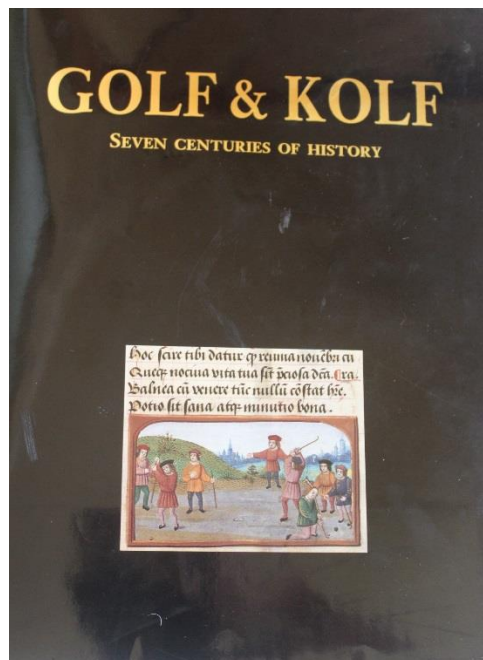


Valuable Book Group, LLC
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Newsletter and Golf Book Review

Golf and Kolf

One of the great things about collecting golf books is the unpredictability of it. You never know where or when something interesting is going to turn up. This month's feature was published in Belgium in 1993 and is titled *Golf & Kolf: Seven Centuries of History* and was written by Jacques Temmerman (D & J T4360). Many of us are familiar with Kolf if for no other reason because of the Dutch tiles Charles Blair Macdonald acquired that are featured at the National Golf Links of America and at the Links Club in New York, and because both clubs' logos use early kolf images in them.



Temmerman has an interesting background: He is a civil engineer and retired general and aide-de-camp to the King of Belgium, and a member of the esteemed H. S. Colt designed Royal Zoute Golf Club. Temmerman knows he is plying difficult ground in the book because accurately tracing the roots of the game is difficult. The book's lead sentence acknowledges as much, "Trying to trace the real origins of golf is not an easy task . . . It is indeed reasonable to assume that golf has not been 'invented'; it has probably evolved gradually. . ."

The first games the author identifies played with a ball and a stick go back to the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans as well as the Japanese and Chinese. An early focus is on a game called Choule played in France in the Middle Ages. The second is Pall-Mall, which was played in the

16th Century in either France or Italy. But these are all speculation, as many games are played with a stick and a ball.

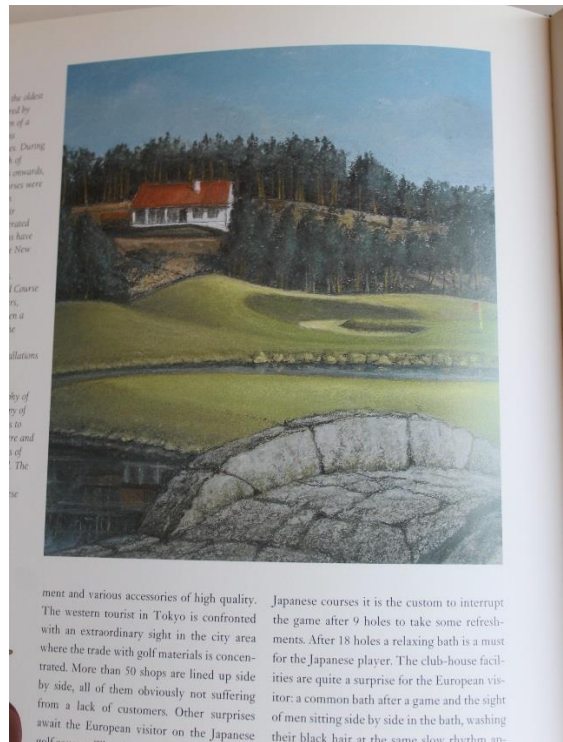


Early depictions of golf-like games in Chile and China and an illustration by Raphael

The author starts to make a more serious case when he focuses on a game called “colf” played in 1297 in the Netherlands, near Utrecht. As Temmerman describes it, “two teams of four players played in turns and tried to get their ball on the targets in the fewest possible strokes. The match was played on four ‘holes’ of a total of length of more than 4 kilometers.” It was also called kolf and the ball was made of polished wood. Although some of the pictures supporting the case were done in winter and it looks like hockey, he does make a compelling case based on foursome play and the fact that they were not shooting at a net with a goalie, but at a hole in the ground.

Subsequent chapters take up the evolution of golf in Scotland, and expansion throughout the world, including chapters about Japan and America, and the evolution of golf architecture. These latter chapters cover well-trodden ground but what makes *Golf & Kolf* rise above many other golf books is the ultra-high quality of the illustrations. Temmerman and the publisher, Martial & Snoeck, have an eye for picking compelling images and how they are presented. This makes sense because the publisher’s other works are art related topics. The reason the images are so good is that none are from photographs. Instead, they are from illustrations, sketches or paintings and they are presented in a manner that makes subtle use of the colors which gives the book a feeling of flipping through a book of impressionist paintings. The book’s coffee table format was a good choice to show them off.

While the book may not be the definitive answer to golf’s origins, a topic we suspect will be debated forever, the book is a welcome addition to the golfer’s library if for no other reason because the imagery is so good. Many of the images were taken from museum collections including the British Museum, the National Gallery, the Prado, and the Rijksmuseum.



The impressionistic style of the images is best seen in the two illustrations below, the first depicting the “Apple Tree Gang,” with John Reid sitting on a bench in 1888. Reid would go on to form the first golf club in America at St. Andrews. The second is taken from a Canadian Club Whisky Company advertisement.





Painting by Henry Sandham, a Canadian who specialized in open air and sporting paintings, 1899.

I propose a toast with a large glass of Stella Artois to celebrate such a lovely book.

-- John Sabino