

# Old School



They appear as if from out of the past, often to the sound of bagpipes. A love of golf history draws together the hickory hackers, named for their throwback wooden clubs. Startling in their plus fours and wool tams, they happily forgo the modern trappings of golf, reconnecting with the past of a game whose origins are lost in the mists of time.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WYATT MCSPADEN TEXT BY JIM APFELBAUM

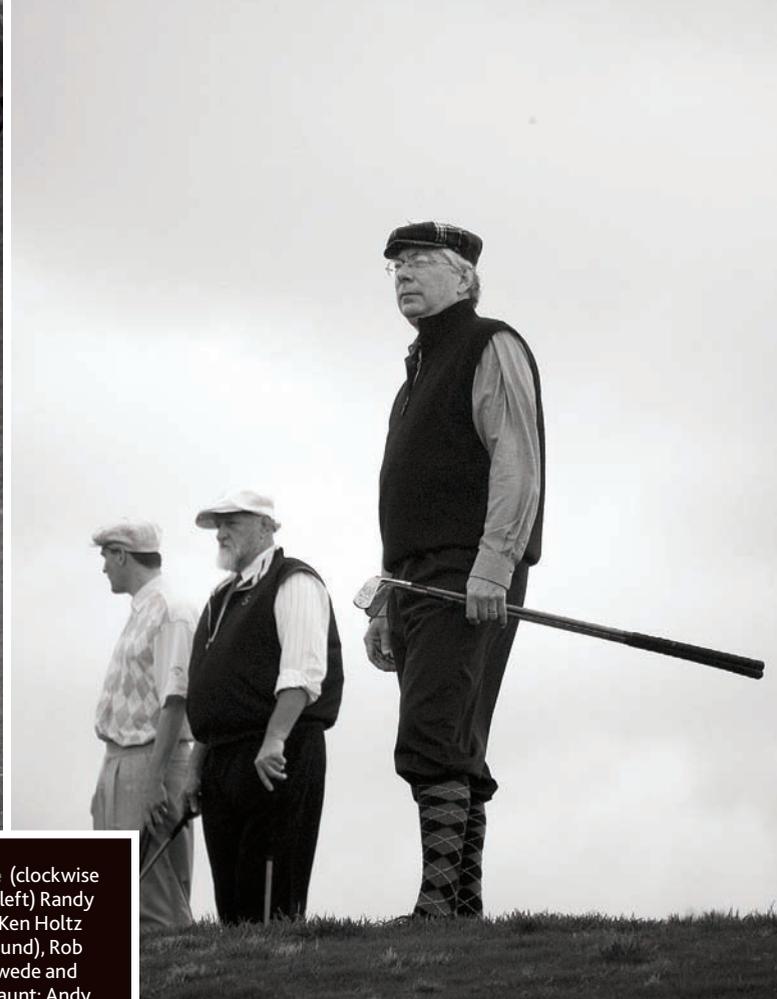


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**This page** (clockwise from top left) Randy Jensen; Ken Holtz (foreground), Rob Ahlschwede and Benny Plaunt; Andy Reistetter; Ken Holtz

**Facing page**  
Johnny Henry

**Page 122**  
John McMurchy





The hickory hackers started playing at the annual meetings of the Golf Collectors Society years ago. The movement caught on, so now you might see retro golfers at any venerable course near you. Hackers tee it up or, on occasion, even use sand molds that predate the wooden golf tee, patented in the late 1920s. The ball and the club grips may be modern, but the clubs are so old that they go by names rather than numbers. Still, playing with vintage equipment provides a ready excuse for bogeys and a vindication of legendary golf pro Harvey Penick's maxim that "a good swing can hit any club."



Remarkably versatile and full of personality, these old clubs can take plenty of punishment. And it's hard to describe the pleasure of a solid strike. As many as 20 million wood-shafted golf clubs were manufactured, so not all qualify as heirlooms. But many display the work of true craftsmen and innovators. Like all collectors, those who ply the mashie and niblick relish the thrill of building a complete set.



**This page** (clockwise from top left)  
Randy Jensen, Willie Ducherer, Max Hill, Edwin Chan

**Facing page**  
Pat Kennedy





**This page** (clockwise from top left)  
Tim Flynn, Flynn's clubs, Edwin Chan and Willie Ducherer, Kenny Plaunt

**Facing page**  
Pat Kennedy





Anything a modern club can do, a hickory can do, too. Outstanding scores, 300-yard drives, backspin, metal woods—it's all been done before. Very little, one learns, is new in golf. Hickory hackers remind us of golf's inviolate will to resist the natural human desire to innovate. More important is the camaraderie they share and the tradition they embrace: golf as a royal and ancient game of gentlemen—and gentlewomen—as it has been for centuries.