

## McCready, Samuel Maxwell ('Max')

by Jim Shanahan

McCready, Samuel Maxwell ('Max') (1918–95), amateur golfer, was born 8 March 1918 in Belfast, only son among three children of Samuel McCready, clothing manufacturer, originally from Lurgan, Co. Armagh, and Sarah Williamina McCready (née Thompson) originally of Annesborough, Castlewellan, Co. Down, and both of Ponsonbury Avenue, Belfast. He was reared in Dunmurry, outside Belfast, educated at Dunmurry elementary school and later at Belfast Academical Institution, before attending QUB to take an arts degree. He briefly considered becoming a presbyterian minister, and spent a year at the Presbyterian College in Belfast, before joining the RAF in the early years of the second world war. He was an excellent all-round sportsman, playing badminton for the RAF, and also excelling at boxing, cricket, and rugby, as well as golf. Having lived beside the local golf club in Dunmurry, he began playing the game at an early age. McCready first came to golfing prominence in 1947, when as a relative unknown he won the RAF championship. That same year he finished as the leading amateur at the Irish Open championship, played for Ireland in the home international championship series, and was reserve on what was then the British team for the Walker Cup against the USA. He played in five home international championships in total (1947, 1949, 1950, 1952, 1954), winning fourteen and halving three of his twenty-eight matches. He also played on two Walker cup teams (1949, 1951), losing all three of his matches. He won the Jamaican Amateur Open title in 1948.

In 1949 he recorded his greatest triumph, when he became only the second Irishman to win the British Amateur Open title, beating the 1947 champion, the top American amateur Willie Turnesa, in the final by 2 and 1. The 1949 Open was held at Portmarnock Golf Club in Dublin, the first time it had ever been held outside the UK. The golfing writer Henry Longhurst, in nominating McCready as his golfer of the year for 1949, wrote: 'I doubt whether anyone has won the championship with so powerful and prolonged an exhibition of first-class golf' ([www.dunmurrygolfclub.co.uk](http://www.dunmurrygolfclub.co.uk)). McCready, who had been four holes up from the morning's round, found himself one down with four holes to play, but managed to win three holes in a row to secure victory on the penultimate green. Later that year in the Walker Cup he was part of a side that lost heavily to the Americans, partnering fellow Irishman Jimmy Bruen (qv) in a 2 and 1 foursomes defeat to the American pairing of Stranahan and Kocsis, and later losing 6 and 5 to Frank Stranahan in a singles match that was actually much closer than the score might suggest. In 1953 he was Derbyshire Open champion and he also won the Kent Open on two occasions (1955, 1956). He had all the attributes of a top-class player: a powerful physique, a long drive, and good iron play. His only weakness was his putting, which, though often inspired, was not always reliable.

After the war McCready became an executive with the British American Tobacco Company, and went to live in the USA, conducting much of his business on the golf course. In the early 1960s he began work with the Alfred McAlpine group and emigrated to South Africa, where he spent the rest of his life. A jovial and extrovert character, he had many apocryphal stories associated with him; one suggests that, during the war, while serving as a navigator on a bomber, he flew the plane home after his pilot and co-pilot were injured. He never had any great desire to be a professional golfer, playing as he did in an era when it had neither the status nor the rewards of later years. He married first Gwen, a Belfast woman, from whom he was later divorced; and secondly (in the early 1950s) Joan. He had a son from his first marriage. McCready died in South Africa 27 June 1995 and his ashes were returned for interment in the family grave in Lurgan.

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GRO; William A. Menton, *The Golfing Union of Ireland 1891–1991* (1991); John Redmond, *The book of Irish golf* (1997); *Fyffes*; [www.dunmurrygolfclub.co.uk](http://www.dunmurrygolfclub.co.uk) (accessed 15 Aug. 2003); information received from Don Collins (GUI, Ulster branch), 28 Aug. 2003, and Mrs Margaret Stewart (sister), 8 Sept. 2003