

Peter Alliss

It was with the greatest sadness that we learned of the death of our Honorary Vice-President, Peter Alliss early in December 2020. The Voice of Golf for more than half a century, Peter passed away peacefully in his sleep at his home in Hindhead, Surrey, and golf and the wider world became a much poorer place for his passing.



His career as a player was only eclipsed by his contribution to broadcasting, golf journalism and in his later years as a one-man touring talk show that played to packed and delighted audiences wherever he went. His was the stentorian voice of our game; the voice of authority, of humour and perhaps of an earlier and arguably much better time.

He never shied away from controversy and told it exactly the way he saw it, usually with a twinkling eye and lightness of touch but occasionally with a withering edge that cast those over-concerned with political correctness or self-importance to the four winds where, in his opinion and among the vast majority of his supporters, they firmly belonged. His comment sometime after Nick Faldo was knighted in 2009 and had “Sir Nick Faldo” emblazoned on his golf bag prompted one of the most memorable in that vein. “I could perhaps have understood if it had been Sir Nicholas Faldo,” remarked Peter, “but I suppose once a Nick always a Nick.”

Peter held not a lot of store for honours. He turned down the offer of an OBE for his services to golf many years ago saying at the time, “I was just doing my job and you shouldn’t get an OBE for that.” He did admit, however, that he would have accepted it if it had been offered for his work on behalf of wheelchair charities for youngsters that was tireless and which he had more than earned. Over the years he raised more than £1.15 million that paid for upwards of 300 motorised wheelchairs and walking aids for youngsters with disabilities.

He is remembered of course for golf commentaries that were unmatched, for asides on the happenings off the fairways that were peerless, and for a mischievous ability to turn a humorous phrase from the simplest of situations. These were qualities unsurpassed by any television commentator of his, and perhaps, any other generation. He learned at the feet of the legendary Henry Longhurst although his style and delivery were very different.

A review of his career and other achievements has been well documented elsewhere but we in the Society remember him also as a great friend and supporter over more than two decades.



I well recall during my early years as your Captain playing alongside Peter in a match against North Hants Golf Club where our present Captain, Peter Stanbrook, is a redoubtable member and a distinguished past-Captain. Peter Alliss and I played in the first group against the Club secretary (Roy Goodliffe, a JBGS member too) and a young “whippersnapper” brought in to bolster the North Hants side against the great man with eight Ryder Cup appearances and more than 20 worldwide victories to his credit.

As Captain of the visiting side I drove first, a bit of a “fizzer to the right” as PA remarked at the time on a shortish Par 4, but one that nonetheless stretched a goodly chunk past the 200 yard marker. Peter’s drive was solid and long and in the centre but still leaving a modest

pitch and run to the green. Roy, a delightful man, followed suit some distance behind the Voice of Golf who was by now in relaxed mode, his bunnet at a jaunty angle, leaning on his driver and plainly happy that his opening blow had landed squarely on the boys from North Hants. Into the fray stepped a lanky lad as Peter I seem to remember remarked, "a youngster who looked rather in need of a good feed", by the name of Justin Rose. This quietly spoken and perfectly mannered young man, who had shown nothing but the greatest courtesy and respect to his opponents up to that point, unleashed a towering drive that carried all the way to the green and left a pitch mark only a few feet from the flag. The man who boasted an unbeaten Ryder Cup singles record against Arnold Palmer looked at me and I looked at him. It was clear that it was going to be a long day.

The Rose two-putt unmatched birdie at the 1st was followed by another towering drive and a No4 iron to twelve inches at the 2nd which set the pattern for a match that ended in a 6 & 5 victory for Justin and Roy with the Great Man, by this time, nursing an injured back in his attempts to try to stay in touch with the young Turk. What many did not realise about Peter Alliss was that beneath his jovial exterior there lurked a steeliness of will that simply hated to lose.

Only a couple of weeks later at the Open Championship at Royal Birkdale Peter was commentating on a young amateur who almost pulled off the most remarkable Open victory of the modern game. "He beat Campbell and me almost by a dog licence the other day," Peter remarked as a new star was born. "Quite remarkable".

Because of his unrelenting schedule, Peter was never able to attend as many Braid meetings as he would have liked but he was regularly in touch and enjoyed getting his copy of *The Bunnet* when it made its irregular and all too often irreverent appearance, a quality of which I know he thoroughly approved.

Only a few months ago when I was in Australia, Peter left an answer machine message for me, touching base, enquiring how things were and congratulating everyone concerned on the opening of Dumbarnie Links, which he was looking forward to visiting. "I am well from the chin up," he reported, "but the rest of me is pretty well knackered. However, everyone is good to me. They take me out and carry me around like the Sultan of Jaipur. I am planning to make it to the Masters and to St Andrews for the Open and then I may well pack it in." Sadly he was to see neither and we were soon to lose a valued friend.

Peter Alliss was a gentle man in a world fast running out of gentlemen. He was one of the great ambassadors for our game, reminding us all not to take it, or ourselves, too seriously and whatever else to stop and smell the flowers along the way.

We will miss his humour, his insight and his wisdom of years but most of all we will miss the dulcet tones of the Voice of Golf.

I doubt that I will ever erase that phone message.

Malcolm Campbell
Vice-President