Silverman, Jeff, ed. *Great American Golf Stories*. Essex, CT: Lyons Press, 2023. Xiii + 319 pp. ISBN 978-1-4930-7191-3. $18.00 ppb.

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Born in Lanark, Scotland, Dad grew up playing golf. He emigrated to New York in his early twenties, met my mother and they married. His father-in-law was a golfer as well, but his only child did not play. Mother and Dad raised three sons, and though my two older brothers and I played sporadically when young, we never took golf up as either an interest or a passion. Dad played regularly on several favorite clubs in Queens, New York City, out on Long Island and up In Westchester County. He generally managed eighteen holes a weekend shooting in the low to mid-80s. After he retired, he enjoyed a parttime job visiting pro shops associated with the links he regularly played, chatting with the pros while selling them balls, clubs and other golf accessories and clothing. When not playing himself, he enjoyed watching the pros on television, a faithful member of Arnie’s Army. He and Mother made annual winter trips to Pinehurst, North Carolina, where he enjoyed the golf and Mother the reading. He enjoyed reading golfing magazines and might have picked up *Great American Golf Stories* had it been published during his life.

A former columnist for the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, Silverman has written for the *New York Times* and *Sports Illustrated*, as well as editing collections on boxing, baseball and several others on golf. This golf collection includes pieces written between 1890 when golf came to the United States and 1920 has fiction, newspaper reports, memoirs and a few “how to” commentaries. While they all mention golf, a few of the connections are flimsy at best. “Winter Dreams,” by F. Scott Fitzgerald, (*Metropolitan Magazine* (1922), and an excerpt from *Babbit*, by Sinclair Lewis (1922) only mention golf in passing. I wonder if he included them because of the universal literary fame of the authors.

While each of the pieces get a brief comment in the Introduction, along with a little history of the origins of golf and its move across the pond, there appears to be little thought given to organization. Being an historian by trade I might have arranged the selections in chronological order. More importantly, I would have liked a few sentences to begin each entry. The reader has to rummage through the Introduction to find any background, and then turn to the end where the Sources are listed in order of appearance. Having this readily at hand at the beginning of each piece, including the original date and place of publication would provide a bit of context.

As with F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis, many of the authors will be well known to a variety of readers. Zane Grey, Grantland Rice, Max Behr, Walt Lantz, Heywood Braun, Ring Lardner, Walter Hagen and Damon Runyon are names I recognize. While all of the pieces are of interest and valuable in one way or another, I am going to focus on a few that stand out as the best to me. If interested in golf stories I encourage you to take a look at the collection on your own.

John G. Anderson, “The Greatest Golf Finish I Ever Saw” (59-64) is written as if you’re there watching it with the author. “Gentlemen, You Can’t Play Through,” by Charles E. Van Loan (145-170), is a wonderful “gotcha story.” “Four nice old gentlemen, prominent in business circles, church members who remember it even when they top a tee shot, pillars of society, rich enough to be carried over the course in palanquins, but too proud to ride, too dignified to hurry, too meek to argue except among themselves, and too infernally selfish to stand aside and let the younger men go through” (145). The story and especially its end on Third Avenue is delightful.

Eddie Loos, “Hit the Ball,” (221-226) is an interesting lesson of a pro working with an amateur who had a perfect practice swing but who, when it came time to hit the drive, invariably flubbed it. Through several conversations followed by thoughtful reflection the pro realized the problem was a wandering mind. The fellow allowed thoughts about everything to run through his mind rather than concentrating solely on hitting the ball, thus proving golf is as much a mental as a physical activity.

Alexa W. Stirling, “Women Handicapped by Men’s Courses” (227-232) and Marjorie R. S. Trumbull, “The Curse of the Skirt” (215-220) consider the problems women faced on golf courses designed and built for men while having to conform to society’s dress codes. Consider if women wore knickerbockers while men teed off in the flowing skirts before the introduction of women’s tees? Both are interesting pieces that focus on the constraints and issues faced on the links by the “second sex.” Overlooking these issues yet still seeming sexist, “Albion” in “Golf for Women” (15-18) writes “That the game is admirably adapted for a ladies pastime there can be no doubt, and it has the advantage of being an amusement in which the fair sex are not so heavily handicapped as in other games” (17).

Silverman wisely chose to open the collection with Grantland Rice’s lyrical piece, “The Other Lure of Golf” (11-14). After describring the intense competition that runs throughout the game from beginning to end, he shifts to point out that “golf happens to be the one competitive sport for the public at large that offers the lure of the open spaces where the vision is unbound and where the feet can follow league after league of open ground” (12). Rice indicates that no matter the scenery you prefer—oceans or deserts, plains or mountains, rugged or gentle—his words, and more importantly golf courses evoke them all.

These are just a few of the myriad stories of golf. An interesting collection from a bygone era.