

A GUIDE
TO
GOOD GOLF
JAMES M. BARNES



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By
JAMES M. BARNES

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

James M. Barnes
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FOREWORD

PLAYER, STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR

BY GRANTLAND RICE

I KNOW of no one better qualified to write on the subject of golf instruction than Jim Barnes. He combines to an unusual degree three qualities of golf. He is a player of exceptional ability, one of the closest students of form and style and the right way that golf has, and with this he is one of the best instructors to be found in any golfing country. It is not often that one sees all three qualities held by the same man, since the star player as a rule has no great amount of time for anything else.

Barnes, nearly always in the front rank, won the U. S. Open Championship in 1921 and a year later came within a stroke of winning the British Open, an event in which he has always been one of the leading figures. But it is more as a student and a teacher of sound golf that Barnes holds high rank. Many great golfers have come upon their game almost instinctively, without searching out the causes of stroke perfection. But Jim Barnes was never content to depend upon instinct. He wanted to know reasons and causes as well as attain results.

FOREWORD

And he is extremely careful in all his research, looking for accuracy at every turn. He has never been content to merely estimate. I have seen him measure by inches the distance of the ball from the right or left foot in playing a mashie shot, adjusting this distance for various human sizes in height or girth. For Barnes goes well beyond the style or form that happens to suit himself. He goes in more for essentials that apply to all and that are important to all, whether short or tall, lean or fat, weak or strong. This has not been a matter of study with him for a few weeks or a few months. It has been a matter of close study for many years, for season after season, always seeking the more important details that will help cure golfing ills to which the average golfer is always subjected.

He has made a close study of such matters as playing from a down hill lie or an uphill lie, complex problems that always baffle the average player, who is never quite sure whether to play the ball off the left foot or the right foot. Then there are the problems of slicing and hooking and topping, their causes and their cures. No one in golf has spent more time seeking the surest and the soundest and the simplest remedies for these all too common faults.

Several years ago Jim Barnes published one golf book, largely pictorial in nature, entitled *Picture Analysis of Golf Strokes*, which made an immediate hit and had an unusually large sale. In this present book he has gone much deeper into every phase of the golf swing, having been helped by greater experience and deeper study in later years.

FOREWORD

Barnes is unusually sincere in having his information accurate, concise and helpful. There is nothing careless in his methods, either of play or of instruction. He makes sure before he has anything to say or write. You can depend upon what he has to say as fact and not mere theory. And it is bound to be a helpful factor for all who listen or read.

INTRODUCTION

IN OFFERING this volume of golf instruction I should like to repeat the observation that there is no royal road to success in golf. Like everything else worth while, ability to play the game well is to be had only at the expense of patient persistent practice along intelligent lines. So far as I have been able to observe, there has never been a "born golfer." At the same time, there is no reason why any one can not improve his or her play, if the time for practice is available and there is a serious desire to improve.

The plan of presentation used in the pages that follow will, I think, be found something of a departure from the usual one. Instead of undertaking to describe in turn how each club is swung I have sought to present a general word picture of just what does or should take place in making a full swing, and from that to work down by successive stages through the shorter strokes. My reason for this is a feeling that the most important consideration of all is to get firmly registered on the player's mind a correct mental pattern of the swing. Once this is had, the rest is merely a matter of shortening or lengthening the pattern as the case may be.

Following this I have taken up in later chapters discussions

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of various types of grips, stances, swings and so on, thus hoping to avoid the confusions which surrounds the player when he is started out with a great array of detailed instruction in the beginning. These various methods of gripping, standing up to the ball and so on are important and bear a distinct relation to the way the player hits the ball. But it is my belief that once he has gotten a clear idea of the general movement of swinging the club, these details will be the better understood and the more intelligently studied and applied.

After these discussions come considerations of other phases of the game such as the mental side, correct ideas of timing the stroke and so on. These too, I think, should be studied after the general pattern of the swing has been acquired. They are somewhat advanced in nature while the discussion of the general methods of the swing, which precedes them are quite fundamental and have, I hope, been presented in such a way that the person who is just taking up the game will understand them.

In addition to the several different subjects taken up for special discussion, there is included a collection of questions and answers on the different troubles that golfers encounter. These have been selected as types from a large number of letters that I have received from time to time, and I think will be found both interesting and helpful to readers of the book. They afford a kind of prescription counter from which the player with ailments may hunt out remedies for his peculiar troubles.

It may be well to explain something about the illustrations.

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I have chosen to use line drawings instead of actual photographs for the reason that a capable artist, who thoroughly understands golf, can frequently bring out in a drawing some essential point or points that the camera may leave obscure, owing to shadows in the photograph. The drawings used were made by Mr. G. P. Haynes, a fine draftsman, and also a very close student of golf form. Each was made from an actual action photograph as a model so as to insure that they are correct in all details. These drawings will, I am sure, add greatly to the reader's understanding of the accompanying text.

J. M. B.

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CHAPTER I

THE FULL SWING

IN making a golf stroke the primary object of the player is to take the club back from the ball and then bring it down against the ball in the exact position that the club occupied in starting the stroke. Whether or not the club is brought back down in this manner depends largely on whether it has been taken back properly. Obviously, then, the problem begins as soon as the club is started back. It would appear logical, therefore, to begin with this starting back, and trace the movement step by step.

There are certain preliminaries even before the club is started back that call for brief explanation here. First is the taking up of the position to make the stroke, usually called taking the stance. Methods vary in this. There are three general types of stance, known as "open," "square" and "closed." How these differ and the relation each different method bears to the way the player swings the club will be

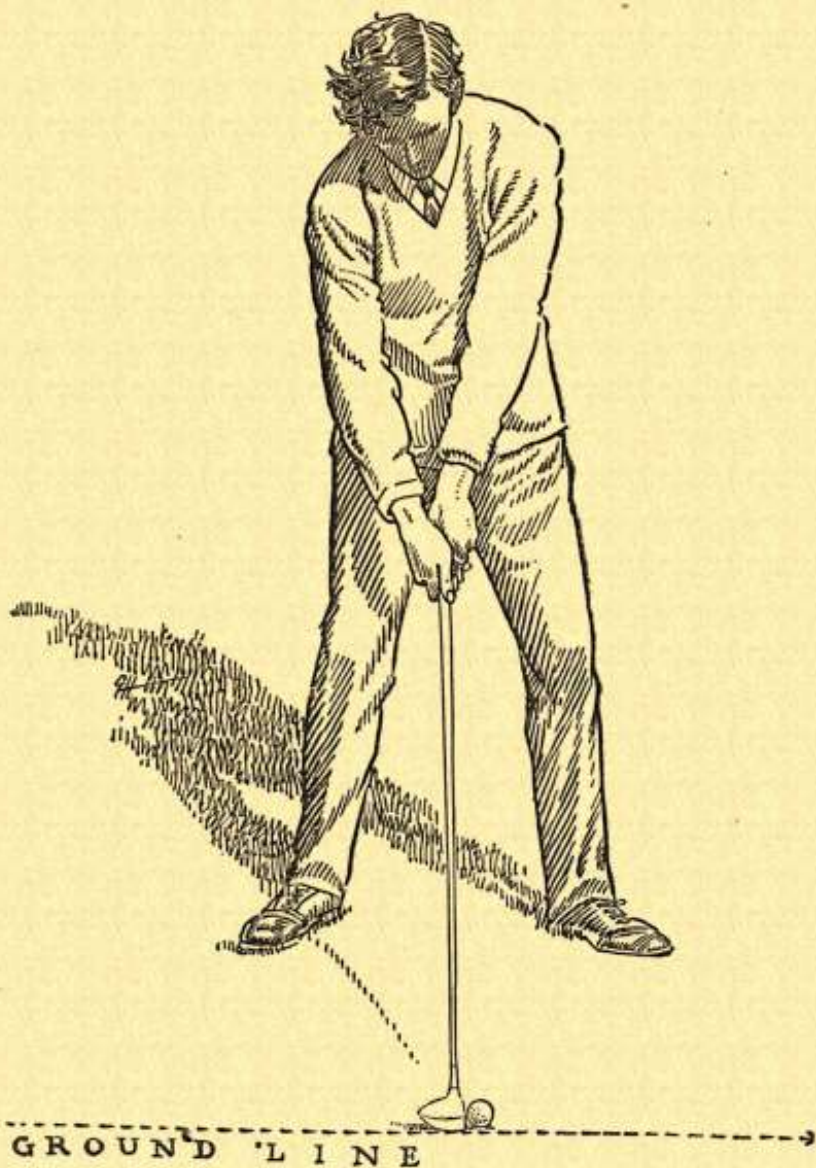


PLATE I

Correct position in the stance for the full swing: feet far enough apart to give steady feel of balance; weight settled back on the heels, upper part of the arms just free from the sides; knees steady but not rigid; the ball a little back of the position of the left heel.

THE FULL SWING

taken up in a later chapter. For the present no distinction will be made.

The first point of concern in taking the stance is to see that the feet are so placed, that, when the head of the club is placed on the ground immediately back of the ball, there is a secure feeling of balance of the weight, both from side to side and from front to back. No fixed distance can well be advised, because this will vary with different individuals. But the feet should be far enough apart to afford a good solid foundation, and yet not far enough to interfere with the necessary turning of the body at the hips in making the stroke.

As to balance from front to back, the weight should be pretty well settled back on the heels, because the player must bend forward in placing the clubhead in position, and unless the weight is kept well back, there will be a tendency to lurch forward toward the ball. The legs should be practically straight, but not stiff and rigid in the knees. The player should have a feeling of controlled flexibility in these joints, in other words a feeling of "give" such as a ball player maintains in his arms in catching a ball. In taking his position, the player should see that the ball is far enough away from him so that as he holds the club and places the clubhead back of the ball, the upper part of the arms from the shoulders to the elbows falls just free of the sides.

There is a very good mechanical guide to determine for the player the distance he should stand from the ball for a full stroke. He should be just far enough away that the end of the shaft, with the clubhead in position back of the ball,

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if lowered toward the left knee just about touches the knee. The ball should be located forward of the halfway mark between the heels of the two feet, about four inches back of a line running straight out from the left heel.

In taking his stance the player has of course taken hold of the club, and this brings up consideration of the way the hands are to be placed on the club, that is the grip. Just as there are different stances, so are there different grips. These are three, viz., the "natural," the "overlap" and the "interlock." Discussion and explanation of these will also be reserved for a later time. It will suffice here to say that in all cases the hands should be pretty well on top of the shaft, and that the club should be held largely in the fingers, not up in the palm. A good general guide for the location of the two hands is to see that the V's formed between the thumbs and forefingers of the two hands point about to the point of the right shoulder.

In connection with the grip, it may be well to point out this early the great importance of not gripping too tightly, especially with the right hand. Hold the club securely with the left, enough so that complete control over it throughout the stroke is assured. But grip lightly with the right. The sooner the player gets this idea firmly established in his mind, the sooner he is going to be certain of saving himself trouble in several different ways. To make this as emphatic as possible, let me say that the tension one uses in holding a pen or pencil to write is quite sufficient for the right hand in gripping the club at the start of the stroke, even for a full swing.

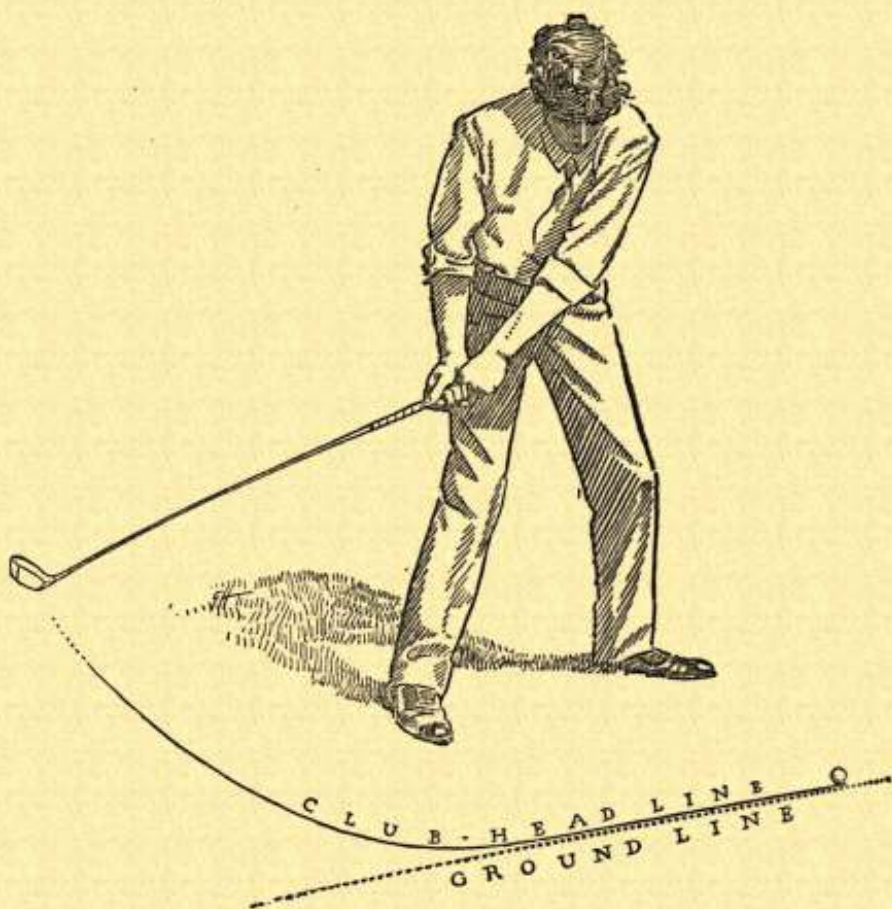


PLATE 2

Taking the club back in starting the swing. It is important to keep the clubhead low along the ground. One of the best ways to do this is to make the left hand and arm do most of the work of starting the back swing, pushing the clubhead back from the ball. Don't allow the right to lift the club up too abruptly.

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STARTING THE CLUB BACK

With the foregoing preliminaries settled, the player is now ready to start the backswing by moving the clubhead back from the ball. And the first important thing to remember is to keep it low along the ground for the first foot or more. Do not lift it up abruptly from the ground. This is probably the most common fault of all with the player who is making his first try at golf. The club is lifted up too abruptly, and the stroke becomes too much of a chop.

To insure keeping the clubhead low as desired, the best plan is to make the left arm and hand do most of the work of carrying the club back. Start by pushing from the left shoulder, keeping the wrist and elbow firm. In addition to keeping the clubhead low, this method will also induce the proper turn of the body at the hips. The purpose of this will probably become more apparent to the reader, if it is explained that the full swing in golf is more of a scythe-like movement than a chopping movement. As a matter of fact it is in a way a combination of the two, but the scythe movement predominates and trouble results where the stroke is allowed to become too much of a chop.

PIVOT, OR BODY-BEND

In order for the left shoulder to push around as suggested, the entire left side must, of course, swing around toward the right. The turning is accomplished at the hips and is spoken of as pivoting. While this turning is being done, things are

THE FULL SWING

happening to the left leg, to enable it to accommodate the general movement. The left knee bends partly in toward the right one and partly forward in the general direction of the ball. At the same time the left heel rises from the ground, leaving only the toes and the ball of the foot touching the ground.

While all this is taking place, the head must be kept quite stationary in the place it occupied when the player started the club back. Now, in order to make this possible, and to avoid any tendency to move it toward the right, the player must still keep enough weight on the ball and toes of the left foot to maintain his balance. That is a very important point to keep in mind. If the player fails to do this, he is sure to get his weight too much over on the right foot, which generally means moving his head to the right. Where this occurs, numerous complications will result. The head must be kept steady in place throughout the stroke until well after the ball is hit.

For the full stroke, this turning of the body around toward the right continues until the line of the shoulders is about at right angles to the line of play. When the player has reached the limit of the turn, he will find himself looking at the ball almost over the point of the left shoulder.

THE ACTION OF THE ARMS

Next comes consideration of the part the arms play in taking the club back and up to the position from which the player starts to swing it down to hit the ball. It has already



PLATE 3

The position at the top of the backswing: Left arm, comfortably straight, right arm and elbow rather close in to the side; the left knee bent partly in toward the right and partly forward toward the ball; the ball and toes of the left foot gripping the ground; and the head held quite stationary.

THE FULL SWING

been pointed out that the left wrist and elbow should be kept firm, with the grip of the right hand light. As the body turns, the hands and arms are gradually brought up so that when the turning has been completed, the hands are at approximately the level of the right shoulder and six to eight inches out from it. If they have come to this position properly the left arm will be comfortably straight, and firm at the elbow, while the right elbow will be pointing obliquely toward the ground, the point of it being six to seven inches out from the side. When I speak of keeping the left arm straight I mean about as straight, for instance, as one would have it in pointing to some object.

The importance of keeping the left arm straight will be readily understood when it is pointed out that this arm and the shaft of the club together serve to establish the radius of the arc on which the head of the club is swung, the point of the left shoulder and the clubhead itself representing the two ends of the radius. The radius is established as the player grounds his club in addressing the ball. Obviously if the arm is allowed to bend perceptibly, the radius of the swing is altered. The result will be to bring the club down in too much of a chopping movement, instead of with a sweeping stroke as described for taking the club back.

There is still another function to be performed after the hands reach the top of their journey. This is a wrist action. The hands are allowed to bend slightly in toward the point of the shoulder, so that the shaft of the club drops to about a horizontal position. This amounts to "cocking" the wrists

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in the sense that the hammer of a gun is "cocked" when it is drawn back, and it places the wrists in position to do their part toward adding speed to the clubhead as it nears the ball.

THE DOWN SWING

The foregoing movements complete the operation of taking the club back up to the position from which it is to be started down to strike the ball and should leave the player with a steady sense of balance at that stage. The operation is a kind of wind-up, bringing the body and arms into such position as to allow the strong back and shoulder muscles to get into play in making the reverse turn necessary on the downswing, and also putting the wrists in position to be "fired" at the proper time. All is now set for starting the downswing.

Now, just as the left shoulder started things on the backswing by pushing the club back from the ball, so the downswing is started with a pull by the left arm. Immediately after the arms start the body begins to unwind, turning around toward the left. And I know of no better place than right here to begin sounding a warning to the player to avoid starting with a jerk or snap. The movement should begin smoothly and steadily with the purpose being to increase the speed gradually until the clubhead has reached the ball. This is a matter to be strongly kept in mind, for there is a great temptation for the player, in his anxiety to hit the ball, to hurry things too much.

Let me repeat, then, start the downswing smoothly and



PLATE 4

This drawing shows the approximate point on the downswing where the wrists begin to snap the clubhead through to give it added speed. Starting at this point, the clubhead is thrown, as it were, at the ball by the wrist action. It is important not to allow this action to start too soon in the downswing.

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steadily, aiming at swinging the hands on through well out beyond the position they occupied in the address. When they get down to a point slightly below the level of the waist and almost in front of the point of the right hip, the wrists begin to lend their aid toward giving extra speed to the clubhead. In other words, here is where these joints begin to "fire" the charge put into them by the "cocking" process at the top of the backswing. This consists in the hands being snapped forward in the general direction they are traveling by a wrist and forearm action. The movement is practically identical with the snap forward of the wrists in cracking a whip.

Just here it is opportune to recall what was said earlier about avoiding gripping the club too tightly, especially with the right hand. This throwing or snapping the clubhead forward with the hands is done by quick contraction of the muscles of the forearm, particularly of the right arm. In order for them to be in position to contract quickly, they must, of course, be relaxed when this call comes. If they have been tightened up too much in the gripping, they can not respond to the call. In other words they must maintain reasonable flexibility for this purpose, and this will not be possible, if the club is gripped tightly.

THE FOLLOW-THROUGH

If the processes outlined thus far are carried out properly, the clubhead is brought against the ball as it was in the address, with the hands in approximately the position they



PLATE 5

Hitting through the ball. Note that the clubhead follows low along the ground for a few inches after the ball is struck, and that the hands are going forward in the direction the ball is hit. Do not allow them to pull around toward the left too quickly.

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occupied in the address at the instant of impact. The club-head is, of course, traveling much more rapidly than the hands, having passed through a much larger arc. Theoretically as soon as the ball is hit the purpose of the stroke has been accomplished, but the club and the hands must be made to swing on through until the arms reach their full length. Anything after that is only the finish of the stroke and can have no bearing on the results of the shot. The hands may and frequently do sweep around and up to where the club stops behind the body.

SUMMARY

The foregoing, then, is a rather detailed analysis of the several operations involved in making a full swing. It may be well to sum up somewhat briefly the important points to be remembered. Plant the feet far enough apart to afford a good firm foundation. Settle the weight rather well back on the heels with the knees bearing a feeling of well-controlled flexibility. Hold the club chiefly in the fingers, with a steady grip with the left hand, and a light one with the right, both hands being pretty well on top of the shaft. Stand far enough away from the ball that when the body is bent forward to permit placing the clubhead immediately back of the ball, the arms from the shoulders to the elbows drop just free from the sides.

Keeping the head quite stationary, start the club back steadily keeping it low along the ground, beginning the movement with a push from the left shoulder, carrying the hands

THE FULL SWING

around and gradually up to a point about in front of the right shoulder, or maybe just a little higher. Keep the left arm as straight as is comfortable, and the right arm close enough in to the side that the elbow is pointing obliquely toward the ground. Allow the wrists to bend in slightly toward the point of the shoulder, thus permitting the club to settle to approximately a horizontal position.

Then, in starting the club down, begin once more with a slight pull on the left arm, in a smooth steady move without a jerk or snatch. Allow the hands and arms to come on down gradually picking up speed until the hands are a little below the level of the waist and almost in front of the point of the right hip, then throw the clubhead forward with a forward bend of the right wrist. Aim at sending the clubhead and arms well out after the ball. Keep the head stationary throughout, until the ball has been served on its way.

CHAPTER II

THE SWING WITH IRONS ·

THE several operations explained in the preceding chapter cover the various stages of the full stroke, that is where the club is taken back to approximately a horizontal position at the top of the backswing. Many of the strokes played in the course of a round of golf do not, however, require a full swing, most of them in fact. Certain differences are to be pointed out between the full swing, and the shorter ones, say for example, the half-swing and the three-quarter swing. By way of explanation, the half-swing is one in which the club at the limit of the backswing is carried to about a vertical position. The three-quarter swing carries the club to about halfway between the vertical and the horizontal position of the full swing.

The shorter swings are usually used with iron clubs, and by reason of the fact that the club is not taken back so far, they are more easily controlled. Less pivoting is required, and the operation is shorter all round. Accuracy and control are of more importance than distance, and to attain these certain changes in methods are adopted.

Since the stroke is shorter the problem of maintaining the

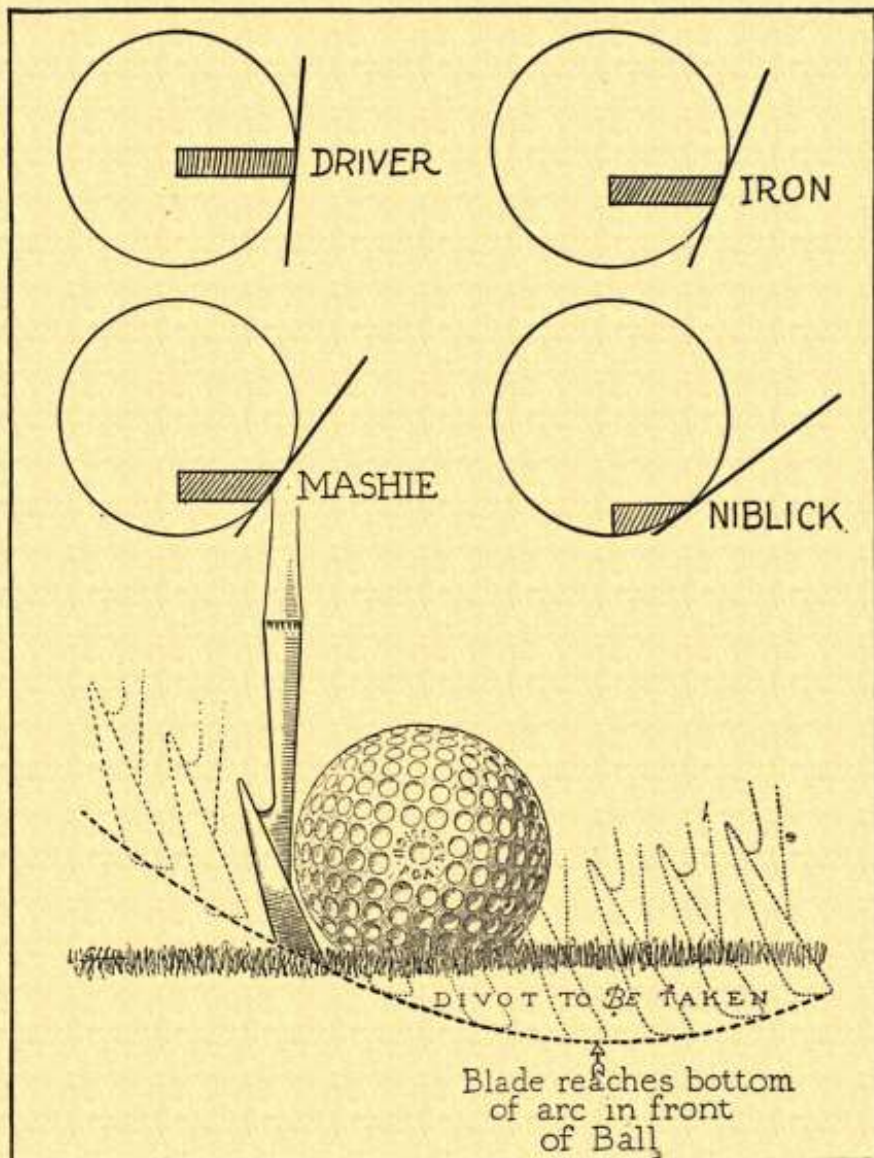


PLATE 6

These drawings show how the face of iron clubs should strike the ball. In iron strokes the clubhead is brought more sharply down to the ball than wooden clubs, the purpose being to fit the face of the club immediately down against the back side of the ball.

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proper balance throughout the stroke is somewhat less difficult. Hence the feet may be drawn a little closer together and less movement of the left foot is necessary. Again the shafts of iron clubs are shorter than those for wooden clubs. Consequently the player must stand a little closer to the ball. Also it is advisable to pull the left foot a little back from the line of play, in other words to "open" the stance.

To properly explain the advisability of this change, let me point out that in playing practically every stroke from the tee up to the putting green, the finish of the stroke should find the player facing toward the hole. Such a position, or the coming to such a position in making the stroke, renders it possible for the player to make the clubhead follow out after the ball, as has been recommended. In the full swing, the momentum of the stroke will bring the body around, if the swing is correctly made. But in the shorter strokes the full force of this momentum is not present. At the same time, it is not necessary for the player to do so much turning on the back-swing, both of which considerations make for the practicality of drawing the left foot somewhat back from the line of play.

One of the basic fundamentals of good iron play is compactness in making the stroke. By compactness is meant keeping the arms under control so as to eliminate as far as possible any chance for them to work out of the correct path both going back and coming forward, and also a somewhat better controlled action of the wrists and forearms. As to the arms, this means keeping them well in toward the body, on the same principal that a marksman can hold a steadier aim, when

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resting his gun on some still object than when holding it free from contact with anything. The arms when kept as close in to the body as will permit their free use, are likewise easier to control and keep in the correct path. The wrists must do a good part of the work in swinging the club. They are used to throw the clubhead, one might say, at the ball and on past where it lay. This means that they can not be held stiffly, nor must they be too loose. Try to keep them about as tense as one would in throwing a ball.

These, then, are the three chief changes from the full swing with wooden clubs to the shorter ones for irons, viz, the feet are placed a little closer together, the left being pulled back slightly from the line of play; the player stands a little closer to the ball, because of using a shorter club; and the arms are kept a bit closer in to the body with the wrists a bit firmer and better controlled.

There are in addition differences in methods of actually swinging the clubs. The clubhead is lifted more with the wrists, the stroke being more upright and there is more of "hitting" effort in iron play. The explanation of this is that, the stroke being shorter, it is more easy to control. Theoretically there is no reason why a player should not hit just as hard as he can with a wooden club in a full swing. Theoretically, there isn't; but practically there is, because it is an exceedingly hard thing to start the club from a horizontal position back over the shoulders, sweep it down to the ball, putting everything the player has into the effort, and still achieve the purpose of the gradual increase in speed

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from the start until the ball has been struck. This is what is called timing the stroke, and it is a rare thing indeed to find a player even among the most expert, who can put everything he has into a full swing and be anyway sure of correct timing to deliver the maximum speed just at the moment of impact. Knowing this, few attempt it. But with irons where the stroke is shorter and more compact, it is permissible to introduce something more of a distinct hitting effort.

Then there is one noteworthy difference between the ways the player should aim to strike the ball with iron clubs and wooden ones. It comes from the fact that iron clubs have more loft on the face, which allows the player to strike more directly at the ball. The curve the clubhead travels down to the ball is sharper. With wooden clubs the stroke is more of a sweep, the clubhead coming to the ball on a flatter curve.

I do not recommend too full a swing with an iron, but if the player chooses to use a full swing with an iron, the stroke is the same as with a wooden club, except for the variation just mentioned. In other words, if a player takes a full swing, he should forget the type of the club he is using and swing to hit the ball, allowing the loft of the club to take care of the distance.

With an iron the aim should be to fit the clubhead immediately down against the back side of the ball. If the reader will take a midiron and a ball and try this experiment, he will probably get the meaning more quickly. Hold the clubhead in position on the floor or on a table, just as it would be in addressing the ball. Then place a ball immediately in front

THE SWING WITH IRONS

of and against the face of the club, in the position it would occupy just at the instant that the clubhead made contact with it in the hitting. Now, look, and it will be seen that the face of the clubhead at the bottom is further forward than the back side of the ball. In other words, due to the loft of the clubface, the club fits right in under the ball.

To fit the face of the club under the ball in this way by just grazing the back side of the ball as the club comes down should be the aim in playing an iron club. So that the ball should be struck a wee fraction of a second before the clubhead reaches the lowest point on the downswing. Hence whereas the wood club reaches the hitting level a brief interval behind the ball, the iron should reach the level at which it is to be driven ahead in the hitting immediately under the ball, and then driven along for a few inches after impact as was explained for the wood.

The purpose of striking in this way with an iron is two-fold. For one thing making the clubhead follow on for a few inches beyond where the ball lay as nearly in the same position it occupied at impact as possible is necessary to prevent drawing the face of the club across the ball and so causing the ball to slice or curve to the right in its flight, or else turning the toe of the club around toward the left too soon, causing the ball to curve to the left, in what is known as a hook.

Then again striking the ball a descending blow in this way imparts to it a kind of backward rotating motion or under spin. This spinning or rotating motion helps to keep the ball straight in its course, just as the rifling in the barrel of a gun

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by giving the bullet a swift spinning motion helps to keep it straight, or a football player putting a spiral motion on a football finds it easier to keep it traveling straight.

Remember, then for iron play. Bring the feet slightly closer together, let us say about two inches, than for wooden club play. Stand a bit closer to the ball. Pull the left foot back a little from the line of play, about three inches, we may say. Do not take the club back further than a position halfway between a vertical and a horizontal position. Keep the arms rather well in to the body, the left one straight, and the wrists reasonably firm but not stiff. Swing to just graze the back side of the ball as the club descends, fitting the face snugly in under the ball, and hit through low after the ball for a few inches, making the clubhead follow in the line the ball took.

CHAPTER III

THE MASHIE PLAY

IN playing the mashie there is rarely any occasion to use more than a half swing. The reader will frequently see it employed in a longer swing, and a player can, of course, use quite a full swing with it. But the club is not designed for such usage, and it is not advisable, even if fairly satisfactory results appear to be obtained in that way for a time. If the distance required for any given shot would call for such an extended swing, use a club designed for greater distance, that is, one with not so much loft.

In discussing the uses of the mashie, then, it will be assumed that nothing more than a half-swing is to be employed. Its uses follow much the same lines as the midiron, except that, the stroke being still shorter, less body turn is necessary, the feet remain firmly on the ground, there is less tendency to get off balance, and accordingly an even narrower stance may be found best. Likewise the shaft of the club is still shorter and the player must stand still closer to the ball. Again, it may be well to open the stance even a bit more than for the midiron, with the ball an inch or two further forward toward a level with the left heel. The ball should be close



PLATE 7

Top of back swing for short mashie shot. Note that, although the club is taken back only a short way, the wrists are bent or "cocked" to snap the clubhead forward in striking the ball. However, do not permit the forward swing of the hands to stop, and so try to flick or scoop the ball up. Make the hands swing on through.



PLATE 8

Top of the backswing for a longer mashie shot, showing the wrists "cocked." The dotted line indicate position hands and club would take, if the wrists were not properly bent. Observe that for a swing of this length the left heel is not lifted perceptibly from the ground.

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enough in to where the eye is almost over it as the player addresses it.

What was said of the midiron in the matter of compactness, both in keeping the arms in and in maintaining reasonably firm control over the actions of the wrists, applies even more forcibly for the mashie. In fact, in the matter of wrist control, it is even more important to keep them under restraint and to guard against allowing them to become loose and floppy. Possibly no other single factor contributes so strongly to the poor mashie play that one sees as faulty wrist action.

For some reason players who are new to the game, and even numbers who have been at it for some years, appear to have the feeling that mashie play is largely a manipulating of the wrists. The idea with them seems to be that a kind of scooping or flicking motion with the wrists is necessary to help the clubhead to pick the ball up and send it up into the air. Especially is this true on the shorter shots, when the ball lies anywhere from twenty to fifty yards from the green.

This is a very wrong impression. For the longer distances at which the mashie is used, little difference is to be noted from the methods with the midiron, except the changes pointed out in the ways of a narrower stance, standing closer to ball, and not taking the club quite so far back. For the shorter strokes in the vicinity of the putting green, it is well to shorten the grip on the club, that is place the hands lower down on the grip. Grip possibly a little tighter with both hands. A short pitch with a mashie is really nothing more than a long approach putt, except that it is played with a

THE MASHIE PLAY

lofted club. The loft takes care of getting the ball up, so the player should avoid trying to help lift the ball.

The left arm kept quite straight is a big factor in swinging the club back and in guiding it through, or rather steadying the swing. But the wrists must be bent back or cocked at the top of the backswing in order to get them into position to put the proper force in snapping the clubhead through. The right hand applies the hitting power, and partly steers the clubhead. In these short strokes the right hand is used more than in any of the longer ones, especially for applying the hitting force. In applying this force, the player should see that the ball is hit with a snap and crispness. Laxness and indecision in hitting the ball is a very common fault in these short strokes.

Deliberation in playing the stroke is a good watchword for the player who is trying to master the mashie, especially for the short shots. Slow back with the club and then hit the ball a clean crisp blow should be the slogan. Keep the clubhead low on the backswing, and then hit out after the ball. On these shots the finish of the stroke should find the club pointing out in the line of flight after the ball.

CHAPTER IV

THE NIBLICK

THE niblick is the broadaxe of the golfer's kit, a heavy implement for heavy work, either in getting the ball out of thick heavy rough, or recovering it from a sandtrap, ditch or the like, where it is important to make it rise up very abruptly in its flight. Being something of a ponderous heavy weapon, little delicacy or finesse is demanded in its employment. The player can afford to ply it rather more vigorously than its companion clubs. A steady secure stance and a firm grip are the important preliminaries to the stroke.

As a rule the stroke with the niblick should be rather upright. This applies whether the job be one of hoisting the ball out of a sand trap or digging it out of dense rough . . . Suppose we consider the former case first.

The fact that a player finds his ball in a sand trap will not necessarily mean that he must use a niblick. If the trap be quite some distance from the green and the lie be fairly good, that is, the ball is not in a depression and the trap not a very deep one, he may well choose another club that will get the ball out and cover the distance required. But if the ball lies badly, or happens to be fairly close up to the forward wall of

THE NIBLICK

the trap, then the main job is to get clear of the trap on the first try. Also if the trap be located quite close to the green, where it is necessary to get the ball well up in the air in the hope of having it hold the green when it lands, the niblick is the club.

Under these conditions the safest method is what is known as the "explosion" shot. The player does not aim at striking so as to fit the face of the club immediately in under the ball, as has been recommended for iron shots generally. Instead he should aim to strike the sand back of the ball, driving the head of the club down into the sand under the ball. The sand takes the force of the blow, and the upheaval which follows forces the ball almost straight up into the air. The distance the club should strike the sand back of the ball will depend on the lie and the distance the player wants the ball to travel. Roughly the clubhead will strike from one to two inches back of the ball.

Because of the nature of the stroke the usual follow-through can not be made. In fact the stroke in this one instance is pretty much a chop, with a kind of quick lift as the club hits the ball. The club should be held securely, but not rigidly. The club is swung with strong wrist action. While there is lacking the delicacy required in hitting the ball exactly right as applies in other strokes, the player is cautioned against violation of the fundamentals that apply to all strokes, such as keeping the head still, avoiding a hurried back swing, maintaining his balance, and avoiding any tendency to lift the head before the ball has been sent on its way.

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Hurrying the stroke, and consequently looking up too soon are responsible for very many unsatisfactory efforts to recover from a sand trap.

When the niblick is called on to get the ball out of heavy dense rough, the same advice with reference to making the stroke rather upright applies. In this way the clubhead can be made to cut down immediately in back of the ball, and so to avoid any unnecessary work of cutting through the growth for several inches back of the ball. Aim at hitting down on the ball and let the loft of the club attend to forcing the ball up. Also there should be the follow-through which marks other strokes requiring a backswing of like extent.

The player is further cautioned that in these strokes played in the rough, there is usually a great temptation to hurry matters, to take the eye off the ball too soon, and so fail to hit where the aim was. Make it a point always to play the stroke deliberately enough to insure that the ball is struck as was intended.

As a lighter running mate of the niblick and at the same time a somewhat more rugged and more deeply lofted companion of the mashie, the mashie-niblick now enjoys wide popularity among players of all classes. It is a combination of the two as the name implies, and its uses constitute substitutions for the two under certain conditions. It is widely used for making short approaches, where the player is especially desirous of being sure that the ball gets well up in the air, so that it stops with little run on striking the ground. Then again it comes in very handy for recovering from sand

THE NIBLICK

traps under certain conditions, being a bit easier to wield than the heavy niblick.

When used for approaching in the place of the mashie, the stroke is about identical with that for the mashie. However, the extra loft makes it a little less exacting on the player in judging accurately the amount of hitting force needed. The extra loft automatically directs more of the hitting force vertically and hence less laterally. If the club is substituted for the niblick in recovering from the trouble, the methods to be applied in making the stroke are the same as those for the niblick.

CHAPTER V

PUTTING

PUTTING is the simplest and yet the most difficult part of golf. It is the simplest because it is the shortest stroke in the game. It is the most difficult because extreme accuracy and control are demanded in larger degree than in any other department of the game.

Consistently good putting is the result of diligent, patient, practice, applied toward acquiring a sound method of striking the ball. One sometimes hears it said that good putters are born and not made. But I have yet to see one of the so-called born putters. Every really fine putter that I have ever known acquired his skill at the expense of almost countless hours of hard, patient practice. With practice, and with it only comes a subconscious knowledge of how hard to hit the ball, and the corresponding accurate judgment of the distance over which the ball is to travel, as well as the conditions of the putting surface and so on. It rests, of course, with each individual as to how far he is willing to go in the matter of practice. It is a fairly simple matter to lay down the basic principles for acquiring a good sound method of hitting the ball.*

Probably the most important fundamental in putting is to

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avoid moving the body during the stroke, or at least until the ball has been hit. The reason for this is obvious. A variation of even half an inch may mean failure to hole the ball. If the body is moved ever so slightly, the center of the swing is altered, and the alteration is almost sure to mean that the face of the club does not strike the ball as was intended. A very small change in the angle at which the clubhead meets the ball will mean a half inch or more in a putt of five or six feet and of course much more in one of greater distance. So it is imperative that the center of the swing remain fixed and to do this, the body must be kept rigidly still. Moreover, it is quite practical to do this, because putting is done entirely with the forearms, but little strength being required in applying the necessary hitting force.

As I see it putting is almost entirely a forearm and wrist action. The left hand does most of the work in taking the club back, and the right sends it through on the forward swing. The forearms and wrist can provide all the power needed. Furthermore the wrists and the fingers, controlled by the muscles of the forearms, are the most dexterous and easily manipulated members of the body, and therefore capable of the most delicate control. So my advice is to put the job up to them, and eliminate all other factors as much as possible.

As to the matters of stance and grip, there is little to be prescribed. The player can take any stance he likes so long as it leaves him a feeling of comfort and enables him to keep the head and body quite still as the stroke is being made. Personally I find I get the best results by placing my feet



PLATE 9

This drawing shows the author's putting stance. The eyes are almost directly over the ball. The right arm rests lightly on the thigh. The feet are well apart, and the ball is played in a line with the left heel, with most of the weight on the left foot.



PLATE 10

Walter Hagen's position and stance for putting. He uses a rather wide stance, with the ball opposite the left heel, the weight forward, but with only a moderate bend forward in the address. The right thumb rests on top of the shaft.

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rather well apart, settling most of the weight on the left foot. This avoids any tendency to sway to the left in making the stroke. I play the ball almost off my left heel, bending forward so that when the club is in position back of the ball the eye is almost directly over the ball.

At the same time the arms are kept well in to the body, the right forearm resting lightly against the right thigh, affording a kind of "rest" to steady the stroke. But as I pointed out, methods may vary in the matter of stance. I know some very fine putters who stand fairly erect with the heels almost touching, and still others who stand fairly erect with the heels six to eight inches apart, with the weight of the body distributed about equally on the two feet. Either of these, or for that matter, others, are all right, if the player succeeds in keeping quite still in swinging the club. As to the grip, the same privilege of choice exists, though the overlap method is the preference of the vast majority, including even many of those who grip differently for their other clubs. The overlapping grip tends to make the two hands work together.

The basis of good putting, regardless of details of stance, grip, and so on, is a smooth steady stroke, free from any jerky, stabbing effect, with the head of the putter making a straight line going back and coming through. Swing the club with both hands, making them work as one, as nearly as possible. The right will do most of the work of controlling the swing, and also in hitting the ball. About all the left does is to help steady the swing.

The clubhead should be moved low along the ground both



PLATE 11

Here are shown the putting stance and grip of Walter J. Travis, former amateur champion, and a very fine putter. The feet are only a few inches apart, and the ball is about equidistant between them. Note that he laps two fingers of the right hand on the left hand.

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on the back and forward swing, and should be made to follow out a little way after the ball. Allowing the head to be lifted too much up from the ground is very apt to cause the player to make a kind of stabbing stroke at the ball.

It has already been pointed out that the shorter the stroke, the more the player tends to hurry and have it over with quickly. This rather curious fact finds its maximum application in the putt. And the player is warned that this is one of his most serious problems. Possibly the introduction of a comparison with a rather commonplace operation may help to impress it on his mind. The problem is much the same as that of a woman in threading a needle. If he will watch this operation, he will see her move her hand steadily back and then forward in the same way. Imagine the result, if she snatched the thread back and then tried to jab it quickly through the eye of the needle! Aim at cultivating her method in taking the club back and then striking the ball, or again, the movement of a man driving a tack or nail with a hammer. Keep the eye and the attention on striking the ball, and all the time aim at acquiring a steady, smooth, rhythmic motion in swinging the club. Once more, this smooth steady stroking is the basic essential of consistently good putting.



PLATE 12

This drawing shows the putting method of Jerome D. Travers, former amateur and open champion, and a remarkably accurate putter. He places his feet several inches apart and keeps the weight evenly distributed between them. Note how he places the extreme tip of the right thumb on the shaft of the club.



PLATE 13

This is the putting stance of George Duncan former British Open Champion. He keeps his feet close together with the weight evenly balanced, and the knees rather stiff to prevent body-swaying. Observe how he has the same trick of placing the right thumb as is shown in the drawing of Travers.



PLATE 14

Here is the method employed by Robert T. "Bobby" Jones. His feet are several inches apart, with most of the weight on the left foot. Both arms are quite close to the body. The ball is played about halfway between the two feet.

CHAPTER VI

STANCES, GRIPS AND SWINGS

IN the opening chapter attention was called to the fact that there are varying methods of taking the stance for making the stroke as well as for gripping the club. Stances are designated as "open," "square," and "closed." Grips are distinguished as "natural," "overlapping," and "interlocking." There are also variations in method of actually swinging the club, swings being characterized as "upright" and "flat." Introduction of the differences in methods is made here because there are inter-relations between the several methods of standing, gripping and swinging.

The square stance is one in which the two feet are so placed that the toes are in a line practically parallel to the proposed line of flight, that line being an imaginary one running through the ball and the place at which the player aims to play the ball. In the open stance, the left foot is drawn back a few inches from the line of flight. In the closed stance, the left foot is placed a bit closer than the right to the line of flight.

The natural grip is that where the hands are placed on the shaft independent of each other, similar to the positions of a

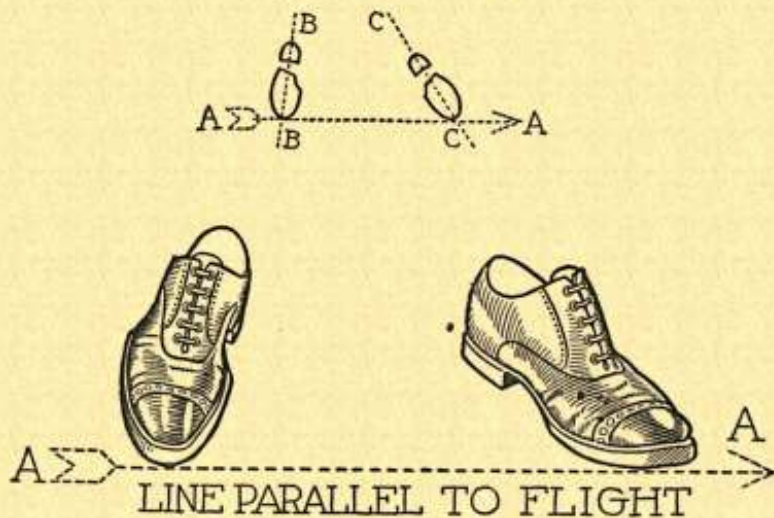
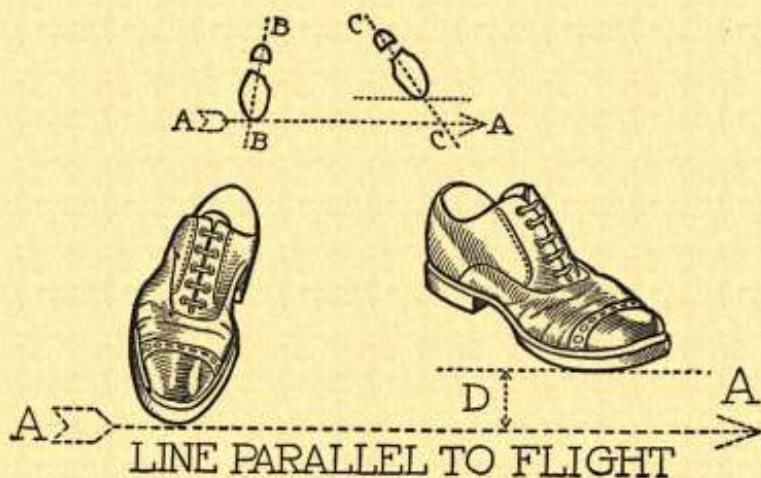


PLATE 15

The feet positions shown here are: top the open stance, with the left foot drawn back from the line of play; bottom, the square stance where the toes of the two feet are in a line practically parallel with the line of play. In the closed stance, the left foot is advanced slightly ahead of the right.

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ball player's hands on a bat or a wood chopper's hands on an axe, though in golf the two hands are crowded as closely together as possible. The thumbs of both hands extend obliquely across and around the shaft. In the overlapping grip, the little finger of the right hand is lapped on the forefinger of the left, and the thumb of the left extends down the shaft, so that the pad of the thumb of the right hand rests on it, while the thumb of the right extends obliquely across and around the shaft as in the natural grip. With the interlocking method, instead of lapping the little finger of the right on the forefinger of the left, the two are interlocked. The thumb of the left hand may either extend down the shaft as in the overlap, or across and around as in the natural grip. The thumb of the right extends across and around the shaft.

Attention is especially called to what has been said about the positions of the thumbs. The placing of the left thumb down the shaft in the overlap grip serves one very definite purpose. At the top of the stroke for a full swing it makes control of the club quite easy. Even with a loose grip control is easily maintained and there will be little tendency to tighten the grip unnecessarily. I would also point out here the desirability of seeing that the ball of the thumb rests easily on the shaft, and that the thumb is not flattened down to where the joint touches the shaft. In other words, keep the thumb slightly arched and do not try to extend it to full length. This renders it easier to maintain the grip mostly in the fingers and not in the palm.

It has already been explained that the club should be

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gripped chiefly in the finger and not in the palms of the hands, though a few players of the old school still cling to the palm grip. As the grip is applied, the club should cross the left hand just at the root of the index finger, with the right hand the same, the thumb and forefinger of this hand exerting practically all of the pressure on the shaft with that hand. The reason for this is two-fold. In the first place, the thumb and fingers will transmit the power given to the stroke by the arms, shoulders and body quite effectively. Again to grip the club in the palms calls for turning the hands well to the sides of the shaft in the interest of comfort, if the player is to avoid an awkward bend in the wrists in addressing the ball.

Generally speaking the natural grip is conceded to yield a little more power than where the hands are joined up. On the other hand the joining of the two is regarded as making for somewhat better control. Of the three different methods of gripping, the overlap is employed by the majority of players, including those of both high and low degree. Most of the better known players use it, though there are several notable players who use one or the other of the other methods. Personally, I use it, and recommend it. It is worth noting that several of those who use the natural grip for their full strokes, go to the overlapping method for the shorter shots, where accuracy is at more of a premium than distance.

The chief point of distinction between the "flat" swing and the "upright," is that in the former the club is swung more around the body, and the hands do not travel quite as high as with the "upright" method. In getting the clubhead back

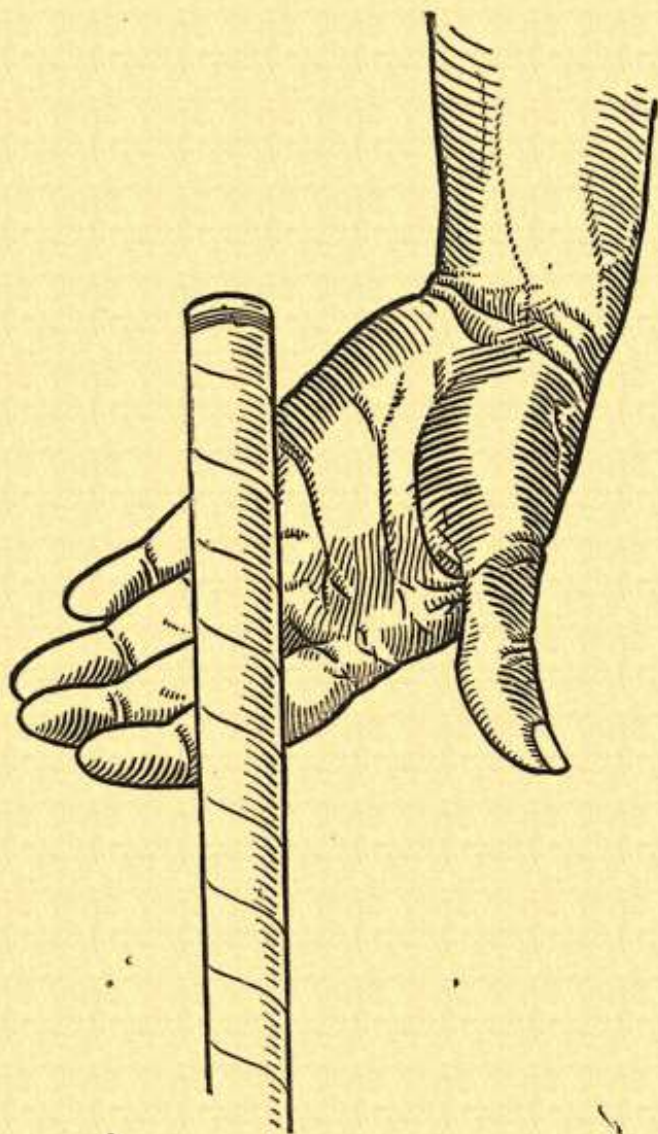


PLATE 16

The first step in applying the grip. The shaft of the club lying across the left hand, crossing at the roots of the fingers. Avoid gripping the club in the palms. The fingers can apply quite enough strength in making the stroke, and are much easier controlled in manipulating the club.



PLATE 17

The second stage in applying the grip: the left hand is in position and the right is ready to be closed. This is the overlapping grip, the little finger of the right hand rests on the forefinger of the left. Observe carefully the position in which the left is placed, well above the top of the shaft.

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to the position from which it is swung down to the ball, the hands—and of course the clubhead—travel through both a horizontal and a vertical arc, starting from the position in the address, and leading to the top of the backswing. In the flat-swing the horizontal arc is more curved and the vertical one less curved, while the reverse is true of the upright. Also the flat swinger turns the body more around toward the right at the hips, while the upright swinger bends the body more at the hips, and turns it less, the bend being from side to side, toward the right on the backswing, and in the reverse direction on the downswing.

Most players use a compromise between the extreme upright and the extreme flat, though there are some well-known players who are notable for one style or the other. As a rule the upright swingers are of the tall, rangy type, while the thick short players find a flat swing better suited to them. It is not recommended that the player try especially to acquire either an upright or a flat swing, but rather that he swing the club in the manner that feels most comfortable, if it is consistent with the important points laid down in the opening chapter on how the swing should be made.

As the player, by experimenting, finds out the stance and swing that seem best suited to him, he may find it advisable to shift the positions of his hands on the club to some extent to fit the swing. The player who places the hands too far over toward the right will generally hook, or cause the ball to curve to the left. Placing them too much over toward the left usual-

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ly results in a slice. These results will not always follow, but will in the majority of cases.

Whether the trouble be hooking or slicing, the position of the right hand is the one to experiment with. Place the left hand so that the "v" between the thumb and forefinger points about to the right shoulder, and let it stay there. Move the right hand over toward the left, if there is a tendency to hook, and to the right if there is trouble from slicing. Also the player may find it advisable to tighten or loosen the right hand grip. Hooking results largely from allowing the right hand to snap the clubhead through too vigorously. Loosening the grip will help to overcome this. On the other hand failure to get the clubhead through fast enough causes a slice. Try to make the right hand snap the club through more strongly.



PLATE 18

Here is the overlapping grip fully applied the thumb of the left hand rests on the shaft under the pad of the thumb of the right. The thumb of the right hand crosses the shaft at an oblique angle.

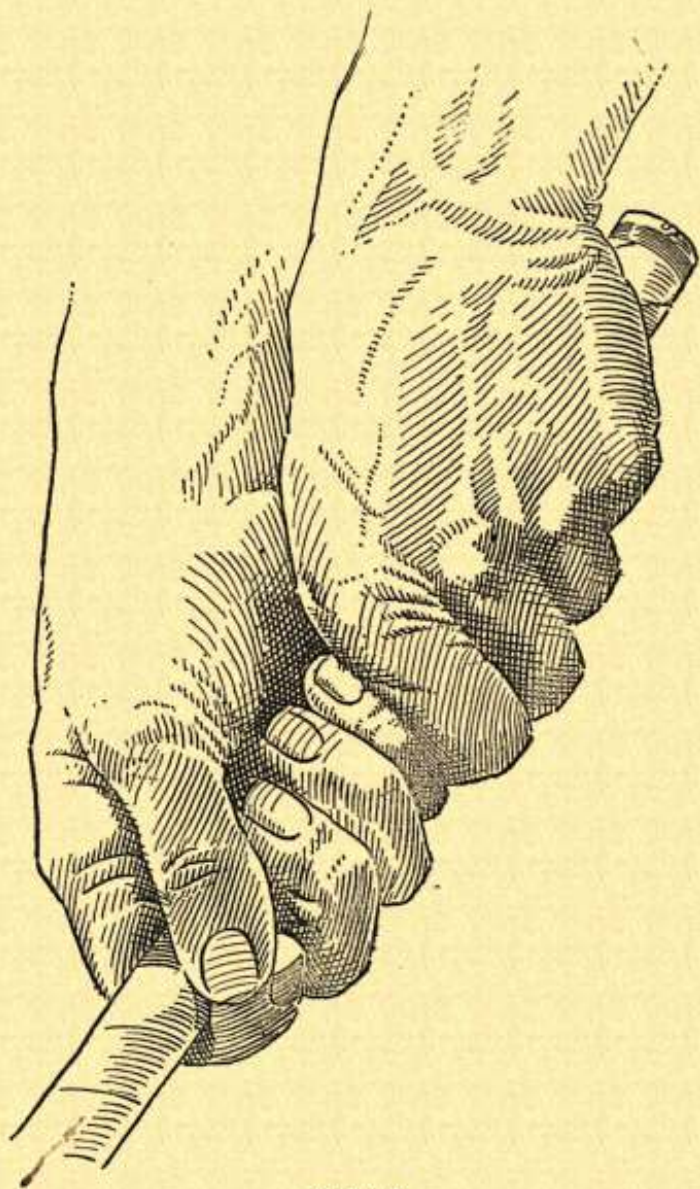


PLATE 19

This drawing shows the natural grip, where the hands are in no way joined together, but are placed as close together as possible. Both thumbs cross the shaft, the left one behind the right hand. As with the overlapping grip, the shaft is held in the fingers.

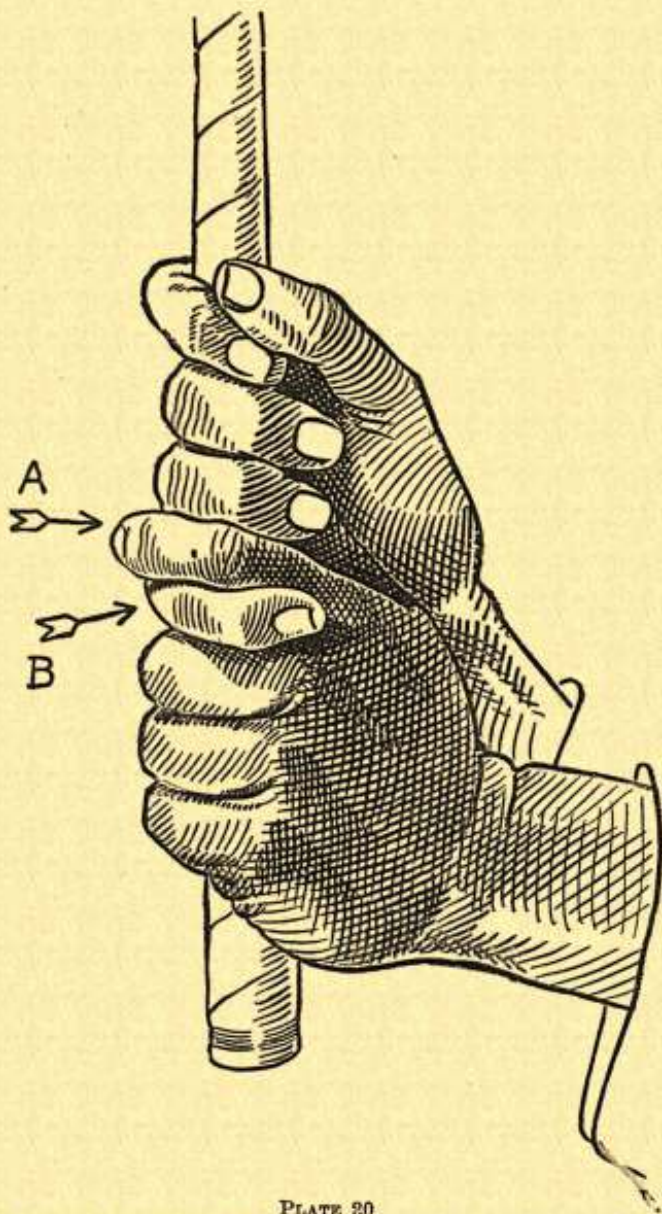


PLATE 20

This is the interlocking grip. The little finger of the right hand and the first finger of the left being interlocked. The thumb of the left hand runs, practically straight down the shaft, while the right thumb extends obliquely across.

CHAPTER VII

THE SELECTION OF CLUBS

WITH reference to the heading over this chapter, I want to explain that I shall not attempt to offer any specific advice as to the particular requirements in a single club for individual types of players. Many things enter into the task of making such selection, as will appear. Also the player of scant experience at the game can hardly hope to acquire right away a delicate appreciation of the fitness of his clubs. As he gradually picks this up through an accumulation of experience, he will begin to form his own standard for judging such matters. The beginner can hardly do better than to accept the advice of his professional. The clubs that are not to his liking will be weeded out and abandoned later.

However, there are certain points on which general advice may be offered; such for instance, as weight, length of shaft, nature of shaft, whether whippy or stiff, and so on. Also for the beginner, a few suggestions may be made for the correct make-up of his kit in starting.

In the matter of weight, I believe I am safe in saying that the usual tendency on part of players, who are not qualified to judge correctly as to their needs, is toward using clubs that

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are too heavy. There seems to be a feeling that the heavier club will make the ball travel further. That, of course, is true, provided the clubhead can be made to attain the same speed as the ball is hit, that a lighter one would. And the test of the fitness of a club in this respect is whether the player can handle it so as to make the same speed possible.

The real governing factor in determining the fitness of a club in the matter of weight is the player's strength of wrists. The club should be of a weight that will permit of its being manipulated freely with the wrists. Here is a fairly good test on this point. Hold the club with one hand, gripping it about where the hand would be placed in taking hold of it to play a stroke, and then see if it can be handled freely in a back and forth wagging movement without undue strain on the wrists. Use each hand in turn. If it can not be handled easily, it is probably too heavy. If it feels unduly light, a slightly heavier one may be better suited. In brief, the player's general physical make-up, height, weight and strength will largely determine the club that will be best suited to him. In the matter of choice between stiff and springy shafts, the strong, robust player will do better with stiff shafts. The one with less physical strength who does not swing so vigorously may choose one with some springiness or "whip." This applies, of course, only to wooden clubs, chiefly the driver. The shaft of the brassie should always be rather stiff, and irons should have stiff shafts.

As a general guide in actual weight I may set down here the following figures which are a fair average and which may

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be varied slightly either up or down: driver $13\frac{1}{2}$ ounces; brassie about the same; spoon, 13; midiron, $14\frac{3}{4}$; mashie, $14\frac{1}{2}$; niblick, $15\frac{1}{2}$; putter, $14\frac{3}{4}$.

In determining a suitable length of shaft, the physical proportions of the player are the chief guide, the most important of these being length of arms as compared with the player's height. The player who has long arms can use proportionately short clubs, while comparatively short arms call for longer clubs. The important consideration is to determine the extent of the arc through which the player can swing the clubhead to the best advantage. The larger the arc, the greater the speed the clubhead must attain to keep pace with the hands. But beyond a certain limit the player will find it difficult to make the clubhead keep pace with the hands. If this happens he will be unable to strike the ball squarely, and can not of course, keep it straight in the line chosen. The arc of the clubhead must be kept within the player's limit.

The above consideration accounts for the fact that one frequently sees a short player use rather long clubs, while a much taller one will play with shorter ones. In my own case, for example, my driver is about $41\frac{1}{2}$ inches in the shaft, though I stand more than six feet two inches tall. I know several fine players who are four or five inches shorter than I am, who use clubs an inch and a half to two inches longer.

Here are what I consider fair averages in the way of length of shaft for different clubs, though they are subject to variations: driver and brassie, $42\frac{1}{2}$ to $41\frac{1}{2}$ inches; spoon, 41; mid-

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iron, 38 to 38½; mashie, 37 to 37½; niblick, 36½ to 37; putter, 34 to 35.

As to the proper assortment of clubs, the player usually finds that the number grows as he becomes more and more familiar with the game up to a certain point. After that he will begin to discard here and there until he eventually works out about the number that meets his needs. In making up the selection to start, I would recommend that the following be included: a driver, a brassie, driving iron, a midiron, a mashie, a niblick and a putter. He may add another wooden club, a spoon. This is a very serviceable club, especially for the player who has trouble in getting the ball up with wooden clubs. It has more loft even than a brassie, and is not so deep in the face from top to bottom, thus bringing the center of the weight down nearer the ground, and so causing it to be applied more below the center of the ball in hitting.

In addition to the list just mentioned there are various other iron clubs, such as the mashie-iron, mid-mashie, jigger, mashie-niblick and so on. These are compromises between the better known ones mentioned above but the differences are rather too slight to call for any detailed explanation. As the player gains in experience he may come to find that one or more of these are to his liking and add it to his set.

I also want to add a little advice about the design of wood clubs. From time to time different styles or fads in clubs develop. For a time there may be quite a fancy for clubs with extra large heads, and then again, the tide may swing back to the extreme in the other direction. I would recom-

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mend that the player, especially those who are just starting to play, select clubs having fairly liberal facings. Such a club will afford somewhat more confidence in being able to hit the ball. Where such a feeling exists, there is less likelihood of the player's tightening up too much and snatching or jerking the club in making the swing. It puts him a little more at ease.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MENTAL SIDE

No real conscious mental effort is needed in the proper playing of a golf stroke, any more, for instance, than exists when a man takes a pen and writes his name. But what is of great importance is a proper co-ordination of mind and muscle. If the player is to be at all conscious of thinking of what he is doing, then he should try to keep his thought on the action as it goes along; that is, to have it picture the back-swing as the club is going back, and then the forward swing as it is brought down, and be sure to visualize the clubhead going on through and out after the ball. In other words I might say think of the right thing at the right time. Allowing the attention to hurry along ahead of the stroke to what is going to happen to the ball while the club is being taken back and started down is almost sure to upset the swing, and render the shot a disappointment.

This is one of the main reasons why a person taking up golf at a matured age encounters so many difficulties. The imitative instinct of early youth is gone. A boy watching a properly played stroke at once registers subconsciously a clear picture of what has taken place. His muscles then

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instinctively follow this pattern without mental effort. He gets the picture as a whole. The man, with his faculties of reasoning and analysis further developed, picks out certain essential points, or at least what he takes to be essential points. And his efforts to reproduce the swing exaggerate these points at the cost of negligence of other parts of the operation.

If it were not for the fact that the golf swing must be cultivated, I am convinced it would be better in starting to teach the game to a beginner, to give him a club and a ball and send him out for a week or so with no instruction whatever, other than to go out and hit the ball. But the serious drawback to this plan is that he could not possibly be expected to pick up for himself the methods which long experience have taught are the best, for the reason set out above, that the swing does not come naturally, and once he had started in with faulty methods, the task of teaching would then first require getting him away from these before he could be set out on the right road.

Yet the numerous Do's and Don't's dealing with the different details of the swing envelope him in an atmosphere of mystery, and the mental reaction of the player almost from the start is one of anxiety and helplessness. The result is he makes labor of what should be but a light task. He tries to keep his mind on each of several different matters at one and the same time, which is obviously impossible, and hopeless confusion follows. And what is still more damaging this general feeling of mystery and doubt causes him to sub-

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consciously tighten up all over, whereas a feeling of relaxation and ease is absolutely essential. As he takes his stance to start the swing the player should relax fully and as far as he can entirely avoid any tendency to tighten up his muscles at all.

The chief problem in learning to play golf from the mental standpoint, is to try to acquire the correct mental picture or pattern of the swing as a whole, and then to work toward becoming able to reproduce this picture to where it becomes habitual, requiring little or no conscious thought. This is not an easy matter. Yet it can be done, and it is the first step toward becoming a consistently good player. Also, it is no more difficult than many of the commonplace operations performed daily quite without conscious thought, such, for example, as learning to write. Learning to write even reasonably well is an exceedingly laborious process for the man who does not undertake it until after he has grown up.

It is not expected, of course, that one will learn to reproduce the swing picture perfectly in all details right from the start, no matter how clear his conception of it. He is bound to fall into mistakes here and there. These mistakes and the resultant poor showings are due to overlooking certain details, and failure to get proper co-operation between mind and muscle. And the correction of such faults as develop will call for concentration on certain details, after the general idea has been absorbed. But the getting of this general pattern is the big thing at the start.

The foregoing accounts for situations where one hears, as

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is rather frequent, a certain player say that after taking lessons for a certain fault, he is playing worse than before. More than likely the remedy prescribed was quite all right. But in attempting to apply it, and to concentrate on doing so, the player loses sight of one or more fundamental principles which have not become habitual with him, and violations thereof lead him into possibly deeper troubles than he was experiencing before.

The importance of the mental phase, or rather of having mind and muscle act together can not be too strongly emphasized, and failure to achieve this is responsible for a very large part of the poor golf one sees. This is true for expert and high-handicap man alike. In fact, I would go so far as to say that, with very few exceptions, the mistakes of the really good players may really be traced back to this. And even with the players of limited skill in handling their clubs, this fault contributes a very large percentage of the sum total of difficulties.

Analyzed further, the trouble may be seen to work itself out in this manner. The player comes to a situation where he instinctively feels he must hit the ball extra hard to carry a certain objective, say for instance, to clear a ditch some distance away. This impression is flashed to the muscles through the nerves. The muscles react by tightening up to meet the emergency. At the same time the player is over-anxious. He follows a damaging tendency to hit too soon. His body turns too fast for the sweep of his arms and the club. He does apply all the strength he can, but it is mis-

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applied. He doesn't hit the ball nearly as he expected. Anxious to see what is going to be the result of the stroke, he lifts his head too soon. The shot is either topped or dubbed or shoots off at some wild angle. At any rate it is a disappointment.

It may prompt a better understanding of what I am trying to bring out here to suggest parallel conditions in other lines of athletic effort. Possibly the reader has at some time or other watched a high jumper clear the bar as it is raised, inch by inch, until it reaches a height around what he feels is about his limit. He may clear the bar at a given height, going over by three or four inches. But when the bar is raised another inch, and he knows his best effort will be required to get over, the chances are he will fail to get over by four or five inches. Again, the baseball pitcher, who has reasonably good control at his regular speed of throwing the ball will become wild and entirely miss his aim, if he tries to throw the ball with every ounce of strength he has. In both cases the trouble comes from lack of proper mental and muscular co-ordination due to the extra effort.

To get back to further troubles for the golfer, he may be called on to play a short approach shot. He takes the club back and starts it down toward the ball. His subconscious senses tell him he is about to hit the ball too hard, his active mind being on the probable outcome of the shot and not on the actual hitting. Instinctively he eases up on the stroke, and he eases up too much. Anxiety over the outcome prompts him to raise his head too quickly. The club does not strike

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where he intended. The ball is probably scuffed along the ground, traveling half the distance he had hoped, and another count has been added to his score.

There are, of course, innumerable considerations to wreck the player's effort at the right kind of concentration, or making mental and muscular actions keep pace properly. During his tee shot there may still be lurking in the back of his head the memory of a short putt missed on the preceding hole. He may have just observed his opponent play an approach dead to the pin, forcing the realization that he must play his own shot exactly right. Some unexpected noise or interruption may attract his attention as he is almost ready to begin the stroke, and so on. All such detractions make the task of keeping the attention properly centered extremely difficult.

It may occur to the reader that this recital of untoward possibilities makes the task of conquering the mental side of the game seem almost a hopeless one. Surely it is difficult enough. But it is not impossible. Any player can cultivate a habit of shutting himself in, as it were, from his surroundings while playing a stroke, and it is a profitable habit to encourage. I have known various pet tricks and schemes to be used to this end, such as starting a short count just before beginning the stroke, repeating some slogan, such as "head down, slow back and follow through" and so on. Any plan of this kind may prove helpful in inducing the proper kind of concentration while swinging the club.

CHAPTER IX

TIMING THE STROKE

MUCH of the success or failure of the player in swinging the club depends on what is called "timing." Likewise the matter of whether or not the ball will travel a reasonable distance, even if the clubhead is brought down against it as intended, depends on timing. Consideration of just what is meant by timing, and how it is accomplished is, therefore, of much importance.

Briefly stated timing means swinging the club in such a manner that the clubhead reaches its greatest speed just as it strikes the ball, that speed being attained through a gradual increase from the time the club is started down. This would not seem difficult of understanding, but several factors contribute to make up the full effect, and in the failure to make these work together properly lies a multitude of shortcomings in golf.

In the opening chapter, dealing with a general description of what should take place in the full swing, it was pointed out that the downswing should begin with a slight pull from the point of the left shoulder, which in turn starts the arms down and that the body then begins to turn around toward

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the left at the hips, to accommodate the sweep of the arms in swinging the clubhead through. It was also pointed out that when the hands get down to a level slightly below the waist and almost in front of the point of the right hip, the wrists begin to execute a forward snap which serves to add to the speed of the clubhead.

All of these operations have to do with timing the stroke, and a co-ordination of the several movements is the solution of the timing problem. Attention has frequently been called in these pages to the necessity for steadiness and smoothness in starting the club, both going back and coming down. Smoothness on the back stroke, makes for the same quality on the down stroke, and this quality in starting the club down is the basis for correct timing.

I am frequently asked how fast the player should swing the club. My advice on this point is that those who are just starting out at the game practice a steady rather slow backswing, and then gradually increase the pace of the downswing. As soon as the player is able to increase and control the downswing, the back swing should be speeded up somewhat to make the two operations link up smoothly. It is, of course, useless to hurry the backswing and then bring the club down slowly. Also with a fast downswing a reasonable fast backswing is necessary, if the player is to avoid a snap or jerk in starting the club down.

The necessity for starting the club down slowly will readily be appreciated, when it is remembered that the clubhead must maintain a fixed relation to the position of the hands through-

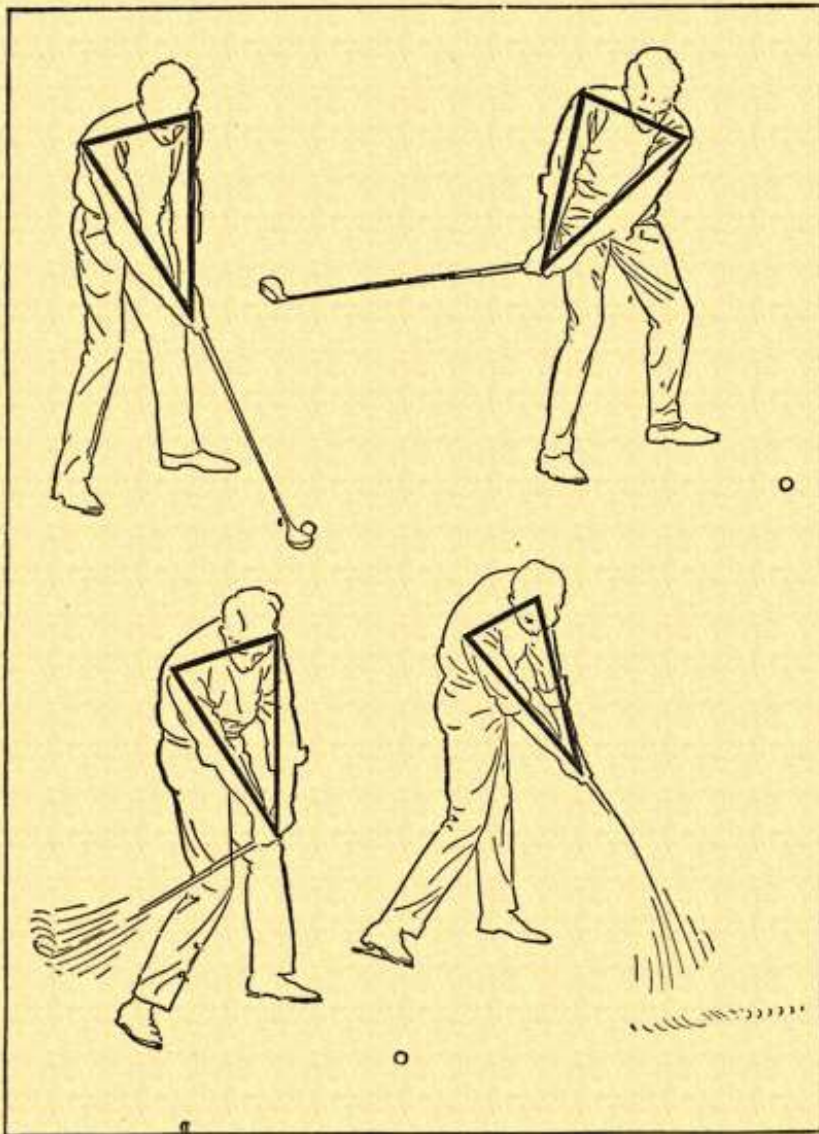


PLATE 21

These drawings show how the arms must turn together with the body for proper timing of the stroke. Top, the address and carrying the club back; bottom, point at which wrist begin to snap clubhead through, and hitting the ball.

TIMING THE STROKE

out the swing. Yet, the clubhead travels through a much larger arc. Hence if the downswing is started jerkily or snatchily, the wrists are almost sure to give enough to allow the clubhead to drop back of its proper position with reference to the hands. Once this happens, it is almost impossible for the clubhead to make up this loss and to catch up to its proper position.

Possibly the following comparison may help the reader to more quickly get the meaning here. Suppose instead of a golf club, the player had a fairly heavy weight on the end of a string three feet or so in length. Imagine him starting to swing the weight to and fro in pendulum fashion, gradually increasing the length of the swing. If he keeps the movement steady and gradually increases the force in the swinging, he will eventually become able to swing the weight through a complete circle. But he must apply the force gradually, and the instant he tries to suddenly speed up the movement, the circle will collapse. The whole trick is in applying the force gradually. So also in starting the downswing in a golf stroke. A hurried jerk at the start of either the up or down swing.

Then again, there is of course a physical limit to the speed which the muscles of the arms, shoulders and body can make the clubhead attain. If this limit is to be reached at the moment the clubhead strikes the ball, through a gradual increase all along the way, obviously the starting speed must be regulated to the maximum possible. Otherwise, the maximum will be reached too soon, if the club is started too fast, and the force of the swing will in reality be dying away when

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the ball is struck, though the player will not, of course, be able to detect the fact, except where the length of the shot is especially disappointing.

The gradual speeding up of the clubhead thus far discussed is a general result of arms and body working together. This result can be best accomplished if the muscles are relaxed. There should be no sudden tightening up of the muscles on the start of the backswing. In addition to this general movement there is the action of the wrists to be considered. Reference has already been made to the fact that when the hands get down to a level slightly below the waist, they start to do their part by speeding the clubhead through. Since this action has been pointed out already in more than one place, it is hardly seems necessary to open any further discussion here. It is, however, worth calling the reader's attention to the fact that the greatest source of trouble in this respect, comes from introducing this wrist and forearm action too soon. The force is expended before the clubhead reaches the ball, and so is of no use. Don't hurry it. It is rare indeed to see a player erring in the other direction by delaying it too long.

Reference was made above to the fact that the speeding up of the clubhead through the general swing is the result of the arms and body moving together. This co-ordination exists where good timing is had, but unfortunately there are times when such co-ordination is lacking. At first thought one is rather likely to feel that the arms do most of the work in playing a golf stroke. This is a mistaken idea, at least for



PLATE 22

A graphic representation of how the clubhead should be gradually speeded up. The start of the downswing must be slow and steady to insure a gradual increase in the speed of the clubhead until the ball is struck.

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anything more than a halfswing. A simple test will convince you on that point. Just try swinging a club without turning or twisting the body, and it will readily be discovered how little power can be put in the stroke. The big muscles of the body, shoulders and leg yield the real power. The reader is no doubt familiar with the way a baseball pitcher turns his body in winding up to throw the ball. The two actions are much the same.

Now, just as there must be a fixed relation between the movement of the hands and the clubhead, so must there be a similar relation between the movement of the arms and the body, and if this relation is broken trouble will result. The commonest cause for trouble here is allowing the body to turn toward the left on the downswing too hurriedly for the arms to maintain this relation. Even as the clubhead swings through a much larger arc than the hands, so the ends of the arms, that is the hands, move through a considerably larger arc than do the shoulders, and a slight turn by the shoulders calls for a good deal larger one by the hands, if the arms are to keep proper pace.

In most cases the trouble comes from over-anxiousness on the part of the player to hit the ball, or possibly a desire to hit it very hard, the effect in both cases being the same. The mental flurry is flashed along to the muscles and they jump to execute the order. There is a quick start of the shoulder turn, and the arms are unable to start in time to keep up. Preventing such trouble means merely getting back to the old admonition to start everything smoothly and steadily. Try to acquire that feeling of a pull with the left forearm,

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and allow the right side to turn easily around as the arms are brought down. It is not possible to have the right side push the swing around. At the same time it should follow easily around with the arms. When the club is actually striking the ball, the arms should occupy approximately the positions they did in the address. There is, however, this difference: in the address, the muscles are relaxed; in the actual striking, the body has braced itself to let the arms deliver the blow.

An excellent idea of the matter of correct timing can be formed by reverting again to the homely comparison of the man swinging a scythe. His motion is slow back, reverse and then a steady sweep which gradually speeds up the blade of the scythe as it comes against its objective. Or consider again the case of a man driving a tack or nail with a hammer. There is no jerk of snatch to the movement whatever. There would be a lot of sore thumbs, if carpenters and carpet layers tried to drive nails and tacks like a great many golfers try to use a club in striking a golf ball.

I realize that the foregoing detailed description of the various considerations that enter into the correct timing of the stroke sounds rather complicated. And it is not expected that a player can concern himself with all or even any considerable part of them while he is swinging the club. They are set forth here for the purpose of trying to make a bit clearer his conception of the basis on which timing is built up, and to emphasize the great importance of avoiding any tendency at hurrying the stroke. A steady deliberate method of swinging the club is a fine foundation on which to start building a golf game.

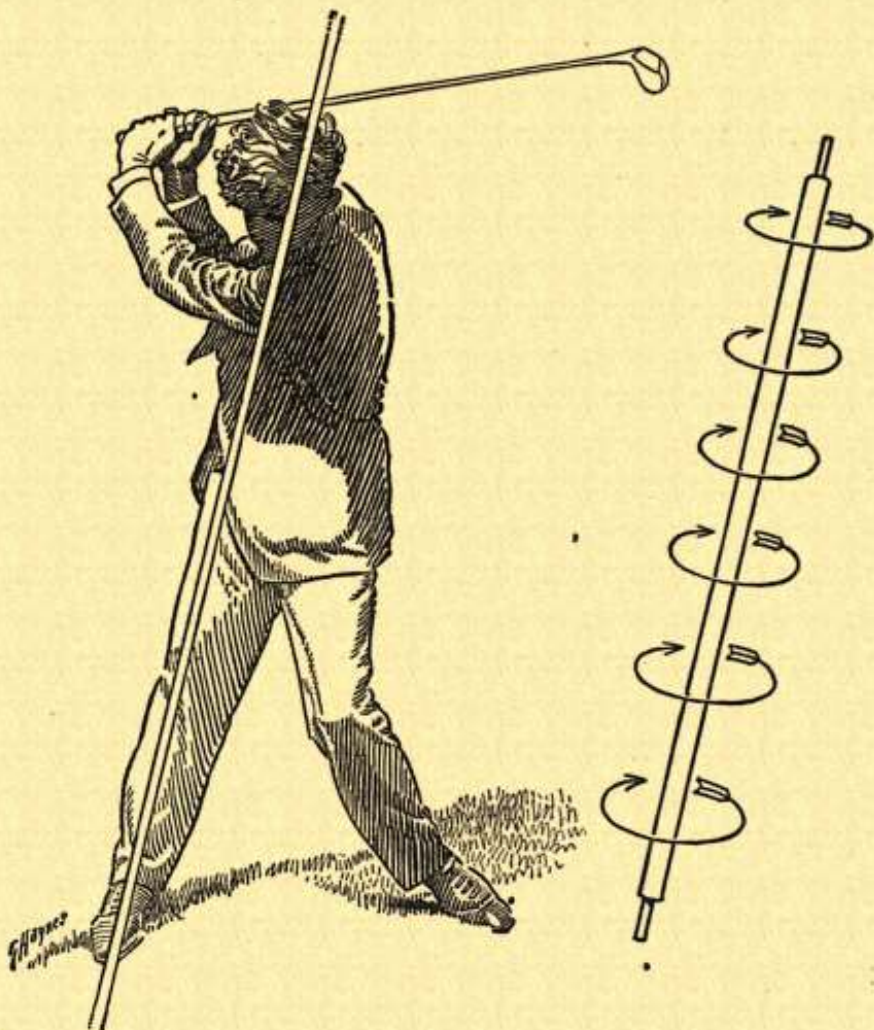
CHAPTER X

BALANCE AND THE PIVOT

ONE of the fundamentals for delivering any kind of blow or punch is that there must be good balance and that the weight of the body must be made to follow up the action of the arms and hands. The boxer, the baseball player, the tennis player, all know the importance of maintaining proper balance in their efforts. Balance and correct handling of the weight during the swing are highly important in golf. They are important both in hitting the ball straight in the chosen line and in making it travel for reasonable distances.

It was pointed out in the opening chapter that the player in taking his stance preliminary to starting the stroke should place his feet so as to give him a secure sense of balance as he addresses the ball. This point needs no further elaboration other than possibly another warning to settle the weight pretty well back on the heels. There will be little tendency to fall backward during the stroke, but some players are troubled with an inclination to fall forward toward the ball in the midst of making the stroke.

Assuming, then, that the player has taken up his stance to start the stroke correctly, the next consideration is to look to



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PLATE 23

In taking the club back to the top position, the body turns on the right leg and hip, as though on an imaginary axis running up from the right foot to a point at the center of the back of the neck. This axis leans toward the left. The player should avoid straightening it through swaying toward the right.

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the essentials for maintaining this feeling of balance during the pivoting or turning of the body necessary in making the swing. To get the proper idea of how this is done, let it be understood from the start that the head is the anchor for the swing. It must remain stationary throughout the operation, until the ball has been struck, and failure to make it do so, will most surely mean trouble. This does not mean that it must be held absolutely rigid and fixed. There may be a slight rotation toward the right on the backswing, but there must be no appreciable change in position.

The turning of the body is accomplished chiefly on the hip joints, the right one taking the turn on the backswing and again on the downswing almost up to the time that the club-head strikes the ball. It may help the reader to get a better understanding of just what takes place, if he will imagine a stiff rod running up from the arch of the right foot practically in line with the right leg to a point at the center of the back of the neck. This imaginary rod leans toward the left at the top. Around this as an axis the body turns. One of the most important things is to see that the upper end of this imaginary axis is not displaced. This is what is meant by the admonition to keep the head stationary.

The strongest tendency to alter the position of this axis will be to straighten it up or move the top end toward the right. This is what happens when the player sways his body on the backswing. The best insurance against such a mistake is to straighten the right leg as soon as the club is started back. The legs should not be stiff and rigid in the address,

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but just as soon as the clubhead begins to move, and if anything a slight fraction before, the right leg should begin to straighten at the knee. Thus straightened, this leg will then provide a safe brace against any swaying.

To allow the left side of the body to turn around this imaginary axis, the left leg must bend at the knee, partly in toward the right, and slightly forward in the general direction of the ball. Also the left foot must rise at the heel from the ground, throwing the weight on that foot on to the toes and ball of the foot. The manner in which this is done and the amount of weight retained on that foot will determine very largely whether or not the player succeeds in maintaining the correct balance. The heel should be guided by the turn of the knee, not in a direct lift but with a slight up and outward turn. However, if the head is held stationary, and the right leg straight, the action of the body and the knee will automatically take care of this movement of the left foot, and there will be little need for the player to concern himself about it. At this top position there should be a feeling that the weight is balanced steadily, and the body relaxed. If the player feels tense and cramped or unsteady on his feet, he will not be capable of swinging the club down and through in a smooth rhythmic manner.

From this position at the top of the backswing, the body begins to turn on this same imaginary axis on the downswing. This axis continues to serve the turning until the hands get down to about the point where the hands and wrists start to snap the clubhead through. Here there takes place an invol-

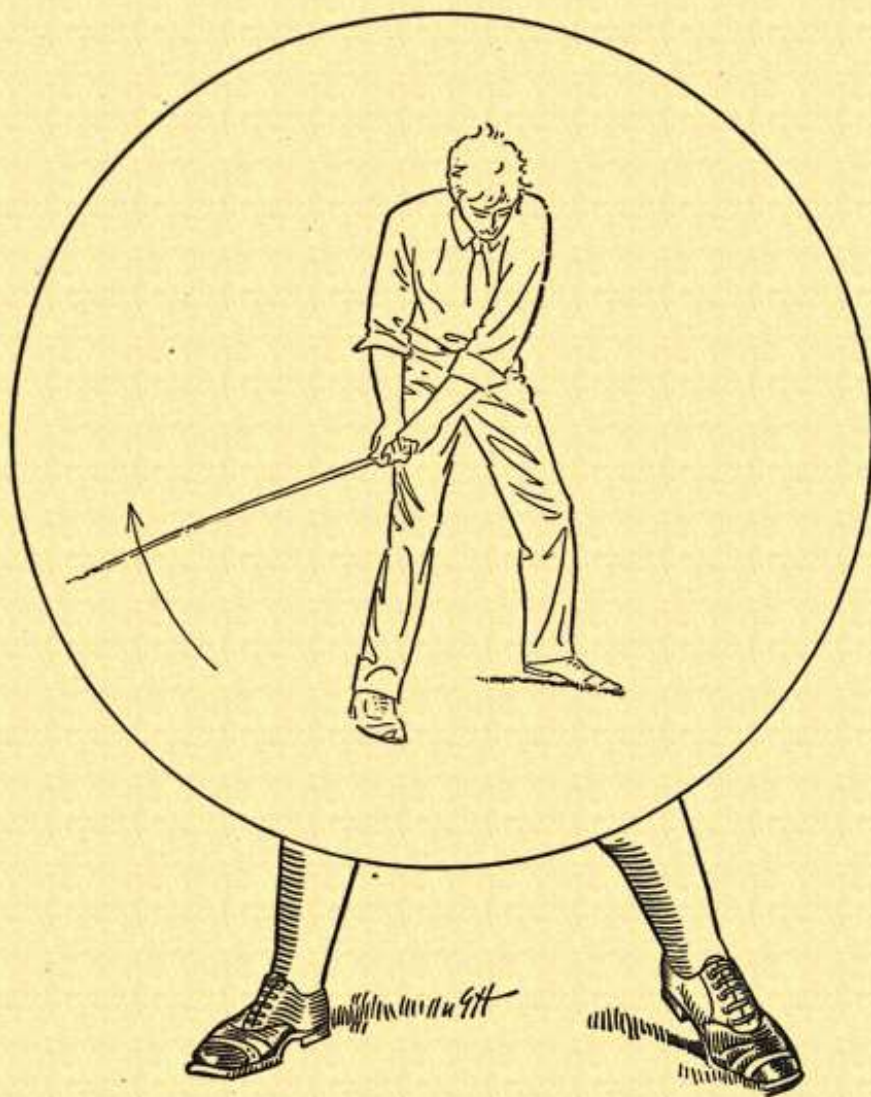


PLATE 24

The turning at the hips is accompanied by action of the knees. In taking the club back, the left knee bends partly inward and partly forward, drawing the left heel off the ground, as shown here, for the long strokes.

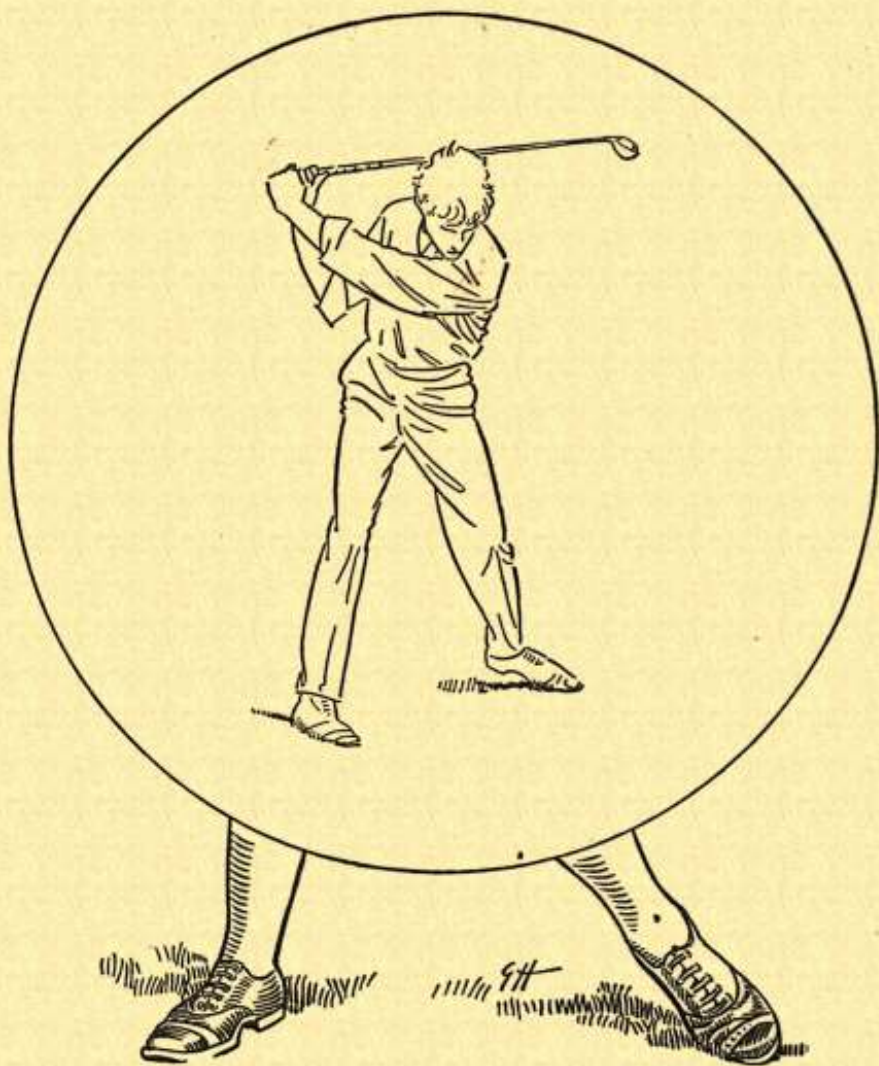


PLATE 25

At the top of the backswing, the left heel is clear of the ground, the left knee bent but the left foot carries enough of the weight to provide the player a steady balance.

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untary shift of the weight at the hips from the right to left, and the left leg straightens to brace the body for the hitting, just as the right did on the backswing. The right leg, meantime, has relaxed, most of the weight has been taken off it, and it bends in toward the left at the knee, to accommodate the turning of the body toward the left. The shifting of the axis on which the turning is done from the right to the left, need not concern the player so far as any thought as to just how it is accomplished is concerned. It is an action which will automatically take care of itself, if the player can only grasp the correct general conception of the entire swing. Any conscious effort to control the shift would be futile, and furthermore would simply result in detracting his attention from the general picture of the swing as a whole.

Control of body balance and pivoting have been touched on in the chapter on timing since the two matters are inseparable. It was pointed out there that the matter of getting good distance on the shot depends directly on applying the hitting force at the right time. Very frequently the player puts all the force at his command into a stroke, seems to hit the ball straight, and still is disappointed at the distance the ball travels. The trouble is that the force was expended at the wrong time. Generally the player hits too soon. Also he stiffens his entire body instead of keeping relaxed until the blow is on the verge of being struck. The only time during the stroke there is any stiffening is just as the hitting takes place, when the body momentarily stops turning toward the left and braces itself with the left leg to allow the arms to

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deliver the blow. Even this stiffening will be supplied automatically, and there is no need for the player to give any thought to how and when it takes place. To try to do so will more than likely result in a jerky stroke.

Proper balance is essential to timing the stroke correctly and hence to getting distance. But it goes further than that. It is necessary to hitting the ball squarely with the face of the club. Let us consider, for instance, when the player in the backswing, sways his body toward the right. The weight is thrown too much on the right foot, and there it most likely remains throughout the swing, instead of following around with the swing as it should. This means, for one important thing, that the player has definitely changed the center of the swing, which was established by the position of the hands in the address, with the body perpendicular. The swaying of the body to the right has shifted the center of the swing in that direction.

Obviously, if the player keeps the weight back on the right foot as the club is swung down, the hands must swing around toward the left too quickly. That is they will start to curve toward the left short of the place where they would have started, had the center of the swing remained where it was in the address. They begin to swing around in this way even before the ball is hit instead of afterward as they should in the correct swing. The result of this is to draw the clubhead in. Hence, instead of meeting the ball squarely at right angles while traveling straight ahead after the ball, the clubface is being drawn inward across the ball. It meets the ball at an oblique angle. The result is to give a sidespin motion

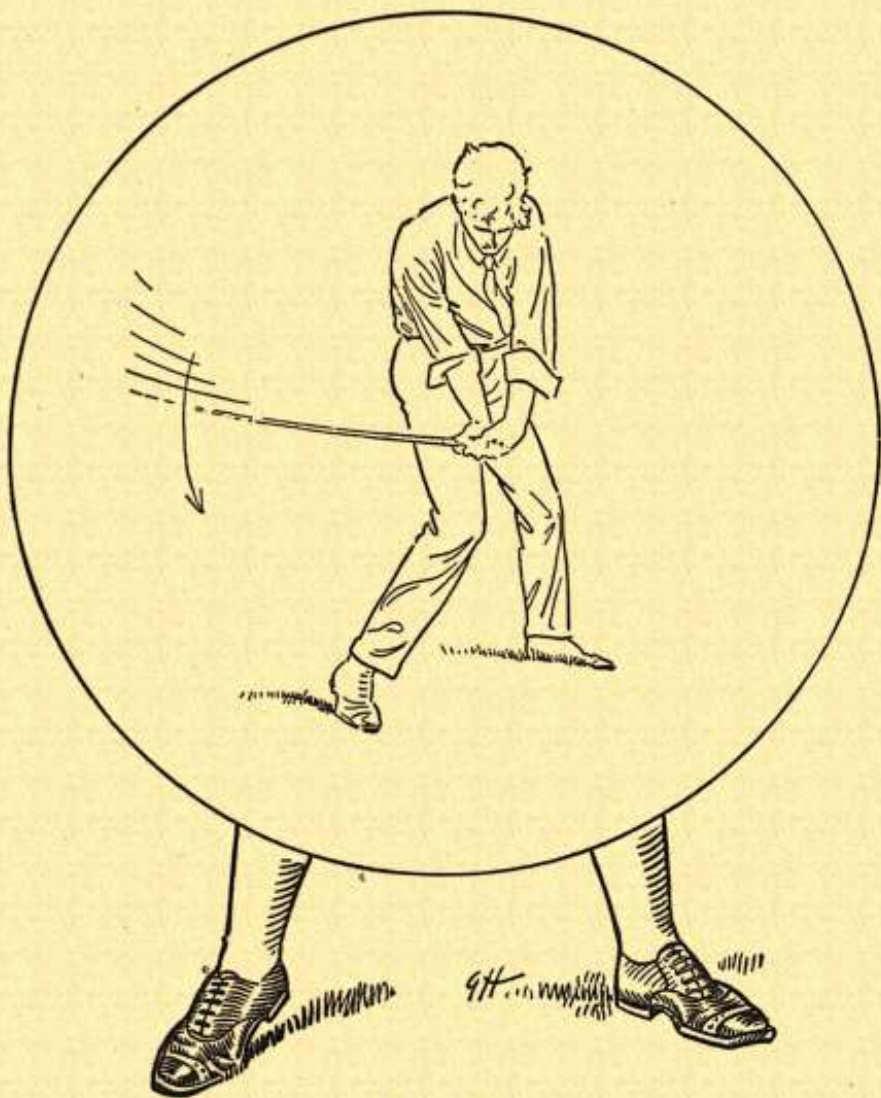


PLATE 26

In bringing the club down, the right leg bends at the knee, causing the right heel to raise. But the player need not concern himself purposely with this. If the club is swung through, this action will take place automatically.

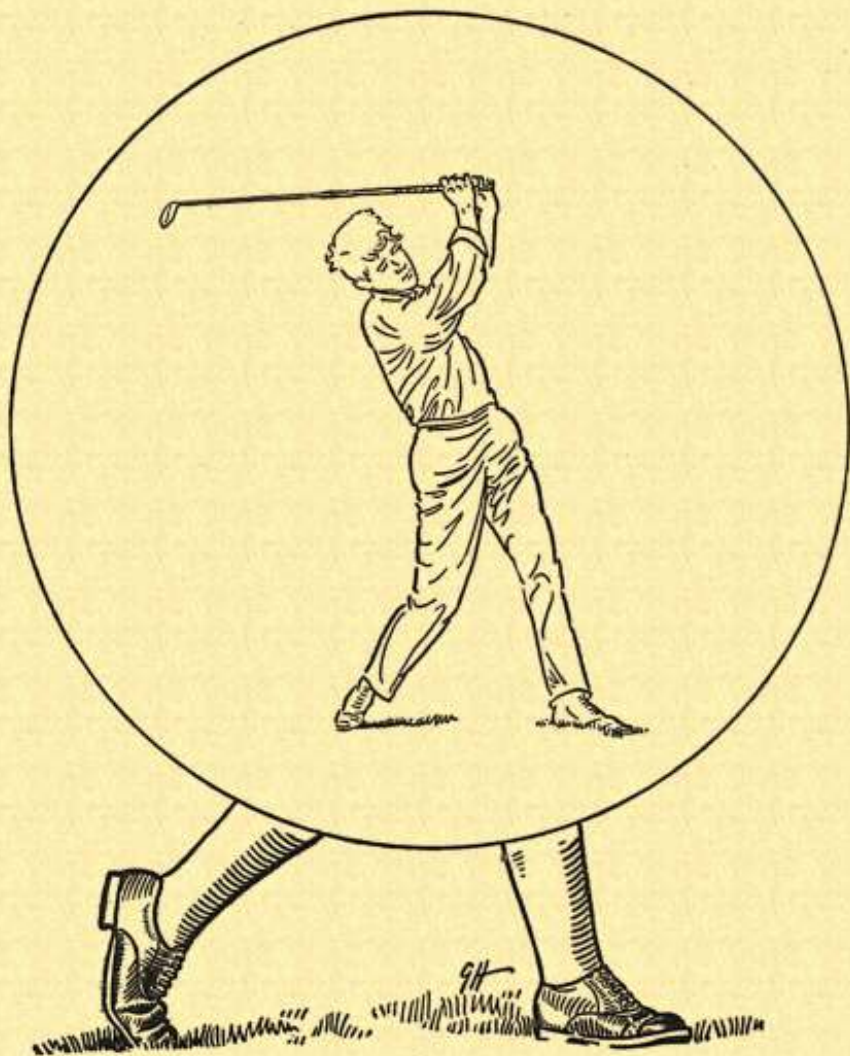


PLATE 27

If the swing is properly made, the body will be pulled around so the player is facing the hole at the completion of the stroke, the left leg serving as a brace, the right bent forward at the knee to permit the turning.

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to the ball that causes it to curve out to the right, that is to slice. When a player is observed pulling his left foot back as he swings through, he has committed the fault of keeping his weight too much back on the right foot. Some baseball players do this in batting. They are invariably right field hitters. Golfers who do it are almost without exception troubled with slicing.

There is this to be remembered about balance and pivoting. It is no trick to keep the balance on short shots where most of the work is done with the arms, knees and hands. It is only where some turning of the body is necessary to get the hands and clubhead in position to deliver a swing with sufficient power to accomplish the purpose at hand, that any trouble in keeping the balance is likely to be encountered. And the reader is cautioned not to overdo the matter of pivoting. Don't do any more turning than is necessary. It is not an uncommon thing to see players who appear to think that pivoting is a kind of ceremony that must accompany practically every shot except a putt. Particularly does one see them arbitrarily lifting the left heel from the ground for no reason whatever. This is a mistake. In fact, once the player has gotten the right idea of how the body should turn, he should cease to give any thought whatever to the turning, even as he neglects entirely any thought of how far he must draw his arm back to throw a stone at some given object. When he observes the distance of the throw, his subconscious senses tell him how far back to draw his arm, when to turn the stone loose and so on. So it should be in taking the club back and bringing it down in a golf swing.

CHAPTER XI

ACTIONS OF HIPS AND SHOULDERS

ATTENTION has already been called to the fact that the strong muscles of the shoulders and hips furnish most of the power in making a golf stroke, that is, for anything like a full swing. Also something has been said of how the muscles are linked up with the general movement of swinging the club. However, a somewhat more detailed analysis of certain phases of their work may prove helpful.

As regards the hips, the body turns largely on the right hip joint in taking the club back and again in bringing it down. When the body turns on the downswing to where the player is facing about as he did in the address, there is a bracing of the left side of the body to get ready for the hit. But it will be well to advise the player not to concern himself with any conscious effort at trying to regulate this shifting of the weight from right to left. It will take place automatically, if the swing is being properly made.

Consideration of hip action afford another opportunity to emphasize the importance of keeping the head quite stationary throughout the stroke. To get into position to yield force for the stroke, the hips either turn laterally or else there is a

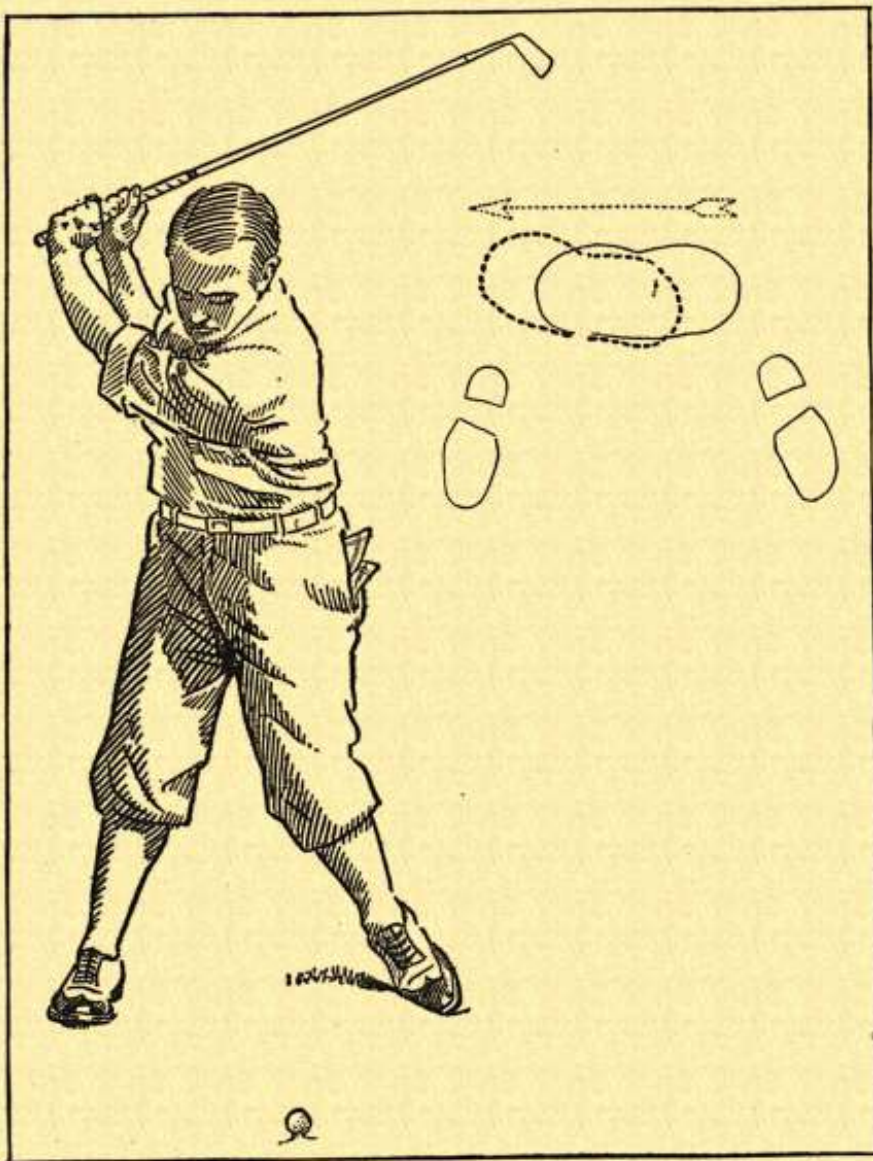


PLATE 28

One method of hip action, in which the hips are moved laterally toward the right on the backswing and then toward the left on the downswing. The body must either turn at the hips or move laterally as shown here.

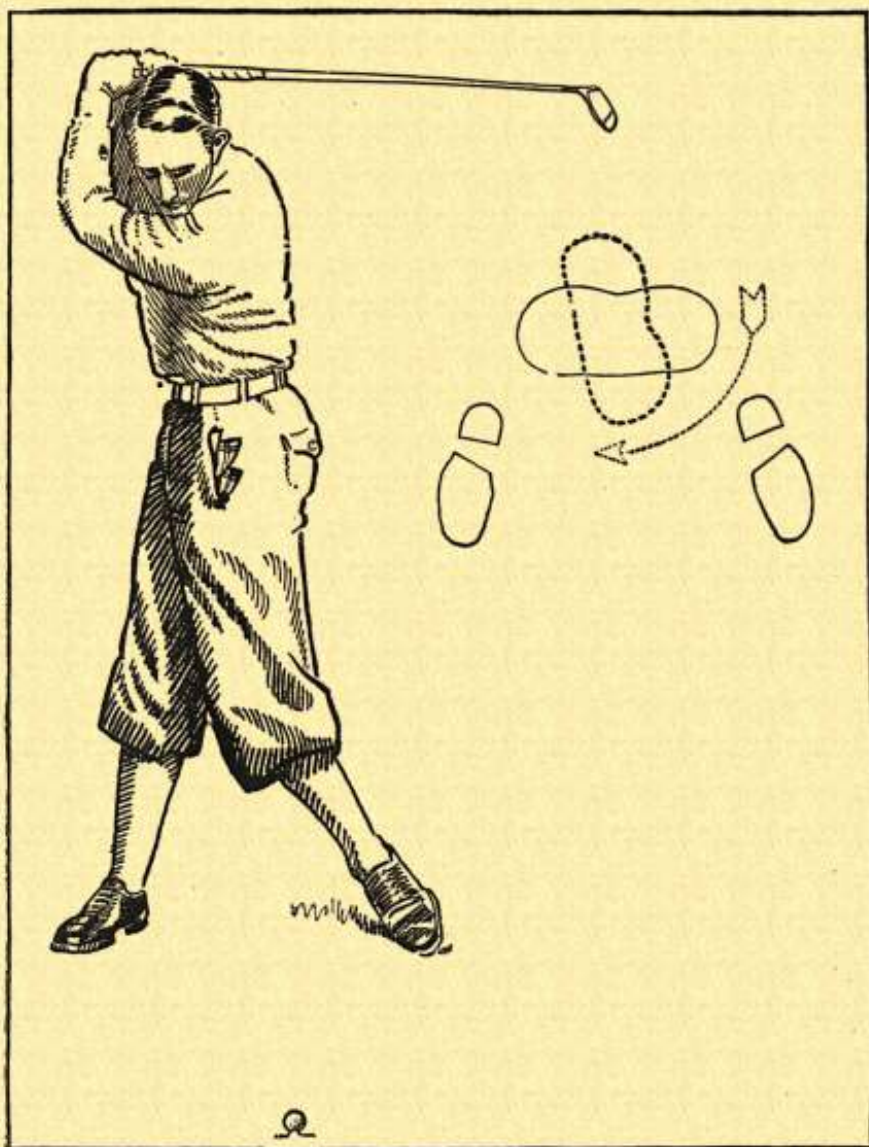


PLATE 29

This drawing shows the hip movement where there is more of a turn, and less lateral shift. In either case it is necessary that the player keep his head quite stationary throughout the stroke.

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slight turn and also a bending of the body at the waist. The nature of the swing determines which takes place. The flat-swinger uses a turn, while the upright one combines the slight turn with the bend of the body. In either event, if the head is not kept stationary, the hips are robbed of much of the power that they could furnish for the stroke. So, if the hips are to be made to yield their full power, the head must be kept in place.

When it comes to consideration of the action of the shoulders, the reader can more profitably study just how they should perform with the purpose of learning how to control them properly, since they are so closely identified with the movement of the arms. To use the arms properly, it is necessary to know what is required in the way of correct shoulder action.

Probably one of the first things to point out is that the shoulders do not and cannot in a properly played stroke make the turn toward the right and then back to the left on the swing through on a level plane. This will be evident to any one on even a casual examination. The fact that one hand—the right one with a righthand player—is placed lower down on the club in gripping, means that the shoulder of this hand must take a slightly lower level than the other. Watch any good player in addressing his ball, and this will be easily apparent. Obviously this will also be true as the ball is hit, since the position of the player, his hands, his arms, his shoulders, body and so on are in approximately the same position at the moment of impact as in the address. Hence, the

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right shoulder must swing through in the hitting on a lower level than the left. Failure on part of the player to accomplish this affords one of the plainest proofs of a faulty swing.

The shoulders should work on a kind of rocker or balance beam movement, the center or pivot being a point midway between them. The right shoulder is lower than the left as the player addresses the ball. At the top of the backswing the positions of the two are reversed. On swinging the club down and through, the right again drops to a lower level, as previously explained. All through these movements, they must be allowed to work freely and easily, in a fully relaxed condition, absolutely free from any tightening or binding feeling. Especially at the top of the backswing must there be perfect freedom and ease. And tenseness at this point is quite certain to mean a hurried, jerky movement in starting the club down, and equally certain to result in a poorly timed stroke, even if the ball is hit squarely with the clubhead.

The keynote to the necessity for making the right shoulder swing through on a lower level has already been given in the advice to make sure that the clubhead is caused to follow low out behind the ball in the line of flight until the full stretch of the arms has been reached. This is necessary for making the clubhead keep a plane at right angles to the line of play, which in turn is, of course, necessary to hitting the ball in a straight line. If the clubhead keeps a straight line for the brief moment during which there is contact the ball will be driven straight, but if the ball is struck at an oblique angle,

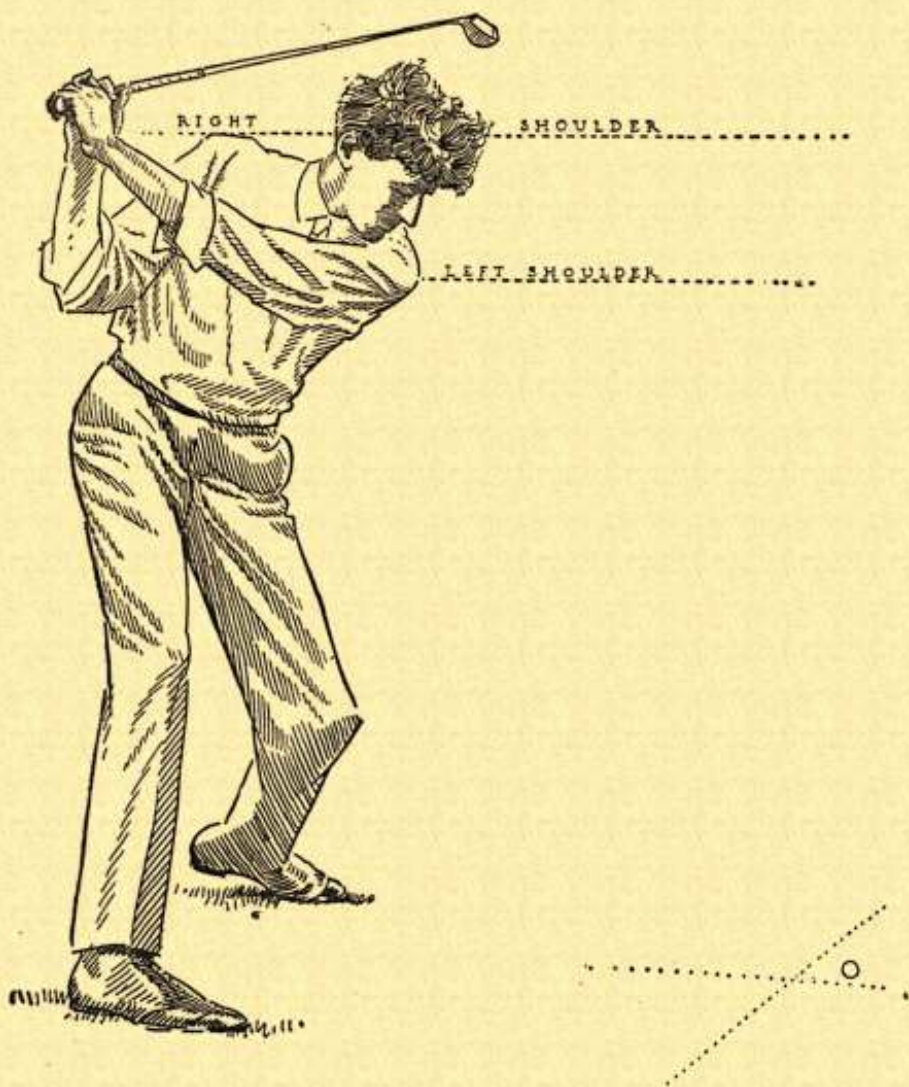


PLATE 30

This drawing showing the relative levels of the right and left shoulder at the top of the stroke for a full swing, the left several inches lower. The right shoulder on the downswing in turn reaches a lower level than the left, as it had in the address.

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due to the clubhead being turned ever so slightly, it will depart from the desired line.

To make the clubhead travel through straight in this manner for the brief space needed it is necessary that the hands hold a like position when the ball is struck to what they had in the address, with a slightly firmer grip on the club. As they sweep past the position of the address, a slight turning toward the left begins. This turning must not be too sharp, and if the body turns with the two shoulders level, too sharp a turn is likely to result. This is the common cause of smothering a shot, that is of hitting the ball low along the ground, and maybe pulling it badly off line to the left. To prevent it, the right shoulder must come under with a gradual smooth turning. Of course, as the arms reach the full stretch, the force of the swing will pull them around toward the left in the full strokes. In the short ones, such momentum will not be present, and the finish should find the club pointing about along the line of flight.

As to the left shoulder and arm, the steady pull in these which has been recommended in other connections must take place. A firm secure grip on the club with the left hand is another matter of importance. This with a steady tension in the upper part of the arm to keep it straight will brace the left up to make it keep the radius of the swing fixed. Whenever the player is troubled with allowing the right hand to turn too quickly over toward the left, he is likely to be slipping into the corresponding fault of allowing too much flexibility in the left elbow. Keep this elbow firm in swinging through, and

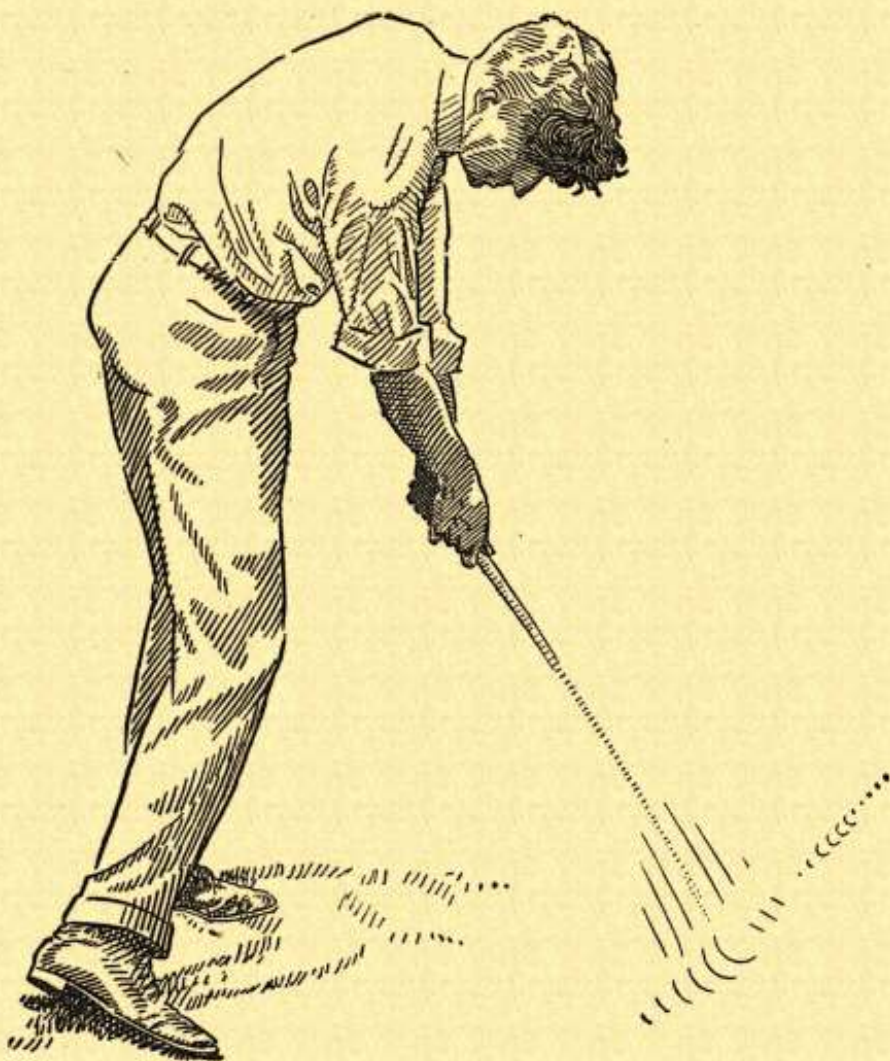


PLATE 31

In hitting the ball the right shoulder must swing through on a level lower than the left as appears in this drawing. This is necessary to permit the hands to follow out after the ball to the full stretch of the arms before they start turning around toward the left.

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don't allow it to bend in toward the left side. The left arm pulls through on the down stroke much like a backhand stroke with a tennis racquet. Also it provides a stay or brace to make the hands swing through on the proper arc, and if it fails to do this, the power contributed by the right is practically sure to be misapplied.

CHAPTER XII

A SWING OR A HIT?

ALMOST without exception those who take up golf after they have grown up introduce, in their attempts to swing a club, a very pronounced tendency to make a chop or a hit of the stroke. In time various principles of instruction tendered them emphasize the idea that it is necessary for them to picture the operation of wielding the club as a swing instead of a hit. The question, then arises, of just how much is swing or sweep, and how much hit, if any.

To draw a distinction between the two, I would describe the swing as an effort in which a steadily increasing movement is achieved in response to the co-ordination of several sets of muscles working to produce the movement. The hit I conceive as a quick movement resulting from the sudden application of a single set of muscles. The one is a slow steady pull; the other a sharp quick jerk.

In general the full swing with wooden clubs is more of a sweeping effort, while there is a distinct punch or hit with irons. The beginner or unskilled player, on watching the experts, either amateur or professional, will usually be struck by the fact that they appear to hit and hit hard, and they do.

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But the point to be remembered is that they have first come to acquire the knack or timing the stroke properly. In other words, they can afford to apply plenty of force since they apply it correctly. The whole proposition for either the expert or beginner is to determine how hard he can afford to swing, and still keep the swing true and make it conform to the early advice to speed the clubhead up gradually to where it reaches its maximum speed just as the ball is hit. Almost invariably, I may add, the fault is in trying to apply too much force, to hit too hard. So that to the player of little skill, I would say, try to keep on the safe side by not aiming at "killing" the ball.

The disposition to want to hit the ball as hard and as far as possible is entirely natural. Such a disposition induces impulsive muscular action, which has been identified with hitting as contrasted with swinging. Quick sharp action of this kind is most likely to be jerky and snatchy. It has been pointed out all along that movements of this kind are dangerous and likely to mean mistiming, throwing the player off balance and so on. For this reason the effort is being made here to get it firmly impressed on the player, that while there is a good deal of "hitting" in the golf stroke, even for a full swing, it is of great importance to guard against overdoing it. There is likely to be a natural urge in that direction anyway.

Then there is another very important objection to making the stroke too much of a hitting effort. Where this is done, there is an unconscious effort, more often than not, to stop the forward sweep of the hands as the ball is hit, if indeed not a

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fraction of a second before the hitting takes place. A wood chopper in wielding an axe does just this, and if he is experienced at handling an axe gets good results from it. But he does not need to concern himself with whether the blade of the axe is going to strike the log at exactly right angles. There will be no appreciable difference in the effect whether it does or not. In other words he is concerned only with putting force back of the blow and a fair degree of lateral accuracy.

With the golfer it is different. When one comes to think of it, a golf club is rather a ridiculous implement with which to hit a round ball. The slant or loft on the face, for instance, introduces a margin for error in hitting the ball exactly right. Also the shaft which conveys the force to the hitting surface is fixed at one extremity of this surface, which adds further difficulty from the torsion, or a slight turning of the hitting surface with impact. And even a very slight turn means a misdirected shot. So there are several problems before the golfer with which the axeman does not have to concern himself.

Long experience has proven that if the effort to drive the ball is allowed to stop immediately on contact between the clubhead and the ball, the result, generally speaking, will be poor. Once in a while the player who does this will get off a good long straight shot, but his general average will be low. How this is to be accounted for does not appear material. Just accept it as a fact and let it go at that. Instead of getting a picture of the stroke as a movement where the hands

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are practically stopped as the ball is hit, try to visualize them as sweeping right on through and out in front of you as far as the arms will permit them to go.

For the purpose then of acquiring the correct general picture of the full stroke, try to emphasize the importance of the general swing or sweep rather than of the quick hit. Several sets of muscles controlling the arms, shoulders, body and legs work together to produce the full stroke. One set in a quick movement produces the hurried hitting effect. The general movement is the more important of the two. Also the proper co-ordination between these several sets is harder to build up. But once it is built up, it becomes a firm foundation of the swing. The hitting effort that can be introduced into the stroke advantageously is restricted to the hands, wrists and forearms, the power provided by the forearms being conveyed to the hands through the wrists.

The additional force given by the hands, wrists and forearms to speed up the clubhead is applied, of course, while these are moving on the general swing. The proportionate amount of the hitting force which these supply depends on the length of the swing. If a short swing is used, these supply nearly all the power, so that the stroke is distinctly a hit. The more full the swing the smaller the proportion contributed by the hands, wrists and forearm. For that reason it is important to keep in mind that the chief consideration is the general sweeping or swinging movement with the hands and clubhead.

CHAPTER XIII

VARYING METHODS

HAVE you ever heard a golfer remark that he had about given up hope of ever correcting some fault in his game because one instructor told him to do one thing and another something else? If you have not, you probably will, sooner or later. It is a rather common remark. Also it is quite true, at least that part of it about getting different versions of the correct remedy to be applied.

At first glance this may appear strange. There must be, one might reason, a right way to swing the club and many wrong ones, and the competent instructor ought to know the right one from the wrong ones. He does so far as his own game is concerned, but generally speaking the instructor teaches his own methods. And it may very easily happen that, while his own game is suited to his build, it is not suited to that of the player he is trying to teach. It may be that the instructor's own game is somewhat unorthodox in certain respects, and that he has succeeded in overcoming some peculiarity by a certain compensating change in some other direction.

Let me illustrate with a very striking example. Nearly

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all capable critics are agreed that a reasonably straight left arm at the top of the backswing is one of the safest guides toward hitting the ball straight. Some of the best players permit a slight bend in the elbow, but keep that joint quite firm and free from any tendency to wobble. Others keep the arm quite straight. Practically all aim at keeping it as straight as is comfortable; that is, all except one—Harry Vardon, six times winner of the British Open Championship and once winner of the United States Open.

Vardon bends the left arm very noticeably at the top of the back swing, and really does not concern himself in the least in keeping it straight. How does he get away with it? Simply in this way. Vardon pointedly *slings* the club back on the backswing, the movement being a two-handed one with both hands taking as nearly as can be told an equal part in the operation, instead of having the left hand dominate the movement as nearly all other well-known players do. But Vardon teaches—and practices too—what he describes as a throwing of the hands backward and to the right in starting the club down from the top of the swing. What this amounts to is to straighten the left arm as soon as the down swing is started. With his method this must be done, because, regardless of how the club is gotten to the top, the left arm must be straight and firm at the elbow as the clubhead is swung down to the ball. If it is bent to start there will be very little chance of straightening it in the midst of the swing down to the ball. Hence, players who are familiar with Vardon's method of slinging the club back, and who try to follow it are practically sure to meet with

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trouble unless they also acquire the practice of throwing the hands out to straighten the arm as he advises.

Nearly every champion has a certain amount of individuality in the way he takes the club back to the top of the swing, and brings the clubhead down to the speed area of the swing, that is where the extra speed begins to be introduced with the hands and wrists. From that point on they hit the ball pretty much the same. These little peculiarities have grown up with them from the time they started the game, and will remain with them frequently throughout their careers. Sometimes these little mannerisms may appear to make control of the stroke more difficult, but in each case the player has succeeded in adapting his general swing so that whatever he does fits in with it all right.

For the most part slight differences in method of this type are inconsequential. Obviously they can not be fundamentally wrong to any serious extent, otherwise the player would never build his game up to championship caliber. The fact that these differences do exist accounts to some extent at least for the different methods employed in teaching. They also establish the fact that there can be no exact set model for teaching. Different physical types, different methods of handling the club and the like render it hopeless ever to hope for any one closely-defined standard of instruction.

Methods vary with different players also in what is usually described as the "open" face and the "shut" face. These are commonly distinguished by saying that in the case of the shut face, the face of the club at the top of the back swing

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faces slightly upward toward the sky; while with the open face, the toe of the club points straight down to the ground, the face of the club being vertical. The actual difference in results, however, is that the shut face comes down to the ball in such a way that the clubhead is being turned forward, thus tending to offset the loft on the face as it reaches the ball. With the open face method, there is little if any turning of the clubhead in this way. The player who inclines toward a flat swing generally shuts the face. The upright swinger is more apt to keep the face open.

Another matter that I have frequently found players puzzling about is whether the hands should start before the clubhead or the clubhead before the hands. It should not cause the player any serious worry. I know some very fine players who start the hands perceptibly before the clubhead; others start the two together. It makes little or no difference so long as the player gets the club to the top position with a feeling of comfort, a sense of balance, and the muscles of the body, shoulders and arms fairly relaxed, and the left arm firmly straight. If he is so situated, and then keeps his head still, starts the club down smoothly, and hits out after the ball, he is fairly sure of getting a reasonably well timed stroke and of hitting the ball about on the chosen line.

CHAPTER XIV

CORRECTING COMMON FAULTS

SLICING

OF all the troubles in golf, slicing or causing the ball to curve off the line to the right is by far the most common. Few are the players who have not at some time or other experienced the sickly feeling of seeing the ball sail out straight for the objective only to develop a wild curve to the right and come down in the rough or possibly out of bounds. Yet it is rare indeed that the good player slices a shot, unless he does so intentionally to meet the peculiar conditions required by the shot.

To get at the trouble of slicing, let it first be said that the immediate cause is drawing the face of the club inward across the ball just as the impact takes place. This drawing causes the ball to take a side spin toward the right, the same as a baseball pitcher imparts to a ball in throwing a curve, and the ball curves off the line.

There are numerous things that the player may do wrongly to cause him to draw the face of the club across the ball. He may even be guilty of doing more than one of these on the same shot. Common faults on the backswing are starting

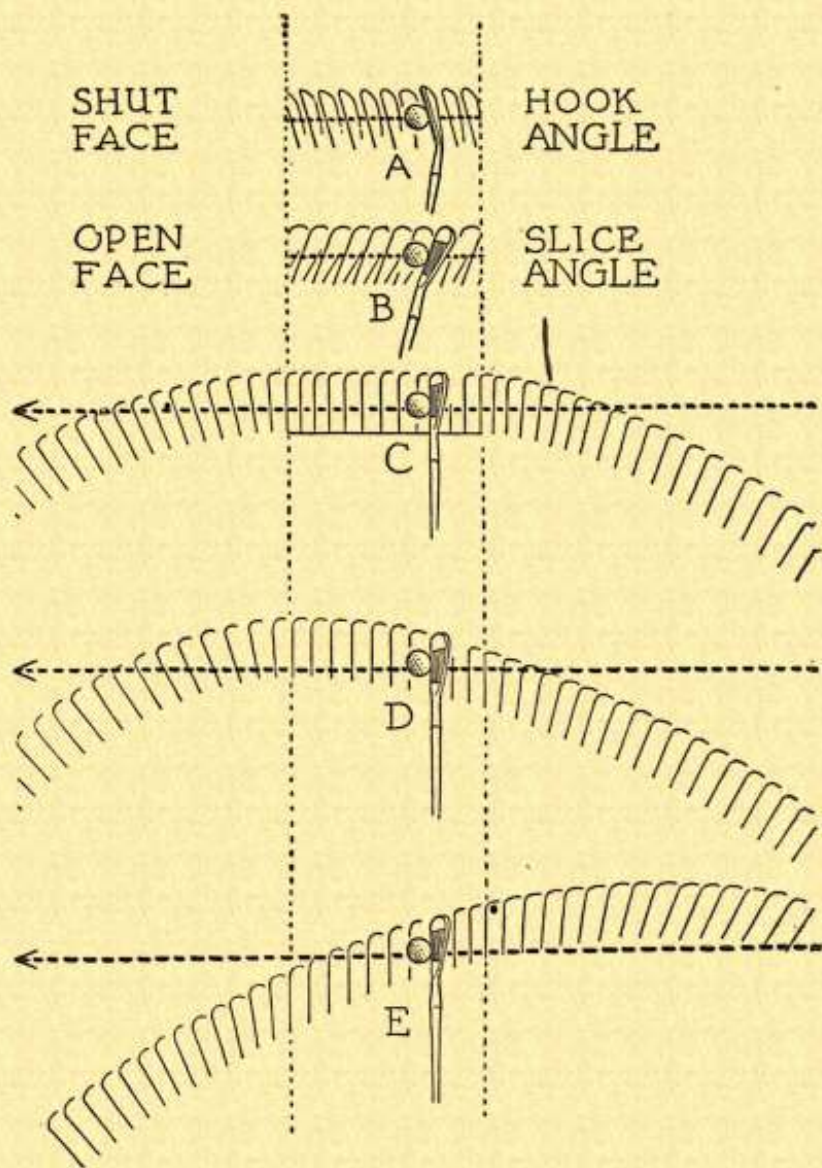


PLATE 32

Diagrams showing the path of the clubhead in various methods of swinging the club. Figure C is the correct method. Try to make the head follow a straight path along the line of play for several inches after the ball is hit. Figures A and B show the clubhead being brought against the ball at oblique angles. C and D show the head traveling practically straight but off the correct line.

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with a wrong grip, swaying the body, lifting the club too much with the right hand, throwing the arms away from the body and so on. On the downswing he may be guilty of drawing the left arm across the body, allowing it to bend at the elbow, falling back on the right foot, turning the body around toward the left too fast for the arms and so on.

Taking up the backswing first, a faulty grip, may mean placing hands on the club wrongly, too much over toward the left, for example, and again it may be due to the tensity with which the grip is applied. If the trouble comes from swaying the body, he is moving his head, due in most cases to not pivoting correctly. Lifting the club up too abruptly from the ball is the result of allowing the right hand to take too big a part in getting the club to the top position instead of making the left hand and arm guide it back and up. Getting the arms too far out from the body comes from carrying the hands too straight back, and failing to bring them enough around the body, and is a common result from failure to pivot properly.

As was pointed out in the discussion of grips, the player can gauge the position for his hands by making certain that the "V" between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand points to the right shoulder. The position of the right should then be regulated on this. If trouble is resulting from improper tensity in the grip, more than likely the club is being held too tightly with the right hand. To grip too tightly with this hand, means destroying the flexibility in the wrist needed to snap or throw the clubhead forward as it nears the ball.

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Loosening up the grip here will frequently help to cure a slice.

Lack of proper pivoting, which is liable to mean swaying and bad balance at the top of the swing is one of the commonest causes for slicing. The player fails to turn his body enough at the hips, and then to get the club back he leans toward the right, thus throwing the swing out of poise, and leaving himself out of balance at the top of the swing. Such faulty movements as these often lead to taking the arms back too far from the body, as remarked above. Of course, the remedy is to check up the pivot. I can not do better than to recommend that the reader go back and study closely the discussion of this subject in the chapter on Balance and the Pivot.

The body must turn around to where the arms can be started down smoothly and steadily with the body, shoulders and arms working easily together. There must be an easy freedom in the movement of the arms, and the shoulders must be free from any tenseness. As the arms are brought down and through, the body must turn readily with it, free from any tendency to push around behind the arms, and yet not allowed to lag or retard the movement of the arms.

This matter of failure to pivot properly is ~~also~~ the direct cause of the trouble where the body starts turning to the left on the downswing too fast for the arms. The body is not turned enough toward the right, so that it is ahead of the arms, one might say, as the club reaches the top of the backswing. Since it starts to move as the hands and arms do, it stays

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ahead of them on the way down. So, being ahead of its proper position with reference to the arms, the turning around toward the left causes the hands to be drawn inward across the ball.

When, as a result of not pivoting correctly, the player sways to the right, it very frequently happens in the down stroke he keeps the weight too much back on the right foot instead of allowing it to follow around with the sweep of the arms. This is the situation where a player is seen pulling his left leg back from the ball as he hits through, and of course it causes him to pull his hands in and thus draw the face of the club across the ball. The weight must be allowed to follow with the swing. I have known players troubled in this way to be benefitted by the simple advice to keep more weight on the left foot at the top of the swing. Correct pivoting will cause this to take place, of course, but that may be an easier way to convey the idea to some.

Possibly the reader, if he has been troubled with slicing, has been told that taking the clubhead back outside the line of flight may probably be causing his trouble. This is what I had reference to in speaking of getting the arms too far out from the body, by carrying the hands too straight back on the backswing. The remedy for this fault is to swing the club more around the body. See to it that the right arm remains rather close in to the side, with the elbow pointing obliquely down to the ground, no more than six or seven inches out. Where this is done there will be no trouble from taking the clubhead back outside the line of flight.

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One other little suggestion with reference to the location of the ball may prove helpful. Slicing is some times partly due to the player's standing so that the ball is too far forward toward the left foot. Try playing it back two, three, or four inches. Likewise a square stance may help, especially if the player has been pulling the left foot back.

It must be plain from the foregoing that it is quite difficult to suggest offhand just what may be causing a player to slice without an opportunity to watch him hit a few shots. I have tried to go over pretty well the causes most commonly encountered, and to explain how they can be removed. About the best the player can do from written instruction and advice is to study carefully the several cases outlined, and to then determine which one or more is at fault in his case.

I might add that after all that has been said about the mechanical faults is given due consideration, it will be well to remember that very frequently a lot can be done to correct most of the troubles of the game by following the old stand-bys of keeping the head down, taking the club back slowly and hitting through after the ball. See that the muscles are relaxed in starting the swing, and try to keep them that way right along through the swing. Anxiety to hit the ball too hard, and a consequent tightening up of the muscles, lurching and throwing the body off balance account for lots of golf troubles.

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HOOING

Hooking, or causing the ball to curve off the line to the left is caused by the right hand being used too strongly in proportion to the left, with the result that the face of the club is being turned in as the ball is struck, and the head of the club is prevented from following out in the line after the ball. The flat swing, where the club is taken around the body too low has a tendency to cause a hook. Also getting the right hand too much under the shaft of the club is a common cause. Both of these leave the hands in such position at the top of the backswing that it is next to impossible to swing the clubhead through without turning it over too much. In each case they mean that the right hand is quite dominating the stroke.

A looser grip with the right hand, the hand more on top of the shaft and a somewhat more upright swing are the remedies to be applied. Use the right hand only lightly, and try to acquire a feeling of making the swing almost entirely with the left hand and arm, especially on the downswing and follow through. At the same time make sure of a secure grip with the left hand, and in taking the club back, try to cultivate a feeling of a kind of bearing down effort with the left hand and arm.

Also guard against letting the right arm get too far out from the side at the top of the backswing. Where the elbow is allowed to get out to where the arm is almost horizontal at the top of the swing, there is too strong a chance to whip the

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right arm through with a lot of power so that it takes full control of the stroke.

Shifts in stance and the location of the ball may also prove helpful. Moving the ball further forward toward the left foot is the proper thing as to changing location, and opening the stance, or drawing the left foot back further from the line of play is a move in the right direction in placing the feet.

TOPPING

Topping or hitting the ball too far up so that it does not rise properly in flight is, next to slicing one of the most common faults. It is especially prevalent among players of the poorer class. As a general rule it comes from lifting the head, lifting the left shoulder or straightening the left leg on the backswing or from raising the head too soon, lifting the right shoulder or straightening the right leg on the down stroke.

If the player troubled with topping will check up or have someone else watch his play, he will soon discover which of the foregoing is causing his trouble. Or he may even find that he is doing one of the things mentioned on the backswing and also another on the downswing. The most important thing in overcoming trouble from topping is to keep the head stationary throughout the stroke. A very common cause for failure to do this lies in failing to turn the left shoulder around toward the right enough, and also to allow the left knee to bend as it should. This, of course, is really another way to say that he is not pivoting properly. Again it may be

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pointed out that keeping the left arm straight until the ball has been hit will help to remedy the trouble.

Also, players sometimes hit the ball too high because of aiming rather too high. In such cases they fail to hit down to the ball, through no particular fault except that of faulty aim. Incidentally, this sometimes comes from a kind of instinctive dread of striking the ground with the club, especially with iron clubs. It should be borne in mind that the club must be made to cut in under the ball. Looking at the back side of the ball near the ground instead of the top side of it will frequently help players who are troubled in this respect.

Topping short approach shots very often comes from looking up too soon, and also from using the wrists too much in trying to scoop the ball up. The clubhead is made to start up too quickly from the lowest point on the swing, and so strikes the ball too high up. One sometimes finds players who are guilty of this fault playing the ball further forward toward the left foot. This is a mistake. If anything, it should be played further back toward the right. Also all effort to scoop or lift the ball should be avoided. Hit to send the clubhead straight on through, and the loft of the club will lift the ball all right.

CHAPTER XV

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

IN nearly twenty years of teaching golf I have had numberless questions asked about every conceivable phase of the game, to say nothing of others that puzzled me to figure out how the person ever come to think of such a thing. I have received hundreds and hundreds of letters from people who I had met, others whom I had at one time or another given lessons, and still others whom I had never seen or even heard of. It occurs to me that many of these may be of interest to others, so that I have selected a list of a fairly general nature to include herewith. In the interest of brevity, instead of giving the exact wording of these letters, I have rather boiled them down to include only the gist of the questions.

SOCKETING

What causes a player to sometimes strike the ball down on the heel of the club, especially with iron clubs, with the result that it flies out to the right, sometimes almost at right angles to the intended line of play? L. L. G.

This is called socketing or shanking the shot, and is due to

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allowing the right arm to get too far out from the side. The player takes the club too straight back from the ball, instead of swinging it enough around the body. Instead of keeping his right elbow close in to his side, he has it sticking almost straight out to his right. Then in swinging through, the clubhead is pushed off to the right of the line of flight.

Any case of this kind can be corrected by simply keeping the right arm in close to the side and making the clubhead swing more around the body. Then in hitting through use more wrist action. This will get the clubhead through quicker, and more on the proper line. Here is a practical experiment that will show just what I mean. Take a pocket handkerchief, wad it up and stick it up under the pit of the right arm, and try playing a shot so as to keep the handkerchief there until after the ball is hit.

Unskilled players also sometimes fall into a habit of hitting the ball back on the heel of the club because they stand too close to it in the address, and again when they stand too far away and have to reach for it and overdo the thing. In such cases they fall into the ball during the downstroke. Obviously the remedy for the trouble in such cases is to work out the proper distance to stand from the ball and keep the weight back on the heels. Generally speaking the player should be just far enough away to where when he bends down to ground the head of the club back of the ball, the upper part of the arms fall just clear of the sides.

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STRIKING GROUND BACK OF BALL

What is the cause of striking the ground back of the ball and how can the trouble be corrected?

S. B. W.

Striking the ground back of the ball, sometimes spoken of as "scuffling" the shot, is due to the player's letting his right knee and right shoulder drop on the downstroke. Also the trouble may be due to the player's crouching down over the ball too much in the address.

Standing up straighter in addressing the ball and starting the club will frequently help to stop this trouble. And of course the player must keep the right knee firm as the hands and club are being brought down. If this is done there will be little tendency to let the shoulder drop.

Once in a while the fairly skillful player will just graze the ground behind the ball, but not dig into it. Where this happens, it can almost always be traced to extra effort in the swing. He is trying too hard, or rather trying to put too much force into the stroke. The extra effort causes a downward pull on the right shoulder, which, of course, lowers the center of the swing, and so lowers the clubhead. All such a player needs to do is to take things a bit easier next time, and concentrate on swinging the club more easily and naturally. The chances are when he overdoes things this way he is mistiming the shot any way, and will not get the extra distance he is trying for in the end, even if he hits the ball cleanly.

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KEEPING THE FLIGHT OF THE BALL LOW

What are the proper changes from the ordinary methods of swinging the club to purposely keep the flight of the ball low, where it is necessary, for instance, to play into a head wind?

V. H. K.

The chief concern in trying to keep the flight of the ball low is a change in the body balance during the stroke. The weight needs to be kept more forward on the left foot than ordinarily. Also, the swing should be a little more upright, and the ball should be teed on inch or two further back toward the right foot.

The whole idea here is to hit the ball a distinctly descending blow, that is, make the club face strike it before it has reached the lowest point on the arc of the swing. In other words you try to hit the ball down. It requires something better than average skill to do this with a wood club with any degree of consistency. If a player is constantly confronted with conditions where he must keep the ball down with the wood, it will be found helpful to use an extra deep-faced club. Such a club has the center of the weight in the head further up from the ground, of course, and so more directly back of where the face makes contact with the ball.

With iron clubs it is somewhat easier, the principle of stroking the ball of course being the same. Hit down on the ball, keeping the wrists firm, and making the clubhead skim low along the ground after the ball. The weight is kept well enough forward to where for the shorter swing with even a

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midiron, for instance, the left heel need hardly be lifted from the turf.

SMOTHERING THE SHOT

I am sometimes troubled with hitting the ball low along the ground and to the left of the intended line. The ball is not actually topped, but just skims the ground and never gets up to the desired height. What causes this and how is it to be corrected?

A. R. P.

This trouble is known as smothering the shot, and is generally the result of the right hand's overpowering the left just as the clubhead comes against the ball. It is most common with players who are given to turning their wrists noticeably. The left wrist is rolled over toward the right on the backswing, and the right is then rolled toward the left in the downswing. Too much roll on the downswing produces this trouble. The roll causes the clubhead to tilt forward so that the natural loft or backward slant on the club face is entirely offset, the reverse effect of even a slight overhang being produced. Also the hands are too far ahead of the clubhead as the ball is hit.

Alterations in the manner of placing the hands will frequently correct this trouble. As a rule the player is putting his right hand too much under the shaft, and his left too far over toward the right. Move both of them more toward the left. Get the right pretty well on top of the shaft. Try a more upright swing, pulling down more with the left arm on the down swing.

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Taking a firmer grip with the left hand will also help to offset the trouble. Tightening the grip with this hand, of course makes the wrist more firm and therefore better able to resist the turning over tendency of the right one.

Occasionally one sees a player hit the ball in this way with his driver on a tee shot. Usually the trouble here is that the player reaches forward too much for the ball, and strikes it too far back toward the heel of the club. The simple remedy for such cases is to stand a bit further away from the ball.

TAKING TURF WITH IRON CLUBS

Kindly explain on what type of shots with iron clubs the player ought to aim to take turf, and what not. J. T. S.

If the ball lies cleanly it is not necessary to take turf in the sense of cutting out a divot, unless the player aims at putting back-spin on the ball. Otherwise the club should be made to just skim the turf. If gotten under it, this may mean cutting through the turf to some extent. In any event, if the club is to cut the turf, see that the edge of the blade strikes the turf after the ball is hit, not before.

OVERSWINGING

What is the probable cause for failing to get reasonable distance where the ball appears to be hit cleanly and travels fairly straight? I frequently have such an experience, and when I do I notice that there is a lack of a "click" when the ball is hit.

E. F. O.

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Overswinging and bad timing of the stroke are the likely causes of the results mentioned. The player takes the club back too far on the backswing. In bringing it down he expends the hitting force too soon, though he doesn't throw himself off balance, or turn the body into the stroke too soon. In cases where this is done, the ball is rarely kept straight in the desired direction.

The remedy for trouble of this kind is a shorter backswing. Keep the left arm more firm at the top of the backswing, and don't allow the club to drop so low behind the body. Allowing it to drop appreciably below a horizontal position, just means extra effort to haul it back up, and makes the problem of timing correctly more difficult.

CRAMPED FEELING AT TOP OF BACK SWING

Knowing the importance of keeping the left arm straight at the top of the backswing, I try to do this, but when I do, I experience a feeling of crampedness and lack of power, when my hands get to their topmost position. What causes this, and how can it be avoided?

M. D. D.

Failure to turn the body enough around toward the right accounts for the conditions described. Possibly the arm is being kept too rigid. Keep it straight but not rigidly so. The left shoulder does not come far enough around, and as a result the left arm is drawn too closely against the breast. The player is left in a position where he is unable to put any power into the stroke, and furthermore, if the downswing is begun

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from this position, the body is sure to turn too quickly for the arms. A weakly hit shot which ends in a slice is the common result.

The remedy for such trouble is to pivot more freely. See that the shoulders swing around toward the right to where the line of them is almost at right angles with the line of play. A full explanation of how this is to be accomplished will be found in the chapter on Balance and the Pivot.

PAUSING AT THE TOP OF THE BACK SWING

One of my chief troubles is hurrying the swing too much. Should it help me to correct this, if I make a slight pause at the top of the backswing. Is such a practice likely to lead to any serious troubles?

S. W. J.

Theoretically there should be no perceptible pause between the finish of the backswing and the start of the downswing, any more than there is when a pendulum reaches the limit of its arc and reverses direction. But practically there is, or at least may be, although few good golfers are conscious of the fact as they swing the club, and few if any of them make any conscious effort to make such a pause.

As a means to correcting the fault of hurrying the swing, it may prove helpful. For one thing, it will cause the player to become conscious of the fact that there is a division point between the finish of the backswing and the start of the downswing; in other words, to think of what he is doing as he

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is doing it. Such a pause, however, should be only momentary, and the usual result where the player overdoes the thing is that he starts down with something of a jerk, which is dangerous and most likely to spoil the shot. Hence, if he does try to make a conscious pause, he should be very careful to start the club back down smoothly and steadily.

TIGHTER GRIP FOR IRON CLUBS?

Is it advisable to grip more tightly when using iron clubs than with the wood? If so, should the grip be tighter from the start, or tightened up while the swing is being made, say for instance just before the ball is to be hit?

C. B. B.

A slightly tighter grip is permissible, even advisable, for iron clubs than for wooden ones. It is permissible for the reason that irons should be handled more compactly, with a shorter swing, and somewhat more firmness in the wrists. Also it is possible with the shorter stroke with irons to make more of a hit of the stroke, and the quick muscular action involved in hitting, as contrasted with the slower steady pull in a swing or sweep, subconsciously induces a tighter grip.

It is advisable to grip a little more tightly because, as a rule, in playing iron clubs the player strikes so that the head of the club comes in contact with the ground. Since the force of the stroke is exerted through the shaft fastened at one end of the head, there will be a tendency for the head to turn when it strikes the ground. Yet it must not be allowed to turn,

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until it has followed through far enough to insure correct direction on the shot. The grip must be sufficiently tight to prevent this turning.

PLAYING DOWNHILL LIES

Kindly explain what changes are necessary from the normal grip, stance and swing for playing a ball on a slope grading down in the direction of play; also cases where the player stands on a level above that of the ball.

H. W.

The chief concern in playing downhill lies is the matter of keeping the balance through the stroke. To do this the player must proceed differently from what he does with a normal flat lie. The left leg must be kept straight to brace the body against falling forward in the line of play. This means that in taking the club back on the backswing, the right leg must be bent at the knee pretty much as the left is ordinarily. This allows the player to keep his balance.

No material change in the grip is necessary, though it may help some to grip the club shorter than usual. Don't try to take a full swing; a three-quarter one is enough. A full one makes keeping the balance exceedingly difficult.

In the matter of hitting the ball, don't try to pick the ball up with a dipping movement with the clubhead. Instead swing to make the clubhead follow right down with the slope after the ball is hit, keeping it low along the ground. If it happens that the ball must be made to rise very quickly to

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clear a steep counter slope, the thing to do is to take a club with lots of loft. Any way it is always well to lean toward one with plenty of loft, a spoon, for instance if a wooden club is to be used and a midiron, and possibly a mashie, if the distance is not so great.

Also in selecting the proper line of play it is well to allow for at least a small amount of slice. The struggle to keep the weight back toward the right foot frequently causes a slight pulling in of the clubhead, and this, of course, tends to cause slicing. The same precaution against overdoing things and trying to hit too hard that has been sounded elsewhere applies strongly here. Don't expect too much from a shot played under these unfavorable conditions.

In cases where the ground slopes downward from the player to the ball, the chief source of trouble, obviously is in avoiding a tendency to fall into the ball as the stroke is made. The player must make a special effort to get his weight well back on his heels and keep it there, because he must reach down to hit the ball. Select a club with a long shaft, and grip near the end to be sure of getting down to the ball. No special method in swinging is to be attempted, other than to see that too much effort is not put into the stroke. This is an important matter in playing a ball in any kind of uneven lie, because the very fact that the ball lies as it does, tends to make the player anxious and doubtful of the result, and this feeling is very likely to lead him almost unconsciously to making undue effort.

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PULLING AWAY FROM THE BALL

What causes a player to swing his left side back away from the ball as the club is swung through? I frequently find that at the finish of the stroke my left foot has been pulled entirely away from its position in the stance, and is several inches further back and around toward the left.

W. E. C.

This trouble is due to lack of proper balance, which in turn comes from poor pivoting. The player, usually through swaying toward the right on the backswing, gets the weight almost all back on the right foot, and it stays there right on through the swing. This leaves him light on his left foot, and the force of the swing naturally causes the left side to swing further around.

This fault almost invariably causes the player to slice. It is full explained, and suggestions for correcting it will be found under Slicing.

RUN-UP AND PITCHED APPROACHES

What are the differences in methods for playing run-up and pitched approaches? Which is the better for the average player? What club or clubs are recommended for playing these?

R. G. R.

The difference between these two methods of playing the ball onto the green from short distances lies in the action of

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the wrists, and this is reflected in the finish of the stroke. A little more freedom in wrist action is allowed in a pitched shot than for a run-up; also the clubhead finishes at a higher elevation in the former.

It has been emphasized right along in these pages that excessive floppy wrist action is bad for mashie play, and the foregoing does not offer a contradiction. At the same time some bending of the wrists is necessary, like for instance the moving of a rather stiff hinge. The right wrist is bent back in the direction the club is being swung on the backswing, but it is important not to allow the left to make a like bend in striking the ball. For when this happens, the player unconsciously allows the forward swing of the hands to stop as they reach the hitting position, and the rest of the work is left to the wrists alone, and this usually means a poor shot.

The swing for the pitch shot is a little more upright, so that the path on which the clubhead comes down to the ball is steeper. Consequently the club rises up more quickly after striking the ball. For a run-up shot the club should follow right along the ground after the ball without rising more than a few inches. In fact a run-up approach is in a way nothing more than a long putt.

In the selection of a club the mashie is probably best suited for playing a pitched approach, or even a mashie-niblick, which is coming to be very popular in this way. For the run-up, a straighter-faced club is better, a midiron, or even a putter being well suited.

Conditions of the shot will determine largely whether it is

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better to pitch the ball or run it up. If there is any trouble between the ball and the hole such as a bunker, mound, ditch or the like, the player must, of course, make the ball carry over it. Also if the ground near the green is uneven and rough, it is better to pitch for the green. If, however, there is no obstacle between the ball and the hole, the run-up is the simpler shot, and there is less likelihood of error. It is one of the simplest strokes in the game, and one that every golfer should learn.

PULLING OR HOOKING IRON SHOTS

What is the probable cause of my pulling or hooking my shots with both my midiron and mashie, whenever I try to get a little extra distance with them? The ball is hit clean enough, but usually veers well off to the left of the intended line.

J. M.

Throwing the right arm and side into the stroke too forcefully causes this trouble, assuming that the ball is usually hit straight, except when an effort is being made. There is no logical advice to be given for such mistakes, except to avoid these extra efforts. Any corrective suggestions would likely result in substituting some other trouble. The discussion of hooking and pulling which will be found under that heading explains what causes such trouble, and also offers suggestions for overcoming it. But where the player encounters such experiences only when he is making an extra effort, it is not wise to go about changing methods, other than to select a club capable of yielding the distance needed with a normal swing.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STARTING HANDS OR CLUBHEAD FIRST

Which should lead in starting the backswing, the hands or the clubhead. I have been told that some of the best players make a point of seeing that the hands take the lead. If this is done, how is the clubhead made to catch up to its proper place?

E. R. H.

My belief in this matter is that neither should lead, but that both should start together, just as the two ends of a spoke start at one and the same time, though of course the end in the rim moves faster because it moves on a larger arc.

It is true that certain very well-known players do start their hands perceptibly before the clubhead, such as Chick Evans, George Duncan, Abe Mitchell and a few others, but without knowing positively I would say that it is a very good guess that they acquired this practice well after they had already become skillful as players. By that I mean to imply that the player who is uncertain of his game will do better to let this method alone until he is sure of himself. About the only purpose I can see it serves is to avoid tight gripping and to insure flexibility in the wrists, and so to promote a tendency to do what is called "throwing the club at the ball." Any number of other fine players accomplish the same ends without resorting to this means.

Of course, where the hands are made to lead, the clubhead must be made to catch up to its correct position with

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reference to the hands by or before the latter get to their top position. This is done by a sort of slinging movement which comes in at about the time the hands get half from the level of the waist to the level of the shoulder. In so doing the average player is very likely to get his right arm too far out from the side at the top of the backswing, and poor direction on the stroke will most likely result. My advice is to concentrate on getting the club back and not to worry too much over such details as these.

TURNING RIGHT HIP INTO STROKE TOO SOON

I have been told that a great deal of my trouble on my tee shots comes from turning my right hip around into the stroke on the downswing too soon. How can this trouble be corrected?

W. S. T.

Where this trouble occurs it is generally found that the player is bending his left arm too much at the top of the backswing, and in starting the club down inclines to pulling the hands down and in toward the body. To correct it, keep the left arm as straight as is comfortable at the top of the backswing, with the elbow firm so as to resist in sagging tendency as the arms start down. Also try to swing the hands on as large an arc as possible, which, of course, will mean straightening the left arm as soon as the downswing is started.

There is also another condition under which the player

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inclines to turning his right side around too fast, and that is where the whole stroke has been hurried too much. The club is snatched back hurriedly and then started down with a jerk. But even in cases of this kind, it is also generally true that the left arm is bent too much, due to allowing the right hand to lift the club up too straight from the ground. The remedy is to start the backswing slowly pushing the club back from the ball with the left arm, and keeping it low along the ground. The player rarely hurries the backswing, when he makes the left arm do most of the work of taking the club back, and so restrains the right hand from taking too active a part in the operation.

KEEPING LEFT ARM STRAIGHT AND HEAD STILL AT THE SAME TIME

Can you tell me how I can keep my left arm straight on the backswing and yet keep my head still at the same time? I have tried this but without success. I can keep from raising or lowering my head, but it seems necessary for me to move it laterally in spite of all I can do to keep it stationary.

C. G. H.

The only way this can be done is through pivoting properly, and if you find that you are not doing it, then the chances are very strong that you are swaying the body to the right instead of turning it at the hips, or pivoting. It is quite possible to keep the head anchored in place, if you pivot properly. Read carefully what is said on this subject in the Chapter on Body Balance and the Pivot.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW TO PRACTICE

Diligent patient practice is essential for any and all who hope to acquire any considerable skill at golf. Yet I am convinced that no few players considerable time in efforts that are practically useless. Practice to yield any real benefit must be done intelligently and with a purpose.

I am frequently asked what the custom is with well known professionals and amateurs in the matter of practice. To answer this question correctly it must be pointed out that such a player may have different purposes in mind. For instance if he is playing regularly two or three times a week in tournaments or matches, he will probably feel no need for any special practice. If, on the other hand, he finds that he is erratic in his play with any particular club, he may go out for a quarter of an hour or so and hit several shots with this club to try to learn where the trouble lies. If he fails after two or three efforts to diagnose and correct his trouble, he will probably hunt up some good player to help him find out just what is wrong, and then take such time as is necessary to correct it.

Again, a player may determine to perfect some particular

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type of stroke that he does not play quite so well as he would like. This usually means a good deal of time taken at odd moments, and he will keep pegging away at it, until he decides he has mastered it, or else until he decides to give it up.

The player of limited skill may do well to follow the above scheme in a general way. That is, if he is troubled with any given fault, slicing for instance, the best thing he can do is to try to learn just what is causing it. If he can't do this by himself, then he should ask the advice and criticism of some one capable to sizing up the trouble. Once he has learned what is causing it, he should then set about practicing handling the club in the right way until he has overcome the fault. But he should have a definite idea of what he is trying to do and work toward that end.

One rather useless way to spend time is to take a collection of and go out with the sole idea of hitting a hundred or so shots with no definite purpose in mind. This can accomplish no good that I can see. Also in hitting the ball with any given club, I recommend that a player select a definite target to play for. This is advisable regardless of what kind of club the player happens to be using. Don't be content with just trying to hit the ball straight. Pick out some mark and aim at it. In other words hit the ball at something.

Again, do not make the mistake of playing practice shots until the performance loses all interest. I don't believe that practice at any kind of a game can yield any benefit if it is indulged in until it becomes a bore. When this stage arrives, the player becomes careless, and he will not take the care and

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pains to try to be sure of hitting the ball right each time as he should.

From time to time I am asked whether I consider that any good is to be obtained from swinging a club in practice without a ball. My answer to this is that such practice may help the beginner to get accustomed to the feel and swing of the club. But for the player of any considerable experience, I doubt whether it is helpful. It may even become harmful by causing him to become ball shy. It is no uncommon thing to see a player swing nicely in a practice swing, and yet handle the club in a totally different manner when he finds a ball in front of him to be hit.

Putting practice is something that may be indulged profitably by almost all golfers. It is an absolute essential to good play on the greens because so much depends on touch or the feel of the club, and like most other delicate operations, such for instance as playing piano, the violin, or billiards, this will not be acquired nor maintained without considerable practice. As has already been pointed out smooth steady stroking of the ball is the basis of consistently good putting, and plenty of practice is required to attain this. As a suggestion to practice of this kind, I would recommend that the player cultivate the habit of putting over varying distances rather than of standing in one place and hitting a large number of shots at a hole. Diversity of distances will help him to acquire keen judgment of how hard to hit the ball better than anything else I know.

There is one other warning about practice generally that I

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should like to sound. Don't try to mix practice and play. If you have a given amount of time to devote to the game either spend it practicing or playing, but not both at the same time. The reasons for this are that practice is aimed at drilling the player in handling his club in a certain way, possibly a different one from that which he has been using, and he is almost sure to confuse them, also that he is very apt to fall into the habit of dropping a ball and playing over a stroke which he has played badly, a habit which is quite certain to irritate and annoy the persons with whom he happens to be playing. No good can come of practice undertaken in the course of a round of play, and the effect on the others is not calculated to help their games or their enjoyment of the round either.

TIGHTENING THE GRIP AS THE CLUBHEAD NEARS THE BALL

Should the player purposely try to tighten his grip on the club as the clubhead nears the ball?

I. R. D.

No. There doubtless is a certain tightening of the grip just as the clubhead is about to strike the ball, but it is quite involuntary, and the player need not worry about it, provided he is holding the club properly up to that point in the swing.

THE RIGHT HAND IN MIDIRON SHOTS

Should the right hand do most of the work in a midiron shot?

C. D. E.

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My answer to that question is no, but I want to explain it, because what I have in mind as most of the work, and what may be meant by that in the question may be somewhat different.

The left hand does nearly all of the work in taking the club back and a very considerable part in swinging it down from the top of the backswing. The right enters chiefly over one very brief sector of the swing, so for that reason I say the right doesn't do most of the work.

However, the right does deliver a very considerable part of the hitting power, and in that sense does much of the work of driving the ball. When the hands get down to a level just below the waist, the right hand, through a forearm and wrist action, and acting against the left as a kind of fulcrum, serves to snap the clubhead forward, thus giving extra speed to the clubhead as it comes against the ball. This action is explained in detail in the chapter on Timing the Stroke.

PUTTING TO LEFT OF CUP

I have frequently noticed that a large majority of the putts that I miss, that is those which come close to the cup, roll to the left of the hole. Is there any logical explanation for this?

R. G. J.

Failure to make the club head follow through straight behind the ball explains this trouble. Slightly too much turning of the right wrist as the ball is struck is the cause. The remedy, plainly enough, is to push the clubhead straight out after the ball.

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Then again there is sometimes a mechanical mistake which quite escapes the player. That is failure to line the face of the club up at the correct angle to the line of play. It happens in this way. Most players try to square the club face with the line of play by sighting or looking along the top edge of the face. Yet nearly all putters have at least a slight amount of loft, which means that, if the player will examine very carefully, he will find that the top edge, looking vertically down on the club face in position, veers slightly to the right of the line of the bottom edge. So if the club is set to square with the line according to the top edge of the face, the bottom edge will line too much to the left. Since the ball is hit about the middle of the face from top to bottom the effect in such a case will be to cause it to travel to the left.

JUDGING DISTANCE IN PUTTING

My greatest annoyance in golf comes on the putting green. I seem quite unable to judge the distance and the amount of force to be used in hitting the ball into the hole. At one time I will be away short and, the next away over. Are there any suggestions that will help remedy such trouble?

C. S. W.

No formula can be given for helping a player to learn to judge the distance of a putt as related to how hard he must hit the ball to get it up to the hole. Practice is about the only thing that will help any in this. However, where the player is given to fitful putting like this, it is generally to be found

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that for one thing he is gripping the club too tightly, especially with the right which registers the "feel" for regulating the hitting force. There can't be any easy delicate stroking of the ball such as is needed in regulating the force with which it is hit, if the club is held in a vise-like grip. Only a very light grip is needed for putting, and most any time a player strikes a streak of erratic play on the greens, it is a very good idea to look first to the grip, and then to be sure the body is being kept still during the stroke, and the head anchored in one place.

CHANGING POSITION OF BALL TO PREVENT TOPPING

Topping the ball with iron clubs, both midiron and mashie, is one of my most persistent faults. Is it advisable to play the ball further forward toward the left foot in trying to overcome this trouble?

M. B. A.

Playing the ball more off the left foot is not likely to do any good in preventing topping. In fact it is more likely to make the trouble worse, unless the player happens to be playing it unusually far back toward the right, which is not often the case. Topping comes from lifting the clubhead as it meets the ball. Very often the player is guilty of raising his head and shoulders, which, of course, causes him to lift his hands also. Then sometimes, topping results from the player snapping the clubhead up too quickly by a quick flick of the wrists. Instead of getting under the ball, the lower edge of the face

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strikes about the middle of it, and the result is the ball is driven straight forward along the ground without being forced up into the air. Where topping results from these conditions, the ball had better be played, more back toward the right foot, rather than further forward, with a more direct swing down at the ball.

RIGHT HAND FORCED OPEN AT TOP OF BACKSWING

In trying to keep my left arm straight at the top of the backswing on my tee shots I find that I have to partly open my right hand, and so loosen the grip with it. What is the cause of this, and is it likely to lead to trouble? S. S. H.

The fact that you find it necessary to open your right hand in this way means that you are letting the right elbow get out too far from the side and using the arm too much. In fact, it must be getting up to where it is almost parallel with the ground, which is more likely to cause a wild shot, even if the ball is hit clean. Keep the right arm close enough down to the side so that the elbow is pointing obliquely down to the ground. This is important for several reasons.

HELPING TO LINE UP THE PUTT

Is there any practical suggestions for helping a player to keep in mind the correct line along which to hit the ball in putting? Even after I study the ground carefully and pick out what I think is the exact line I find that by the time I get

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my stance, ground the club and start the stroke, I am no longer certain of the line.

C. L. C.

One of the best ways to keep in mind the line along which to hit the ball after picking it out is to try to locate some definite point a foot or so away from the ball over which you want to make the ball pass, and keep it identified as you get ready to start the stroke. By selecting some particular spot only a short way from the ball, it is possible to keep it in sight until the ball is hit.

HITTING BALL TOO HIGH IN THE AIR

What causes the trouble where the player pops the ball up in the air, getting but little distance on the shot, and how can the trouble be remedied?

W. K.

Results of this kind are due to striking the ball an ascending blow as a rule. That is the club has reached the lowest point on the swing and already started to rise when it strikes the ball. Incidentally it is an indication that the player is getting too much of a dipping motion on the downswing with the right shoulder into the stroke instead of hitting to make the clubhead follow low after the ball for a few inches at least.

When this trouble occurs on the tee, the player is probably teeing the ball too high for one thing. For another he is likely playing the ball too far forward, and also allowing his weight to shift too much back on the right foot at the top of the swing and to remain there until the ball has been struck.

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Remedies for this trouble are to play the ball a bit further back toward the right foot. With iron clubs try to hit down on the ball, making the face of the club strike against the ball before it has reached the lowest point on the swing, and then continue low along the ground for three or four inches after the ball has been hit. If the shot is a long one requiring a fairly full swing, whether with an iron or a wooden club, make a point of keeping more weight on the left foot at the top of the backswing. This will be a big help in swinging so that the clubhead will follow low after the ball, and where the clubhead is kept low, there will be little or no trouble from lofting or skying the shot.

BACKSPIN OR OVERSPIN FOR PUTTING?

Do you think it advisable, in putting, to purposely try to impart either backspin or overspin to the ball?

W. I. C.

There are occasions when a slight backspin or "cut" may help in putting. If the shot at hand is down a slope, for instance, and also if the greens are very keen and fast, a little "cut" will help to control the stroke. Also it may help to make the ball keep the line. But I can see no reason to attempt to impart any overspin to the ball. To do this the ball must be hit above center, and in trying to manipulate the clubhead so as to do this, the chances are strong that the ball will not be truly hit for direction. I am convinced that the player who concentrates on learning to stroke the ball smoothly and to

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hit it squarely on the line chosen will get better results in the long run than the one who undertakes to develop such highly specialized methods.

TO PREVENT HURRYING THE BACKSWING

What is the best way to correct the fault of hurrying the backswing too much, or rather is there any simple precaution that will help in this way where a player under a little tension finds himself falling into this habit? P. D. M.

The best insurance against hurrying the backswing is to practice making the left hand start the club back and to grip very lightly with the right hand. Concentrate on hitting the ball, don't allow the attention to run ahead. The player can easily cultivate a habit of doing these two things, to where they become quite automatic, and once he reaches this state, he is not likely to be troubled much further with a hurried, snatchy backswing. This will apply on every stroke from the tee right on down to the putt that gets the ball in the hole.

MAXIMUM DISTANCES FOR DIFFERENT CLUBS

Can you give an idea of about what the maximum distances are for the different clubs, except, of course, the driver, brassie and putter? R. M.

Naturally such matters depend very largely on the individual player. But for what I would call the average player, the following may serve as a rough guide: Mashie niblick, not

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over 100 yards; mashie, 100 to 125; mashie-iron or jigger, 130 to 150; midiron, 155 to 180; spoon, 150 to 200. Such figures, however, can really mean but little to the individual player. The thing for him to determine is about the distance he can hit the ball with any given club without undue effort, and with fair hopes of keeping it reasonably straight. It will serve him but poorly to learn that some friend of his can play a mashie with fair accuracy at 150 yards, if he has to lunge at the ball to get that far. No one will consistently keep control over his clubs where he is exerting himself practically to the limit in making the stroke. *Let it be repeated here again, don't underclub yourself.

THE END

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