

From the Archives – 17th April 2025

Professional Golf Tournament at Roehampton Club in April 1925

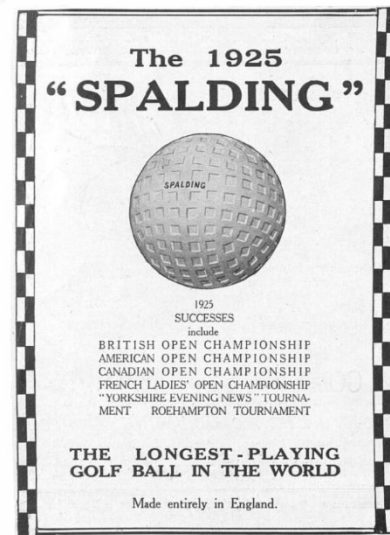


By the early 20th century, professional golf was beginning to take its place on the sporting stage, with a growing number of tournaments drawing crowds and attention across Britain. The Open Championship, established in 1860, was the pioneer, but the scene truly began to flourish with events like the *News of the World* Match Play, launched in 1903 and supported by its namesake newspaper. Organised by the then-newly formed Professional Golfers' Association (PGA), it brought together the country's best professionals in a structured, high-stakes competition.

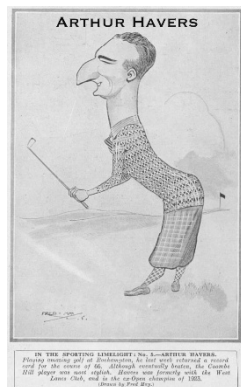
By the 1920s, the professional golf circuit included regional events such as the Midland Professional Championship and the Irish PGA Championship, helping to grow the game across the British Isles and build the reputations of many of the era's finest players.

Roehampton Club, too, became part of the flourishing development of professional golf with the launch of the Roehampton Invitation Golf Tournament in 1920. Held annually throughout the 1920s, the tournament quickly established itself as a highlight in the British golfing calendar.

The 1925 event was no exception, drawing a stellar field of top-tier professionals. While there is no record of a formal commercial sponsor, the tournament attracted attention from the leading golf equipment manufacturers – most notably the Spalding Company, which referenced the event in its national advertising. Though it's unlikely Spalding contributed directly to the prize fund, their promotional tie-in reflects the growing relationship between sport, marketing and product placement. The £200 prize money was most likely funded through a combination of gate receipts and Club support.



As previously mentioned, the 1925 event attracted a strong field of professional players to compete for the prestigious Roehampton Cup together with prize money of £200 – equivalent to approximately £15,500 in today's money. The competition took place over three days with the first day devoted to two qualifying rounds of stroke play. The top sixteen players with the lowest score would then go through to the match play stage of the event over the following two days. In 1925, there were 66 players involved in the draw for the qualifying round on day one.



This included many notable players such as former Open Champions, George Duncan and Arthur Havers, Abe Mitchell, regarded as the 'greatest golfer never to have won an Open Championship', Aubrey Boomer, two-time winner of the French Open Championship, James Ockenden, regular participant in the Open

Championship, Arthur Compston, known for his flamboyant personality and his reputation as a match play specialist, and finally Percy Alliss, father of the famous golf commentator Peter Alliss, winner of the German Open Championship and considered 'a talented and promising golf professional'. Roehampton Club Golf Professional and his Assistant FG Holden were also included in the Qualifying Draw.

Day one of the event generated a remarkable series of headlines in the newspapers referring to perfect golf and record scores. The initial star of the show was early starter James Ockenden who carded a course record score of 68. This was beaten shortly afterwards by Abe Mitchell who posted not one but two course record scores of 67. His combined score of 137 shots was the best ever score over 36 holes in competitive golf across the whole of Great Britain.

Not to be outdone, former Open Champion, Arthur Havers achieved yet another course record score of 66 beating the 67 put together by Abe Mitchell. Meanwhile, George Gadd failed to make the last 16 for the match play stage of the tournament but his Assistant did make it through also winning his first round match in the match play stage against Len Holland from Gerrards Cross GC before losing 7 and 6 to Percy Alliss.

Other first round matches saw the elimination of two former Open Champions namely Arthur Havers (course record holder from the day before) and George Duncan who was disqualified in peculiar circumstances in which Duncan had failed to understand the rules of golf when his opponent hit the ball twice and wrongly assumed that the number of shots applied to the incident was two shots for a double-hit plus a penalty stroke of one shot making a total of 3.

The two semi-final matches involved Abe Mitchell playing Aubrey Boomer and Arthur Compston playing Percy Alliss. In a closely contested match Aubrey Boomer defeated Abe Mitchell by one hole. The match was described in the newspapers as a 'putting duel'. Boomer took an early lead, but Mitchell fought back squaring the match at the 9th hole. The tenth hole proved critical, where a stymie prevented Mitchell from squaring the match after a good recovery shot. Boomer eventually secured victory on the final hole. The other semi-final saw Arthur Compston defeat Percy Alliss by 4 and 2. Compston's putting was noted as being particularly strong.

The final of the Professional Golf Tournament at Roehampton Club in 1925 was witnessed by 1000 spectators and was well reported in the newspapers. The final was contested between Aubrey Boomer and Arthur Compston. In a 'most exciting match,' Aubrey Boomer emerged as the winner, defeating Arthur Compston by 2 and 1. The match saw decisive putting from both players, but ultimately, it was Aubrey Boomer's consistent play and 'plucky putting' that enabled him to secure the Roehampton Cup.

This win was particularly noteworthy in his career as it marked his emergence as a formidable competitor in British golf. In defeating one of the leading British golf professionals at the time, Aubrey Boomer's had announced his arrival in the golfing world. The victory at Roehampton Club served as a catalyst for Aubrey Boomer's subsequent successes, including multiple wins in continental Europe and participation in the inaugural Ryder Cup in 1927. In summary, Aubrey Boomer's victory at Roehampton Club was a significant milestone that not only elevated his professional standing but also mirrored the dynamic evolution of British golf during the 1920s. It also cemented the reputation of Roehampton Club as a premier venue successfully hosting a major event in the golfing calendar.

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