

inside SocialGolf

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Bruce Young
Teeing Off
regular contributor

An unlikely DOUBLE

Despite such a good result at the World Match Play in late 1973 (where I made it all the way to the final against Gary Player carrying Graham Marsh's bag; see Inside Social Golf September issue), things were beginning to tighten up financially for me by the time the Open Championship at Lytham St Annes came around in July of 1974.

Based on that result at Wentworth I had returned to Europe to caddy for Bob Shearer in those events he was playing but there was now also an arrangement in place that I would caddy for Marsh whenever he played in Europe. That would involve just three events in 1974; the Open in July and later in the year the Dunlop Masters and the Piccadilly World Match Play, should he be invited again.

While I was still enjoying the life of a 20 year old caddy, having to watch every penny was taking some of the enjoyment away. I was determined not to slum it too much and end up like some of the British caddies who would often sleep anywhere under hedges or in the open just to get by. Don't get me wrong; there were some great characters out there and I did at times share rooms with maybe one or two others. But I was not really into some of the methods some had of roughing it.

During the course of Open Championship week I was approached by Bob Charles, the great left handed New Zealander, who asked whether I might be available to work for him in both the Scandinavian Enterprise Open in Malmo, Sweden, the next week and the Swiss Open in Crans Sur Sierre the following week. I talked it over with Bob Shearer and we both decided it would be an opportunity to earn some guaranteed money and that I would return to work for him in Germany two weeks later.

"After a few drinks on the Friday night, Hobday decided to undress in the bar, likely prompted by a bet with a mate and stood there naked in all his glory while others carried on drinking around him."

With the Open Championship finishing on Saturday as it did in those days, myself and two other caddies embarked on a mammoth journey from England to Sweden. It involved an overnight ferry across the North Sea to Esbjerg in Denmark followed by a 12 hour adventure by car and ferry across that country to

Copenhagen and then the final leg of our journey to Malmo via yet another ferry.

At the end of it all Charles finished 6th behind Tony Jacklin (who won by an amazing eleven shots) but the New Zealander would exact his revenge on the Englishman seven days later. Before that, however, we had another adventurous trip ahead. To get to Switzerland we overnights on the ferry from Malmo to Puttgarden in the north of Germany and began the 12 hour drive to the south west corner of that country. There, we put the car on a train in order to take us through the tunnel into Switzerland. While this may have seemed an extravagant way of doing things, airfares in those days were relatively expensive and the deals that are available now were not as prevalent. It would also mean that we could have a car with us at all times to get around once we reached our destination.

The location for the Swiss Open in Crans Sur Sierre is one of the most spectacular you could imagine. The view down over the Rhone Valley from some 1500 metres up is stunning. The golf course is nothing special although in recent years it has been upgraded. Some suggest little has changed, however, and the golf course still plays a role during



In 2004 I got to interview Bob Charles in my role as on-course commentator as he played his last New Zealand Open 50 years after winning his first. It was also 30 years since I caddied for Bob in his win in Switzerland.

winter as the learner slopes for the adjacent ski resort.

After 36 holes Charles lay in a share of 7th five shots behind the brilliant South African Dale Hayes. He shared that place with fellow New Zealander Simon Owen and, among others, Rhodesian golfer Simon Hobday. Hobday did little else in the tournament but off course he was causing quite a stir.

Hobday could often be described as eccentric but was one of the finest ball strikers on the European Tour. Twenty years later he would win the US Senior Open at Pinehurst (another occasion with which I had first hand experience) but I would have the opportunity that week to witness one of Hobday's larrikin exhibitions on the Friday night in Crans Sur Sierre.

The George and Dragon was an English pub in the middle of the ski resort town and was the gathering place for many of the golfers and their caddies during tournament week. After a few drinks on the Friday night, Hobday decided to undress in the bar

(likely prompted by a bet with a mate) and stood there naked in all his glory while others carried on drinking around him. Eventually the manager approached to ask Hobday if he would mind putting something on. He obliged by promptly placing his underpants on his head. Perhaps you had to be there and the impact may be somewhat lost in the translation but believe me, it was a very funny moment for those of us who were there.

The next day Hobday's 74 told the story of the night while my boss, Charles, made his move with a third round 67 to move into a share of the lead with Hayes and Belgium's Donald Swaelens. However, it would be the previous week's winner, Tony Jacklin, who would emerge as Charles' biggest threat over the closing holes of the final round. By the time we reached the 18th, Charles had a one shot lead and I distinctly remember standing in the middle of the fairway from where he had 130 yards to the hole. Jacklin had already finished his round and so the tournament was Charles' to win or lose. His 9-iron approach

finished twelve feet from the hole and his two putt par saw him take the title by one.

"On the par four last and after hitting it in the middle of the fairway from the tee, Simon asked me if I could establish exactly what he needed to do. I told him a birdie would win outright and a par would tie. He parred and was now in a playoff with Oosterhuis."

As a fellow New Zealander this was a great thrill for me. To caddy on the other side of the world for one of my golfing heroes, and the man who encouraged me and many other New Zealanders to take up the game, as he won a coveted European title was very special.

Now I had a decision to make. Bob Shearer, who I was scheduled to caddy for in Germany the next week, had decided to head back

to London to spend time with his then girlfriend and now wife Kathie, leaving me without a bag for the German Open. The win with Charles had given me a few extra British pounds to ease the increasing financial strain and the thought of having the week off to visit a German girl I had met was appealing. Just as I was planning how I was going to make that happen, though, I saw yet another New Zealander, Simon Owen, packing up his gear after finishing 33rd that week.

I asked Simon if he had anybody working for him in Germany but he replied that he was unsure if he wanted a tour caddy as he was a little money strapped himself. In his rookie season in Europe, Simon had made plenty of cuts but there was little money in those days for midfield finishes and he was contemplating heading back to New Zealand if a big finish was not soon forthcoming.

After disappearing for a few minutes he returned and a deal was struck for me to caddy for him. I felt at the time this would at least cover my expenses for the week and so we packed up the car and headed back through the tunnel into Germany with Krefeld, in the very west of the country, our destination. My Fraulein would have to wait.

My first memory of the golf course at Krefeld was that of the Welsh golfer Dai Rees attempting to kick me out of the clubhouse while I was trying to source some accommodation. In those days caddies were not allowed in clubhouses on the European Tour but there was a greater leniency on the Continent as there were only a few of us who made the trip across the Channel. I let Mr Rees know my feelings and the week was off to a fiery start.

Simon made a good start to the event and at the completion of the

first 36 holes he led by one over Swaelens with Dale Hayes third. The most interesting memory of round two was when Simon hit his ball onto the back of a green early in the round after which we proceeded to help his playing partner look for his ball. When we emerged from the trees Simon's ball had disappeared and in the distance two kids were seen scurrying away. A ruling was called for and Simon was able to drop a ball, where it was deemed his original had come to rest, without penalty.

Simon was round in 70 in round three and took a one shot lead into the final day. Three shots behind was the prolific Englishman Peter Oosterhuis who was, to a large extent, the Colin Montgomerie of that era. He won several Order of Merit titles and on Sunday of that week produced a final round 66 that had Simon under the gun.

On the par four last, after hitting it in the middle of the fairway, Simon asked me if I could establish exactly what he needed to do. I told him a birdie would win outright and a par would tie. He parred and was now in a playoff with Oosterhuis. (On a sidenote, an English journalist took a little bit of license with how Simon got that news when writing in Mark McCormack's 1974 World of Professional Golf. In his version "Owen was not helped as he stood over a 20 foot putt for birdie at the last by his caddie's observation that he needed the putt to win". I never did forgive that bloke).

Simon won the playoff at the first extra hole after Oosterhuis blocked his tee shot right and two New Zealanders had won consecutive events on the European Tour with the same kiwi caddy.

An unlikely, not to mention thrilling, double indeed!

Simon Owen won the German Open in a playoff against Peter Oosterhuis. This photo shows him teeing off at first the playoff hole where he won the event.



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