

I never expected to describe history of golf in terms of London buses, but just when you think there are no comprehensive sources on golf in South Africa, along come three at the same time. The first (chronologically) is William Gibson's informative piece in this issue of TTG. The second and third are two of the books discussed here. Taken together they expand our knowledge of the game's history and its spread in Africa.

DRAFT

Blazing the Trail – Bringing Down Apartheid
by Barry Cohen

The history of golf is often characterised by heroic terms. 'Titanic struggles' feature strongly in the tales of early golfers' legendary rivalries and extraordinary achievements in the face of adversity. But such histories seem modest when compared to the achievements of South Africa's non-European golfing community over the history of their existence since 1928. In a clear and often poetic description of golf, both at the grass roots and at the highest international level, Barry Cohen's book fills an historical void. His book expounds a story that has deserved to be told for many years, not only to demonstrate the extraordinary bravery and resilience of an oppressed majority, but also to highlight the truly exceptional golfers that came from South Africa's caddy ranks. It is perhaps a measure of the restrictive success of the apartheid regime that the names of some of South Africa's finest golfers are virtually unknown outside the country, names such as Ramnath Bambata Boodhun, the first black golfer to play in the Open (in 1929), and Papwa Sewgolum, who played and beat many of the best South African golfers of his time, among them Denis Hutchison, Brian Huggett and Gary Player.

This history is unusual in that it unavoidably demonstrates the playing of golf as a political activity. It is a measure of South Africa's non-European golfers that they did not allow their political restriction to affect their determination to play the game they loved. The story of Dennis Brutus, leader of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee is an example. He it was who urged the British PGA to reprimand the South African Golf Union for turning down Sewgolum's application to play in the whites-only Natal Open Championship in 1960; he was imprisoned on Robben Island for 16 months. There are many such examples across the wide span not only of Papwa Sewgolum's career, but also of the many other golfers who resisted the attempts of the Verwoerd and Vorster régime to marginalise or curtail their achievements. All of them are powerfully and clearly described in Mr Cohen's book.

It is perhaps in the recording of such achievements and playing records that this description will in the future be most valuable. Although much of the history that Mr Cohen describes is relatively recent, much of it was suppressed or not recorded at the time. Future historians will thank him for the scrupulous way in which he has recorded the playing prowess and successes of non-European golfers, although the

inclusion of an index would improve any further editions. Without these records, to some extent at least the apartheid philosophy would have succeeded in air-brushing out the achievements of non-white golfers. Future historians have in Barry Cohen's book a considerable resource on which to draw. Behind each achievement there lies a story that enriches golf history. For example, it is extraordinary that Papwa Sewgolum was flown the length of Africa and Europe, from Durban, South Africa to Biggin Hill, Kent in a Piper Comanche light aircraft bought specially by his patron Graham Wulff (the inventor of 'Oil of Olay'), to attend his first Open in Britain. As a non-European he was not permitted by the SAA (South African Airways) to travel on a normal scheduled flight. He also achieved his success using the 'caddy grip', which for a right-hander reversed the position of the hands, with the right hand above the left.

Barry Cohen's book opens our eyes to the many strictures and slights imposed on non-Europeans within the world of golf, but it also brings to our notice the exceptional courage of those who rose above such policies and with tenacity and dignity demonstrated that golf could be played by all parts of society, and that given the chance South Africa had talented golfers of all races who could compete with the best in the world.

This is a book that is clear and easily read. In many instances its content is disturbing, but it shows a parallel history to the previously received history of South African golf, which should be understood more widely by golf historians. I hope that it will be widely read by all those with an interest in the game's history. It deserves no less.

Blazing the Trail : Bringing Down Apartheid (ISBN:978-0-620-82779-9) is self-published by Barry Cohen, with forwards by Honourable Minister of Sport Tokozile Xasa; Sally Little, two-time LPGA major champion and Rajen Sewgolum, Papwa Sewgolum's son. It has 394 pages, including a Bibliography. It is published in card covers and art paper, with numerous illustrations, some in colour. Size is 152 x 230 mm (6 x 9"). It can be obtained from the author, bjcohen@mweb.co.za at a cost of ??? including post and packing???