herald: "An applauding gallery and an enthusiastic audience were present at the Rutland Country Club at as weird a tournament as was ever staged on the local links. A golfer, a caster and an archer were opponents in a duel against respective pars in a scheduled nine-hole

golf game, which showers cut short at the end of the fifth stanza."

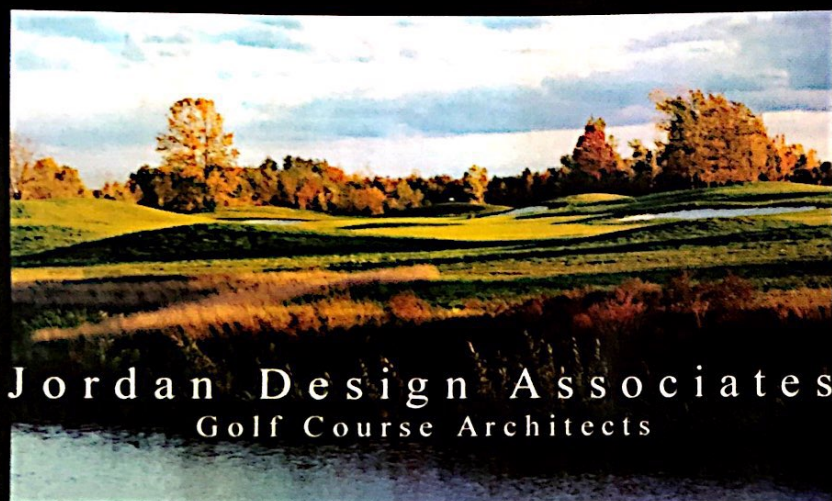
The credit—or blame—for assembling such a bizarre cast of characters can be laid at the feet of the American Fork and Hoe Company of Wallingford, Vermont, though to company officials

few other demonstrations could have highlighted their products more convincingly. American Fork and Hoe began in the late 1800s, manufacturing farm and garden implements. By the turn of the century they added fishing rods and hickory golf shafts to their offerings, and a decade later the bow and arrow. American Fork and Hoe was later at the forefront in the evolution of hickory to steel-shafted golf clubs, and just one year before this match was staged, patented the step-tapered golf shaft that remains the standard today. In the 1930s, the company pioneered chromium plating; and in 1941 the introduction of the Dynamic shaft heralded the first time that differing flex categories were made available in shaft options. In the late 1940s, the company changed its name to True Temper Sports, a name still recognized as a leader in the field today.

Officers of the manufacturing concern were attending an executive convention at their Wallingford factory in 1929 and H.C. Taft, manager of the plant, was placed in charge of entertainment. Many company officials had driven from the company's headquarters in Ohio, while still others had boarded a special train from the Mid-West to be on hand for this noteworthy extravaganza.

The caster was Carl Kinnear of Geneva, Ohio, holder of the world casting record for half-ounce and five-eighths-ounce bait. Kinnear had tossed the heavier weight 314 feet in competition, while throwing the lighter load 278 feet. He was equipped with a Surf Casting Rod with a four-ounce weight for his work on the fairways and a True Temper Rapier Steel Tournament Casting Rod with a five-ounce weight when things got technical around the greens.

Sterling 'Curly' Moulton of Cleveland, Ohio, carried the banner for the Robin Hood crowd, employing True Temper Steel U Bow of 42 pounds



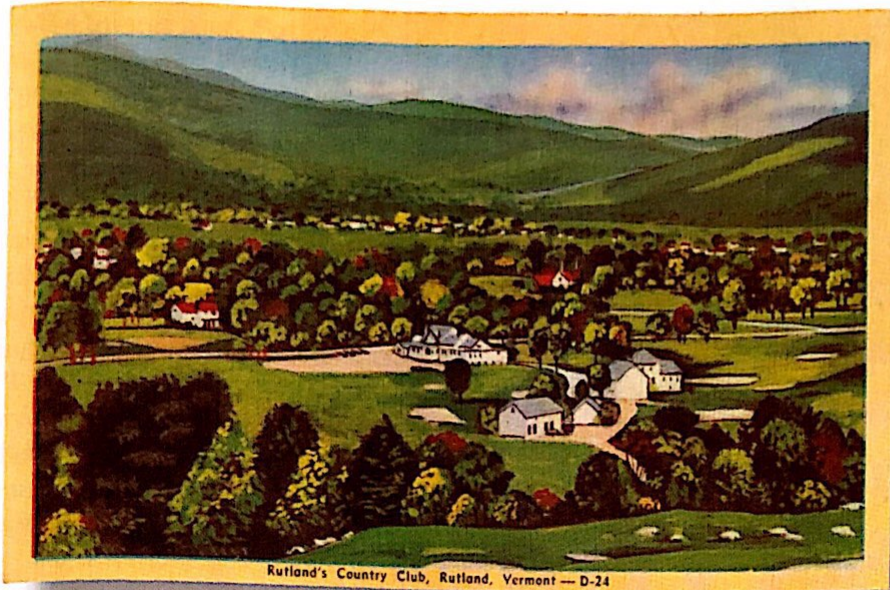
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Rutland's Country Club, Rutland, Vermont — D-24

pull and playing to the sides of the greens where a small straw target served as his "hole." Organizer Taft kept the identity of the golfer secret until the morning of the contest, and according to a PGA newsletter from the era, "Bets were freely laid among adherents of the various sports represented that this or that contestant would 'walk away' with the event."

Games of skill for company officials were prelude to the main event, with a bait-casting contest highlighting the build-up. Five two-foot-wide targets were spread over the course 200 feet apart, with casters awarded points for hitting the mark—or even just getting it within a two-foot radius. Chris Hartnett of Proctor captured the casting honor by striking the mark five out of ten attempts, and never landing more than two feet from it.

When the main event commenced at 3:30 in the afternoon, Roof Gilson, a student at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, arrived to carry the banner for the golfers, toting the latest True Temper-shafted golf clubs when he appeared at the first tee. Play was following closely by the assembled on-lookers, and it was quickly apparent that no one would dominate the contest.

Each participant played to their own pre-determined par and the match launched as darkening skies threatened a

golfer waiting until the fourth to secure a victory. As they headed to the fifth, the players were tied and officials wondered if another hole could be played before the deluge. But on they marched, with the fisherman winning what would prove to be the final contest, "the players being driven from the course at this time by a

terrific wind and rain storm," according to the assembled media.

The final tallies showed the caster with a score of 25 shots for the five holes or one over his par; the golfer with 2 blows, two strokes over his standard; and the archer with 20 arrows launched, or three over his par of 17. It is unclear how the bookies made out.

As the rain pelted the course and the assembled guests, officials of American Fork and Hoe Company adjourned to the True Temper Inn at Wallingford where they dined at an elaborate banquet and were entertained into the night. The convention lasted another two days—though the lore lingered for years. The match remains one of the most unusual in Vermont golfing history—one never repeated in the ensuing three-quarters of a century. ♦

Bob Labbanca is polishing his clubs, restringing his bow and checking his lures in anticipation of a rematch.

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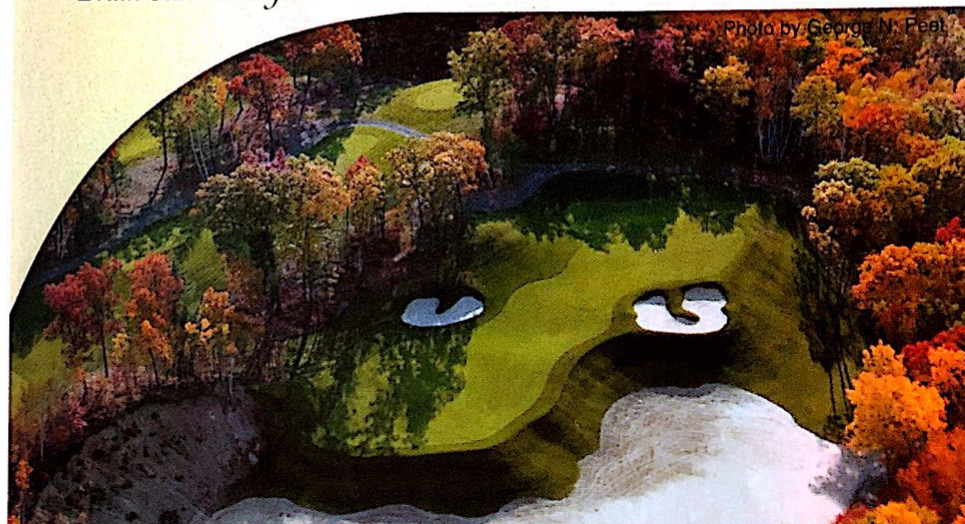


Photo by George N. Peet