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*Experimentation and Mathematics: P.G. Tait at the Old Course*

Nineteenth-century mathematician and physicist Peter Guthrie Tait (1831-1901) is widely known for his collaborations with Maxwell, Hamilton, and Thomson. Less familiar are his extensive aerodynamical studies. In the 1890s, Tait published over a dozen papers on the path of a rotating spherical projectile. Tait's classic work on the trajectory of golf balls was experimentally tested on the course at St. Andrews with the help of his son, celebrated amateur golfer Freddie Tait. P.G. Tait realized that the combination of a dimpled surface and backspin created lift that allowed the ball to exceed the maximum expected distance.