



Royal Lytham & St. Anne's Golf Club

The 2018 Ricoh Women's British Open

This story starts with the same words that launched many a fairy tale. This is fitting, for in many ways the 2018 Ricoh Women's British Open was a fairy tale for the winner, Georgia Hall.

In 1996 Greg Norman took a six shot lead into the last round of the Masters at Augusta, only to be comprehensively overtaken by a steely Nick Faldo. Back in the UK, Wayne Hall was so taken by this happening that he named his new-born daughter Georgia, after the state in which the drama had unfolded. Wayne was an able golfer with a one-time handicap of two but he had a living to make as a plasterer in Bournemouth.

Under his guidance Georgia soon showed herself to have promise with a handicap of ten by the age of nine. By the time she had made as much progress as she could in the amateur ranks, she had won two gold medals in the Youth Olympics in Australia. At the age of seventeen she won the 2013 British Ladies Amateur Championship but restricted finances meant she had to decline the invitation to play in three Majors that followed. For her, a cushioned time at a US College was not an option. Instead, having turned professional two months after her eighteenth birthday, she had an early success when she won the Open Generali de Strasbourg on the LET Access Series. The fairy tale continued towards the end of 2014 when she had a hole in one at the Omega Dubai Open and won a brand new Mercedes car. Cinderella like, having only £200 in the bank when she reached Dubai, she sensibly took the cash alternative. But two months later she did pass her driving test, in case history might repeat itself. She did have another hole in one in 2016 but this time won an Omega watch instead. By the end of that year she headed the Solheim Cup rankings, having played in fifteen events and finishing in the top ten on a remarkable eight occasions. In the 2017 Ricoh Women's British Open at Kingsbarns she went out in the final pairing and finished in third place. At the age of just 21 she played for Europe in the Solheim Cup, winning two foursomes and only losing her singles to Paula Creamer on the last hole. Shortly before coming to Lytham for the 2018 Women's Open she played with Tom Lehman, Open winner here in the year she was born. His advice to lay up short of the bunkers stayed with her and in the first two rounds she was unflappable, with two bogey free rounds of 67 and 68. In the third round she was paired with Pornanong Phatlum, who kept herself calm by singing Thai songs inside her head. The Thai player took a one stroke lead into the last round and the same pairing exchanged birdies on the front nine. Single putts after bunkers saved pars for Hall at the ninth and fourteenth, but it was only until she had birdies at the thirteenth and sixteenth that she finally edged ahead, with putts of ten and twenty-five feet. After Phatlum struggled on the seventeenth, Hall took a three stroke lead to the last tee and allowed herself a cautious three putt to win her first major.

More of the fairy tale - at the age of just 22, Georgia Hall was the youngest British golfer to win a major since Willie Anderson, who had emigrated from North Berwick to win the US Open in 1901. Following Tom Lehman's advice she was only in one fairway bunker all week and six green-side ones. In all six instances she got up and down in two, echoing the similar experiences of Tony Jacklin in 1969 and Seve Ballesteros in 1979. The smoothness of her putting stroke was another impressive strength of her game. Once again Royal Lytham showed itself to be the ideal arena for a championship, with the largest crowds ever for a Women's British Open being treated to golf of the highest calibre played over a course superbly presented by players who were a credit to themselves and the game. And for the young English Georgia Hall to win - now that was a fairy tale!