

The Americans are coming: Celtic Manor, in Wales, is set to host the 38th Ryder Cup

A shot in one

As the 2010 Ryder Cup approaches, **Ian Valentine** examines the stunningly engraved 12-bore shotgun created to celebrate the prestigious occasion

The links between shotgun shooting and golf are surprisingly numerous. Aside from the silly trousers, both sports measure success by the number of shots taken, with the best exponents needing far fewer than the rest of us. Both are reliant on a smooth, consistent swing and a cool head, especially in the cauldron of competition clays or stroke play. And both can be a source of extreme frustration, resulting in red faces, blue mutterings and black moods, with the bad worker wrapping his iron round the nearest tree.

Shooting and golf also have in common a reputation for being expensive, snobbish, chauvinistic and over-regulated by stifling etiquette, which is (mostly) unwarranted. Hardened practitioners get excited about wind and rain — conditions that would send cricket, tennis and even some rugby players scuttling away to the fireside. Furthermore, accuracy on the range is no indicator of success in the field.

There are some stark differences, of course. Shooters are happier in the rough, golfers are encouraged to shoot eagles, and shanks, plugs, duck hooks and thinning have different meanings. But in both pursuits, the bag tends to get heavier the farther you walk. And whether they brandish a 12-bore or

seven iron, a Purdey or a Ping, the US golf team are always welcome on our shores.

Let the battle commence

At the start of October, however, this “special relationship” will be put on ice for three days when the US golf team arrives at Celtic Manor, in Newport, South Wales, for the 38th staging of the Ryder Cup. In the past 25 years, the biannual event between Europe and the US has become the highlight of the golfing calendar, one of the few sporting contests where highly paid sportsmen play solely for pride and the thrill of competition.

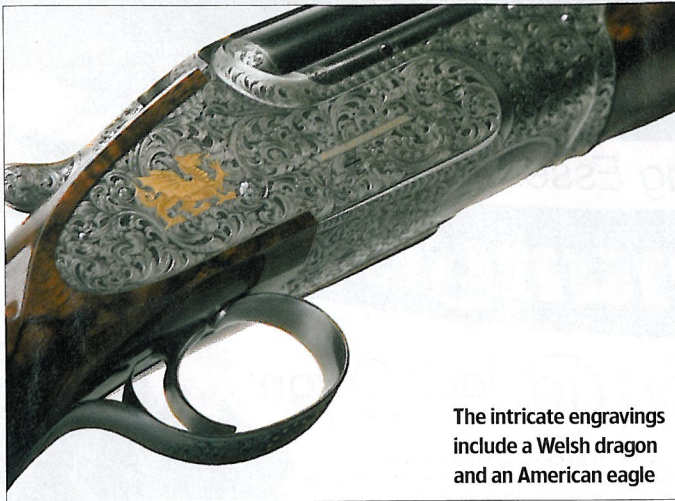
Since 1999, when unpleasant crowd scenes at Brookline, in Massachusetts, threatened to derail the team match that has been played since 1927, the rivalry has been ratcheted up. European captain Nick Faldo relinquished the cup last year in the US, as Team USA was inspired by the Mossy Oak-sponsored deer hunter Boo Weekley, riding his drive like a pony down the first fairway on the final day.

However, the Europeans have had the upper hand for the past two decades and Colin Montgomerie's team is expected to prevail on home turf. Rookie Swede Peter Hanson, a devoted

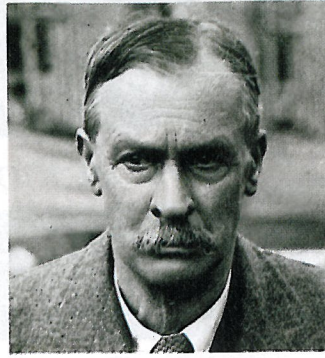
CELTIC MANOR RESORT

▼ Holloway & Naughton has created a bespoke 12-bore for the occasion





The intricate engravings include a Welsh dragon and an American eagle



▲ Seed merchant and golfing enthusiast Samuel Ryder was the Ryder Cup's first sponsor in 1927

hunter in his homeland, qualified after a consistent season on the European Tour, where he showed an accuracy in his iron play and putter that he can match behind the sights of a rifle.

A thing of beauty

To celebrate this highly anticipated contest — and the similarities between the two sports — gunmaker Holloway & Naughton was commissioned to create a bespoke 12-bore shotgun that has been intricately engraved with images from the showpiece event. The world-renowned Welsh engraver Phil Coggan has crafted a detailed portrait of the seed merchant Sam Ryder, who founded the event, alongside a Welsh dragon and a bald eagle, which represents the American visitors, both depicted in inlaid 18-carat gold. The Ryder Cup itself is featured on the top-lever in the finest detail. A striking European flag is blued on to the trigger-guard and is studded with gold stars. Featuring a 12-bore sidelock action and a single inertia trigger, the shotgun has demiblock 30in barrels and a tapering solid rib. It will be put on display in the hotel throughout the competition.

“It’s a work of art, but also a fully functioning sporting gun, hand-built to the highest specifications,” said Andrew Harvison, managing director of Holloway & Naughton. “The gun represents more than 1,200 man-hours of effort in its production. There is a beautiful feel to the gun, which has been enhanced by the wonderful detailed artwork of Phil Coggan. It was a real honour to have been granted this commission and we are proud of the end result, the sort of quality shotgun that is not made very often these days.”

Simon Gibson, chief executive of Wesley Clover, the company that owns the resort, said: “Celtic Manor’s reputation as a world-class golfing venue will be cemented when it stages the Ryder Cup, but shooting is another popular outdoor pursuit that we offer our leisure and corporate clients. Many people enjoy both sports and there are similarities between the two. The importance of technique and maintaining your powers of concentration are key elements of shooting and golf.

“The gun is a celebration of Wales hosting the Ryder Cup for the first time, and the Welsh and British craftsmen involved in its design and construction have created a truly magnificent shotgun worthy of the occasion.”

Perhaps the most obvious crossover between shooting and golf is the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. This simple pleasure is a universal attraction, no matter which side of the Atlantic you hail from. ■

For more information, visit www.hollowaynaughton.co.uk, www.celtic-manor.com and www.rydercup.com.



▲ The Ryder Cup is depicted on the top-lever in beautiful detail

► A portrait of Samuel Ryder and a European flag that is studded with gold stars adorn the gun

