

Charles M. “Chay” Burgess
NEW ENGLAND
PROFESSIONAL GOLFERS’ ASSOCIATION
HALL OF FAME
2003

Charles M. Burgess was born in 1873 in Montrose, Scotland. Young Chay excelled in football (soccer) and was a golfing prodigy. In 1903, after an eight-year career in professional football, he was elected to the British Professional Golfers’ Association. Burgess’ reputation as a skilled instructor grew quickly. In 1909 he came to America, recruited by the Woodland Golf Club in Newton, Massachusetts. There he became the influential tutor of 15-year-old Francis Ouimet, America’s first golf hero. Burgess also became Harvard University’s first professional soccer coach. He brought Harvard to an undefeated season in 1913, the same year his star pupil Ouimet won the US Open. In 1914 Burgess’ Harvard team again won the Intercollegiate Soccer Championship and his student Ouimet became the National Amateur Champion of the United States. Ouimet won the Amateur again in 1931 and Chay Burgess mentored two additional National Amateur Champions – Jesse Guilford (1921) and Ted Bishop (1946).

In 1921 New England golf professionals, led by Burgess, met to establish a regional professional organization, autonomous from the young PGA of America. The founding fathers officially incorporated as the New England Professional Golfers’ Organization and Charles M. Burgess was voted in as its president. Under Burgess’ leadership, the NEPGO won wide acclaim for its achievements. After the PGA constitution was revised to allow for local governance, the NEPGO voted to affiliate with the PGA. Chay Burgess was re-elected and became the first President of the New England Section PGA.

After the inaugural Ryder Cup matches at Worcester, Massachusetts in 1927, the PGA did not have enough money to send an American team to England to defend the Cup. Burgess arranged an impressive fund raising tournament, featuring the greatest golfers of the day. Francis Ouimet refereed a match putting Walter Hagen and Gene Sarazen against US Open Champion Johnny Farrell and the incomparable Bobby Jones. Chief Marshall Burgess raised over \$10,000--saving the Ryder Cup from extinction. Chay Burgess passed away in 1960 at age 86 after an eminent career spanning five decades.