

5, 4, 3, 2...1!

Stephen Miller on an incredible five-hole run

The commemorative plaque beside Lincoln Golf Club's 7th tee celebrates arguably one of the more extraordinary feats ever recorded in golf. Yet until earlier this year, when remedial work provided an opportunity to clean up the granite block and repaint the inscription, even some of the local members were unaware of the story behind it.

Harry Dunderdale, the man at the centre of the drama, was by all accounts a highly gifted golfer, a three handicapper who had gone up to six before upgrading his clubs, then worked his way down to three again. Had he been the best player in the world, however, it would not have made what happened on Lincoln's 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th holes during a routine club competition in August 1978 any more likely.

As Harry played the par-5 third and par-4 fourth holes that day there was no inkling of what was to come, his regulation five and four being literally par for the course and of no special significance. At the par-4 fifth (284 yards), which requires a well-drawn tee shot to a small green guarded by three greenside bunkers with out of bounds down the left side and a ditch to the rear of the green, he moved into a new gear with a birdie three. Thirty eight years ago the trees on the left side were smaller than they are today so Harry may have gone straight over them and onto the green in one. So far so still relatively unexceptional.

The 6th hole at Lincoln is a short par-3 (145 yds) with an undulating green, three greenside bunkers and an out-of-bounds directly behind it. Harry completed that

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5 4 3 2.**

hole in two shots, another birdie. At this point, after scores of 5,4,3 and 2, one can imagine the banter on the tee as his playing partners wound him up to have a go at the 321-yard par-4 7th. The hole is sometimes driven by long hitters during the summer but it is no pushover in any season – deep greenside bunkers lurk in wait left and right of the long, narrow backward sloping green, not to mention an out-of-bounds all the way down the left hand side of the fairway.

The odds of a hole-in-one on such a hole are unimaginable (there was no record of anyone having done it earlier, and certainly no one has done it since), while the odds of anyone completing a sequence of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 with 1970s or any other equipment are frankly unfathomable. Harry, however, defied those odds when the group arrived at the green and found his ball in the cup.

Ironically, he did not win the club competition that day, but his achievement is not only unrivalled at Lincoln Golf Club but is unlikely to have been emulated anywhere in the world: the only other 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 I know about is reputed to have been recorded at a course in Australia that finishes

on a par 3.

Sadly Harry died of a heart attack at just 54 in the mid-1990s, since when members have played for the Harry Dunderdale trophy presented in his honour. Captain of Gainsborough Golf Club earlier in his life, he turned down the invitation to be captain of Lincoln on the grounds that having had that honour once someone else should be given the chance. He was renowned as an all-round sportsman, having also played football for Gainsborough Trinity.

Harry's achievement did not earn instant recognition but his friend Geoff Dring recalls that sometime later, he sent his story to a golf magazine that had asked readers to write in about great golf shots. His entry won him a round at St Andrews alongside the great Seve Ballesteros, whose gross score he managed to beat on the day. But for the famous 'five-in-a-row' that would surely have been the highlight of his (or anyone else's) golfing career.

Stephen Miller has been a member of Lincoln Golf Club since 2005 and co-chairs the social section with his partner Angela Spencer.



'Best inland links'

2016 is the 125th anniversary of Lincoln Golf Club (established 1891), once reputedly described by Peter Alliss as "probably the best inland links course in England". Unfortunately, following the planting of thousands of trees planted during the 1960's for Health and Safety reasons, it is no longer a pure 'links'. But it is still a great course and considered by many to be eclipsed in Lincolnshire only by the mighty Woodhall Spa. Visitors to Lincoln Golf Club, near Torksey village roughly 11 miles west of its original location on the outskirts of the city, will be most welcome, and were they to emulate Harry's 54321 I am sure we would erect a plaque in their honour.