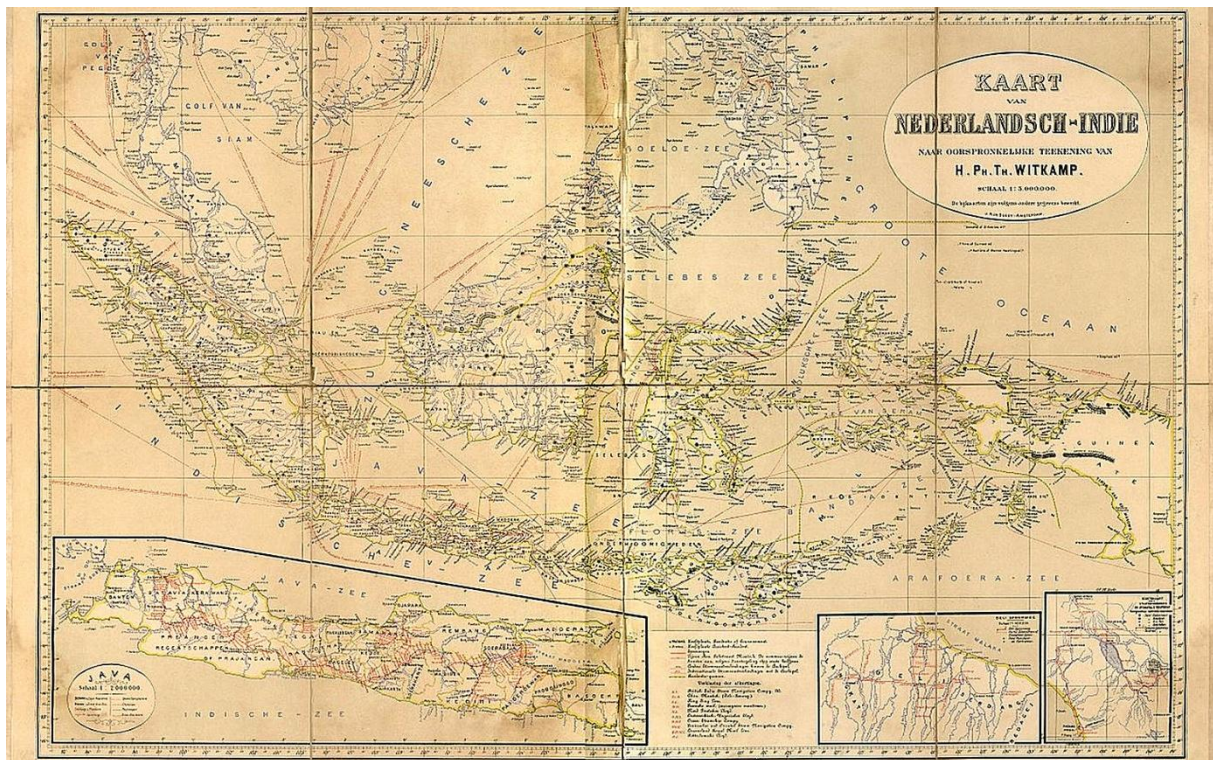


Golf in the Former Dutch East Indies

by Ferd Vrijmoed



GOLF AS WE KNOW IT TODAY appeared in the Netherlands in 1889 with a primitive 5-hole golf course, built by Baron Arnoud van Brienen van de Groote Lindt on the sheep pasture of his Clingendael estate. However, there were already several 9-hole golf courses in the Dutch East Indies which had been established earlier. This was reason enough for the Dutch Golf Museum to set up an exhibition covering golf in the former Dutch East Indies. The exhibition ran from October 2023 to June 2024.



It is possible that a 9-hole course had already been established in Batavia, (present day Jakarta), around 1813.¹ The point is - in 1810 the Netherlands, including the Batavian Republic of Holland, was annexed by France. Consequently Great Britain sent a huge fleet of 90 warships with almost 20,000 men to Batavia. Due to this great superiority, the then Dutch authority was transferred to Britain without any fighting, and the Dutch Governor General Herman Willem Daendels was replaced by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles who was appointed Lieutenant General. Raffles is said, to have had a passion for golf

¹ J.P Campen, *De Golfglorie van Tempo Doeloe -Golf in Nederlands Indie*, Uitgeverij Equipe bv, The Netherlands, 2013.

and there are indications² that around 1813 he had a 9-hole course built between his palace at Lands Botanical Garden and the center of Buitenzorg [now (again) Bogor]. After the decisive defeat of Napoleon by the Allied armies, which included Great Britain and the Netherlands, Great Britain returned to the Netherlands most of the former Dutch colonial possessions. On 19 August, 1816 the administration of "Java and Dependencies" was officially transferred to the United Kingdom of the Netherlands marking the birth of the Dutch East Indies.

There will undoubtedly have been some golf here and there in the 19th century, but it is known that the first golf club, the Batavia Golf Club, was founded on 8 July 1872. It was the initiative of John Campbell, who later became Honorary Secretary. The 9-hole course was built in the heart of Batavia on the almost 100-hectare Koningsplein, an extremely prestigious place. The English influence was great until 1930 when the club statutes were amended, as there had not been a Dutch chairman. In the 1930s, the expansion to 18- holes was important for the club. By then, the club had already relocated to the outskirts of Batavia.. First to Bukit Duri and then to Rawah Mangoen, a reclaimed swamp area. Along with the expansion at Rawah Mangoen, a new clubhouse was inaugurated in 1937.

The Batavia Golf Club in Rawah Mangoen was the leading golf club in the Dutch East Indies, but unfortunately almost nothing has been preserved from before the war.

In the Tjandi collection there are still two replicas of cups from 1939 and 1940 from the Eclectic Club Championships. *Tjandi* in the meaning of a monument or temple is a well-chosen term for the collection of pre-war golf treasures from the Dutch East Indies that have been painstakingly preserved. The Tjandi Collection is exhibited in the Indisch Huis, now the Indies Remembrance Centre in The Hague.

Included in the exhibition of the Dutch Golf Museum was the surviving silver cup (with two handles) from the Batavia Golf Club from 1939-40, won by Mrs Emmerling (Susan M Emmerling MD) and the silver cup (with two handles) of the Batavia Golf Club from 1941, also won by Mrs Emmerling. After the occupation by Japan, these cups were kept in a Japanese internment camp as a reminder of the time before the occupation. The two cups are among the few surviving golf trophies from that era that have been preserved.

It was customary at almost all East Indian golf clubs that the winner could take home a solid silver cup. The prizes tables were therefore full of these often small works of art made from first grade silver.



In 1895, the Tjandi Sports Club was founded on the Kenarielaan, a few kilometers south of the center of Semarang, seemingly once again by the British. The club had several tennis courts and a 9-hole golf course, located in a shallow bowl between two hills. The golf course had only one *khaki andjing* (dog leg) and was overgrown with dense long reed grass, in which tigers felt very much at home.

² J.P. Campen, *ibid.*



At the first *lustrum*³ of the club it was decided to buy a cup for the official club championship. This silver cup and the accompanying shield of honour were made in England in 1901; the cup in Sheffield, and the shield of honour in London. The cup, also known as the Tempo Doeloe cup, is the oldest surviving golf trophy of the Dutch East Indies and possibly the oldest golf cup in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Fortunately, the shield of honour has also been preserved.

The second oldest cup in the Dutch East Indies, also from the Tjandi Sports Club, just like the Tempo Doeloe cup, was made in Sheffield, with first grade silver and has an official hallmark from 1925. This cup was purchased by the Ardath Tobacco Company in 1928 and offered to the golfers of Tjandi, to be played for annually. The tobacco company, producer of Chief Whip cigarettes, has long since ceased to exist. The cup, officially the "State Express Cup", but known as the Tabaksbeker (Tobacco Cup) still exists and is part of the Tjandi collection.



Tempo Doeloe Cup 1901

Tobacco Cup 1928

From 1911 onwards, due to the central location of Tjandi, the annual amateur championship of the Dutch East Indies was played on the Tjandi course and always during the Easter weekend. The Dutch East Indies Close Amateur Championship, as the tournament was officially called, became known as *The Easter Tournament*. It was the most important golf competition of the year for the whole of the Dutch East Indies. Only in 1936 the amateur championship was played at Palembang to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the club. And in 1938 it was played at Batavia to celebrate its new clubhouse. The gigantic cup with a height of about 70 cm was destroyed by the Japanese at the end of 1942.

At the time golf clubs were social hubs where people always stayed for a drink after the game of golf. Naturally they would change clothes for the *after-golf* social occasion.

³ *Lustrum*: five years anniversary.

In 1936, the Tjandi Sports Club bought from the Oei family an adjacent piece of land on the Oei Tjong Bing road. The clubhouse was extensively renovated and the course expanded to 18-holes.

In 1898, there was an initiative of a number of employees of the Shell petroleum company from the office in Wonokromo to build a golf course in Pasar Toeri, and so the Soerabaja Golf Club was founded. The course was virtually unplayable outside the wet monsoon period as the course was very hard due to drought. If it was possible to play, it was only on Sunday.

In 1908, the club received permission to build an 18-hole golf course in Gunung Sahari, about five kilometres from the centre of Soerabaja. Good use was made of the ponds and ravines of the natural landscape and it became a challenging golf course which was inaugurated in 1910. In the same year, the first official club championship was played, a mainly British affair. As from 1915 onwards more and more Dutch people started to participate, much earlier than at the other large East Indies golf clubs, the Soerabaja Golf Club was considered to be one of the most Dutch golf clubs in the Dutch East Indies.

The Queen's Cup, the Wilhelmina Cup, the Juliana Cup and two Beatrix Cups, all originate from the Soerabaja Golf Club.



Wilhelmina Cup 1928

In 1928, to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the reign of Queen Wilhelmina, the board of the Soerabaja Golf Club decided to establish the Wilhelmina Cup. From 1928, this cup was played annually in August. This stopped with the Japanese occupation. It wasn't until years after the war in 1949 that the cup resurfaced. Literally, as it seems that a Chinese employee of the club had buried the cup and thus saved it from Japanese destruction.

The Japanese were interested in the silver and they had demanded the surrender of all cups.

There was great resistance to this and often silver cups were hidden from the Japanese by burying them in the ground. The club members and employees who did this were risking their lives.

In order not to arouse suspicion, some cups had to be handed to the Japanese.

That is why the second Queen's Cup, the Juliana Cup, was handed in to the Japanese police, and unfortunately immediately destroyed.

A member of the Haagsche Golf Club, Cor Bryan, later brought the original Wilhelmina cup back to the Netherlands and from 1960 onwards this cup is again competed for annually, also in August as previously, but now in the Netherlands at the Royal Haagsche Golf & Country Club, where the historic cup is now safely kept.

Although the Juliana Cup was destroyed by the Japanese, there is a faithful replica of the cup.

The late Peter Campen had the replica made based on a photo of the original Juliana Cup.

From 2018, 75 years after this cup was last played, it was contested once again, but now in the Netherlands during the Tjandi competitions at Rozenstein Golf Club, Wassenaar. During this series of

revivals of historical competitions other trophies are the aforementioned Tobacco Cup, and the spectacular Tjandi Club Championship Cup from 1901, (the Tempo Doeloe Cup mentioned previously). The original Dutch East Indies Open Cup and possibly also the Insulinde Cup are also part of the series of the Tjandi competitions.

Peter Campen made an extensive research of golf in the Dutch East Indies which led him to publish the comprehensive book *The Golf Glory of Tempo Doeloe*.⁴

Tempo Doeloe - the times of the past, (which one may not have experienced oneself). Much of the information presented in this article is drawn from the book.

In 1938, on the occasion of the birth of Princess Beatrix, the Dutch members of the Soerabay Golf Club presented a set of cups, engraved with the coat of arms of the new princess.



Beatrix Cup Ladies

Beatrix Cup Men

These two Beatrix Cups, (a smaller cup for the ladies and a larger cup for the men), were also secretly buried and hidden from the Japanese during the war.

And as a result, the historic Beatrix cup competitions are also being played again. This happens every year at the Hattemse Golf Club in the annual Indies Golf Weekend (IGW) held there in September, the only Indonesian multi-day golf event in the Netherlands, which has celebrated its fifteenth lustrum (*seventy-fifth anniversary*) in 2023. The main cup of the IGW is the post-war Gunung Sahari Cup, but the Beatrix cups are showpieces of the IGW. Other trophies that are contested during the IGW are the Kuta Radja Cup and the Shanghai Cup.

There is another Indonesian golf competition, the Tjitjak competition, which after some wanderings in 1998 ended up at the Haarlemmermeersche Golf Club.

The Tjitjak is an East Indies wall lizard, and the winner of the Tjitjak competition is awarded a silver Tjitjak figurine.

There may be other golf competitions of Indonesian origin in the Netherlands. However some have been discontinued often due to waning interest, (*suda – never mind*).

Some silver cups from the Soerabaja Golf Club have also been preserved.

There is a mixed foursomes cup from 1938, the design of which clearly shows that the cup was specially designed as a golf cup. This cup was won by Mr and Mrs G A Cox.

The other two cups that are still in existence were won by Mrs Spruyt, a ladies January medal cup from 1939 and a ladies competition cup from 1940.

When Mrs. Spruyt had to enter a Japanese internment camp in 1942 with two small children, she took those cups with her and possibly drew some comfort from them, as afterwards she took them with her everywhere.

These three cups were also included in the exhibition of the Dutch Golf Museum

The Batavia Golf Club, the Tjandi Sports Club and the Soerabaya Golf Club were all located in Java. But after 1898 Java was dormant for a long time as far as the construction of new golf courses was concerned. That is until 1915 when Denis Mulder developed plans for a high-altitude orbit between the volcanoes of the Preanger, an area characterized by its healthy mountain air.

⁴ J.P. Campen, *ibid*.

Denis Mulder was a doctor in Garoet, who had already worked on the construction of the *Sanatorium Ngamplang* and a holiday resort in that area. Adjacent to the holiday resort was a 9-hole golf course, which stretched between the volcanoes Goentoer, Papandajan and the Goenoeng Tjikori. In 1918 Garoet Ngamplang, the most beautifully situated golf course in Java, was opened.

Almost at the same time, Mr. Rameau, a scion of the well known family from the National Government of the Dutch East Indies, took the initiative to build a 6-hole course in Tegalsapi near Buitenzorg. The 1917 course was expanded to nine holes in 1919.

In 1926 another golf club was added, this time in Bandung with the golf course at Andir airport. However, the golf course was so close to the airport that golf balls regularly landed on the runway. When Elisabeth Sandbergen hit an airplane in 1938 with a deflected ball, she had had enough and almost immediately decided to relocate the runway five kilometres away. The golf course is still there. We don't know much about the early years. Very little has been preserved. Only a few photos remain, including a not very good photo of a competition board from 1928. However, two cups from the Bandoeng Club have been preserved, both won by Dr Denis Mulder. The cups were on display in the exhibition of the Dutch Golf Museum. One cup is from 1934, and the other is from the Bandung Golf Club bogey competition of August 1936.

In 1931, the Soebang Golf Club was founded and almost immediately there was an annual exchange between Subang and Bandung. Pictures of Subang from that time provide an idea of golf back then. For example, the Dutch golfers were numerically superior to the English golfers in Bandung, but the English were still qualitatively superior to the Dutch in terms of golf and usually only the British flag flew at the clubhouse. There were a lot of barefoot caddies, and more caddies than players, from which one can conclude that fore-caddies were likely deployed in addition to bag-carrying caddies.

It is not unusual that compatriot expatriates visit each other. This was the case with Armenians in the Dutch East Indies. In 1926, the Armenian Sports Club was founded in Karang Mendjangan, a suburb of Soerabaja, with tennis courts and a 9-hole golf course which was one of the most remarkable golf courses in the Dutch East Indies. The chairman, Mr Hacobian, officially opened the golf course in 1927.

More and more golf courses were added. In 1931, two were built next to the Subang course, one in Trètès, one of the most popular holiday resorts in the entire archipelago, and one, the Sitoebondo, in the far east of Java, just north of Banjoewangi. It was a real links course, right by the sea between the sugar companies Pandji and Asem Bagoes. The location of this course, also referred to as Landangang, caused some problems, as golf balls often disappeared. They were then taken by *jaja's*, small lobsters, who lived on the beach, but dug their holes a little further inland. A special local rule waived the penalty stroke for a lost ball.

Another links course was built in Tegal in 1933 and in 1937 the Malang Golf Club was established. The golf course, the Soember Aloer, was closed on certain days of the week due to its use as a military firing range.

In 1938 golf had become popular with the expatriate community and golf courses were created in Cheribon, Djember, Tosari and Sukabumi. Even in 1940, golf courses were still being built. Like the one at Tjepoe in the highlands between Central and East Java created on the initiative of a number of Shell employees. The first chairman of the golf club was the Dutchman A H Colijn, the son of the then Prime Minister of the Netherlands (until the summer of 1939). But also the Manggarai, named after the adjacent residential area with sports fields in Meester Cornelis. This course was known for the Toko Cup, a competition between large companies. And then there was the Struyswijk golf course near the workshop of the State Railways.

In addition to these 18-hole and 9-hole courses, there were some 6-hole courses, of which the course around the Purwoasri sugar factory near Kediri was notorious because there was a blind hole where one had to hit the golf ball over the factory to get to the green.

The most famous 6-hole course was the one at the well known hotel Nongkodjadar.

If we look at the golf course developments on Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes and New Guinea, the petroleum industry also played a major role in the creation of golf courses. Royal Dutch Shell and British Petroleum were quick to act when good quality oil was discovered in Sumatra in 1883. And competition soon developed. Standard Oil established there well before the First World War.

The colonial past of the Dutch East Indies is now a sensitive issue for many, but at the beginning of the 20th century this was not the case, as evidenced by the name of the American oil company founded in 1910, which was called Colonial Petroleum Company (KPM). Around 1920 this company built a refinery in Sungei Gerong on the south bank of the Moesi River near Palembang. A golf course was built on the north bank of the Moesi in Kenten, especially for the management and their families. In 1926 the course was opened and handed over to the board of the Colonial Golf Club Palembang. Although around 1928 the management of the KPM saw reason to change the name of the company to Stanvac (Standard Oil/Vacuum – Mobil), the golf club did not participate. It kept its now more sensitive name until 1947. After 1947 the name was changed to Palembang Golf Club.

On the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Colonial Golf Club Palembang, a few major golf events were organized. In consultation with Tjandi, the Easter Meeting, the Closed Amateur Championship, was not played in Semarang that year, but in Palembang. In addition, it was decided to close the golf season with a Dutch Open. Apparently they were unaware of the fact that the Dutch Open already existed in the Netherlands and had already been played in Hilversum that same year. And so in 1936 there were two Dutch Open champions. In the Netherlands the Belgian Flory Van Donck, and in the Dutch East Indies the Dutchman Eddie Veltman. The only Dutch Open cup ever awarded in the Dutch East Indies still exists. It is in the Tjandi collection and as mentioned before, it is played annually during the Tjandi matches at Rozenstein Golf Club, Wassenaar..



Dutch Open Cup 1938

The Dutch Golf Museum would be happy to include the cup in its collection and add it to the four Dutch Open cups, the Burrows cup, the Boomer cup and the current challenge cup (KLM Cup) for men and the current Ladies Dutch Open Cup for women.

In the exhibition there were four silver cups from the Palembang Golf Club from after the Second World War on display. A cup of the monthly medal August 1949, won by Mrs J H v.d. Berkhof, a cup from the monthly medal May 1950, won by Mady v.d. Berkhof, a cup of the monthly medal 1952, won by Meade v.d. Berkhof and the Wimpey Cup from 1953, won by M v.d. Berkhof and J B Stephens. It seems that all four cups were won by ladies from the same Berkhof family.

Palembang's course was notorious for having a lake less than 100 meters from the clubhouse. If your ball landed in there and you wanted to continue playing – with a penalty stroke, of course – you were

expected to shout very loudly "*ajer*", water in the local language. Immediately, out of nowhere, some *katjongs* from the nearby *kampong* appeared, took off their clothes and jumped into the water to retrieve the ball. The finder's reward was half a cent.

When Jan Feith, a *totok*⁵, who once played golf in the Dutch East Indies, gave a ten cents coin to the finder of his ball, to Jan's surprise, the boy immediately ran off with it.

Shell was close by and staff were allowed to play at the Colonial.

Nevertheless, in 1937 the Shell people got their own golf course, the Pladjoe Golf Club.

In 1938 the third "oil" course of Sumatra was built, a 9-hole course on the Aloer Gantoeng north of Medan. It was named the Pankalan Brandan Golf Club.

The most beautiful courses in Sumatra were built in 1939 at the famous Lake Toba in Brastagi and Prapat. The clubhouses were very much in the English style.

Golf-mad Dutch people built the last courses on Sumatra. They appeared in Siantar, in Padang and in the *Karbouwgat* near Fort de Kock in Boekittingie. This still evokes warm feelings in me because of my aunt Bella, one of my father's older sisters, who did missionary work there for years (after all, that was what it was called). Sister Paula Maria Vrijmoed, her convent name, became head of the Novitiate and then Mother Superior and ran a school and a maternity hospital in the middle of the bush. She passed away after 48 years in Indonesia (1949 – 1997) in Alverna in the Netherlands on 5 May 2012, more than a century old.

There has only been one 9-hole golf course on Dutch Borneo, frequently played, but only in use for a short time. The course was opened in 1939 in Balikpapan for Shell employees.

Also on Sulawesi there was a lack of a golf course and so in 1938 the Golf Club Makassar was founded by about twenty enthusiastic golfers.

It was a simple, rural 9-hole course in the beautiful Toradja country, and played mainly during the weekends. On the other days carabao were grazing.

The club never had more than 50 members.

Even more remote and primitive was the 9-hole course built in 1939 near the oil town of Babo on Dutch New Guinea. About 100 kilometres east of Fak Fak, as the crow flies. The golf course could only be reached by aeroplane.

The golf course environment was not beautiful because there were too many ugly eucalyptus trees.

Maintaining the golf course was challenging. The attempts to build sand bunkers always failed due to the monsoon rains washing away the sand. Eventually the bunkers became overgrown with the tough native grass.

Maintaining greens was impossible. Only one green was with grass; five greens were compacted sand, and three greens were plain asphalt.

If a ball disappeared into the jungle, even the sharp eyes of the Papuan caddies usually couldn't find it.

The third hole was notorious. A par-5 of 500 meters, nowhere wider than 30 meters and a sharp *kaki andjing* (dog leg). In addition, the green was made of hard asphalt.

The sixth hole was good, a par-3, but with the green in a sago swamp. If you missed the green, you immediately lost your ball. No caddie dared to get the ball out of the swamp. Leeches and other vermin ruled the roost there.

Local manager Lykle Schepers had an eye for the difficulty of the golf course.

That's why he offered a bottle of champagne to every golfer who played the course in 47 strokes or less, probably without any significant risk. The champagne to be consumed on the spot at the "tenth hole", which was a log cabin with a Papuan waiter.

⁵ *Toktok*: a newly arrived person who is not yet familiar with the established local customs.

Not only golf trophies from the former Dutch East Indies have survived the years. There are also historic golf clubs from that time. In the Dutch Golf Museum there are some original clubs from Java. And a few are engraved *Onderlinge Hulp* (Mutual Aid) from Batavia.

These clubs were made around 1910 and belonged to the Dutch owner of a tin mine in Batavia. This man was also the owner of *Onderlinge Hulp*, a well-known retail chain at the time. What makes these clubs special is the Dutch text on them and the fact that they are very rare.

I am not aware of any specific mentions of golf on Bali and the Moluccas.