

The Harrington: Ace in the Hole

Beloved equally on the links and the hard streets, the Harrington defies categorization. However you slice it, it's a hole in one.



There is an irony attached to the Harrington: somehow this coat, which defined 1950s conformism, found its way into the closets of nonconformists. Each of them—mods, skinheads, punks, and hipsters—adopted the coat as a form of rebellion against everything the Harrington seemed to stand for.

Baracuta, the brand that produced what vintage enthusiasts still regard as the definitive version of the jacket, was started by Manchester's John and Isaac Miller, who had gotten their start making raincoats for Burberry and Aquascutum. They struck out on their own in the mid-thirties with a slightly revised take on the classic full-length raincoat. It became an immediate success, but, one rainy day at the Lancashire Golf Club, they realized that the raincoat limited their range of motion. Soon after, they introduced the Baracuta G9, a zip-up, waterproof jacket designed especially for golfers (the G stands for "golf").

The G9, with its water-repellent poplin shell and its elasticized cuffs and waistband, sat high on the waist. In the rain, the collar could be flipped up and latched across the throat with a pair of buttons. In the sun, depending which way the wind was blowing, the jacket could be worn open or partially zipped. Shortly after its release, the Millers, with permission from Lord Lovat, 24th Chieftain of the Fraser Clan, added the distinctive Fraser tartan lining—a masterstroke that virtually assured the coat's iconic status.

The young brand had scored a hole-in-one, and the G9 could soon be spotted in golf and country clubs all over the country. Exports into the American market followed, where it spread like crabgrass on U.S. golf courses. American brands were soon producing their own takes on the silhouette. One of these, a candy-apple red McGregor Drizzler, was worn by James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), which appealed overwhelmingly to a younger market.

That market included the mods, a group of English working-class kids with a penchant for American jazz. They modeled themselves after flashy, avant-garde artists like Miles



James Dean as Jim Stark in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955): Though Dean wears an American version of the classic English Harrington, the heartthrob's candy-apple red McGregor Drizzler gave the English-made Baracuta G9 a substantial boost among young rebels in both America and England.