

University of St Andrews
Golf Graduation, 12 July 2005
Laureation Address for Peter Alliss

Chancellor, it is my privilege to present Mr Peter Alliss for the Degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa.

Peter Alliss has been setting records since the moment he was born: weighing in at a then European record of fourteen pounds and eleven ounces. A phrase incorporating glass eyes and tears comes to mind.

With his father, Percy Alliss, among one of the finest players of his generation, it was perhaps inevitable that Peter would also make a career in golf. Although his father was not Scottish, he hired Peter as his unpaid assistant at Ferndown Golf Club, allowing him time off midweek to compete in tournaments. With some degree of success in his first professional tournaments, one of them over the Old Course here at St Andrews in 1948, Peter quickly established himself among the top young players of the time.

Between 1954 and 1969, he won twenty-one professional tournaments and was twice winner of the Vardon Trophy. In September 1958, he won the national championships of Italy, Spain, and Portugal in three consecutive weeks. He played in eight Ryder Cups, and is one of only two father and sons to have represented their country at this level.

He retired from the professional golf circuit in 1969. His acquisition of the car license plate PUT-3, showed his sense of humour regarding the major factor contributing to his early retirement.

Following on from his playing career, Peter has been a very successful golf course designer. He continued to serve the professional game and was the first president of the Women's European Professional Tour and twice Captain of the PGA. However, golf is not his only focus as he shares his time and talents working to change lives through the Wheelchair Crusade and the Alliss Masters that has raised over two million pounds for powered mobility, and also DEBRA, the research and support charity for children with a rare and currently incurable skin disease.

Peter Alliss has strong connections with St Andrews, both town and gown. He is an Honorary Member of the St Andrews Preservation Trust and a patron of the Byre theatre. He is also a Patron of the Bobby Jones Trust, a student scholarship partnership with Emory University in Atlanta. Tomorrow, he will be with the St Andrews charity Keepers of the Green as they make their latest presentations of powered wheelchairs.

Today, millions of people all over the world know Peter Alliss for his distinguished career of over forty years as a television broadcaster and as a marvellous ambassador for golf and Great Britain. Indeed, his golf commentaries, witticisms, and general musings on life are *the reason* many people watch golf on television.

To make things a wee bit different for this laureation address, over the last few weeks I have been soliciting "comments on the commentator" from golfers, colleagues, and

friends of Peter Alliss. Thank you to Mrs Alliss! Time permits me to read only a couple of these memories.

The first is from one of your Ryder Cup adversaries, Arnold Palmer, who said his most vivid memory of you was from your first meeting at Royal Lytham and St Annes in 1961:

“I greatly admired the way Peter played the game, with such precision and accuracy, which was almost nothing like my style. And it says something nice about the man’s quiet tenacity that I had to work my tail off simply to halve the match with him. Cordially shaking hands at the match’s conclusion, I think both of us knew we’d been in a dogfight — and would probably be in a few more before things were over.”

Now, take yourself back to a practice round on the Old Course for the 1955 Open Championship, ultimately won by your fellow honoree Peter Thomson. John Jacobs recalls:

“Backed up at the sixth tee, Peter and I were practicing putting on the fifth green when Peter decided to bowl the ball to me. Well, I made contact with my putter and nearly killed someone on the thirteenth green. On completing our round, Brigadier Brickman (“Brickie”, then secretary of the R&A) was waiting behind the eighteenth green, summoned us over, gave us a right good dressing down, demanding to know who had been “playing cricket on this hallowed turf.” It’s funny to think that those two young rogues are now both honorary members of the R&A.”

Jimmy Tarbuck also sent a message. Principal Lang assures me that I will not lose my job for reading this... and I hope I’ll not lose my Links Ticket!

“Peter Alliss is Henry Longhurst’s lovechild. He still plays like a champ, but the only thing he can’t do is bend down to tee up the ball. He reads Playboy magazine for the same reason he reads National Geographic, he sees places he’ll never visit. But in the words of Tina Turner, he’s *simply the best!*”

Many more friends and colleagues have sent their warmest congratulations and best wishes for this week and many more Open Championships.

Finally, in addition to being an honorary member of 27 golf clubs, this is the third time that Peter Alliss has been awarded an honorary degree. Today is special for the Alliss family as both father and son were to be awarded degrees. However, Henry Alliss has changed his graduation from the University of East Anglia to tomorrow, so that he could be here with his dad today.

Peter has said of his previous awards that his mum would be proud. We hope that today’s ceremony is another occasion for all your friends and family to be proud of you, your achievements, and the great affection with which you are held. It is with great pride that we at St Andrews University, the town of St Andrews, and the Home of Golf are today honouring the Voice of Golf.

Chancellor, in recognition of his major contributions to the fields of golf and television broadcasting, I invite you to confer on Peter Alliss the Degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa.