

## OLD TIME HOCKEY TO BIG TIME GOLF



Bill Ezinicki

In 1929 the Boston Bruins were the Stanley Cup Champions. It also marked the first year that the Rhode Island Open was played. What could rough and tumble pro hockey have in common with the polite world of pro golf? More than you think.

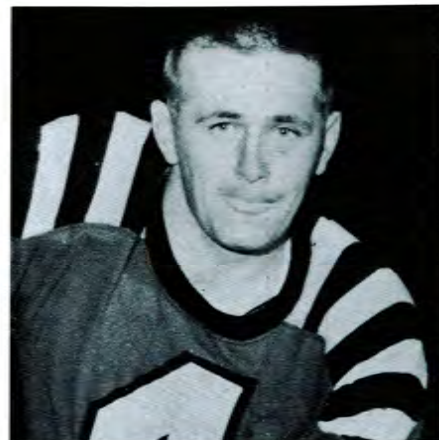
It's no secret that many professional hockey players enjoy playing golf in the off-season, but not many can say they've won a state open. The Rhode Island Open (now the A.T. Cross Open) counts two former pro hockey players in its list of champions – Bill Ezinicki and Stan Baluik.

Ezinicki played 368 games for the Toronto Maple Leafs and Boston Bruins in the mid-1940's to early-1950's. An enforcer-type player, he twice led the NHL in penalty minutes, 1948-49 and 1949-50. He led the way in more than his fair share of donnybrooks in the Boston Garden not to mention most of the other

rinks in the NHL. His aggressive play helped the Leafs to three consecutive Stanley Cups.

In the off-seasons Ezinicki would play in amateur golf tournaments. He improved steadily and became one of Canada's finest players, losing in the finals of the 1947 Canadian Amateur. Upon his retirement from hockey he tried his hand at the PGA Tour. He had some minor success, but after a few years he decided to become a head pro in New England. He won many area tournaments including three consecutive Rhode Island Opens – 1958, 1959 and 1960.

Stan Baluik played for the RI Reds for five seasons in the late-1950's to early-1960's. A fine play-making center, Stan finished fourth in scoring in the AHL with 80 points in the 1958-59 season. The next season he missed making the top 10, but he had 81 points the next two seasons, finishing seventh and eighth respectively.



Stan Baluik

He even had a short stint in the NHL with the Boston Bruins during the 1959-60 season.

Stan retired from the Reds in 1964. He still had at least a few more productive seasons in him, maybe even another shot at the NHL, but he decided to accept the head pro job at Kirkbrae Country Club which was offered to him after the '64 season. He begins his 32nd year at Kirkbrae this year.

Baluik, having won the 1965 Vermont Open, was considered one of the best players among New England club pros. The culmination of both of his professional careers came, perhaps, in 1971. That year Stan was inducted into the RI Reds Hall of Fame, and later in the summer he went on to win the Rhode Island Open.



# RIGA NEWS

Newsletter of the Rhode Island Golf Association

SPRING 1996

## WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM



A likely depiction of Burningbush Golf Club.

By Joe Sprague, Jr.

The game of golf is many things to many people. Like no other game, it tests you. It cajoles you and it teases you. And just when you're sure you've figured it out, it drops you to your knees and kicks you in the side. Why do we allow ourselves to be punished this way? Why do we "roam so far and wide to reach such a tiny goal?" It's something inside that keeps us coming back for more.

Much has been written about golf – volume after volume of instructions, anecdotes, histories and philosophies. There have been books on the fads, gadgets, gurus and heroes. There is one book, however, like no other – *Golf In The Kingdom* by Michael Murphy. First published in

1972, it has enjoyed a cult following which has grown in recent years into devoted legions. I had never heard of the book until six years ago. It's now my favorite golf book, and one of my favorite books, period.

*Golf In The Kingdom* is centered around twenty-four hours in the life of a graduate student from the United States who is on his way to India "to study philosophy and practice meditation with the Indian seer Aurobindo." Along the way he stops off to play the mythical links course named Burningbush. He meets and plays a round with teaching pro Shivas Irons whose philosophies on golf and life are completely intertwined. What happens during and after their round is the basis for the book.

The book is actually written in the form of a retrospective. The author goes into India for a year and a half after his brief stopover in Scotland, and upon his return to the States he can not get Shivas Irons out of his mind. He goes back to Scotland in search of the mysterious golf pro but no one knows what has happened to him. It was then that the author says he began to write down his thoughts about their time together and read through the notes he had taken at Shivas' apartment.

### "SINGING THE PRAISES OF GOLF"

After their round of golf together Shivas invites the author to dinner at the

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Marcus Munsill, Agawam Hunt

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

After some of the beautiful weather we've had recently, spring seems to have finally arrived. Golf will certainly be more pleasurable after our cold, snowy winter. Let us hope we all keep in mind our "pace of play" so that the season will be enjoyable and memorable for everyone. Finally, I know that the whole golfing community joins me in sending condolences to the family of Arthur McLaughlin.



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Can it happen again in '96? What, you ask? Home course advantage, that's what. In 1995 home course advantage was very much in evidence in seven of our championships.

Think about it for a minute. Mike Wilson and Chris Pompeii at Valley; Joe Fogarty - Triggs, Paul Quigley and Nick Cioe - RICC, Kyle Phelps - Green Valley, Dana Quigley - Crestwood, Bill Ferrigno - Winnapaug and the Tri-States at Pawtucket.

This is in no way a knock on those who won because all of them have proven themselves to be bonafide players. But I'm sure they all agree that the home course

had its advantages and gave them an edge. I know if I were still competing and one of the majors was scheduled for my course in '96, I'd be getting excited right about now and would plan to work a little extra hard on my game. Who knows, maybe '96 will be a repeat of '95.

### NEW WAVE IN THE 90'S

Will the 1996 season see the start of a new wave dominating the amateur golf scene or will the "old guard" still prevail? Some of the new names stepping up in '95 included Phelps, Stallman, Young, Auclair and Lunnie.

Over the past 50 years of RIGA competition, every decade had its dominat-

ing players. The mid-1940's to mid-1950's featured the likes of Kozlowski, Campanelli, Newman and Faenza. The mid-50's through the 60's were the glory days for Allen, Kosten, Quinn and Santilli. The 70's had Lutz, Marcotte and Abrams, and the early-80's were dominated by Faxon and Andrade.

Since the mid-80's the names of Quigley, St. Martin and Pirie have been in the headlines most often. Will the second half of the 90's bring some new names on the scene? Time will tell, but I know one thing - the 1996 season should prove to be very exciting.

- Joseph J. Sprague

## IN MEMORIAM: ARTHUR L. McLAUGHLIN 1919-1996



The RIGA lost a loyal friend recently with the passing of Arthur McLaughlin. A mainstay at RIGA events since 1988, Arthur spent countless hours in the scoring tent and behind the announcer's mike.

Arthur was employed in the security department at New England Telephone for more than 35 years before retiring in 1978. He attended Brown University and was very active in the Brown Hockey Association. He was also a communicant at St. Margaret's Church in Rumford.

A member at Wannamoisett Country Club for 35 years, he began his work with the RIGA as the official announcer at the Northeast Amateur Invitational in 1988. He could also often be heard announcing at major tournaments like the State Amateur, Four-Ball and Stroke Play.

Arthur also worked in the scoring tent with Official Scorer Fred Malcolm, and he helped out at many Weekly Invitationals. His presence will be missed not only for his loyalty and dedication to the RIGA, but more importantly, as a true friend to those of us who knew him so well.

## ASSOCIATION NEWS & MISCELLANY



Photo courtesy of Daniel Hyland, Westerly Sun.

Senior Champ Bill Ferrigno of Winnapaug was one of seven home course winners in '95.

Feel like watching **Tiger Woods'** attempt at three in a row? You'll have to go a little farther than Newport this year. The '96 U.S. Amateur will be held at Pumpkin Ridge GC in Oregon on August 19-25. Tickets can be ordered by phone at 1-800-337-3099.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) have done much in recent years to promote their profession. A recent survey shows that the majority of golfers now believe that golf courses are good for the environment. The GCSAA even has its own television program on ESPN. In its second season, "Par For The Course" is a look at the world of golf, touching upon all facets of the game including interviews with golf's movers and shakers, playing tips from top teaching pros and tournament preparation and lawncare tips from superintendents.

Twenty-five original, half-hour episodes will be aired on Sunday mornings at 7:30 Eastern from March 10 through August 25. So set your VCR's if you figure you'll already be at the course.

**Hank Coleman**, co-founder of the Tri-State Bluebird Society, reports that the nesting box program continues to grow. There are now 20 golf courses in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts which have the nesting boxes in place. "Agawam and Crestwood have been the most successful," relates Coleman. Several pairs of blue birds have successfully fledged at the two courses. Despite the late spring, the program promises to experience more success this year.

The Family Golf Association is a new organization formed earlier this year "to promote family fun and values through the game of golf." They have tournaments planned, and if you would like to become a member you can call (609) 466-8191.

There are a few changes this year in the RIGA's major tournaments: The minimum age for the Stroke Play Championship has been reduced from 30 to 25. All RIGA tournaments are now in agreement with the USGA with respect to age limits.

The number of State Amateur qualifiers at the two pre-qualifying sites has been reduced from 40 to 35 players and ties.

Player of the Year points for the Par-3 Championship have been eliminated.

The entry fees at the Mid-Amateur, State Amateur and Stroke Play Championships have been increased by \$5.00 each. The additional monies realized will be used to finance the Rhode Island team at the 1997 USGA State Team Tournament. A site has not yet been determined but the USGA has decided that the tournament will be a biennial event.

Finally, the point structure in determining who will represent the RIGA at the 1997 USGA State Team Tournament will be total points accumulated over two years with 1996 points counting 75% and 1997 points counting 100%. Points for Player of the Year will still be full value.

There have been 11 players who have won both the Rhode Island Junior and State Amateur Championships in their careers including **Brett Quigley** and **Ed Mauro**. Can you name the players who have won the Junior, Amateur and Open Championships? In the 1930's **Tommy Tailer** of Newport and **Mike Bobel** of Metacomet each won two Rhode Island Open crowns to add to their Junior and Amateur titles.

In 1950 **Bobby Allen** won his second of five State Amateurs as well as the Rhode Island Open to complete his RI Slam. The fourth and final member of this select group is a gimme - 1995 Ryder Cupper **Brad Faxon**. Brad won three consecutive State Juniors in the 1970's before adding back to back Amateurs in 1981 and '82. In 1985 he captured his sole Rhode Island Open on his home track, Rhode Island Country Club.



Former RIGA Secretary Ed Perry is flanked by Bob Kosten (L) and Bobby Allen before one of their classic matches in the 1950's.

# AT THE CLUBS

**AGAWAM HUNT** – New watering system on outside holes has greatly improved appearance and playability; plans call for the 16th hole to be returned to its original par-3 design.

**ALPINE** – New general manger for '96, Brian Warrener; recent irrigation and drainage work has been a big help.

**CRANSTON** – Newly constructed 5th green will be open for play in '96; new construction of 6th and 13th greens in the fall.

**CRESTWOOD** – Jim Piquette recently hired as new superintendent; improvements include renovation of 2nd and 11th greens along with some tree removal.

**FOSTER** – Removing trees and clearing out underbrush to help the playing of holes #12-15; hosting RI Junior Amateur in July.

**GLOCESTER** – New and much larger 7th tee will add about 60 yards to the hole; major tree pruning on holes #5-7.

**GREEN VALLEY** – New putting green will be ready for '96 season; fine-tuning the course in preparation for the 1997 A.T. Cross Open.

**KIRKBRAE** – Recently completed state-of-the-art maintenance building to the left of 13th fairway; new 4th tee and new cart paths at holes #9 & #12; major pro shop renovations.

**LAUREL LANE** – Ongoing tree removal to help playability; new cart paths completed; getting ready for State Amateur pre-qualifier.

**LEDGEMONT** – Remodeling exterior of clubhouse and pro shop.

**LINCOLN** – New irrigation system has greatly improved course; Golf course architect consulted in making changes to holes #1, #2 & #9; new sand in all bunkers.

**METACOMET** – We welcome David Weiss from Oak Hill as new head pro; new 3rd green will be open by June 1st; all bunker renovations to original Donald Ross design now completed.

**MISQUAMICUT** – Plans for drainage work on lower nine holes approved.

**MONTAUP** – Improvements to many tees; 14th pond dredged; hosting State Amateur for the first time in July.

**NEWPORT** – After a busy few years of preparation for '95 U.S. Amateur, back to normal in '96.

**NORTH KINGSTOWN** – We welcome new pro and manager Mark O'Brien, a Bryant graduate and formerly of the Captain's Table on the Cape; Fran O'Keefe has taken a pro's position in Maine; Superintendent Gary Carlson and crew have done a great job in improving course each year.

**PAWTUCKET** – Welcome to Heidi Hayes as new club manager; 3rd green will be ready for start of the season.

**POTOWOMUT** – Peter Wilkins, formerly at Pawtucket CC, begins his first year as club manager; golf course greatly improved over last few years.

**POINT JUDITH** – Looking to putting in ponds on holes #1, #2, #3 & #10 to help drainage; ten new blue bird boxes installed; renovation to driving range completed.

**QUIDNESSETT** – Bunker renovation program in progress; Bruce MacDonald is new assistant pro.

**RHODE ISLAND** – Renovations continuing to original Donald Ross design; restoring bunkers, eliminating overgrowth and installing new tees.

**SAKONNET** – Tee renovations on a few holes; ongoing bunker work with 17th hole scheduled for this season.

**SEAVIEW** – New clubhouse and kitchen have added to members' enjoyment.

**TRIGGS** – More new cart paths; 16th & 18th tees to be renovated; complete renovation to signature hole, the par-3 7th, to begin in fall.

**VALLEY** – Continued renovations to bunkers with addition of new sand; purchased new hand mowers to cut greens; trees removed around some greens; major renovations to clubhouse to begin.

**WANNAMOISSETT** – Renovations to 18th hole have provided for more formidable finish; pond on #14 to be enlarged; some trees removed; Jody Bissonnette joins Steve Napoli's staff as new assistant pro.

**WANUMETONOMY** – Members will benefit from new irrigation system and new 13th green, originally done for '95 U.S. Amateur; John Stahl formerly of Montaup is new assistant pro.

**WARWICK** – Restoring bunkers to original Donald Ross design over next three fall seasons; bird nesting boxes to be added around course.

**WEST WARWICK** – New tee on 1st hole for ladies; hosting its first RIGA Weekly.

– Renovation to clubhouse entrance; new 8th tee.

**WOODLAND GREENS** – Completed irrigation program; cart path renovations continue.

## Welcome To The Kingdom

Continued from page 1.

home of his friends, the McNaughtons. After dinner all seven dinner guests sit around the dinner table singing the praises and mysteries of the game. Shivas spoke with his usual eloquence:

*"In golf ye see the essence of what the world itself demands. Inclusion of all our parts, alignment o' them all with one another and with the clubs and with the ball, with all the land we play on an with our playin' partners."*

Shivas honed his metaphysical approach to the game from his teacher Seamus McDuff. Seamus is considered the local madman or wiseman depending on your point of view. He lives in a cave at the bottom of a ravine at Burningbush's 13th hole. He uses just one club – his "baffing spoon" – to play the game. One of the story's highlights is Shivas taking the author to meet Seamus in the middle of the night.

If you haven't read the book this may all sound a bit way out, but the book needs to be taken as a whole. Many golf notables have cited the book in interviews including Tom Watson, Peter Jacobsen and Ben Crenshaw. Golf writer Herbert Warren Wind calls *Golf In The Kingdom* perhaps "the best 'serious' golf book since Arnold Haultain's *The Mystery of Golf* in 1908."

### "THE GAME'S HIDDEN BUT ACCESSIBLE MEANING"

The second part of the book is the author's reflections on Shivas' journal notes. This is where Murphy delves most deeply into the philosophical side of the game.

"A round of golf," he said in his journal notes, "partakes of the journey, and the journey is one of the central myths and signs of Western Man. It is built into his thoughts and dreams, into his genetic code."

In the book, golf is used as a tool for discovering the highest truths and deepest realities of life. There are passages which consider "the whiteness of the ball", "the mystery of the hole" and "how the swing reflects the soul."

There's a whole chapter dedicated to Shivas' notion of "True Gravity" which the author explains is deep awareness of the relation between all things in the universe. It was Shivas's contention that in order to play one's best golf, a player must become properly aligned with these higher universal powers.

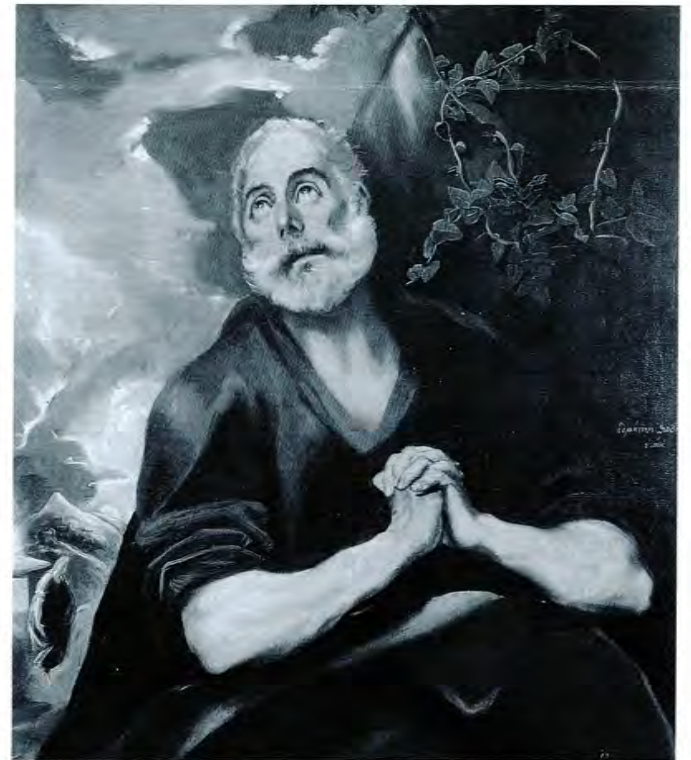
Don't get the wrong impression, though. The book is not some kind of academic treatise on golf. There's still a true love

and reverence for the game at the heart of it. To put it more plainly, if you're a fan of Harvey Penick's *Little Red Book*, Michael Murphy's story just climbs a level or two higher up the philosophical ladder. For instance, where Harvey Penick says to "take dead aim", Shivas Irons might say "Ye must have true gravity, lad. Let the nothingness into yer shots."

Maybe Agatha McNaughton, the dinner hostess at the beginning of the book, summed it up best:

*"Oh, golf is for smellin' the heather and cut grasses and walkin' fast across the countryside and feelin' the wind and watchin the sun go down and seein' yer friends hit good shots and hittin' some yerself. It's love and feelin' the splendor o' this good world."*

It may not change your life, but a walk through *Golf In The Kingdom* would be time very well spent.



Author Murphy cites the work of 16th century Italian painter El Greco as illustrating the concept of the "inner body," an extension of Shivas Irons' idea of "true gravity." It may seem like a stretch but if you read the book there is both method and meaning to the apparent madness.