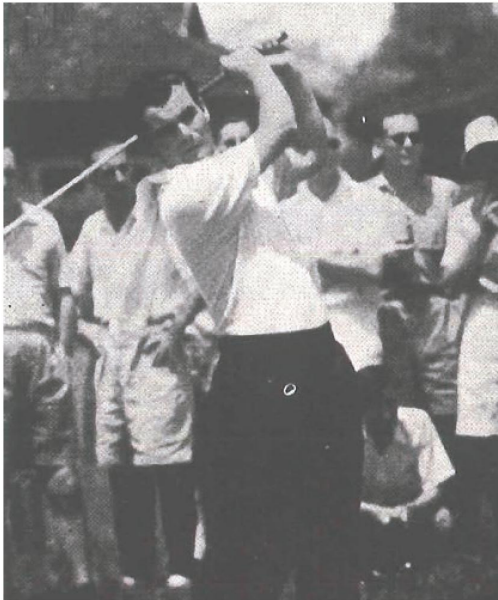




# GALAXY OF STARS



By YK Liew

**Left:**  
*Dai Rees in action*

Prior to the War, almost all of the famous professional golfers confined themselves to the tournaments at home. Commercial air travel was still in its infancy then. The only stars who set foot on RSGC soil then were Joe Kirkwood, the Australian trick shot artist and American Walter Hagen, three-time winner of The Open and twice holder of the American Open. They came over in 1937 during a world tour and enthralled everyone – Kirkwood with his sheer artistry in making a ball do anything, and Hagen with his demonstration of the more orthodox shot-making.

Perhaps the biggest-ever impact created by a golf professional at the RSGC was that of Tom Verity, who transferred from Singapore Island Club in 1938 to become the Club's resident teaching pro. Golfing ability aside, his immense contribution in the massive rehabilitation exercise after the War has been well-documented and cemented in the Club's history.

Verity remained as the resident pro until 1962 when he subsequently went on to

build a number of other courses in the region including one in Kashmir before his retirement in 1979. He was made an Honorary Member upon his return to Kuala Lumpur where he settled down until his demise in July 2004.

The Club welcomed the first of the postwar visitors in April 1951 when Dai Rees and Max Faulkner, both British Ryder Cup stars, made a diversion to Kuala Lumpur (after a stopover in Singapore on the way back home from Australia). Rees was then the holder for the 4th time of the British Professional Matchplay Championship and Faulkner was to triumph in The Open shortly thereafter in the summer.

The illustrious visitors had an exhibition match against Verity and the then Club Champion R.B. Lauriston. Dai Rees was so delighted with the Club, the course and the surroundings, as well as the warmth of his reception, that he paid a return visit.

Another outstanding star that is part of RSGC's history was Norman Von Nida. The Australian came to prominence in 1947 when he took Britain by storm in winning seven tournaments that year (still a European tour record) and a few more in 1948. By the time

**Below:**  
*Dai Rees, Lauriston, Faulkner and Verity*





**Left:**  
Tom Verity

he retired from tournament play in the mid 1970s with a bad back and failing eyesight, he had won over 80 championships, although never a major.

The Von, as he was popularly known, first met our Club Captain Tommy Lee and his wife Clarissa in 1975 when they visited him in Australia to seek his expertise and to invite him to assist the Malaysian team to win the Putra Cup. He accepted, much to the delight of the Lees. Before long, he became an invaluable asset at RSGC. The Von would rise at the break of dawn coaching housewives in the morning and other Members, including Putra Cup players, throughout the rest of the day and if necessary, even in the blazing sun. Hard work or magic or whatever – it worked and almost immediately, paid dividends. His Putra Cup team won in 1976. His charges in the 1977 Nomura Cup were even more impressive, securing third placing among the best amateur players in Asia.

In 1978, Members were treated to some exciting world-class golf when the Club hosted a head-to-head match, the 4th and final leg, between Johnny Miller and Graham Marsh. Miller had an 8-stroke cushion at the end of the earlier three rounds played at Fanling in Hong Kong, Pondok Indah in Jakarta and KGNS – and looked a certainty. Complacency, nervousness or just plain showmanship, who knows? Whatever it was, the crowd was treated to a nail-biting finish with Miller's lead whittled down to only one stroke going to the par four 18th. Miller was on in two. Marsh had to chip from a bad lie and like a true professional, his ball came to

rest a few inches from the hole and he tapped in for a par. Miller had a tricky putt from 100 feet or so with "potato chip" undulations to surmount. He did reasonably well to come to within a very missable six feet, with a subtle break. The stage was set for a dramatic finish. But Miller was not ranked No. 2 in the world then for nothing. He coolly stroked the ball in to seal victory.

The following year RSGC was again the chosen venue for another such event with Fuzzy Zoeller, the reigning US Masters Champion taking on Hubert Green, the 1977 US Open Champion. After the first three legs in Hong Kong, Jakarta and Ipoh, they were all square. Unfortunately, the eagerly anticipated excitement did not materialise as both finished unspectacularly with Green just edging his opponent with a 73.

During the modern era when intercontinental destinations by air were readily accessible (the Subang International Airport being finally completed in the mid-1960s) a galaxy of stars lit up our course from time to time in various tournaments. The Malaysian Opens, in particular, had seen the participation of an array of champions such as Peter Thomson, Kel Nagle, Bruce Devlin, Tony Jacklin, "Mr. Lu" Liang Huan, Graham Marsh, Isao Aoki to name a few, and later on, the likes of Vijay Singh, Ian Woosnam, Frank Nobilo, Frankie Minoza, Michael Campbell and even Jean "Carnoustie" Van de Velde! Hopefully with the successful staging of this inaugural Maybank Championship Malaysia 2016, more stars will continue to twinkle on RSGC greens!

**Below:**  
The Von with Eshak  
Bluah (left), Sahabudin  
and team manager  
H.K. Mah (right)

