

Far and wide, golf has made its

STAMP

upon the world

By Michael Schaefer

The passion of golfers for their game has few limits, be it scholarship, travel, writing, equipment, or collecting. One collecting pursuit does not challenge space, like equipment, books, or art. One fits on the corner of an envelope, the postage stamp, and like the game itself, has traveled around the Universe ignoring international boundaries. Moreover, there is a story behind every postage stamp.

Here are some of them.

Of timely interest for this year's Open Championship, Royal Portrush's 5th Hole, "White Rocks," stages



MERCEDES-BENZ 300SL COUPÉ 1 1952

a Mercedes Benz. Rolled all up into one tiny image is N. Ireland, Germany, and the far away issuing nation, Tanzania. Golf is a popular association for any product.

From such prestigious connections, even the lowliest places on Earth document golf's reach through a stamp (shown top right). Rising up from the depths of the Indian Ocean as a 300-foot mountain top, Christmas Island, so named for its discovery that day in 1643, features its finishing 9th hole. Built in 1955 and having only 1,500 inhabitants, it boasts of the highest percentage of resident golfers in the world. Ironically, the Christmas 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami was a mere ripple on its 50-mile shoreline due to

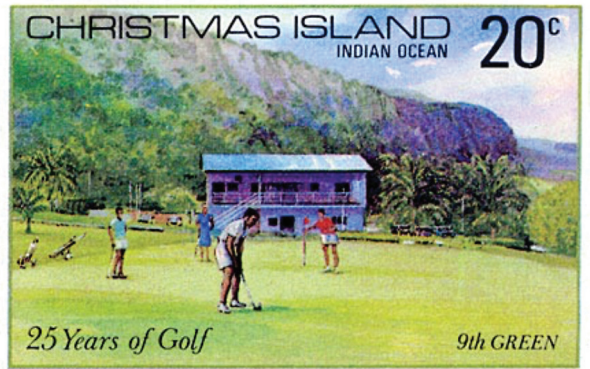
its lack of a continental shelf.

The tiny Caribbean Island of Montserrat did not fare so well. A 1996 volcanic eruption eliminated its eleven-hole



golf course and rendered half the island uninhabitable.

The most widely viewed single golf shot in history



caught the eye of the West African Republic of Guinea on the 25th anniversary of Man on the Moon. Alan Shepard's 6 iron went "for miles and miles." Shivas Irons then proclaimed golf as the "only interplanetary sport."

A more attractive volcano (it's inactive), Mount Taranaki rises 2,580 meters above New Plymouth Golf Club on the tropical coastal plain of New Zealand's north island. Even children putting have found their way to the corner of an envelope.

One stamp leaves no doubt about its connection to golf, Royal Troon's diminutive 123-yard 8th hole, "The Postage Stamp." Its small putting surface and bunkers perforating its edge inspired its naming. Many golfers seeing their shot roll off have wished the green had been laid glue side up.

Collecting golf stamps gives further proof that the sun never sets on the game. The story

behind each of them chronicle the obstacles that the game and its players have overcome and continue to motivate its pursuit, even for notable cartoon characters. ¶

