



# Duel in the Sun: Tom Watson and Jack Nicklaus in the Battle of Turn

*Michael Corcoran*

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In the rest of the world, they call it the Open Championship. Americans call it the British Open, but if any tournament is considered the battle for the world championship of golf, it is the one held annually on the great links courses of Scotland and England, the birthplace of the game.

By the time the 1977 Open came to Turnberry on Scotland's west coast, Jack Nicklaus had established himself as the greatest champion the golf world has ever known, well on his way to the record that Tiger Woods would spend his childhood dreaming of and pointing toward. The sight of Nicklaus on the leaderboard was enough to make strong golfers shake. Everyone knew that Nicklaus was the man to beat in every major championship he entered.

At the same time, Tom Watson had become the latest golfer to be heralded as the "Next Nicklaus." Watson had overcome his reputation for choking in big tournaments and was beginning to be viewed by his peers as the top player of his generation. He had won two majors, but there were still questions about his ability to stand up under the fiercest pressure.

There are few moments in sports when it is clear to one and all that a torch has been passed. The 1977 Open Championship at Turnberry was one such event. The weather was uncharacteristically warm, British golf fans bared their pink skin to the unfamiliar sun, and the course played hard and fast. Nicklaus and Watson were tied after the first two rounds. Nicklaus shot a blistering 65-66 over the last two days to post a 72-hole score that set a tournament record; but Watson, paired with Nicklaus over those fateful 36 holes, looked Jack in the eye and shot 65-65 to win by a stroke. And the Next Nicklaus had been found at last, even as the original kept winning major tournaments -- but the air of invincibility was gone forever.

Michael Corcoran takes the drama of this rare moment in golf history and brings it to vivid life. He draws on his interviews with competitors, caddies, commentators, and spectators to tell the magnificent story of this epic duel in all the rich detail any fan of golfing drama could ask for. *Duel in the Sun* is an unforgettable tale of the rise of a new hero and the grace of an older champion welcoming him to the summit of the game.

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