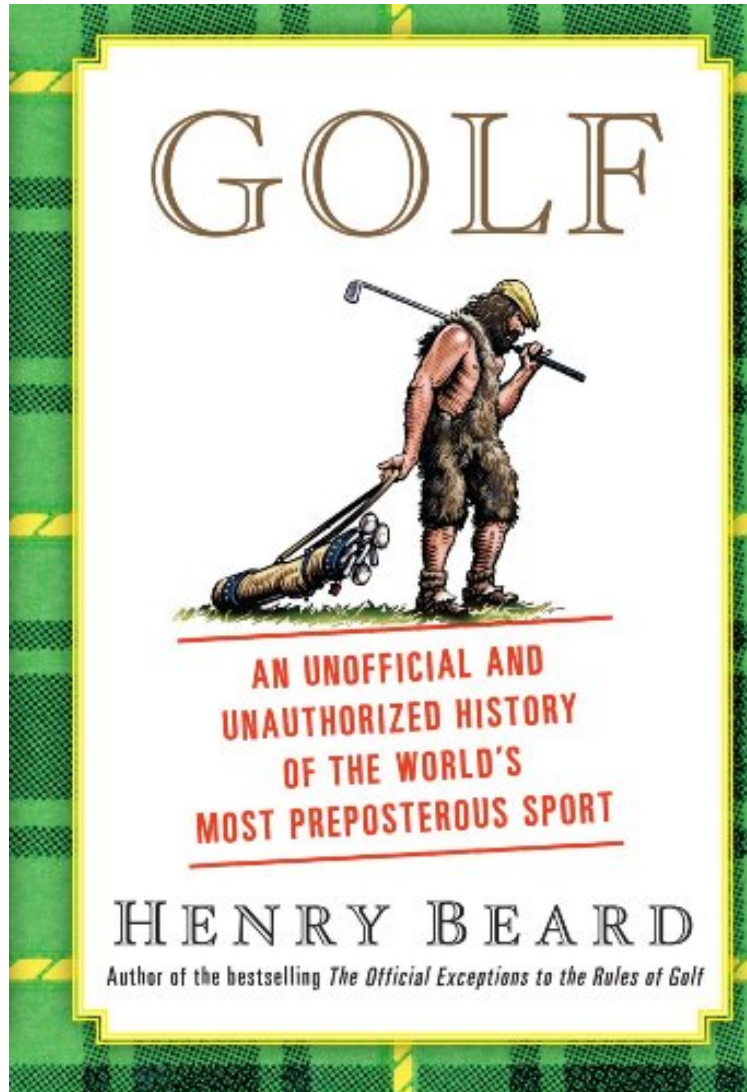


Golf: An Unofficial and Unauthorized History of the Worl

Henry Beard

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Henry Beard : Golf: An Unofficial and Unauthorized History of the Worl before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Golf: An Unofficial and Unauthorized History of the Worl:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. he thoroughly enjoyed it. It's the funny history of that crazy ...By JudgesJoyBought this for a friend. Being an avid golfer, he thoroughly enjoyed it. It's the funny history of that crazy game! He recommends it.

- An ingenious mix of facts and flights of fancy: The history of golf begins in 732 AD, when a relic of St. Andrew—patron saint of Scotland and of golf—was found wearing a copper arthritis bracelet. And who could forget

1492, when Christopher Columbus discovered the birthplace of Tiger Woods. Golf is the perfect gift for the serious—and not so serious—golfer. • Bestselling humorist: Henry Beard has authored or coauthored ten parodies, five of which are New York Times bestsellers, as well as more than two dozen other humor books, including *French for Cats* and *The Official Politically Correct Dictionary*. • Golf is Beard's game: In a New York Times interview, Beard once said "It's the most insidious of sports because once in a while you have a day where you do extraordinarily well and you think you can do very well—and you can't. It's just a tease. Even a Zen monk would be driven crazy by golf." Beard has written seven other golf humor books, including *Golfing: The Duffer's Dictionary* and *The Official Rules of Bad Golf*.

About the Author Henry Beard attended Harvard University and was a member of the Harvard Lampoon. He went on to found the National Lampoon with Douglas Kenney and served as its editor during the magazine's heyday in the 1970s. He has written numerous bestselling humor books, including *Miss Piggy's Guide to Life* and (with Christopher Cerf) *The Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook*. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION When I first set out to write a book tracing the origins and charting the evolution of this strange sport in which a number of special clubs are used to hit a small, stationary ball into a series of widely spaced holes in the ground, I encountered pretty much universal reactions of befuddlement and disbelief from my fellow players that could probably best be summarized as, "Who gives a rat's patootie about the history of golf? Just tell me how in hell to play the stupid game." I was tempted to respond by quoting the famous admonition made by the great philosopher George Santayana (16-handicap, played a big fade, a demon with the flat stick)—namely, that those who do not study history are condemned to study much more difficult subjects like trigonometry, Latin, or Russian literature—but I realized they had a point. After all, this frustrating, infuriating, but ultimately captivating pastime has plenty of far more pressing mysteries to unravel than the question of where it came from—truly knotty problems like taming a snaphook, or battling the yips, or curing a case of the shanks. And, honestly, who cares whether the head case who dreamed the whole thing up was a Scottish whackjob, a Dutch whackjob, or even a Chinese whackjob? We still have to figure out how to slash a ball out of hip-high rough, or blast a sand shot from an unraked footprint in a bunker, or hit a duffed drive off the ladies' tee with dignity. Well, the fact is that the numerous and often quite detailed accounts of the genesis and growth of golf really do have much of practical value to offer even casual students of the game, who can derive immediate and tangible benefits from little more than a passing familiarity with a few key items in the sport's rich chronology. For instance, if your tee shot on a water hole lands in the drink, you might want to remind your fellow players of the royal decree promulgated by King James in 1606 guaranteeing "safe, free, and fair passage over all ye waters and washes of ye realm, be they firths, lochs, tarns, burns, runnels, sloughs, fens, or bogs, for all and sundry, and for their goods and chattels, without hindrance, fee, or penalty, from now and for all time." Similarly, a golfer who finds his or her ball in an obstructed lie behind a large tree would do well to recall Admiralty Order 27 issued by the Sea Lords of the Cinque Ports in 1557 reserving prime stands of timber for future use as spars in ships of the Royal Navy and requiring all persons to take such steps as are reasonably necessary to preserve particularly fine woodland specimens from harm, including, of course, preventing the damage that could be caused by a blocked shot that chipped the bark of an obvious candidate for conversion into the mast of a frigate. And a competitor facing a hopeless downhill double-breaking twenty-five-foot money putt on the 18th hole of a Sunday skins match might choose to cite the Edinburgh Council's prohibition of 1592 against "playing golf in time of sermons" and insist on a draw, perhaps accompanying his opportune recollection of the ban on Sabbath play with a sharp slap to his forehead to display remorse at his prior forgetfulness of the obligation to engage in more appropriately pious pursuits on the day of rest. Now surely, out of a sense of respect for the time-honored customs and centuries-old traditions of golf, and in recognition of the memorable exploits on the links of so many legendary players celebrated in its chronicles, you owe it to yourself and, yes, to the very spirit of this great game, to take a do-over on that tee shot that got wet, throw that stymied ball out into the fairway, and pick up that putt. And in any event, always bear in mind that, as was so aptly remarked by the noted essayist and critic Ralph "Wild-o" Emerson (a scratch player but inclined to spray his drives, hence his nickname), the only reason it's called "golf" is that all the other four-letter words were already taken. © 2009 Henry Beard