

The New Golf Champion.

Surprise Defeats of All the Experts.

BY A ROVING PLAYER.

JOHN WOOLLAM, a Cheshire business man, young, tall and alert, is the new English golf champion. He is very little known outside his own particular sphere of influence, and I doubt very much whether more than a mere handful of golfers in the south have ever heard of his name. But Woollam's name will always be associated with a championship which produced a longer chain of extraordinary events than any of its predecessors. For example, of the six English players in the last British Walker Cup team, not one survived to the semi-final, the last to disappear being Eric Fiddian, the holder.

It would be imagined that half a dozen picked players, supposed to be the cream of amateur golf in this country, would put up a better show. The fact that they did not opens the door to destructive criticism. It is not that they were engaged in cutting one another's throats; indeed all, with the exception of Rex Hartley, were beaten by players of lesser renown. Hartley lost a desperate match at the twenty-first to Fiddian, who, at the previous hole, would not have taken 500 to 1 about his chances.

Neither would any sane person in similar circumstances, for it is not reasonable to expect that, with two for the match from less than a yard, the opponent is going to knock your ball into the hole and present you with a half. I do not recollect a more tragic instance of what may be described as momentary carelessness on the part of a first-class golfer with a wide experience. Hartley lost a match which he should have won, and it is conceivable the championship into the bargain.

This particular incident illustrates once again the importance of being on one's guard against taking things for granted. Nothing is certain in golf. There is the classic case of Havers, in the recent Roehampton tournament, taking three putts from fifteen inches. He missed the first because he took it for granted that the holing of the putt was a mere formality, and jabbing one-handed at the next, missed the ball altogether. If it were possible to give a reasonably accurate estimate of the number of six-inch putts missed in the course of a year by players aiming a one-handed blow at the ball the total would be so astonishing, and would create so deep an impression, that I believe there would be far fewer careless golfers in the world.

It will not be without interest to follow the progress, terribly short in some cases, of the other five Walker Cup players. As for Fiddian, who never really struck his true form, he was beaten in the sixth round by the ultimate winner. In the case of a young man it may sound a little curious, but I have an impression that he has never quite recovered from last year's strenuous events, which included the finals of two championships and a trip to America to play in the Walker Cup match.

The attempt to maintain one's reputation in continuous play in first-class events entails considerable physical and mental strain, far



THE BAYS AND THE GORSE: GIVING THE NEW CHAMPION "A HAIR OF THE DOG THAT BIT HIM." While cheering and chiring J. Woollam, the new English Amateur golf champion, at Ganton, after his victory, a practical joker raises above him a bit of the gorse both finalists had so frequently found from the tee during their wild match.

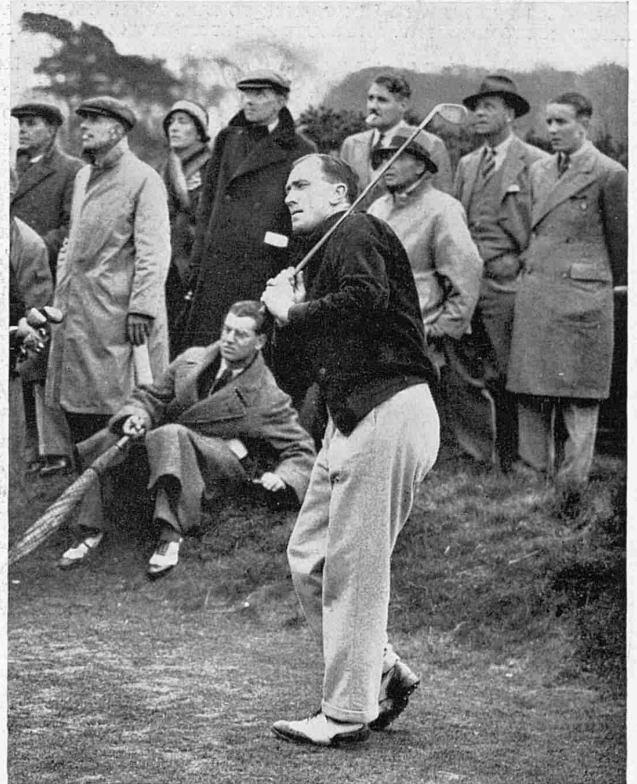
more severe than the ordinary person imagines. There is the case of Bobby Jones who retired from the arena for no other reason than that the strain was so tremendous that he felt a complete breakdown was inevitable if he went on. Fiddian is now compelled to wear spectacles, which do not make the playing of golf any the easier.

THE first of the "tigers" to be beaten was Leonard Crawley. He had not only trained hard, but practised diligently for the event, and his determination was such that defeat was wholly unexpected. His downfall was encompassed by the giant-killer of the championship—J. L. Esplen of the Royal Calcutta club. I remember Esplen when, as a scratch player at the Wanstead club, he won the Essex championship. He is now an exchange broker in Calcutta, and being home on holiday took the opportunity of trying his hand in a national event. He succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. He got rid of Crawley in an exciting match at the twenty-first, and then accounted for J. A. Stout, a pronounced favourite be-

cause of local associations, by two holes. Here were scalps of two illustrious players, either of whom, it would have been thought, would have annihilated Esplen. But the man from Calcutta is not only a lovely hitter of the ball, but he uses his head as well as the club-head, in addition to which he is a courageous fighter. Apparently, reputations mean nothing to Esplen, who works on the principle that, — as the opponent cannot interfere with your game, the thing to do is to keep on hitting the ball and leaving the rest to look after itself. One cannot do more, and it is possible to do a good deal less if too much heed is taken of the other fellow.

After these two hectic battles it was not surprising that Esplen suffered a setback in his next match in which he ran up against Rex Hartley. However, Esplen can have nothing but pleasant recollections of his merry little jaunt at Ganton. I was a little taken aback by the nature of Stout's defeat. All square with two to play, he cut his tee shot at the seventeenth into a bunker and took two shots to recover, while at the eighteenth his drive dived into a mass of gorse, and the ball was never found.

The British champion, John de Forest, was beaten by W. Sutton, a well-known player in the Lancashire and Cheshire districts. De Forest hopes to atone for this defeat by again winning the British title at Hoylake next month. I have now mentioned all the six international players except Lister Hartley, who got through two rounds and lost to Bourn.



A GIANT KILLER WHO ALSO HAD TO BITE THE DUST: J. L. ESPLEN. J. L. Esplen, the young player who entered from the Royal Calcutta Club for the English Amateur golf championship at Ganton, "fluttered the doves" there by laying low two former holders of the title in Leonard Crawley and J. A. Stout. Then he himself went down rather badly to R. W. Hartley.

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