

A Caddy's Tale. The Tale of a Trilby Tour Bag Man

Having found himself in the “William Hunt Trilby Tour Amateur International Final” on Wednesday 11th August 2010, via a qualifying tournament at The Oxfordshire, Robert Lloyd, the most consistent golfer in the Tradlads Golf Society in the years I have been involved with them, found himself without a caddy.

Someone was required to step in to the white overalls previously filled by David Butler. The six inch turn ups and 4 inch cuffs would no longer be required as they were to be occupied by the svelte form of yours truly.

Robert Lloyd and Neil Smyth were to be The Dream Team.



The heavy rain of the Tuesday had passed and the forecast was set fair as I clambered out of bed at 4 a.m. I was under instructions to be at his house in Chessington by five as he had to register by 6:30 ahead of his 7:30 tee time.

It was to be a long day. We made our way round the M25, busy even at that ungodly hour, past Heathrow and along the M40 to the Buckinghamshire Golf Club, spiritual home of the William Hunt Trilby Tour.

The rain of the previous day had caused a mist to evaporate slowly from the fields alongside the motorway and, as we made our way through the club grounds, off the fairways and greens of the golf course revealing the now familiar white sponsors adverts surrounding the tees and also strategically placed to be picked up by the TV cameras.



Yes, it was to be televised as well in a series of programmes on Sky Sports. All that was missing was the lone piper droning out a lament as the greenkeepers lovingly prepared the battleground for the event.

John O'Leary, a former European Tour and Ryder Cup player, greeted us as we made our way from the car park to the beautiful Denham Court Mansion, which forms the clubhouse, for a look around before breakfast.

Robert registered and handed me the pin position chart with which I was able to mark up the yardage book purchased on our practice round the previous week and which I had already coded with the slopes on the greens. Just like a proper caddy, seeking to give my man every advantage.

6:40: Time to get changed and out on the range.

Robert had purchased new irons just the week before and apparently played well with them. I thought that this was strange, though, as I was fully expecting him to win and be getting measured up by Callaway for a new set of clubs as his prize for winning. As Mr. Hunt was to remind us, these clubs would be on permanent loan to protect the winner's amateur status.

As he warmed up, some of the shots sounded a bit "thin", not resonating with that smooth clip off the club face we normally associate with Lloyd. And what's this, he had developed a fade with his woods instead of the booming arrow straight drives I was so used to. It was too late to change anything now. We would just have to hope that it was down to nerves or the range balls not behaving like "proper" golf balls and it would be alright on the night. It was a time for encouragement and a reassessment of how I would want him to play the course, because everyone knows that the caddy is the boss in these teams.

6:55: Time to check the putting. The putting green was faster than any we had experienced on the practice round even after all the rain. They had been shaved and would provide a true test of pace and touch.

Players were being called to the tee well ahead of time. The stipulated requirement was 20 minutes before your allotted tee time and this was rigidly enforced as one player in the first group found that the only score he would see against his name on the leaderboard would be DQ.

7:10: Our host, William Hunt, was at the tee welcoming golfers. As was the Sky camera for a 7:30 bulletin.

Robert was in a group with Mark Smith (Caddy Roy Kavanagh) and John McGoey (Caddy ??????????) who had qualified via the London Club and Druid's Glen respectively.



Not too long to wait though and the starter called Robert forward and a straight drive down what would usually be the 10th but for this competition was the first hole, opened up the approach to the green round the dogleg right. So the range had been lying and it was to be business as usual. Sadly the approach was tugged left in to a greenside bunker and the damp sand resulted in the green being airmailed. I was to become pretty good at raking bunkers! A good chip back took an unfortunate kick and a tentative first putt was to be a sign of things to come. Still a point and we were off and running.

Steady and unspectacular golf saw us reach the turn in fourteen points, scoring on every hole but Robert saw that earlier groups had been returning eighteens and nineteen's. We would have to up our game and this we did with pars at ten and eleven as birdie putts dribbled narrowly by the cup. The twelfth was to

see golfer and caddy in perfect harmony. A 212 yard par 3 with the pin cut 15 on and 4 from the right behind two deep unwelcoming bunkers.

Robert had used a five wood in the practice round from a forward tee and come up just short. A three wood at the signpost with that fade was his caddy's wish and this was exactly what he delivered. The ball described a beautiful fading arc and ran up to the hole peaking in as it passed. It was not to be our day as the pin was cut on a nasty slope which claimed his Pro-V and sucked it off the green in to a hollow. This was never a fair game but to find such a cruel fate was a poor reward. The agony was compounded when the chip (the best part of Robert's game) hit the pin at dead speed and still the ball did not drop. The formality of a three inch putt for par but it could have been so much better.

Still, we continued, the back nine proving a richer hunting ground as the weather warmed up. The last four holes are my favourite part of the course. Normally the sixth, the fifteenth provided a potentially intimidating tee shot with bunkers blocking the eye line for the fairway, bushes blocking the right and thick rough to the left. In truth, the bunkers can be cleared from the tee and the bushes are further away than they look. The green, though has a steep slope across it and from the wrong level an excellent long putt, having been on the green in regulation, guaranteed the par and it was off to the stroke index one feeling confident. 13 points so far on the back 9 and knowing that it could easily have been more. Hopes of winning had realistically passed but the earlier caution had passed and we knew we could play this game.

The driver was pulled out with the instruction to give me one last good one as this would be the last time this club would be used today . An underhit "toppy" drive followed, but, with luck that had earlier been missing, the ball stopped just short of the first stream. With the flag 27 on there was still 220 yards to go with another stream meandering in front of the green and a pond to the right. The three wood flew straight and only the slope of the green took the gloss off of the shot. A long putt from just off the green across the slope came up short and it was another two to get down. It is not the hardest hole on the course for nothing. Still, it was a shot hole and two more points racked up.

The seventeenth bends round to the right hand side of a lake with the fairway curving left to a narrow green. The tee was set to encourage longer hitters to go for the green, but Lloyd's days of such bravado are gone. His shot was the five iron at the second bunker , kicking off the natural banking in to the fairway and a 9 iron in to the green .

So why the bloody driver then? So why the bloody hook when you've been fading it all day?

WET.

A drop on to a down slope with all the lake to carry.

WET.

The only blob of the round and a good finish at the par three was required.

Another thinned 5-iron faded in to the bunker and the first sign of the Sky cameras since the first hole. The cameraman crept round the green to catch Lloyd's bunker shot. A lovely flighted shot checked to come up short when it looked to be making its' way to the flag. Now that would have been on the telly. The putt was the same old story but a point for a thirty total and certainly no disgrace.



The weather added to the day as we enjoyed a barbecue on the terrace watching the other golfers find various ways of playing and mucking up the final hole as William Hunt added his commentary on the performances of the players, some of whom seem to be part of a family on the Trilby Tour.

Over drinks we sat in our group with, as is traditional, us caddies bemoaning their players performance. "Why on earth did he (Mark) take a 6-iron in the rough? Just because he said he could see the back of the ball, I wanted him to take a 9-iron" groaned Roy.

"That is the worst I have seen Johnny drive the ball. Ever." Exclaimed Johnny's main man.

Would we want to take part as players? We all agreed that we would love to but did not know how we would cope with the cameras and the first tee.

The other thing we all agreed on, because the caddy is always right was:

If HE had played better WE could have won the thing! Roll on 2011!