

1935 Ryder Cup

Ridgewood Country Club's new golf course got its acid test in international competition in 1935 when the club hosted the fifth edition of the Ryder Cup – the third in America – on the weekend of September 28–29. George Jacobus, in his role as president of the PGA, was instrumental in bringing the matches to Ridgewood.

The announcement that Ridgewood was awarded the Ryder Cup was covered in the New York Times on July 13, 1934: “The Ridgewood (N.J.) Country Club yesterday was selected as the site for the 1935 Ryder Cup matches between picked golf professionals of the United States and Great Britain, according to the Associated Press. Announcement of the choice was made by the Ryder Cup committee of the

Professional Golfers Association through George R. Jacobus, PGA president. Other courses which bid for the matches were the Metropolis Club at White Plains, N.Y.; the Fresh Meadow Club at Flushing, N.Y.; and the Pittsburgh Field Club. The tournament will be the first major golfing event ever held at the Ridgewood club and the first in New Jersey in several years. The present Ridgewood layout is six years old and consists of twenty-seven holes in three nine-hole stretches.”



US Team 1935 Ryder Cup



Ticket to 1935 Ryder Cup

The United States and Great Britain were represented by teams of ten professionals each. Although the competitors practiced at the club all week, most of the American players stayed in Manhattan and arrived at the club each day with a state-trooper escort, with sirens blaring. The exceptions were Walter Hagen, captain of the American team, and Gene Sarazen, who stayed in rooms above the pro shop at the club.

Hagen had at his command such stalwarts as Craig Wood (in later years a Ridgewood member), Paul Runyan, Horton Smith, Sam Parks (the 1935 U.S. Open champion), Olin Dutra, Ky Laffoon, Henry Picard, and Johnny Revolta (the year's PGA titleholder), in addition to Sarazen. British Captain Charles Whitcombe could select from among his two brothers, Ernest and Greg, Alf Perry (winner of the 1935 British Open), Wiffy Cox, Richard Burton, Percy Alliss (father of television commentator Peter Alliss, himself an international competitor), Ed Jarman, Alf Padghan, and Jack Busson (the youngest member of the team).

The competition consisted of four Scotch foursome (two-ball) matches on Saturday, then eight singles matches on Sunday, all at thirty-six holes of match play.

Consequently, two players from each side joined the gallery each day. All three of Ridgewood's nines were used, in the East-Center- West rotation.

The first day's matches were played during intervals of rain and drizzle, conditions many thought would favor the “Brits.” They didn't, with the Americans taking three of the four matches, all by sizable margins. Hagen played in this part of the competition, teaming with Sarazen to trounce the British team of Perry and Busson 7&6. The other victorious American teams were Revolta–Picard and Smith–Runyan. Britain's only point came

from the combination of Charles and Ernest Whitcombe, who edged Dutra and Laffoon 1-up. Sunday was a day of glorious sunshine, with rising winds in the afternoon sending scores soaring as well. As many as eight thousand spectators gathered to see the American team return for lunch in a commanding position, with four of the eight matches seemingly in hand. The highlight of the morning's play was a 69 carded by Horton Smith, the only sub-70 round of the competition.



Gene Sarezzen putting on 9 West

The complexion of several matches changed after lunch, however, as the British players prospered in the familiar windy conditions. Wiffy Cox won seven consecutive holes on the outgoing nine (3 West through 9 West) to go from 6-down to 1-up over Horton Smith, whose game had disintegrated. (Smith followed his brilliant 69 with an 83!) The match eventually was halved. Craig Wood lost his lunchtime lead, and his match against Percy Alliss. Sarazen needed a miraculous 170-yard shot from under overhanging branches to the right of 4 East fairway to deflate young Busson. Sarazen's shot, which was played with a restricted backswing, hit the flagstick and stopped near the hole for a tap-in birdie that broke his rival's spirit. Sarazen was two under par for sixteen holes in the afternoon.

The best-played match of the day paired the two nations' Open champions, Sam Parks and Alf Perry. Perry outscored Parks 70-71, but their match ended even when Parks holed a birdie putt of nearly forty feet on the home green.

In all, the Americans won five of the eight singles, and halved two others, producing a final winning score of 9-3. Two factors contributed significantly to the outcome – the British players' lack of familiarity with the larger American ball, and their inability to handle “flier lies” from wet clover in the fairways. The victory marked the beginning of the United States' domination of the matches – the American team won nineteen of the subsequent twenty matches until the tide turned in 1985. Before 1935, the first four matches had been split, with the home team victorious on each occasion.

Captains: Walter Hagen (US), Charles Whitcombe (GB)
USA 9 - GB 3