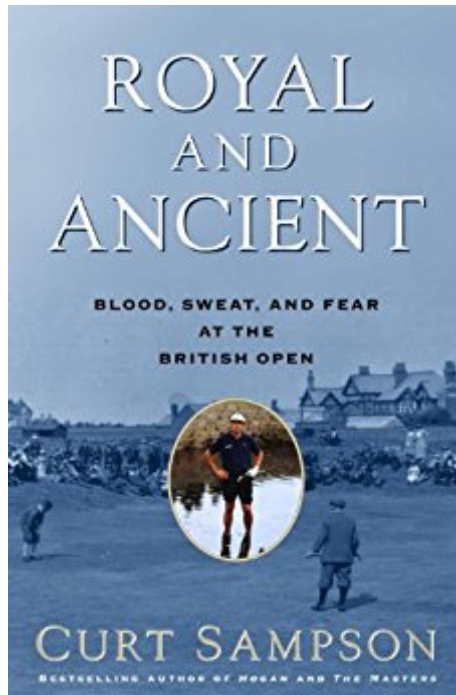


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Royal And Ancient: Blood, Sweat, And Fear At The British Open



Synopsis

For a century and a half, the best golf players in the world have, once a year, attempted to beat the weather, the pressure, and one of the toughest courses in the world at the British Open. In *Royal and Ancient*, Curt Sampson, the bestselling author of *Hogan and The Masters*, draws a definitive and affectionate portrait of this legendary tournament, with a fascinating narrative of both its rich history and its exciting present. The thread of *Royal and Ancient* is the 1999 championship--the most astonishing four days in British Open history. Sampson follows individual players as they meet the gut-wrenching challenge of the links at Carnoustie: the icy classicist, Steve Elkington; the good-looking bon vivant, Andrew Magee; the struggling hopeful, Clark Dennis; Zane Scotland, the youngest Open qualifier in history. Sampson is there for Jean Van de Velde's dramatic collapse on the final day, probing both Van de Velde and his caddie for their emotional insights. He gets inside the heads of stars and journeymen, caddies and groundskeepers, and shows how they prepare and how they think as the tournament progresses, from the qualifying rounds to the practice sessions, all the way through the play-off on the final day. Beyond his excellent reportage, Curt Sampson captures British Open history as it's never been captured before. With an insider's knowledge and expertise, he draws us into the rarefied atmosphere of tradition and myth, telling the amazing--and sometimes heartbreaking--stories of past champions, of triumphs and tragedies, of deaths and ghosts. We hear the unexpectedly poignant story of one of the early greats, Tommy Morris, the invincible champion of the 1860s and 1870s, and explore the loyal Scottish fascination with the legendary Ben Hogan. The reminiscences of past and current participants combine with the behind-the-scenes stories of everyone from the club superintendent to the local pub owners to give an intimate look at this unique tournament. In his book *The Majors*, John Feinstein called Curt Sampson's *The Masters* the best book ever written about that Augusta event. Now, in *Royal and Ancient*, Sampson cracks the inner circle of another remarkable major to provide this fascinating and truly all-embracing view of the British Open. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

File Size: 911 KB

Print Length: 272 pages

Publisher: Villard; 1 edition (July 6, 2011)

Publication Date: July 6, 2011

Sold by: Random House LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00589AYOA

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #665,020 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #63

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Customer Reviews

Did Curt Sampson come to Carnoustie, Scotland in 1999 expecting to turn the British Open upside-down like he did Augusta National in "The Masters?" If so, he was beaten to the punch by a genial Frenchman named Jean Van de Velde who gave golf's signature event its wackiest finish ever. I didn't like "The Masters" much; its agenda was a little harsh. But "Royal And Ancient" sees Sampson approach his topic with more respect, and get better results. He takes in the history of the Open, champions from Old Tom Morris to young Tom Watson, the sound of Carnoustie's winds whipping through the media tents and the dry fescue, and the separate pilgrimages three American golfers take for the big event. "Royal And Ancient" is scattershot in many ways; none of the three golfers Sampson spotlights make the cut. He spends a good deal of time honing his Dan Jenkins aspirations, detailing the misadventures of a tour hanger-on who doesn't merit the print. Sampson wrote a famous bio on Ben Hogan, and there are times Sampson seems in danger of writing another here. But after a slow beginning Sampson puts you right at the center of things, analyzes expectations against results and giving a thorough sense of what a British Open entails by using this particular year's edition as a case study. He rambles some, but he tells some fun stories and quotes some interesting people. The big controversy at Carnoustie most of the week was the condition of the course, with the rough grown so high players could not try to advance the ball if it went off the fairway. A writer likens it to asking basketball players to play with a medicine ball. Meanwhile, course superintendent John Philp argues the game is supposed to be a test of skill and not a birdie racket.

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