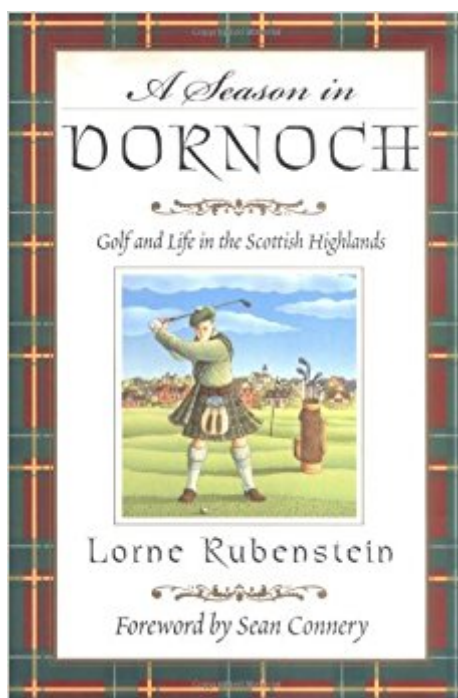


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# A Season In Dornoch: Golf And Life In The Scottish Highlands



## Synopsis

The town of Dornoch, Scotland, lies at nearly the same latitude as Juneau, Alaska. A bit too far removed for the taste of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, the Royal Dornoch Golf Club has never hosted a British Open, but that has hardly diminished its mystique or its renown. In an influential piece for "The New Yorker" in 1964, Herbert Warren Wind wrote, "It is the most natural course in the world. No golfer has completed his education until he has played and studied Royal Dornoch." If any town in the world deserves to be described as "the village of golf," it's Dornoch. You can take the legendary links away from St. Andrews, and you'll still have a charming and beautiful university town with great historic significance; take the links away from Dornoch and it would be as little noted or known as its neighbors Golspie, Tain, and Brora. (The town is forty miles north of Inverness, generally thought of as the northernmost outpost of civilization in Scotland.) The game has been played in Dornoch for some four hundred years. Its native son Donald Ross brought the style of the Dornoch links to America, where his legendary, classic courses include Pinehurst #2, Seminole, and Oak Hill. Lorne Rubenstein decided to spend a summer in Dornoch to clear the muddle from his golfing mind and to rediscover the natural charms of the game he loves. But in the Highlands he found far more than bracing air and challenging greens. He found a people shaped by the harshness of the land and the difficulty of drawing a living from it, and still haunted by a historic wrong inflicted on their ancestors nearly two centuries before. Rubenstein met many people of great thoughtfulness and spirit, eager to share their worldviews, their life stories, and a wee dram or two. And as he explored the empty, rugged landscape, he came to understand the ways in which the thorny, quarrelsome qualities of the game of golf reflect the values, character, and history of the people who brought it into the world. "A Season in Dornoch" is both the story of one man's immersion in the game of golf and an exploration of the world from which it emerged. Part travelogue, part portraiture, part good old-fashioned tale of matches played and friendships made, it takes us on an unforgettable journey to a marvelous, moody, mystical place.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** Most of the memoirs written about golf trips to Scotland generate in the reader as much envy as pleasure. Canadian golf writer Rubenstein's trip to Dornoch in the Scottish Highlands certainly inspires envy, but his quietly evocative prose forces us to focus on the charms of the place rather than the melancholy fact that he was there and we weren't. Because of its isolation in the far north of Scotland, Royal Dornoch Golf Club remains relatively free of the hordes of American tourists who clog the fairways on St. Andrews' Old Course. That may change after enough golfers read Rubenstein's account of spending an entire summer in the village of Dornoch, living above a bookshop, immersing himself in the rhythms of the community, and playing golf both casually (a few holes after dinner) and seriously (trying to qualify for the club's annual amateur tournament). It is the village life (evocative of the film *Local Hero*) even more than the golf that imbues this memoir with its seductive tranquility--that elusive quality we search for but rarely find in either our daily lives or our vacations. Whether Rubenstein is recounting fascinating bits of Highlands history or offering vivid character sketches of Dornoch natives, the prose breathes a kind of atmospheric calm that works on the reader like a mild summer breeze. Golfers interested only in assaulting the great courses of Scotland with their titanium drivers won't respond to this book at all, but for those who would rather play a quiet hole or two in the twilight, Rubenstein opens the door to a linksland version of *Brigadoon*. Bill Ott  
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James Dodson author of *Final Rounds* The wee sea-blown village of Dornoch is a special, if somewhat cloistered, holy place of golf that is known by many but probably truly understood by only a few. With *A Season in Dornoch*, Lorne Rubenstein, one of golf's gifted modern writers, has done every fan of the game a great and entertaining service by taking us with him on a magical mystery tour of Royal Dornoch's surprising history and rich social lore, revealing far more than the area's soulful landscape and unforgettable local characters. Part sporting travelogue, part memoir of a summer magnificently spent, this tale of discovery will linger in the mind of any lover of the auld sod long after it's finished -- taken down and savored, winter after winter (at least by me) for years to

come. -- Review

Excellent recounting of his summer in Dornoch. Often lyrical in his descriptions of golf and the Scottish highlands, I found it to be an easy read offering some history as well as info for golf geeks like me.

I was initially interested in the authors take on Scottish links golf, but the book was more about his attempts to understand the history of the local people and countryside, so maybe this is a 40% golf book and 60% book on self discovery through cultural exploration (I'm not sure if that part of the book works).

A wonderful book, especially if one is planning to visit Scotland's Northern Highlands. The author not only describes his time in Dornoch, but also in the surrounding area and suggest numerous sites and interesting venues to visit. We used the book as our guide last summer when we spent 10 days in Dornoch, playing golf at Royal Dornoch and other neighboring courses and sight-seeing as far North as Brora and South to Inverness, St. Andrew's and Edinburgh. I would highly recommend this book to anyone planning a trip to Scotland.

Lorne Rubenstein is a gifted author who has dedicated his life to writing about golf. He asks the same questions all golfers ask of themselves, and provides at least a framework to answer them for yourself.

While this posed an interesting experience, the writing is simply boring and fails to catch the imagination of the reader. Read an American Caddie in St. Andrews instead

If you've become a bit obsessed about the topic of Golf in Scotland, you find yourself quickly moving through many of the 'guide' books, etc...My tastes for Scottish Golf information moved me towards books about individuals and their experiences. The writer of this book is a pro and his story is terrific (for my tastes). If your reading requires that you move past the typical Scottish golf books, I'd recommend you pick this up. Enjoy!

A fascinating book which should be of interest to any golfer, though more particularly to those who have experienced the beauty and challenges of playing in the north east of Scotland. The Highland

folk, their natures, environment and history are described with great perception and sensitivity and Lorne Rubenstein's love of them, Scottish links courses and the game of golf is highly infectious.

Wonderful combination of history, human interest and golf reporting beautifully written. Bentley

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