

Sketch of a West Pointer: Neil Brett-Davies

Neil was born in Tyneside, England, and took his formal education at King Edward's School, Birmingham and Aberdeen University. Term time was fully occupied with team sports and golf was considered to be "dilettante", so his introduction to golf occurred during summer holidays, beginning at age 12, playing with his father who was keen, but never good. As a forester, Neil has been lucky enough to work in all the continents with trees – and has lived in North America, Europe, Africa and Asia, always finding time for golf. By age 30, Neil recognized that he was not going to become a scratch golfer and has enjoyed the game much more as a result of this recognition. He recalls a handicap of 11, for a few brief weeks along the way.

Neil has had 3 holes-in-one. The first one was at the 139 yard 13th hole at Frasersview, where his foursome recorded scores of 1, 2, 3 and 4. He remembers scoring 8s on the 12th and 14th, so some wit suggested his score card "looked like an eastern area code". They finished the round by 11 am (he points out it was not a West Point game!), so the clubhouse round was cheap. Playing with WPGC at Riverway a couple years ago, he had two holes-in-one within 3 weeks of each other - and both rounds were expensive!

As everyone knows, golf is full of little surprises, and Neil's golf memory is littered with incidents. One of the more vivid occurred while playing at Eighteen Pastures, on the north side of the Fraser River. A campfire got away on a rugged, wooded bluff and they needed to call in the water bombers. The fire-suppressing red mud spoiled several ladies' blouses – and a good round that he had going!

Neil has many stories, enough to fill a book (hopefully, he is working on that book), and offers this true story. "It was the semi-final of the Club championship in north-east Aberdeenshire. Neil's pal, John Glennie, is playing Jimmy Michie, the greens keeper. The match is tight. They are both on the green at 14 with plausible birdie putts. John misses. Jimmy's putt is on the way and looks good, when out of the dunes springs John's setter, Bracken (because he was always brackin' things). He sits on the hole, preventing the ball from entering. "Fits a rulin'?" asks Jimmy. "Rub of the green," says John, and they go to the 15th tee. Here John has the honour and on his backswing, Jimmy gets down on his knees and barks loudly. John's ball vanishes into the sea. Nothing further is said."

It is difficult for Neil to select a favourite course, but if he had to play one for the rest of his days, he would select Cruden Bay in Aberdeenshire. It's too short to have ever held a major championship and with several blind holes, the Old Tom Morris design from 1899 stands up well; you can take a virtual tour with the secretary on the internet. It is a true links course where the springy turf encourages the players to finish a Sunday morning four-ball in three and a half hours and an evening two-ball in well under two and a half. The wind, ever-changing, makes the course particularly interesting, with the par 3 fourth hole requiring anything from an 8 iron to driver. Several holes have been featured in golf writers' "favourite 18". The 8th was considered by Henry Longhurst among the best par 3s in the worlds (it is now a short par 4). Neil recalls staying on the course with his family one June and being awoken at 7:30 am by his 15 year old son, proudly announcing that he had just shot 85! Another course he enjoyed was The Albany golf course in the extreme south of Western Australia (founded in 1898); it was the nearest thing to links golf. Locally, Kings Links is his favourite. He appears to like seaside courses!

Golfers Neil has admired are Eric Brown and Severiano Ballesteros, his match play heroes, and "Champagne" Tony Lema and Francis Ouimet (winner of the 1913 US Open and two Amateur titles, Honourary Captain of the Royal & Ancient and author of a delightful autobiography, "A Game of Golf"). A life-time amateur, Ouimet is often called the father of amateur golf in the US.

Neil joined West Point Golf Club in 1999 and has served the membership in many ways. In addition to being Vice Captain in 2004 and 2005, he has coordinated the Ed Angel competition from 2008 to 2014 – and is always willing to lend a hand.

Material submitted by Neil
July 2013