



BY OUR BRITISH CORRESPONDENT.

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A real beginning has now been made with the new season, which was given a good send-off at Easter, this being often regarded as the best official golfing holiday of the year, since it lasts longer than the others and there is more doing in the way of match-play tournaments. For some time before the Easter holiday began the weather was brilliantly fine, and there was an expectation that courses would be in grand order, but in many cases yet they are far from being properly recovered from the effects of the terrible heat and drought of last season, while the greenkeepers also complain that the early part of this year has really not been at all favorable to their green-keeping. However there is every prospect of the season being in all respects a magnificently successful one, and I never remember one beginning with more enthusiasm and eagerness on the part of the players.

Some of the spring meetings have already been held; and the professionals are just making a beginning with their exhibition matches and tournaments which promise to be just as interesting this year as before. Braid v. Vardon is to be the big attraction of the present year, this pair of champions, each of whom has won five times as no other man living or dead has ever done, having been engaged to perform all over the coun-

try on a very large list of occasions. There can be no doubt that they are a great attraction now, better than any other, and both are playing at their very best. Vardon has been for a few weeks' holiday in France, and has come back very fit and well, while his game is as good as it was when he won the championship at Sandwich last year. Of course it is always an exceedingly open question as to who will win the Open Championship, but I should say that these two will be favorites again. Taylor is also playing his best once again. A few months ago his game became very shaky for a time, and some pessimists began to wonder whether a decline in it had set in, but all fears on this ground have now been removed. The simple fact of the matter is that Taylor has had some little stomach troubles to deal with, and has never until lately been quite himself since he had a motor accident in the north about a year ago. However these matters are now things of the past, and I should be not at all surprised to find him making a very big season of it for himself this year. George Duncan has been quiet since he returned from the States last fall, but he is a player who never does anything to advertise himself, and there is every reason to believe that his game is just as good as ever if not a little better, and outside the leaders



The tenth green at Muirfield, where the British Open championship is to be played this year. Harry Vardon (on the right) is putting, Taylor and Braid are next to him and the player on the left is Alec Herd.

he must again be the best favorite for the championship. As I have previously intimated the Open Championship takes place at Muirfield this year, and when it was last held there the first three places were taken by Braid, Taylor and Vardon, which was a magnificent triumph for the old "triumvirate," so people are beginning to wonder what they will do this time, now that they have got once again to the place that seems to suit them best. As the season goes on and the big cracks begin to play their matches I hope this year to give a little fuller attention to their scores and details than hitherto, being assured that American readers find interest in the subject.

There is more interest than usual in the subject of golf balls in this country at the beginning of the season, although at this time of year that interest is always tolerably keen. Perhaps all the talk that there has

been about standardization lately, and the suggestions that have been put forward that the authorities should take some steps to see that our drives are shortened has had something to do with stimulating the public curiosity as to the next move that the manufacturers would make and set them wondering whether, as usual, the new balls that are given to us would go a little further and behave even better than their predecessors have done. Again, the fact that one or two of the leading manufacturers were understood to be truckling somewhat to the standardization party, to the extent, anyhow, of saying that they would see whether something could not be done in the way of making lighter balls that would answer in some measure to some of the demands of the cranks, made people wonder what the beginning of the new season would have in store for them. Well, most of the secrets are

now out, and we know the best and the worst, and it is not very much either way. I think that the best balls are exactly the same that they were last year, and the particular brands that were the best favorites then start with everything on their side again, and are the most popular and reliable for the time being. There is no need to mention any names, but these balls are two in number, and have probably a good half or more of the whole trade between them, and one of the balls, if

standardizing people, or at least is put forward in that way, for I suspect it is chiefly a ball meant for the gentle hitters who find the small heavy ones too much for them. It is not being enthusiastically spoken of. Besides these, two or three new brands are in the field. The manufacturers of motor tires are almost universally taking up the business of making golf balls, and there is a sort of belief that in time they will get most of the trade for themselves. Some new and peculiar markings are being



Two of the chief figures at the amateur championship meetings. Mr. John Ball (on the left) and Mr. Robert Maxwell.

not the other, is known as well in America as it is in Great Britain. Each ball is exactly what it was last year, but the manufacturers in each case are making another kind slightly varying from the original. In the one case, that of a baby ball, the makers are now turning out a ball which is half a size larger, that is mid-way between the old size and the baby, and in the other case they are trying a new full size ball, very light so that it floats, this being an experiment to see how it will please the stan-

tried, and in one case a firm who have come new into the business and are blowing trumpets very loudly to start with say that they have come by a new and very special stuff for the inner core of the ball which gives it remarkable properties of the kind that the golfers like best, particularly in the way of more carry and less run, the full length of the drive being not less than that of the other best balls on the market. This special centre is said to consist of a solid gelatinous mixture produced from a

species of West Indian starch by chemical action, and it is a rather larger centre than usual. The inventor is an old army officer who has been experimenting with golf balls for a long time past, and believes that in this new production he has got the right thing. I have tried it, and, while I consider it to be quite a good ball, I cannot say that I was much struck by its superior excellence in any way. All the best balls again start the season at a price of half a crown each, this being the equivalent of about sixty cents, and there is the usual outcry that it is too much and that something should be done to force the makers to reduce the price to two shillings, at which it stood before the price of rubber rose. Accordingly, there is news of the establishment of a small syndicate, consisting chiefly of players, with a well-known London amateur, Mr. J. S. Worthington, at its head, with the avowed object of producing a ball as good as anything on the market, and better than most, which is to be sold at eighteenpence or thirty-six cents. They are building a works specially for the purpose, and the venture is being watched with some interest.

In the meantime it may just be remarked that all the bother and talk about the necessity of standardization, and other nonsense of that kind, has got stopped now that the season has been started, as was expected to be the case. The individuals who got the discussion up have sent along a sort of petition to the championship authorities signed with the names of a number of players asking those authorities to consider whether something might not be done—not asking them to standardize a ball of lower capacity than those at present in use, which they are erroneously repre-

sented to have asked for. Even the people who started this discussion, advocating the gutty at the beginning, have now realized that the whole thing is hopeless, and we shall probably hear no more about it. Their last suggestion was that we should standardize the balls we have got now, which is somewhat different from bringing back the old gutty from its grave and giving it the command of the game again. Apart from the fact that this question will be and must be settled by the golfing masses and not by a few cranks, there is the further point that those masses have not got any very good idea of the sincerity of the advocates of standardization or their knowledge either, and when they consider the way in which they have suddenly turned round from denouncing the modern ball to saying that it is a very fine thing, after all, and would do splendidly to standardize, they wonder how this has come about, and when they do so wonder they naturally begin to ask if commercial reasons have got anything to do with it. They could never quite understand why certain golf journals desired the extinction of the rubber-cored ball making industry, when that industry was keeping them alive by its advertisements, and they think that perhaps it was all a mistake which is now being rectified.

There is very deep interest being taken in some special clubs which are being marketed at the beginning of the season, and most of which I have mentioned in these pages from time to time. One of the most prominent is the putter like a miniature of the old aluminum variety, but made in iron, which Harry Vardon began to use at the end of last season and has used ever since, during which period



Major Newton-King,  
Secretary of the Royal North Devon Golf Club,  
Westward Ho!, who will have chief control  
of the arrangements for the amateur cham-  
pionship.

his putting has certainly improved in steadiness, whether it is due to the putter or not. This is called the Brown-Vardon putter, and it looks like catching on. A club that has most certainly caught on and is causing more discussion than any other that has been set before the public since the days of the Dreadnought driver, is the Shoebury brasse, the invention of a major in the Royal Artillery. The idea is simple enough, but, like many other simple things, nobody thought of applying it before. The question has been raised as to whether it is quite legitimate, whether it hits the ball twice, and so on, but the consensus of opinion is that it is within the law at present, and that it does not hit the ball twice, but there

is also a feeling that if the club became very popular it would very unfavorably attract the attention of the authorities at St. Andrews, as it is a rather striking departure from the conventional in the matter of faces. From the bottom of the sole there projects out of the face, and the full length of it, a continuation of the vulcanite that usually comes flush up to the face for the purpose of protecting the edge. It is about three-sixteenths of an inch long and the same in thickness, and is straightened by thin brass underneath, the same as that which covers the sole. The effect is to make a kind of picker-up or step, and the inventor claims, and apparently with some reason, that balls that would have been topped with an ordinary club, are picked up all right by the projection of the Shoebury brasse, and that it is much more effectual in dealing with bad lies than any other club. Others, however, have found it to be most effective in playing from an ordinary or moderate lie, as the step or projection gets under the ball first and makes sure of its being hugged properly to the face of the club, which is made rather straighter than usual, and so there is more driving power.

Much has been heard from time to time in this country about the golf schools in the Chicago and other districts and the thorough way in which they are conducted, and the suggestion has many times been put forward that it would be a good and successful thing if something of the kind were started in London. Hitherto we have had only outdoor golf schools, consisting of small pieces of ground at which driving at a net may be practised. These have for the most part done very well, and have been much on the increase; but they have



Miss Elsie Kyle,  
One of the most brilliant of the girl golfers of  
Britain. She is only 20 years of age, but  
has been Scottish champion more than once  
and is expected to be well forward this year.  
She is studying to be a doctor.

been places for more or less elementary tuition only and nothing in the nature of competitive play, such as goes on in some form or other, which we do not quite understand, at the American schools, has ever been attempted. Just lately, however, London has been accommodated with a new kind of school, which is a distinct novelty, and may quite likely remain so. An indoor school has been established near to Piccadilly Circus, which is in the very heart of the West End of London. It is, in fact, but a very short shot from this new school to the busiest part of the pleasure quarter of the metropolis. The school itself is a very remarkable institution. The idea has been that realism is not sufficiently culti-

vated at these places as it might be, and an effort has been made to effect an improvement in this direction. The floor of the institution has been laid with a special carpet of preserved grass, a putting course consisting of three holes has been laid out on it, and a real sand bunker with steep sides has been fixed up and two tons of sand emptied into it. Here the real business can be done with the niblick, with no such special desire to get out quickly as constantly animates the man who is at work in real bunkers on real courses. But this is not all or anything like it. The desire is to make the golfer feel at home, as it were, make him fancy he is on a real links or come as near to that as his imagination will let him, and in order to compass this end some special scenery, most magnificently painted, has been arranged round the room, representing some of the most prominent features of the Sandwich course, including the famous old Maiden, which, as we know it, is no more for golfing purposes. This scenery is protected by nets, and so you drive straight at it without doing any damage. Thus you can have a full bang at the Maiden as often as you like, but you miss the climb over the top and the suspense of waiting until you see where your ball finished, that we used to experience in the old days. Three professionals have been engaged by the school. How it goes on I will tell you another time; I cannot prophesy.

The secretaryship of the Royal and Ancient Club of St. Andrews recently fell vacant owing to Mr. Thomas Law having resigned in order to further his interests in his profession by going abroad. Besides being secretary to the club, Mr. Law

was and is a chartered accountant, and he hopes to advance himself in a new country. For many years he has filled a responsible post with great ability and unfailing courtesy to all with whom he came into contact. He is succeeded by Mr. Henry Gulen, the secretary of the Ganton Golf Club, near Scarborough, whom the committee of the R. and A. have appointed to the post. Some time back an idea was formed of starting a fourth course at St. Andrews, with the object of doing something to relieve the pressure on the others at a busy time. The scheme has just

been revived again, but whether anything will ever come of it is hard to say. It takes them a terrible time at St. Andrews to decide anything, and heaven knows what would happen if they had to begin golf there from the beginning now instead of having had it all supplied to them by their ancestors. They would never get much farther than talking about it. For years they have been talking about making a charge for playing on the old course, but they have not done it yet, though they say it is absolutely necessary, and they are now talking about it more than ever.

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