

"Nice Putt.....Alice": Origin!

Say you're playing in a foursome with three of your buddies, when one of them lines up a putt, takes his stroke ... and doesn't even get the ball to the hole. What do you say? Well, one possibility is, "hit it, Alice !" Another is, "nice putt, Alice !" The derogatory "Alice" statement has been part of golf for decades. But who is Alice?, and what did she do to get immortalized in a golf insult that frequently follows a putt left short?

Contrary to one frequently offered explanation, this "Alice" has nothing to do with the Jackie Gleason sitcom *The Honeymooners*. Gleason was a golf fanatic, and his character on the show, Ralph Kramden, played golf too. Ralph's wife was named Alice. It's a good guess, but the phrase does not refer to Alice Kramden. It turns out that "Alice" isn't a she at all. "Alice" is a he, and it's not "Alice", it's "Alliss." As in Peter Alliss.

Peter Alliss is the famous English golf broadcaster, the voice of golf on the BBC for decades. But before he became internationally famous as a broadcaster, Alliss was famous in Britain and Europe as a touring pro. And a pretty good one, too: Alliss won 21 times on the precursor to the European Tour and played on eight Ryder Cup teams. At the 1963 Ryder Cup in Atlanta, Alliss played Arnold Palmer and Tony Lema in back-to-back singles matches and won 1.5 points, halving with Lema and beating Palmer. At some point during his match against Palmer, Alliss - for whom putting was not a strength - badly missed a 3-foot putt. Someone in the gallery yelled out, "Nice putt, Alliss!"

Alliss described that moment in a brief article in a 1997 issue of *Sports Illustrated*, and explained how the phrase became part of the golf lexicon: The BBC, for whom I now do golf commentary, played a large part in burning the phrase into the public consciousness. "I was never renowned for my putting and therefore was an easy - and frequent - target for the many comedy programs on the "Beeb," where great humor was found in such knee-slappers as 'That girl Alliss sure hits it a long way!'"

So BBC programs of the early to mid-1960s liked to get funny with Alliss' name and its homonym, the female moniker Alice. Ah, that good ol' golf humor: questioning a man's manliness for leaving a putt short by calling him a woman's name. They did it in the 1960s and they - ahem, we - still do it today. Except that today, most golfers - most of those outside of Britain, anyway - have no idea that "Alice" is actually Peter Alliss.

SO now you KNOW!!