



Tommy's Honor: The Story of Old Tom Morris and Young Tom Morris, Golf's Founding Father and Son

Kevin Cook

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In the tradition of Seabiscuit, the riveting tale of two proud Scotsmen who beat all comers to become the heroes of a golden age—the dawn of professional golf

Bringing to life golf's founding father and son, Tommy's Honor is a stirring tribute to two legendary players and a vivid evocation of their colorful, rip-roaring times.

The Morrises were towering figures in their day. Old Tom, born in 1821, began life as a nobody—he was the son of a weaver and a maid. But he was born in St. Andrews, Scotland, the cradle of golf, and the game was in his blood. He became the Champion Golfer of Scotland, a national hero who won tournaments (and huge bets) while his young son looked on. As “Keeper of the Green” at the town's ancient links, Tom deployed golf's first lawnmower and banished sheep from the fairways.

Then Young Tommy's career took off. Handsome Tommy Morris, the Tiger Woods of the nineteenth century, was a more daring player than his father. Soon he surpassed Old Tom and dominated the game. But just as he reached his peak—with spectators flocking to see him play—Tommy's life took a tragic turn, leading to his death at the age of twenty-four. That shock is at the heart of *Tommy's Honor*. It left Tom to pick up the pieces—to honor his son by keeping Tommy's memory alive.

Like the *New York Times* bestseller *The Greatest Game Ever Played*, *Tommy's Honor* is both fascinating history and a moving personal saga. Golfers will love it, but this book isn't only for golfers. It's for every son who has fought to escape a father's shadow and for every father who had guided a son toward manhood, then found it hard to let him go.

Tommy's Honor: The Story of Old Tom Morris and Young Tom Morris, Golf's Founding Father and Son Details

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From Reader Review Tommy's Honor: The Story of Old Tom Morris and Young Tom Morris, Golf's Founding Father and Son for online ebook

Tracy Johnson says

Before there was Tiger, Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Ben Hogan and Bobby Jones -- there was young Tom Morris. Golf's first playing professional. This is a fascinating book covering a time in history when golf was exploding in popularity. It is full of little tidbits to drive home how different the game was then while at the same time very similar in other ways. For example, there were no golf bags to carry your golf clubs - caddies just clutched them under their arms. There was no PGA tour - golf was primarily (almost exclusively) played by wealthy gentlemen. When a couple of 'cracks' could be induced to play head-to-head, the gentlemen would engage in large betting games and the two players might get a fraction of the betting action - if the gentlemen were feeling generous. I know a lot about the history of the Morris's but really learned a lot more and learned a lot about the time they lived in.

Ben says

Another hard core golf book for golf fans who enjoy the history of the game. Some general history too, but mostly golf focused. Not a bad read.

Kathryn Baker says

As a golfer this book was where it all began. I have visited St. Andrews so it was awesome to be able to connect the dots between the rules and development of golf, the history of the courses and the historical figures that developed the game, with the places that I have visited. Also....very emotional and sad. Loved it.

John Jenkins says

Kevin Cook combines strong research and skillful story-telling to produce a wonderful chronicle of the lives of Old Tom Morris and Young Tom Morris. This story will be especially appreciated to those of us who play golf and have visited St. Andrews, but this narrative contains enough depth and drama to interest other readers who appreciate human struggles. Old Tom Morris is acclaimed for being a championship golfer, but winning golf championships is probably not his greatest accomplishment. This book shows that he was also an innovative golf course designer, golf club and golf ball manufacturer, and a loving husband and father.

As a 21st century American, I find the barriers that existed between gentlemen and working class people during the lifetime of Tom Morris (1821 – 1908) difficult to understand, but Mr. Cook seems to make this concept mostly comprehensible. He does not rationalize the class distinctions, but he shows how Tom Morris accepted them for what they were and tried to enable himself and his children, particularly Tommy, to rise above them. For himself, he clearly accomplished this. As Mr. Cook points out in his Epilogue, "In the

twenty-first century, the symbol of the R&A is not a red-jacketed gentleman or even a full member of the club, but the son of John Morris the weaver.”

This is a well-written book, and Mr. Cook strongly supports his theme that Tom Morris Senior spent the last 33 years of his life honoring his son, Tommy Morris Junior. There are only two very minor issues that I can find with this book:

(1) On page 110, Mr. Cook points out that Tom Morris’ ban on Sunday golf at St. Andrews is perpetuated today, except when the Open Championship is played at St. Andrews approximately every five years. Mr. Cook is probably aware, but did not consider significant, that the Alfred Dunhill Cup is played at St. Andrews every year and finishes on Sundays. I frequently play golf on Sundays, but I still wonder if the world would be a better place if more golf courses and other venues followed the vision of Tom Morris and were closed on Sundays.

(2) The title of this book is absolutely appropriate, but Tom Morris’s life was not just dedicated to honoring his son. His entire 86 years were devoted to honoring the game of golf, the golf course at St. Andrews, and his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Alan Livingston says

For anyone who truly loves golf, “Tommy’s Honor” is required reading. Those close to golf are familiar with the name of Tom Morris from 19th Century Scotland, and most know there was an Old Tom and a Young Tom. Their names are attached to St. Andrews in many ways, and also as winners of several of the early Open Championships. What I’ll bet most do not know – I sure didn’t – was the story behind the elder Tom, and what made Young Tom the Tiger Woods of his day.

This book overflows with history, mostly of golf as it evolved in the 1800’s, but much about Scotland of the day outside of golf as well. (I even learned something I didn’t know about my family tree.) When you hear of what day-to-day life was like, what the times meant for everyone there, you’ll wonder how golf itself could have endured, have continued to sustain what had been growing for hundreds of years already. But when you hear of the love Old Tom had for the game, his innovations not only as a caretaker of courses (so much more than a “greens keeper”), but as the creator of courses who trained and/or inspired so many of the finest and most legendary golf architects of the game’s history, you’ll appreciate him so much more. Then, add to that the family that he was so dedicated to, which included as fine a player as that century produced, even more prodigious than his father. The tragedy that befalls them is unimaginable today, and renders even more empathy for the Old Man as he aged toward his passing.

The golf history will make a lasting impression, and not only about the two main Morris men: The evolution of the golf ball; the players of the day; the early days of the British Open (yes, I know what we’re supposed to call it now); courses whose names are familiar to us today; how courses were laid out and managed then, and how changes looking for the right recipe led to what we’ve come to expect today. There’s also enough about the players’ travelling around Scotland that I kept a map of the country handy on my iPhone as I read it. If you didn’t know already why St. Andrews is our Mecca and Scotland in general our Holy Land, this book will help get you there. You may also learn the root of why so many of us think there practically has to be some kind of bet in action when we play.

This book IS golf. I thought I knew a lot about our game’s history before I read it, but now I see I knew nothing. The book is very well written. I highly recommend it for anyone who loves this wonderful old game as more than just that.

Doug Campbell says

Having been to St Andrews 20 years ago, this book made me appreciate the history of the great game even more. It would be nice to go back! A great read for any golfer. Kevin Cook did a great job and now look forward to watching the movie.....

Frances Bonardi says

I love the game of golf, and I am a history buff who has visited the Old Course at St Andrews, Scotland, so I loved this book. If you are a golf, history buff, you will love it too. If you want to read a very interesting story about the early days of the game, humanized by the author, then enjoy Tommys Honor.

Izah says

5 Stars for Golf Lovers; 3 Stars for Non-Golfers

Lea Gallardo says

I loved this book and would have given it 5 stars easily except for long passages describing golf plays. I actually didn't mind them but think many friends, especially non-golfers like me, would be put off by them. The prose is like a song. Most of the time I felt like I was floating through the pages instead of reading.

Denise says

I used to think golf was just for putting on TV on the weekends when you wanted to take a nap. It was certainly not a sport for somebody with no depth perception; we proved that on the Ratcliff Country Club course when I was young. "Keep your eye on the ball!" my dad would shout, exasperated, as we went trudging off, again, to look for the ball I had just lost in the glare of the late afternoon sun. But as my dad got older, I started to check in on how Tiger was doing before I dialed the phone for my weekly call. It gave us something to talk about, and eventually I got interested.

Turns out a book about Old Tom and Young Tom, who more or less invented golf, is a pretty good read, a look at a slice of life in Scotland from around the time of the American Civil War to the turn of the century, while class stratification was breaking down, and small-town families were burying their children six deep in the churchyard, and you could get mid-mountain hickory from Tennessee and sap from trees in India and put them together in your workshop to make golf club shafts and gutties (balls made of gutta-percha) - make a living, and make a life.

Thrill of victory, agony of defeat, human drama of athletic competition. Yep. More human drama, and more

joy, and pain, and endurance, than I was expecting. Good story, and good story-telling.

Derrick Bates says

A great history of the game with a touching focus on the father/son relationship. The golf description was good. Fun to learn about how the game has changed over the past 100 years. I particularly liked the idea of green keeping. Old Tom Morris was the master and I bet he taught a lot of people how to perfect the landscape of golf in a difficult environment. I also liked the idea that he took a freezing cold bath every morning. Probably the reason he outlived everyone around him.

Conor says

A really good history of both the Morris family, and the era of golf they grew up in. Old Tom Morris is widely regarded as one of the first great golfers, and a key proponent of the game as it gained popularity. This biography tells his tragic yet remarkable life story, inexorably linked as it is with the rise of St Andrews, and of golf more generally.

Perhaps a bit heavy on detail for someone not that into golf, the book tracks some of the more high-profile matches and competitions of the time. On reading this, it appears that Willie Park of Musselburgh was as good a golfer as Old Tom. However, his association with St Andrews, as greenkeeper and pro, have cemented Tom's place in the history of the game.

Michael R. Zuelke says

I was looking for something that would be a light read but still educational. This book fit the bill very nicely. I am interested in the early days of golf and found Cook's presentation fascinating and educational. The book was fun to read despite the obvious tragedies of the Morris family. I highly recommend it for anyone interested in golf or the history of a family from Scotland.

Ian Allan says

Stumbled onto this book when I saw the trailer for the movie. Reviews indicate the movie is only so-so, but the book is outstanding.

I golf, and my parents are from Scotland, but I had not heard of Tom Morris and his son Tommy.

Book does a good job of bringing these guys to life and explaining why they are pivotal, historic figures in the game of golf. Tom Morris invented the concept of improving greens with the use of sand; his ideas about designing courses has had an impact on dozens of the best courses around the world. Tommy was the first to use lofted wedges to land the ball on the green. He had the first hole in one in a notable tournament -- the Tiger Woods of his day.

Must-read for golf fans. Those who have never played golf should like it as well.

Bonnie says

This surprising biography makes reading about golf interesting. Set in Scotland, of course, it tells the story of one of the first groundskeepers and his son who was one of the first professional golfers. I never suspected that golf was created by such down to earth and humble countrymen. Originally thought to have started by shepherds using the crooks of their trade to knock rocks down rabbit holes, the game was honed by young men, picked up by local aristocrats and perfected by the professionals who were their caddies! The book is well written, with high regard for the subjects.

John Zych says

Paying tribute

This book has made me appreciate the old course even more than when I had the privilege to visit three years ago. I encourage all golfers not only to read this account of the Morris family, but to make a pilgrimage to St. Andrews so that you can experience this special feeling and have a new appreciation of the glorious game of golf

Thomas Anstett says

Any golf enthusiast should add this book to the personal "must-read" list in order to acquire a true appreciation of the development of the game of golf. Through a friendly style, some subtle humor, and an ability to tie in the title throughout the course of the book, the author (Kevin Cook) has shot "under-par" for his efforts. Moreover, the book carries a range of emotions from start to finish, emotions that can keep readers from putting the book aside for any length of time. Wonderful read. I will never watch the British Open the same way I had been watching it, again.

Bonnie says

I absolutely loved this book. The movie version got lukewarm reviews, so I opted for the source material and am so glad I did. The detailed history of the origin of The Open Championship was fascinating. Having visited St. Andrews just two years ago, all the descriptions in the book were very vivid to me, and Cook has a gift for really bringing the players to life. If you're a golfer, this one should be on your "must read" list.

Maggie says

2017 read harder challenge (read a book about sports)

I enjoyed this book more than I thought I would, especially since I don't really like golf. But this story was fascinating.

Amandalynn says

i bought this at the dollar tree for jeremy thinking he would at least find it interesting and crack the cover...to my surprise he devoured it and loved it even recommending it to my dad. i thought i would give it a read too...LOVED it!!! i learned so much about the start of golf and tom morris was an amazing man who lived a very fulfilling and humble life. the author did an amazing job describing the country side and the golf courses i felt like i was back in scotland watching the tournaments. even if your not that interested in golf there is plenty for a history buff to enjoy from the book.
