



QUEST FOR THE CURTIS CUP:

"The honor of playing for my country"

by Bill Quirin

The last time the Curtis Cup Matches were played on Metropolitan Area fairways—in 1978 at Apawamis—the American team was on a roll, with nine consecutive conquests of their British and Irish counterparts in hand. Things have changed over the last 12 years, even though the Americans managed to extend their streak to 13, including a convincing victory at Apawamis, where the team was led by future LPGA star Beth Daniel. They lost for the first time on home sod in 1986 over the links-style course at Prairie Dunes in Kansas, then lost again in 1988 at Royal St. George's in Sandwich, England. So when our representatives tee it up July 28-29 at the Somerset Hills Country Club in Bernardsville, N.J., in the 26th renewal of the international matches, they will be attempting to halt their first-ever losing streak in the USGA-sponsored competition. Overall, the Americans lead the series 19-4, with two ties.

The eight-woman team that will attempt to bring the Cup back to America this year appears to

Margaret Platt (left) and Karen Noble will represent the Met Area on the 1990 Curtis Cup team.

be a strong one, including four USGA champions of 1989 and, of special interest to *Met Golfer* readers, two young ladies from the Metropolitan Area.

The team will be headed by teenagers Vicki Goetze, 17, and Brandie Burton, 18, the leading protagonists in women's amateur golf last year. Goetze beat Burton in the final of the Women's Amateur at Pinehurst, just one week after Burton had captured the Girls' Junior, eliminating Goetze in a crucial semi-final match. Burton recently beat Goetze in the final of the prestigious North & South Amateur.

Adding more than a modicum



of experience to the squad will be Anne Quast Sander, making her eighth appearance in Curtis Cup competition, and Carol Semple Thompson, selected for the sixth time. Sander won the 1989 Women's Senior, and has three Women's Amateurs to her credit, including one locally at Wee Burn in 1958. Thompson won the 1973 Women's Amateur at Montclair, defeating Sander in the final, and was presented the winning trophy by her father, the late Harton S. Semple, then president of the USGA.

Rounding out the team will be Robin Weiss, 1989 Women's Mid-Amateur champion; Katie Peterson, winner of five major titles over the last 12 months; Karen Noble of Brookside, N.J., and the Morris County Golf Club; and Margaret Platt of Hastings-on-Hudson and the Westchester Country Club. The team captain will be Leslie Shannon of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Let's take a closer look at the two Met Area representatives.

Karen Noble began attending junior clinics at age 10, but it was not until she was 16 that she started formal lessons from Morris County professional David Glenz. She also began competing in regional junior tournaments that season.

Karen won the New Jersey





Somerset Hills, created by the legendary A.W. Tillinghast, is known for its sloping fairways and undulating greens.

Women's Amateur in 1987 and 1988 (her mother, Marie, won the same title in 1971); the 1988 WMGA Match Play Championship at Somerset Hills; and captured both the Match and Stroke Play Championships of the WMGA last season, and just recently the Match Play Championship again this season. On the national scene, she was runner-up in the 1988 Women's Amateur, eliminating three former champions, including Curtis Cup teammates Sander and Thompson, along the way. And she won the 1989 Trans National, beating Burton in the final.

For Karen, a 1989 graduate of Wake Forest, being a member of the Curtis Cup team represents a "dream come true." Making the team has been her goal for some three years, ever since she learned that the matches were to be played at nearby Somerset Hills.

According to the Glenz, Karen Noble is "a good athlete and all-

around player, who manages her game well." Karen herself lists her main strengths as consistency and a deft putting touch. The latter was honed over the undulating greens at Morris County, which are quite similar to those at Somerset Hills.

Margaret Platt lived alongside the 12th hole at Knollwood when she first took an interest in golf at age 13. She ventured onto the course that season with a neighbor who was a member, then began to take formal lessons from Jim McLean (then at Quaker Ridge) at age 14. Margaret was the WMGA junior champion twice, at ages 16 and 17, and competed in the Girls' Junior at Somerset Hills in 1983, but did not reach match play. She won the WMGA Stroke Play Championship as a teenager in 1986, then captured the inaugural Women's Met Open in 1988 at Quaker Ridge (like Somerset Hills, an early Tillinghast work), finishing ahead of 26 pros and 57 other amateurs. Last year

she teamed with Peter E. Bisconti to take the MGA Mixed Pinehurst.

In national competition, Margaret reached the quarter-finals of the Women's Amateur and the semi-finals of the Western Amateur, both in 1989. She graduated from Auburn in March of 1990.

Jim McLean considers Margaret a "great match player with as much talent as any young player in the world, but who has not as yet come close to her full potential." According to McLean, Margaret is "easygoing, a very natural player for whom golf came easy."

Margaret feels that her exceptional length will prove especially useful on Somerset Hills's par-3s, which she will be able to reach with irons while the other players will have to use woods.

Both Karen and Margaret are 22 years of age. They roomed together this spring in Florida, where both held positions in pro shops. They get along very well, have sim-

MARGARET PLATT IS "A GREAT MATCH PLAYER WITH AS MUCH TALENT AS ANY YOUNG PLAYER IN THE WORLD."—*Jim McLean*

ilar attitudes towards golf and competition, and were nurtured by professionals with similar theories about the golf swing. When the Curtis Cup team gathered to practice in Florida this winter, they teamed well together. Whether they will in fact be a team during the actual competition will not be decided until the week before the matches, though.

In the meantime, both young women are working on the mental side of the game. Margaret notes that the "honor of playing for my country is something I can't allow myself to think about, or else I will put too much pressure on myself." Karen also sees the alternate shot four-ball format of the foursomes part of the competition as an additional source of pressure. The responsibility of placing her partner in good position off the tee and around the green is of no small concern to her. Both young women say that they will sharpen themselves mentally for the matches by playing in as many major national tournaments as possible in the weeks leading up to the last weekend in July.

The Curtis Cup competition is named for two sisters, Margaret and Harriot Curtis, lifelong members of the Essex County Club near Boston. Both won the Women's Amateur, Harriot in 1906 and Margaret three times (1907, 1910, 1911), the first of these at the direct expense of her older sister. In 1908, Margaret teamed with Evelyn Sears to win the U.S. Women's Doubles in tennis, becoming the only woman to hold national titles in two sports simultaneously.

The Curtis family was deeply involved with the birth of golf in the Boston area. A cousin, Laurence Curtis, served as the second president of the USGA. He had attended the famous "Boston Tee



The British and Irish team with the Curtis Cup at Royal St. George's in 1988.

Party" on the lawns of the Hunnewells in Wellesley in 1892, and it was he who proposed a golf course at The Country Club later that year.

Margaret Curtis, the youngest of ten children, first played golf in 1893, at age 9, at the newly formed Essex County Club. She reached the finals of the ladies' club championship at age 12, and entered the Women's Amateur for the first time the following year, at age 13, losing in the first round to three-time winner Beatrix Hoyt of Shinnecock Hills.

In 1905, the Curtis sisters were among a pioneering group of eight American women who sailed to Great Britain to compete in the British Women's Championship. They contested an impromptu match against a British team at Cromer just prior to the tournament. Although soundly defeated, the seed that would eventually flower as the Curtis Cup was planted.

It was not until 1924, however, that the possibility of international matches was seriously considered. Discussions took place at

the Griscom Cup matches, the annual women's team competition among New York, Philadelphia and Boston. In 1927, the Curtis sisters donated the cup, but because of difficulties related to the financing of the matches, the first competition was delayed until 1932 at Wentworth, just outside London.

The first American team, headed by Glenna Collett Vare and Virginia Van Wie, like the present one included two Metropolitan players, Maureen Orcutt of White Beeches (N.J.) and Helen Hicks, perhaps the greatest female player nurtured on Long Island, and the first of the Women's Amateur champions to turn professional. The team was captained by Marion Hollins, one of the most influential women in golf's first half-century in this country, and the founder of the Women's National Country Club in Glen Head. The American team won that first match, 5 1/2 to 3 1/2. The two local players helped win their foursomes matches, but lost in singles competition.

Nestled in the rolling hills of Somerset County's horse country,

SOMERSET HILLS IS AN IDEAL SELECTION FOR INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION, FAVORING NEITHER THE AMERICAN NOR BRITISH STYLE OF PLAY.

just outside the town of Bernardsville, Somerset Hills, venue for this year's matches, is one of New Jersey's oldest and most prestigious clubs. It was incorporated on August 1, 1899, and quickly became the social center of the region. The club's founders were among the landed gentry who built the imposing mansions of Somerset County, each in turn attempting to outdo those who had come before. Many had ancestors tracing to Somerset, England, and hence the county's, and club's, name.

In the beginning, Somerset Hills was located five miles west of the present site. The land was purchased in 1894, with a country club in mind. Construction of Ravine Lake and the club's golf, tennis, swimming, boating and fishing facilities was completed in 1899. The nine-hole golf course was a short but dangerous one, with several parallel fairways, even a few holes that crossed each other. Although the club had no room to expand there, it remained at that location until early 1918.

In 1916, the club purchased the 210-acre estate of Frederick P. Olcott off Mine Mount Road. The property included a racetrack, traces of which can be seen on a few holes on the front nine. A.W. Tillinghast was engaged to design the golf course, and work began on the Colonial-style clubhouse and six grass tennis courts.

Prominent

among the club's golfers over the years have been Max Behr, twice State Amateur champion and editor of *American Golf Illustrated*; George Haines, also a two-time winner of the New Jersey Amateur; W. Syndor Settle, president of the MGA during 1983-1984; and Ann Probert, a four-time winner of the WMGA's Match Play Championship during the 1980s.

Somerset Hills has been the site for the Girls' Junior twice in recent years. Amy Alcott, a future star on the LPGA tour, won in 1973; Nancy Lopez was medalist. Kim Saiki was the winner in 1983. George Zahringer won his first of five Met Amateur titles at Somerset Hills in 1982, holding off the furious rally of Mike Diffley. Somerset Hills also hosted the 1987 Lesley Cup matches, won by the Pennsylvania team, which overcame a quick start by the Metroropolitans in foursomes play to come out on top.

From a golfing standpoint, Somerset Hills is an ideal selection for international competition, favoring neither

the American nor British style of play. Tillinghast designed the two nines in contrasting styles. The first nine originally was a links-style course, laid out over relatively barren terrain and featuring numerous mounds and small, high-lipped bunkers. By way of contrast, the second nine is considered one of

the prettiest in New Jersey. It is heavily wooded, with far fewer bunkers and seldom a mound, but with water in play on four holes. Somerset Hills's greens come in a variety of shapes, and often are dramatically undulating, especially those on the second nine. For the Curtis Cup the course will play to a par of 72 at 6,027 yards.

Of all the great courses in the Met Area, none has a more imposing collection of one-shotters than Somerset Hills. The second hole is a stunning Redan, with its green set on a right-to-left diagonal to an elevated tee. The huge Redan bunker across the left front is situated below a high mound. The eighth, longest of the quartet, plays deceptively uphill over a gully to a green protected by a pair of raised, high-lipped bunkers. The 12th has been compared to Augusta National's 16th, with its green set on a peninsula extending into the pond that borders the entire left side of the hole, and trees close at hand on the right. The tree-enclosed 16th plays over water to an elevated green set above a huge bunker along its right side.

The 15th hole also merits mention, having been included on a list of the country's best 100 holes published in 1986 by *GOLF Magazine*. This right-dogleg par-4 plays over a rise to a blind landing area, then downhill to a green set on a right-to-left diagonal to the approach, preceded by a meandering stream that cascades through a waterfall at greenside. The Duke of Windsor, a frequent guest at Somerset Hills, was especially fond of this hole. □

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Karen Noble (left) and Margaret Platt roomed together in Florida while honing their games for the international matches.

