



Lambton Golf & Country Club

# I LAMBTON

*A Celebration of our Past & Present*

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# Olympic Golf, Gold & Glory for George S. Lyon & Lambton G&CC

After five consecutive days of seemingly endless golf, a 36-hole stroke play qualifier and then two 18-hole matches a day for four days, Lambton Golf & Country Club's, George S. Lyon was on the verge of making history in the Olympic Games at Glen Echo Country Club in St. Louis, Missouri.

What the 46-year-old thought about as he fell asleep on the night of September 23, 1904, before his final match against 20-year-old Chandler Egan is anyone's guess. There's no doubt he was battle-scarred, perhaps physically aching after walking the soggy fairways or mentally exhausted, but like all successful Olympians, there is no doubt that he was looking forward to the challenge with a never give-up attitude.

George was a natural athlete who played many sports over the years – baseball, football, hockey, lacrosse, cricket, soccer, and curling among them. He didn't take golf up until 37 years of age. As thoughts ran through his mind as he relaxed in bed that evening in the Glen Echo clubhouse, he might have tried to remember what he was doing at the age of 20. He may have recalled that he won a medal in 1876 at the age of 18 for setting a national record in pole vaulting, another Olympic sport, at 10 feet, six inches.

One thing that probably didn't cross George's mind as he lay his head down on his pillow to shut his eyes was the idea that we would still be writing and reading about him 117 years later. Nor could George have dreamt of how much worthy recognition he would bring to Canada and Lambton Golf and Country Club by winning golf's Olympic gold medal on American soil. More rain was in the forecast for the next day, the course could not handle much more water. It was time to sleep.



George S. Lyon with his clubs and Olympic golf trophy.

It's important to remember that the eight-time Canadian Amateur champion was not alone at Glen Echo. The field of 75 included 72 Americans and three Canadians. Lambton founding father, Albert Austin, and his son Bert, also made the train excursion to St. Louis. The trip included a stop at the eye-opening World's Fair that was being hosted in the city at the same time. Of those 75, only 32 qualified for the match play rounds and a shot at the trophy and Olympic medals.

Neither of the Austin's made it through qualifying, however Albert did win his consolation match and squared off on the Friday in the International President's Cup match, 36 holes, against Colonel McGrew from Glen Echo, who brought the tournament to the club. Albert lost that match and then had the pleasure of mingling with other golfers and watching George's march into golf history books.

It poured rain throughout the final. The weather was so bad that the players had to chip over water on the greens. By the end of the morning round, Chandler Egan had regrouped and was only down by one hole. In the afternoon round, it became obvious that Egan was becoming quite frustrated by the fact that this older man with the odd swing was consistently out-hitting him with straight drives down the fairway. He began to press and his shots became more inconsistent. With three holes to go, and down by two, Egan required four strokes to reach the 16th green. Lyon was within two feet of the hole in three. Egan missed his putt and Lyon calmly sank his for the win 3 and 2. He was the Olympic champion and Gold medal winner. In the clubhouse after the round, George reportedly walked the length of the dining room on his hands. He wanted to make a statement and that he did!

*In his book, *Golf in Canada - A History*, James Barclay wrote, "His colourful excursions in such events (the Olympics) caused pages to be written in the Canadian sporting sheets, helping to bring golf to the attention of thousands who had never heard of the game. George Lyon caught the interest and imagination of all. He is remembered as a man who played golf for the sheer enjoyment of it, as one who lived to win with deep and untrammeled sincerity, but who knew how to win graciously, how to lose gracefully. Above all, he was a man who hewed to the written and unwritten rules of the game."*

Though the gold medal won by George has now been lost to history — family descendants think it was pawned — the legacy of Glen Echo continues in St. Louis and the trophy he won is now part of the



**This Albert Austin portrait hangs in the clubhouse Dining Room.**

Golf Canada collection. Visitors can still buy a replica of the medal in the golf shop.

"Glen Echo is proud of its role in Olympic history and their members are well versed in the stories and exploits of the personalities who took part in the historic event," says Lambton member Alek Oleszkowicz,



**A replica of the 1904 Olympic medal.**

who participated in several of the annual Glen Echo vs. Lambton matches that took place from 2004 to 2018 between the two clubs.

"It's a special place to visit for anyone who appreciates the history of golf. Against all odds, George S. Lyon put Canada and Lambton G&CC on the map. You can still see the Olympic flag flying there today as a reminder of the event and they have plaques on the course that connect today's golfer with the past. It's very cool to be able to stand on the exact spot on No. 15 where Chandler Egan dumped his ball into the lake and lost the tournament."

Glen Echo initiated the matches in 2004 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the playing of the Olympic golf matches at the club. Rosedale in Toronto, where Lyon was also a member at different times, took part for a couple of years before dropping out.

"While we didn't always distinguish ourselves on the golf course, we always had a lot of fun. It was like seeing old friends. Hopefully, the matches will make a comeback at some point and time," Alek added. "Too bad we could not do it this summer with golf in the Olympics in Tokyo, Japan."

At the Olympic Games in Rio 2016, 120 competitors representing 34 nations teed it up at the Olympic golf course at Barra da Tijuca on the outskirts of the massive South American city. You could say that Lyon was the reigning Olympic champion until that

moment. The women had not taken part at the Olympics since 1900 in Paris and the men had not taken part since 1904 in St. Louis.

Exciting is a perfect word to describe the final round in Men's Golf as Great Britain's Justin Rose, the 2013 US Open winner, battled with Sweden's Henrik Stenson, the reigning British Open champion, to the wire with Rose claiming the gold medal and Stenson settling for silver. There was also a late charge from American Matt Kuchar, who shot a stellar 63 on the final day to capture bronze.

As we have been watching, the Olympics are back, in Tokyo Japan, despite COVID-19. Four Canadians will tee it up – all with a good shot at bringing home a medal. They are Brooke Henderson and Alena Sharp who are back for a second go, while Corey Conners and Mackenzie Hughes will make their Olympic debut.

"I am honoured and proud to be a part of Team Canada this summer," said Henderson, who finished T7 at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. "I love representing my country and feeling all of the support of family, friends and Canadian golf fans back home."

"This is something that I've thought about for a long time—I've worked hard toward qualifying for one of the spots, and I'm just so proud to be part of Team Canada this summer in Tokyo," said Conners, who finished T8 at The Masters earlier this season. "I've had the opportunity to compete for Canada at different events with the National team over my career but to do it at the Olympics, one of the biggest stages in sport along with Mac (Hughes) and the rest of the Team Canada athletes is going to be an incredible experience."

Golf at Tokyo 2020 will take place on the East Course of the Kasumigaseki Country Club. The men's event is being contested July 29 to August 1, followed by the women's event from August 4 to 7. Both will have fields of 60 golfers competing over 72 holes of stroke play with no cut.

# CANADA'S TOKYO 2020

## GOLF TEAM



HENDERSON

SHARP

CONNERS

HUGHES



"Brooke, Alena, Corey and Mackenzie have become heroes in our sport—they embody the Olympic spirit and I know how important it was for each of them to be part of Team Canada," said Golf Canada CEO Laurence Applebaum. "As the National Sport Organization and proud member of the Canadian Olympic Committee, we are extremely pleased with how golf has become a high focus sport for the Olympics, and we look forward to watching these talented athletes take on the world's best."

Whether it was 117 years ago in St. Louis, Missouri or in the coming days in Tokyo, Japan, the Olympic spirit continues. George S. Lyon, our golfing legend and long-time Club Captain etched the Lambton name into golf history many years ago. Whether another Canadian, a dark-horse so-to-speak, can win another Olympic medal for his or her country remains to be seen, so stay tuned!

**By Brent Long**

RULES OF GOLF GOVERN NO LOCAL RULES Lambton Golf and Country Club														
Mr. _____ vs. Mr. _____					Date _____ 1903									
OUT			IN		OUT			IN						
Mr.	Name	Yds.	S.	Blow	Mr.	Name	Yds.	S.	Blow					
1	First	300	5		10	Devon's End	300	5						
2	Imp	300	4		11	St. Cliff	400	5						
3	Bridge	300	5		12	Triangle	275	4						
4	Willes	445	6		13	Lev Cliff	255	4						
5	Number	300	4		14	The Dan	100	4						
6	Gates	300	5		15	Woolbridge	300	4						
7	Pentails	300	5		16	Glen	205	4						
8	Short	125	3		17	Prince Reg.	575	5						
9	Hole cut	400	5		18	Stone	400	5						
Total 3000-41					Total 3000-42									
For 1st 9 holes _____ For 2nd 9 holes _____														
Add first 9 holes _____ Total _____ Handicap _____ Net _____														
RE-PLACE THE DIVOTS MEMBERS MUST NOT BUY BALLS FROM CADDIE														

