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Writing Samples

TITLE: Cameron Smith Wins the Open at St. Andrews

Meta Description: The Open at St Andrews came to a close with an unforgettable finish for Cameron Smith's first career major win.

Link to Article on Web: <https://stickandhack.com/cameron-smith-wins-the-open-at-st-andrews/>

The energy in the air transcended individual players or scores this past weekend as the 150th Open at St Andrew's capped the men's golf major season. The competition did nothing less than surpass expectations, with Cameron Smith clawing his way to victory after starting Sunday at a four-shot deficit. Cameron Young and Rory McIlroy followed closely behind, unable to outpace Smith as he fought his way past. For months, the golf world has been buzzing about [this tournament, at this course, on this landmark anniversary year](#). And St Andrew's delivered in every way.

Though the Home of Golf is unique in many aspects, one of the biggest features of the Old Course is its integration into the streets of the town. Most other champion courses are set away from city centers or neighbor's porches. Some are so remote that mountains or deserts rim their edges.

At the Old Course, on the other side of the fence are sidewalks, porches, and patios. Locals set out with their dogs and smoke a cigar while they recline and watch the legends play. The spectators without tickets clammer together on garden walls for a better view of the 18th fairway. Fans cheered from windows and decks as well as grandstands when Tiger took the tee box at one, and again when [he crossed the Swilcan Bridge for potentially the last time](#). For the past week, St Andrews was the world, and its club championship was the 150th Open.

"The ground is rock hard out there today," golf essayist Jim Dodson said over a beer on Thursday as Rory McIlroy made his best effort from the rough of 15, only to have his ball bounce its way off of the green.

Dodson hit the nail on the head. Western courses like Troon or Dundonald have had regular rains rolling off the Atlantic coast, but to the east, St Andrews Links has been hardened by drought for weeks leading up to the 150th Open Championship. With the sun keeping the course a pleasant 70 degrees, the biggest environmental obstacles to players this weekend were the ground and characteristic coastal winds.

Still, key leaders fought for their position throughout the weekend, scoring so well that murmurs of course records dominated spectator conversation. Cameron Smith finished out on top with an overall 20 under par for the weekend, matching the record for lowest score to par in a major championship and snatching his first major win and the No. 2 world ranking.

“Those guys are great players. They weren’t going to give it to me. I had to take it,” [Cameron Smith said after his win](#).

Smith flipped the script on the "business in the front party in the back" attitude that his mullet would suggest when he made 5 straight birdies to finish out Sunday's back 9, leaving the likes of Rory McIlroy, Cameron Young, and Viktor Hovland in his wake.

Hovland, in particular, was one to watch this weekend, ending his season with the best major finish of his still emerging career. At the end of round 3, he shared the lead alongside McIlroy but finished Sunday in the crowd-pleasing #4 spot. McIlroy, finishing third, led for 54 holes and hit every green in regulation during his final round. Suffice to say, it was a tough loss.

Cameron Smith celebrated the win as much as he worked for it. “I’m definitely going to find out how many beers fit in this thing,” Smith said. “These last four or five holes aren't easy around here, especially with the wind up off the left. I'm just really proud of how I knuckled down today and managed to get it done.”

TITLE: “The Phantom of the Open” Shows the Hero in Every Hack

Meta Description: Oscar winner Mark Rylance stars as the "Worst Pro Golfer in History," Maurice Flitcroft, in this cult classic in-the-making.

Link to Article on Web: <https://stickandhack.com/the-phantom-of-the-open-shows-the-hero-in-every-hack/>

Subhead: *The Phantom of the Open* opened in New York and Los Angeles on June 3 and will roll out in select theatres in the US and Canada through June 24. Look up [showtimes in your area here](#), or [check out the trailer](#).

Something was already amiss when Maurice Flitcroft teed up on hole 1 of the Open on July 7, 1976. He was an unknown name to the crowd. Something peculiar sat in the way he watched the other pros on the tee box, wide-eyed with a twinge of fear. Maybe it was the daunting world-class course. Maybe it was because his being there stood somewhere between a clerical error and a miracle.

You see, this was Maurice's first true round of golf. His historic round at the 1976 British Open is at the center of *The [Phantom of the Open](#)*, a dramatic and comical retelling of Flitcroft's almost unbelievable life.

An entire world of hacks related as the announcer commentated Flitcroft's '76 finish on hole 13. "He's celebrating like he just holed for a birdie, but that was for a ten." Flitcroft ended his round that day with 121, the worst round in British Open history. *Phantom of the Open* shows us how a dreamer made a smashing success out of 49 over par.

From an outsider's perspective, Maurice Flitcroft, played by Mark Rylance, might be mistaken for any other ordinary, soft-spoken crane operator at a small town shipyard. But it only took watching Tom Watson's 1975 Open victory through his television set to spark Flitcroft's fascination with golf. From that point on, he had his sights set on the claret jug.

The film introduces you to the Flitcroft family in a way that feels like you're listening around a corner or peeking over a shoulder. With a keen sense of duty to his family, true respect for pursuing one's dreams, and a matter-of-fact attitude, we begin to understand that Flitcroft is much more than he lets on.

In one scene, Flitcroft tells Seve Ballesteros, "love your errors, and you can't go wrong." That is the crux of what sets Maurice apart: his abundant willingness to keep at it, no matter how badly the round seems to be shaking out.

In a way, there's a bit of that intrepid hacker in all of us with above-average handicaps. And this story goes beyond the course. *The Phantom of the Open* shows the power of persistence, hope, and family.

Rylance won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor in 2016 for his performance in Spielberg's *Bridge of Spies*. His counterpart in this film, Sally Hawkins, is best known for her role as Elisa Esposito in *The Shape of Water*. *Phantom of the Open* is directed by Craig Roberts and adapted by Simon Farnaby from his book *The Phantom of The Open: Maurice Flitcroft, the World's Worst Golfer* (co-written by Scott Murray.)

The Phantom of the Open opened in New York and Los Angeles on June 3 and will roll out nationwide through June 24. Look up [showtimes in your area here](#), or [check out the trailer](#).

TITLE: Nomads Carry On the African American Golfing Tradition

Meta Description: The Nomads Golf Club holds a reputation as one of the most exclusive golf clubs in America, and for good reason.

Link to Article on Web: <https://stickandhack.com/nomads-golf-club/>

One of the most exclusive and prestigious golf clubs in America is coming to French Lick, Indiana for their annual member meeting this week. The Nomads Golf Club, a group of 70 African American men from different walks of life across the country, come together once a year to play golf, share stories, and bond over what brings them together: a love for the game.

“For 51 weeks of the year, you can do whatever you like, but that 52nd week, the last week of July, that’s Nomad week,” said club president Walt Bowers.

The Nomads originated in Chicago in 1950, when Chicago-based lawyer Eugene Wood gathered a group of affluent African American men for regular meetings at Chicago’s Wayside Golf Course. This is the same Wayside Golf Course where Joe Louis lost \$10,000 to a buddy in a single round (as told by [John H. Kennedy in his book](#), “A Course of Their Own”). [According to the Nomads](#), they began traveling from course to course, playing at the best clubs that would let them in, after the Wayside clubhouse burnt down. One of their earliest member meetings was at the Keller Golf Club in Minneapolis, home of the 1954 PGA Championship and the 1958 Nomads Golf Club Member Tournament.

Among the Nomads in their first tournament were the likes of former NFL linebacker and Hall of Famer Judge Frederick “Duke” Slater and olympic gold medalist, Congressman, and founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus Ralph Metcalfe. Such accolades are par for the course with the Nomads, which is still known as one of the most exclusive golf clubs in the United States.

Minnesota Governor Orville Freeman attended their award ceremony that week, but it wasn’t lost on that first cohort that the members were playing golf in a city that was carved [from redlining and racial covenants](#), many of which were still in place, if legally null. That, and the sentiments that drove those racist policies were still alive and well across the United States.

Private golf courses have always been allowed to create their own standards for limiting membership. Generally speaking, policies fall along lines of income, community influence, or other points of character. In the not-so-distant past, race also played a huge factor in club memberships. Augusta National, for example, [didn’t admit its first Black member until 1990](#). Today, 9 of its 300 members are Black, while according to the 2020 census, 57% of the surrounding [county identifies as Black or African American](#). There are a variety of factors at play for golf in the race conversation, but there is no denying that race is a point of conversation in the game.

The Nomads Golf Club was founded over 70 years ago, when most clubs wouldn’t admit African American men as members, no matter their social standing. The group’s name is a symbol of that history; a group of affluent golfers without a clubhouse that

would take them in because of the color of their skin. Today, the group keeps its nomadic nature, and embraces it as a reason to travel and play some of America's greatest courses for their annual member tournament.

This week, they're carrying on that tradition on French Lick's Donald Ross and Pete Dye Courses. [These two world-class golf courses](#) are nestled in the rolling hills of Southern Indiana. The Dye course, which sits on top of what its creator called the "tallest mountain in Indiana," was originally sketched out on a paper napkin, which French Lake Resort & Casino still has on display.

The Ross Course was originally known as the Hill Course when it opened in 1917, and the curve between 8 and 9 would reveal exactly why that is. Its slopes and bunkers are coated in what golf journalist Mike Hembree describes as "devil grass", providing for a world-class challenge along its fairways.

Though the Nomads keep their membership limited to 70, they do sometimes allow for guests to join their ranks for parts of their annual meeting. Nasser Sutherland from title sponsor OnCore Golf has witnessed some of the play first hand.

"I think from an internal perspective, and for clubs that are trying to kind of emulate them, that premise of being character based, is hugely important."

OnCore Golf became a sponsor for the Nomads four years ago, when the Nomads were seeking someone in the golf industry that suited their values.

"We're proud to be their first sponsor. We play in their practice rounds each year." Sutherland said, "I think in any industry, it's important. But especially in golf. Golf is one of those things where you're not playing in huge crowds. We're picking the three guys we want to play with if that. So it's intimate, right? And golfers are intimate."

"Getting to know the nomads and other groups like them, really put a face on Black men in golf. And I can touch history." Sutherland said, "To know a group of African American men that are very successful in their personal life, and they golf, it really brought everything full circle. For me, it was like, whoa, okay, this isn't just a history blurb that I need to know about. It didn't disappear."

Though OnCore's business model focuses on high-quality personalized golf equipment, their company's core values have always included the foundations of DEI.

"It's in our DNA. Steve and Brett didn't have to bring me in from the jump, but they did. And I think that speaks volumes," Sutherland said, "A lot of times in diversity and inclusion, there's the token aspect of things, where you'll find one person of color and they feel ostracized or like they have to assimilate. It's the exact opposite at OnCore."

“Even if you never become a Nomad, the fact that you know that the Nomads exist, the fact that the world knows that the Nomads exist and are welcome will help the next golfer of color.”

Sutherland and OnCore co-founder Steve Coulton will be joining the Nomads again this year in French Lick. The club activities run through Thursday, when a champion is announced and board positions for the next year are decided.