

This Sporting Life

Bench and Bar Versus Services Golf Match, St Michaels Golf Club Friday 4th November 1994

There was brilliant sunshine. Then there was wind and rain. Finally there were sheets of lightning. Nobody got killed, Bob Toner had a drink, Peter Gray sang a lewd Irish folksong and, all in all, it was a pretty good day of golf.

That, in a few words, is the overview of the 1994 Bench and Bar versus Services Golf Match which this year was held at St Michaels on Friday afternoon, 4th November 1994.

Fourteen members of the Bar turned out to play the Services and I regret to report that the Services won the overall event by a handsome margin. They also won the 'A' Grade (scratch to 15) but the Bench and Bar were successful in the 'B' Grade (16 to whatever) which represents our first success in this 60 year old tournament for many, many years.

Because a thunderstorm overtook us at about 5.30, only two matches completed the course and the other matches were determined by negotiation, but since the Services had all the big guns, we still lost.

Madeline Gilmour looked stunning when she hit off wearing white knee length shorts and shirt, and pulling a colour co-ordinated golf bag, but the wind and the rain and the lightning soon fixed that up.

Peter Gray shot the lights out and returned, after adjustment for holes not completed because of the weather conditions, a score sufficient to mark him as the most successful participant in the Bench and Bar team, and therefore the winner of the perpetual Northern Ireland Medal, presented to the Bar in 1992 by a contingent from the Belfast Bar who played in the match that year at Bonnie Doon. So overcome by success was Peter that he forthwith claimed long and distinguished Irish ancestry and burst into song. For five minutes or more he regaled those present with a bawdy Irish ballad sung, one has to say, in a modest baritone, and, flushed with success, he then attempted to decamp with the trophy. He apparently thought that his golf was so good and his singing even better such that he should be entitled to make the trophy his own for all time.

An ugly scene followed, with Bob Toner and David Farthing physically restraining Gray whilst the trophy was recovered from his person. Allan Hughes won a golf shirt (apparently for being there - it could not have been the quality of his golf). Peter Gray also won nearest the pin (2 feet away, he claimed - I saw it - he must have very long feet) and several others won golf balls. All of this was somewhat out of keeping with the elegant surroundings of the Victoria Barracks Officers' Mess where we were all grandly dined and wined in Victorian splendour.

A great night was had and, late in the evening, as proceedings wound down, a number of us repaired to Kittie O'Shea's Hotel in Paddington in search of a cleanser. That was not to be; the establishment was closing as we entered.

It is reliably reported that, not to be outdone, Peter Stitz from Sir Owen Dixon Chambers and Bob Toner were last seen striding, or moving in a manner that can broadly be described as such, to a nearby hotel in further search of strong drink.

Despite the weather, the occasion was again a great success. Next year the RAAF will host the occasion and preliminary thinking is that we will play the Services somewhere in the mountains, probably on a Sunday morning, after dinner at the RAAFOfficers' Mess at Glenbrook,

at Glenbrook, which is the Old Lapstone Hotel. History buffs will be drawn to the occasion like moths to a lamp given that it is, I am assured, the place where Gough and Margaret Whitlam spent their wedding night. Those known to be interested in participating ought, by now, to have received some preliminary information about that occasion. If you are interested, please let me know. If insufficient interest is shown, an early November Friday afternoon format in the city is likely to be arranged.

The annual match against the Solicitors will be played on Thursday, 19th January 1995 at Manly Golf Club. It is expected that before Christmas entry forms will be sent to individuals known to be interested, and not to clerks for display on notice boards. If you receive nothing about the event, please let me know. □

John Maconachie



D. Farthingdale DSC



(left to right) M Gilmour, D Flaherty, P Gray



(left to right) Peter Stitz and Bob Toner