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# GOLF CLUBS AND HOW TO USE THEM



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BY

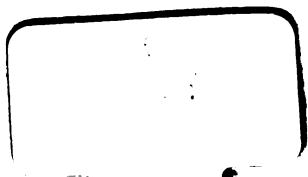
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**GOLF CLUBS AND  
HOW TO USE THEM**



# **GOLF CLUBS AND HOW TO USE THEM**

BY  
**EDWARD RAY**

**NEW YORK**  
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## PREFACE

**P**REFACES are often boring, and so very seldom touch upon real issues, that I make no apology for the brevity of mine to this work. But, I would like to emphasize that when all our leading authorities on the orthodox in golf disagree here and there in little matters, then surely the unorthodox golfer is entitled to his opinion or opinions. Suffice it to say that I never was orthodox even as a small boy in Jersey, and one may say that either because of, or despite, this persistence of mine in keeping away from stereotyped golfing methods, I have attained a small measure of success in that Royal and Ancient game.

On each of my tours in America, and very often in this country, I have been asked how I accounted for a player of my style—a style in many ways breaking the canons of golf—achieving success now and then, and I have invariably indulged in the Caledonian characteristic of answering one question by asking another: “How do you think I would fare were I to drop my present style?”

*January, 1922.*

E. R.



# GOLF CLUBS AND HOW TO USE THEM

## CHAPTER I

### MISTAKEN IMPRESSIONS OF BEGINNERS

**N**O doubt when the man who has never played golf in his life sees an expert for the first time, he is struck mostly by the apparent simplicity of the game, and times out of number I have heard great exponents of other ball games argue that a game in which the ball is stationary must be much more simple than games in which a moving ball has to be dealt with. But it is a singular fact that of all the Masters we have had of golf, there never has been one who did not have his little mental trials on top of his little golfing mistakes. There are styles among our leaders almost too numerous to think of. We have the "Sandy" Herd type of player who is almost mentally argumentative in the studiousness of his play, and we have the cold and calculating Braid. We have the express-like George Duncan, and we have the dogged

## 2 GOLF CLUBS AND HOW TO USE THEM

J. H. Taylor. Ask any one of these players if he has ever played a round in which everything to a detail went just as he had wished it to go, and I am afraid that the answer will come as a rude shock to the fellow who sneers at golf simply because there is employed in the game a ball which has to be stationary before being manipulated.

When the beginner first takes a tangible enthusiasm in the game one can assuredly reckon that his chief difficulty will be in the matter of the choice of clubs.

One huge mistake must be avoided, and that is the error of going on and on until you have a bag so full of clubs that you cannot get the proverbial cigarette paper into it. Do not worry if the champion of your county insists upon having a score of clubs wherever he goes, and always remember that one good club in which you feel that you have confidence is worth three clubs concerning each of which you are in doubt as to comparative merit. More than once I have observed a golfing beginner stroll out upon the course and proceed to fizzle effort after effort. In turn he has gone from one club to another, and each time with the same miserable result, and the net effect upon him at the conclusion of his round has been acute wonder why he has not done better. The root of the trouble was the over-supply of clubs.

## BEGINNERS' MISTAKEN IMPRESSIONS 3

What is the correct number of clubs for the novice? I would answer, Seven. This number provides for most situations which are likely to arise in a round on an ordinary course, and at the same time gives the young golfer an opportunity of studying the different duties and capabilities of his implements. Such clubs as the spoon, the driving mashie, the mashie iron, may safely be left alone for a little time, and when confidence has asserted itself, the "in between" clubs, as one may term them, may be included in your bag.

### MY OWN CLUB STOCK

I myself use four wooden clubs, a cleek, a driving iron, an iron, a mashie, a niblick, and a putter, but I would advise the beginner to confine himself to seven clubs, their classification being—driver, brassy, cleek, mashie, iron, niblick, and putter.

## CHAPTER II

### THE VARIOUS CLUBS

**A**S regards the driver, too much rigidity in the shaft should be avoided. There should be a flexibility quite noticeable, say, a matter of ten inches above the socket.

If a man of average build aims at three and a half feet in length for the shaft of his driver, he will not be going far wrong, while, as for weight, he would do well to get approximately two ounces under the pound. The shape of the head is a topic which has produced more arguments than I would care to count, though my own particular fancy is the well-known steel-bolt pattern.

Perhaps a little more stiffness in the shaft of the brassy is requisite than in the driver, for the reason that the brassy is sometimes used to extricate the ball from a doubtful sort of lie, and here one wants strength in manipulation. Much the same principles in length apply here as in the case of the driver.

For ordinary purposes the sole of the brassy should not be too flat, and if one can get a fair

percentage of the sole to bite into the lie in which the ball rests, then so much the better. Indeed, if you aim at getting a brassy about half an inch of the sole of which comes in contact with the ground when it is placed among grass, then you have, to my mind, a club which will be fairly useful. So much for the wooden clubs.

Now we come to the iron clubs, and here, for obvious reasons, stiffness of shaft is advisable. It is very nice to feel a nice lithe element in the shaft, but you do not want too much of it in the shaft of your iron clubs, for "give" in the playing of an iron shot is almost inevitably fatal; for one thing, you run the risk of your shaft snapping, and, on the other hand, the very force which you desire to get into your stroke is partially wasted. The great secret of iron-club play is in getting just the correct amount of strength at the moment of impact with the ball, and all the calculation and delicacy which you are capable of will be wasted if the shaft of your iron "gives" when the head strikes the ground.

Take the case of the mid-iron. Loft is wanted here, though it must not be overdone, for the reason that the direction of the stroke is liable to be interfered with.

Approaches of shorter distances necessitate the employment of the mashie, and I would advocate the use of this club for strokes of about one hundred and twenty yards. This is a

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club which allows of vigour within reason, and, especially when playing on courses in the vicinity of big business centres, I would suggest that the mashie should have a moderately deep face. Nothing is more annoying to a player than to have given all his care and thought to his ball when in a cuppy-lye, and then, when at last he has made up his mind as to how to employ his mashie, to see his ball come to rest a matter of inches from its original position. That is what very often happens through using a mashie the blade of which is too much angled; though on a seaside links a more shallow blade may be used.

We now come to the niblick, the club in my bag which has carried many smiles and facetious remarks, such as "Now Ray will be pleased with himself." Personally, I believe in a niblick with a good healthy face on it. In the first place, the niblick is a club which you will have recourse to when you are in difficulties in long grass and sand. And it will at once be apparent that when your ball lies amidst troublous circumstances, you want, as far as possible, to be sure that you are first of all going to get a sufficient amount of contact with it and simultaneously have a moderate degree of assurance that you will pilot it in the required direction. Yet once made, you want here a shaft which is capable of standing a good strain. I like a niblick with the face

lying back fairly well, for the reason that it will then come in useful should I find myself and my ball confronted by a miniature precipice, or perhaps a giant tree which has to be lofted in order to reach the green and avoid wastage of strokes.

## CHAPTER III

### THE VEXED PUTTER

**W**HEN I come to discourse on the putter, I feel that I am about to step in where even angels justifiably have doubt, and of all the tragedies which exist in golf, there is not one more repeated than that of the missed putt. Of a truth, a missed putt of eighteen inches undoes all the good which has been wrought by a magnificent drive or a superb mashie shot, and I know full well that the man who most of all in the kingdom reckons that he has the putter which suits him has been known to sit down in the club-house after a round and soliloquize anent short putts and missed ones.

For instance I have known players to possess iron clubs and wooden clubs of various kinds for years and years, and, not only that, but to use them constantly over those years, but somehow one very seldom finds a man playing with the putter which he used, say, ten years ago. Putting I am certain, has caused more brain worry than

any other department of golf. I could name one very prominent British amateur who, it is generally acknowledged, would be one of the finest golfers in the land if he could only get over a form of nervousness, and believe me, this want of confidence is simply nervousness *in excelsis* when he arrives on the putting green. Indeed, so acute is it, that he carries about with him two putters, one of the cleek variety, and the other of the famous aluminium pattern which I myself use. He actually reserves one for long putts, while the other he uses for putts within a range of a couple of yards. Now, in this case I am convinced that seventy-five per cent of the player's nervousness arises from the knowledge that he is not at home on the putting green, and he also knows that he will have to visit the vicinity of the flag approximately eighteen times during a round. Some may think I am exaggerating when I say so, but I am sticking to absolute truth when I say that I have known of a man possessing a stock of just under thirty putters !

There is such a variety of tastes in putters, and tastes alter so in many cases, that I am rather loth to enter upon a series of advices regarding the putter. But having undertaken to deal with all golf clubs, I am afraid I have committed myself.

A healthily stiff shaft is requisite here, and

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personally I have no use for a putter with something like a " whip-handle " shaft, while lightness is, to my mind, an element which may also well be kept in check. Mark you, all the while I am writing these remarks I have a lingering suspicion that to a certain extent they are useless, for, more particularly among beginners, there is a tremendous and almost unquenchable desire to chop and change about in the matter of putters, and I cannot emphasize too forcibly that, not only in the department of putters, but regarding every club in your bag, changes are in ninety per cent of cases not for the good of your game.

### CHANGES TO BE GUARDED AGAINST

I myself only once went in for anything like a change in my set of clubs, and I can assure you that it was very reluctantly, for it was when my shop at Oxhey was burned and with it my clubs. My iron heads I recovered, but, needless to say, my wooden clubs went " west " and with them my favourite driver, which to me was like a close-blood relative. It took me years to get a driver which I reckoned to be similar to my original one, but even now I cannot think of my old driver without a twinge of regret. This you may say is all very personal and not of

assistance to the average golfer, but it goes to show that when you are in possession of a good club you ought to stick to it, and even if there are days when in moments of wrath you feel that one of your clubs is not giving satisfaction, again stick to it. Never mind if a fellow comes along and tells you that the particular club to which you have for a long time pinned your faith, and which you have temporarily lost confidence in, is a bad club. When those disturbing moments come along, remember the old Scottish adage—"Better wi' the deil ye ken than the deil ye dinna ken."

If I may go back for a few moments I would like to deal with a club which has achieved a wonderful amount of popularity within the past couple of decades in quarters where it was not seen too frequently before. I allude to the baffy. Scot players are great believers in this club; and I have seen Englishmen do more than tolerably well with the baffy. I have witnessed "Sandy" Herd and George Duncan—two contrasts as stylists—work tremendous havoc upon their opponents by means of the baffy. The nicely set-back face and the curved sole are remarkable features of the baffy, and particularly on inland turf.

One explanation I ought to make, in view of possible questions of an awkward nature, concerns my niblick, the club which has caused many

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smiles on its being handed to me by my caddie. That club is in fact a mashie-niblick, and its peculiarities are the length of the head, and not too pronounced loft.

## CHAPTER IV

### ATTENTION TO GRIPS

**S**O many times have I seen players engage in the most uncomfortable contortions with their fingers that I feel constrained to point out that too much attention cannot be given to the grips. The leather work of which they are constructed will not last for ever, and the man who refuses to attend to his grips is asking for trouble. Rain gets at the grips of your clubs and the perspiration from your hands also gets into them. But, as likely as not, you go on month after month, and cannot understand why it is that you do not wield your clubs just as you would like to. The explanation is simple. The leather has become hardened and your fingers do not get the hold required. Therefore, give a thought to your grips now and then. Lastly, when your grips become irrevocably hard, get rid of them and have a new set. There are good grips on the market, and, though I will not lend myself to advertising here, if any player who meets me cares to mention the matter, I will

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put him on what is the best grip being sold just at present.

### AND CLUBS

Seeing that I have advocated looking after your grips very carefully, I might as well give a hint as to looking after your clubs themselves. So many players expect their shafts to go on month after month without attention of any kind that one almost wonders if they possess domestic pets. If they do, then Providence look after the said pets.

Your golf clubs want as much looking after as your collie dog or your Persian cat, although, of course, in another way. Rain and damp will affect your clubs in a multitude of ways, and, for that matter, when the average golfer takes his clubs home, what does he do with them? Ten to one that he leaves them standing against the hall stand perhaps for a week or even longer, and with the front door being opened a myriad times during their stay there. Believe me, weather acts on the shaft of your clubs in a way the ordinary man does not appreciate, though you may justifiably say that bad weather is thus a good friend to a professional like myself in view of the fact that I sell clubs. Still my intention here is to give sincere and honest advice.

The remedy is a very simple one, for if you

would preserve the natural life and strength of your shafts, a little linseed oil now and then, with a coat of varnish at intervals will work wonders. Wood, no more than metal, can not go on for prolonged periods without attention, and even if a man may say that it is " a beastly fag " oiling and varnishing his clubs, I was never more sincere than when I say that attention given your shafts will pay for itself time over time.

## CHAPTER V

### GOLF BALLS

**T**HE question of the golf ball has loomed large for a very considerable time previous to my writing this book. The feeling seemed in some quarters to be that the time had come when driving had reached such a stage that something had to be done in order to reduce the length of the drive of first-class men, and thereupon came a great campaign for what some were pleased to call the standard ball. The small and heavy ball had crept into popularity and with practically all the golfers in the United Kingdom and elsewhere using it the time seemed ripe to introduce legislation good, bad, or indifferent, in the matter of golf balls. Really the gist of the new idea was that driving must be reduced in length. It did not matter how far the first-class golfers might be penalized ; the whole solution it was said lay in the introduction of the light and floating ball. No need for me now to recount the awful furore with which the proposition was received, and to an extent I can'

well understand it. Truly, as one very well-known amateur expressed himself on the situation, it would have been just as feasible to bring about legislation which would count two strokes to the man who holed a three-yard putt instead of one stroke as we have been accustomed to for so many years. The proposition could only have a more or less hostile reception, and I myself consider that the golf ball which some authorities would force on to the golfing community will have a short career.

Not only among professionals but among amateurs the small and heavy ball was favourite, and when the new ball was recently introduced to the public it did not have the commendation of more than five per cent of the golfers of this country. To be quite candid I cannot give the large and floating ball my support, and I am unable to see that either the beginner or long-handicap man can be helped one whit by the ball which was brought out in the year 1921 amidst much ceremony if not acclamation.

As a matter of fact had it been really desirable to keep driving within certain limits I think it would have been much better to have adopted another and much more simple course. With the ball which had been in general use I fail to understand how with the same materials in use as had been used for many years the driving of even our best men on the tee could have length-

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ened to any appreciable extent. There was the chance for those who desired to interest themselves keenly in the matter. How easy it would have been to have allowed driving to go on as humanity might allow, so long as the old materials alone were employed in golf-ball construction. Even if another substance as a component part of the ball were introduced that substance might have been allowed so long as the average drive of, say, 1920, was not lengthened by more than fifty yards. When more than fifty yards came to be added to the drive then might arise the opportunity to step in and draw a line, but from what I know of substances which are used and which might be used in the construction of a golf-ball I should say that the chance of fifty yards being added to the length of a good drive in 1920 are so remote as not to be of the slightest interest to this or the next generation of golfers.

Having said unhesitatingly that I have no affection for the large and floating ball, I may safely leave the subject of the golf ball. There are on the market varieties of the golf ball the names of which would occupy many pages in this book, and when all is said and done the problem as to which is the best ball for a given player to use reduced itself to a mere matter of opinion. Especially in the case of the beginner the topic of what ball he should use may safely be left out of any discussion. The golf ball as

we have known it for a long time is as near perfection as it is to be got, and the difference between one and another is infinitesimal if one takes the dozen best-known brands.

Now and then one hears academic discussions as to the dimple ball, the bramble ball, and the mesh ball, but to be quite candid I fail to see that the average golfer need seriously trouble himself as to which ball he uses—if only he be left to use the small and heavy ball.

I quite agree that there have been great changes in the golf ball here and there in the past. I also agree that the introduction of the Haskell ball some twenty years ago practically revolutionized the golf ball market, but I do not think that anyone will gainsay the fact that the ball which we know to-day is a better ball for the beginner, the moderate-handicap man, the long-handicap man, and the plus man, than has ever been on the market, and moreover is a ball which is very unlikely to be improved upon if golf be played from now until the crack of doom.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE DRIVE THE IMPORTANT STROKE

**O**PINIONS differ as to which is the most important of golfing strokes, and despite the arguments which have taken place regarding this subject, I, as might be expected, will plump for driving. J. H. Taylor has made himself world famous by reason of his approach play, and it is not more than a few months ago that his opinion concerning the value of the pitch as opposed to the run-up formed the point of a terrific controversy. Yet again, Willie Park, formerly of Musselburgh, and now stationed in the United States, has placed putting first as the prime necessity for the man who would show golfing prowess.

I will analyse it this way. You cannot putt well unless you have approached well, and you cannot approach well if your drive has not been a good one.

If a man is going to cultivate a good swing, he must begin slowly. Imagine a man who has decided, or has had it decided for him, that as

## THE DRIVE THE IMPORTANT STROKE 21

a runner he is a quarter-miler. Does his tutor allow him at first to go away at break-neck speed and then do the last hundred and fifty yards in a state of semi-blindness? Not at all! And the same thing applies to the man who, beginning with the rudiments of golf, sets out to get a correct swing. I have in mind one player who for six months from the time of his first taking up golf was not allowed to look at a golf ball. Day after day this pupil had to swing at an imaginary ball, while his tutor adjusted his fingers, moved first one foot and then the other a fraction of an inch, set one shoulder a quarter of an inch in advance of the other, and so on. I grant that this treatment is a trifle drastic, and not every man has the time, or the moral courage, to swing at a ball that is not there for three or four hours a day, seven days a week, for six months. Yet the man tells me that he is now plus four, so I suppose that there was method in what some people may uncharitably term madness.

## CHAPTER VII

### DRIVING PITFALLS

**A**n uncomfortable feeling is sometimes experienced by the golfer regarding his driving. After a period of strict attention to his play on the tee, he finds that he can only attain a length of between one hundred and fifty and one hundred and eighty yards. His aspirations, of course, are much in excess of that distance, and a feeling of annoyance comes along with the almost inevitable result that for a time at least his driving powers go to the winds. That is the time when the "slowly back" idea is forgotten, and that precisely is the time when it should be most kept in mind. A disjointed and hasty swing back is simply a useless expenditure of energy, and, in strict fact, adds nothing in the way of merit to the down swing. Indeed, it would not be going too far to say that anything like a jerk in the back swing is going to have an effect on the drive which is derogatory and nothing else. It entails a strain on the lower part of the forearm which is not for the improvement

of one's game, and, altogether, hurry or any semblance of hurry in the upward part of the swing is something which if once cultivated it is as well as early as possible to be rid of.

Opinions may differ as to the method, but it is beyond argument that on the down swing force and speed are essential, which fact is proved up to the hilt by a casual glance at the methods of such players as Abe Mitchell, James Batley, or myself.

It is here that I would call attention to the problem of timing, and probably that is one of the most important points in the art of long driving. The finest example of timing that I have seen exists in the wooden club play of J. H. Kirkwood, the Australian and New Zealand Open Champion, who visited Britain in 1921. This Antipodean expert uses clubs which contain an inordinate amount of the "whippy" element, and he is one of the few golfers I have seen who have adapted themselves to their clubs rather than procure clubs which suited their play. It may be that a fractional error in the case of Kirkwood would lead to trouble of the most dire order, but the fact remains that he contrives to avoid error with his wooden clubs, and very successfully. That is the result of good timing.

It really does not matter a great deal if one chooses to use the full swing which is characteristic of my own play. or whether one chooses to do

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away with the follow through as in the style of Abe Mitchell—the thing is to get accurate hitting and hitting of useful length in a style which will suit the individual golfer. As I have already suggested, I lay no claim to being what is known as a stylist, and perhaps for that reason I am inclined to be a little sympathetic towards the peculiarities of human nature and the vagaries of the human frame.

Something like the idea to aim at in getting a lengthy drive is this: the club is controlled from the wrists, the part of the arm from the wrists to the elbows, from the joints just named, and the arms swing from the shoulders. The body must move as if dependent for its movements on the spine. At the same time these movements must be gone through without too much relationship between each, and the net effect must be that a concentration in their effects should accrue at the crucial moment. That moment is at the exact time when the club-head meets the ball. If anything goes wrong in the manœuvre which I have endeavoured to describe, your timing is inaccurate and the pure result is what is known as pressing.

In his first few essays at length the player in executing his drive may be tempted to impart too much speed to the commencement of his downward swing, and that temptation in most cases arises from a sort of horror that time has

been lost in the slow up-swing. If that error be fallen into that small fault will lead to a conglomeration of faults, and that mixture of faults will end in a drive which will not, to say the least, give the player cause for congratulation. It is not at the top of the swing that pace and force are required, but, as I have already said, at the point of the swing when the club-head strikes the ball. Anything in the nature of hurried force at the top of the swing is entirely out of place. Rather let the club begin the down swing with a nice easy movement, and then all the way in its passage to the ball let it increase in its velocity.

Should the elbows and wrists come into operation after the forearms have done their task the hands will get in front of the ball in a most undesirable way, and, in fact, will be in front of the ball before the club comes in contact with it.

Now we come to the question of body-work in the drive, and here I know that I am discoursing on a topic which will cause much comment ; but, yet again as I have already said, I never was orthodox and I am afraid never will be. Those who have witnessed my play have doubtless noticed that in my up-swing my body has a tendency to sway from the target and then in turn it moves in the direction of the ball in the down swing. But, to be quite candid, I

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would scarcely advise the inexperienced golfer to start emulating me in this respect as there are little points upon which he might go wrong. By far better let him wait until he has mastered the more academic items and then study the matter of sway.

Fairly free pivoting is essential in the first sway, and as the club advances and the forward movement of the body is evident, a slight turn on the ball of the left foot is advisable, the turn culminating in a sort of pointing of the left foot in the direction of the drive. By that means one will achieve a sort of rhythm and ease.

It has been suggested to me sometimes that my somewhat extraordinary build is everything in my driving, and though perhaps it may truthfully be said that my fairly bulky proportions do play a part in my driving, it would be a mistake to say that they entirely govern it. Though it is conceded by many that build does count in long driving, an argument I agree with to an extent, it must be kept in mind that there are players of comparatively small build who can get prodigious length from the tee, and here I have in mind the well-known Ben Sayers, senr., of North Berwick. This little man, who is merely a shade over five feet in height, uses clubs which do not compare too unfavourably with himself in the matter of length, and he achieves a length which is positively astounding to anyone watching

him for the first time. Yet again he is unorthodox in his way much as I am in mine. His is a case where timing has been reduced to a fine art, and I suppose that just as it would be unsuitable for me to attempt to follow out the finer theories which have been advocated by our great professors for many years, so it would be correspondingly unsuitable for Sayers to endeavour to play golf on the more accepted lines. The point of this is that the average golfer who reads books on the Royal and Ancient Game scarcely ever hopes to be a Harry Vardon, and I have tried to write as far as possible with the average-handicap and low-handicap man in mind.

Even among men of something like ordinary physique one finds little peculiarities in style too numerous and too varied to recount, and I have in mind at the moment the flourish in the swing of Arnaud Massy. One can perceive an element almost of the impetuous in George Duncan's style, and despite all that has been written for years and years there is no gainsaying the fact that each and every golfer in the front rank, whether he be amateur or professional, has his own little way. Therefore, in explaining how I manage to get a fairly lengthy drive I do not insist that the student of the game shall follow me in every little detail. I ask him to employ common sense here and there according to his own build, his own weight, and other considerations.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BRASSY SHOT

**W**E now come to another wooden club, the brassy. The brassy is a club which almost performs the task of the driver in the getting of length, and there is an angle on the face which is intended to an extent to get the club-head under more than behind the ball. With regard to the swing in the brassy shot, the student will not go far wrong in following out my advice concerning the up and down swing in the case of the driver, and it is as well to keep in mind that as punishment arises in the faulty playing of the drive, it takes a more severe form in a badly manipulated brassy shot. To begin with, the brassy is generally brought into play with the ball in such a position that it wants to be got under to an extent by the club-head, and that factor, as is at once evident, is one which necessitates most careful execution. I believe that the brassy was originally intended for a lie on such a surface as a pathway or a roadway, but it was not long before the powers

of this club in getting the ball out of awkward lies through the green were discovered.

First of all, I will take the case of a low-lying ball. One does not get the facility of a nice tee, and, whatever happens, the ball has to be got into the air. To do this the stance should be slightly closer to the ball than in the case of the drive. The position of the feet regarding the ball may be much in that of the left heel being about half a foot in front of the ball, though if the ball be embedded rather deeply the left foot may be moved just a shade rearwards. It does not matter such a great deal if a slight cut is imparted, and after a time the student will come to recognize that cut, if not overdone, does not assuredly mean that the shot will not contain straightness. However, whether or not the beginner chooses to use cut, it will be as well if he in his up-swing employ just a trifle more straightness, for a flat swing is almost as good as useless where the brassy is concerned. The ball has to be struck fairly low, so that it will soar over bunkers which may lie between its position and the green.

One thing to be avoided in the playing of the brassy shot is the pull, for almost as sure as the novice attempts pull with his brassy the distance he will gain will be disappointing. At any time there is just a risk when the beginner is manipulating his brassy that he will "smother" the

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ball, and the risk is intensified if there is an inclination to pull.

On the up-swing force may be brought in almost immediately the club-head has reached its apex, and here I might remark that the brassy shot does not involve one or two of the delicate points employed in the drive. There should be a fairly firm grip. The wrists should be moderately steady at the moment of impact between club-head and ball, and if this be kept in mind the beginner will soon appreciate the value of the brassy for the lengthy approach. The brassy is now primarily intended for a lie through the green, but quite a number of prominent players are quite at home in using it from the teeing ground. Moreover, I have seen the brassy used in very awkward lies on hillocks and so forth, though I myself cannot get away from a conviction that the iron club is the implement with which to get out of every questionable position and that the driver is the correct club to use on the teeing ground at a longish hole. I quite admit that some players take into consideration a threatening hazard or perhaps shortness in length of the hole, and many players make many excuses and apologies for the use of the brassy from the tee. If a man explains that the length of the shaft of his brassy suits him much better than does that of his driver from the tee, then that is a confession that the

shaft of his driver is not what it ought to be, for a driver properly constructed and properly used should bring about proper results from the tee.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GRIP QUESTION

**I**T seems to me that now that I have dealt with the driver and the brassy the moment is opportune for the introduction of the question of the grip. In Britain, in America, in Australia, in India, and in South Africa the problem of the grip has excited controversy almost beyond measure, and when the most prominent American players, amateurs and professionals, arrived in England in the beginning of the golfing season of 1921, the query raised by more than five people out of ten was as to whether Mr. "Bobby" Jones kept his thumb down the shaft, as to whether Mr. ("Siege Gun") Jesse Guildford used the overlapping grip at all, etc.

At this time of day it is apparent that the majority of golfers are in favour of the overlapping grip, even though such experts as Mr. Harold H. Hilton and Mr. Sidney H. Fry recommend a separation of the hands on the grip of the shaft. Naturally when Mr. Hilton, the former Amateur and Open Champion, and

Mr. Fry, the one time runner-up in the Amateur Championship, have expressed sentiments which go against the use of the overlapping grip, less important people in golf may be pardoned if they oppose each other in their views on this question, but, as I say, it really would appear as if within the next few years practically every golfer of note will be using the overlapping grip. At the same time it must be kept in mind that even in the overlapping grip there are little points of difference among first-class golfers, and my own method is to point my right thumb directly down the shaft instead of slightly curling it round the leather grip. A good hold of the club by the fingers of the left hand is advisable with, of course, the left thumb uppermost. The right-hand fingers should encircle the shaft so that the little finger holds the left forefinger, the left thumb being completely covered by the ball of the right thumb. Some players prefer to have the right thumb round the shaft, but the essential point is to have the two hands working in concert as far as can be.

One point which to my mind is in favour of the pointing of the right thumb down the shaft is that should the player unconsciously allow the club to drift to an unhealthy extent across the right shoulder at the top of the swing, the placing of the right thumb as I advocate has a tendency towards preventing the evil becoming accentuated

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in such a manner as to prove a deterrent factor. Of course it would be idle to aver that it is an utter impossibility for the club to wander in the way described whilst keeping the thumb down the shaft, but what I will say is this, That if you keep the thumb down the shaft you will very soon know if you are allowing the club to drop.

With the right thumb round the grip of the shaft it is always possible for the shaft to slip between the forefinger and the thumb, and once that contingency arises, well, there is no grip at all. If your grip is not correct your swing will be very short of perfection, and if your swing is imperfect, then your golfing effort will be nothing to be proud of.

I have known instances of players who have held the club in a finger grip at the commencement of the swing, but before the swing has gone very far the grip of the club has been in the palm, and one thing is certain, that if at the top of the swing the palms of the hands leave the shaft, the swing and the grip ought to be fairly good.

Never could I see the truth of the assertion, made in days gone by with reference to a strong grip with the left hand and a loose grip with the right ; if the intention is for both hands to work together, logically an equal grip should be taken in order to get this effect.

Those who have witnessed my play will doubtless have in mind the fact that I more or less hold my club on the putting green in a similar manner to that in which I hold my other clubs, but I will not be so egotistical as to lay it down that my way is the best way. Putting is a department of golf which stands out from other departments, and I am sure that so great is the diversity of opinion on all matters pertaining to putting that only a very small percentage of the readers of this book will follow me literally. Still, if on account of what I have written on the question of the grip—whether the reader agrees with me in every detail or only in one or two—the golfing student finds that his game has been improved, it will have been well worth my while going into explanation of the grip.

## CHAPTER X

### THE USES OF THE VARIOUS CLUBS

**O**BVIOUSLY each and every golf club has its particular use, and as one travels around the various courses it is astonishing how one finds presumably good players from the way they shape using what are unquestionably wrong clubs in certain instances. Many players I have met have apparently had little or no conception of the distances which various clubs were meant to get, and I recall the story of a sarcastic caddie on a London course. He was carrying for a member whose confidence in his own play entirely outweighed the admiration of others for it, and that member was about to essay a long carry on to a green. Good-naturedly the lad remarked to his employer, "Don't take iron, sir; take a wooden club," but the player verbally and forcibly signified his ability in his own mind to reach the green. "Right," rejoined the caddie, "If you'll wait for three weeks I'll bring that green one hundred and fifty yards nearer to you, sir" as he dropped the caddie bag and slowly

sauntered in to the caddie master's shed to report that he had had enough of that club member.

I have seen an ignorant player play his brassy with the intention of carrying a bunker when he had not the slightest chance of doing so unless he played the shot badly. No one admires the heroic more than I do on the golf course, and no one admires determination more than I do, but there comes a time when the heroic and the determined cease to be such and become out-and-out misplaced ambition.

If anyone wants a perfect example of playing the correct club he need only look to Mr. John Ball, the famous Royal Liverpool golfer and eight times Amateur Champion, playing on the Hoylake course. Mr. Ball's wonderful play on the Cheshire green may solely be put down to his local knowledge, and to the knowledge of which is the most advantageous club to use in given circumstances. Mr. Ball at the age of fifty-eight years in the Amateur Championship of 1921, gave one of the most perfect performances ever seen on a golf course against a young American named Douglas, and actually beat Douglas when the latter looked like keeping the American Flag flying in a wholesale attempt made by United States amateurs to capture our Amateur Championship. Mr. Ball really beat young Douglas by knowing exactly what club

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to use here and there, and nothing but age prevented the great Hoylake man from winning the Championship a ninth time.

For each case that I have seen of a player being modest in his expectations from the various clubs in his bag, I have seen fifty who certainly could not be accused of modesty in this respect. They have used light iron clubs when what undoubtedly was wanted was stout brassy play, and I can only emphasize that close attention to the ability of his various clubs will in the end most amply repay the golfing student.

Before I go on to deal with the duties of the various clubs I should like to call attention to one grade of club which caused some argument towards the end of 1920 and during the earlier half of 1921, viz., the Ribbed Iron club. A great deal of talk revolved around this club, but really it was a mere adaptation of a club which had been brought into use something like a quarter of a century before in Britain. However, there was a great deal of controversy when the ribbed club was used in America, and more and more controversy when it was first suggested that that club or pattern of club might be introduced in England. The idea was that by having deep scores or grooves in the iron club there would be introduced more ability than previously to stop the ball within a small area of the point at which it first alighted on the ground, though

truth to tell such a theory did not greatly appeal to myself.

As time goes on one hears of innovations in the club department, and I myself have seen some of the most weird pieces of golf-club construction that one could even dream of. The Schenectady putter as used by Mr. Walter J. Travis, the American, at Sandwich in 1904, had something to commend it as compared with clubs which I have seen at different stages in my golfing career, though the Schenectady putter was barred by the ruling powers of golf. Yet again there was something to be said for the putter with side struts which was used by another famous States golfer, and it is a hard thing to say exactly what is an infringement morally or legally of the golfing code. In any case the orthodox clubs which are now in use do not differ to any tremendous extent from those which were popular well over a dozen years ago, and I can do no better than advise any beginner not to be influenced by the merits, shouted from the house-tops, of this or that patent club. The law of libel prevents my particularizing, but more especially in these post-war days there seems to have been an inordinate inclination in some quarters to introduce clubs which only have novelty as their commendable quality, and certainly no golfing value. I mention this and I emphasize it so that the beginner or the long-

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handicap man may not have a promising game interfered with. Putters with ghastly shapes and lines drawn across them are undoubtedly remarkable, but that is all that can be said for them. Wooden clubs with patent attachments are very fine things to look upon from an engineering point of view, but personally I have no room for them and I cannot see how the modest golfer can advantageously employ them.

## CHAPTER XI

### CLUBS AND THEIR PECULIARITIES

**I**N dealing with the various clubs which go to make the complement of a well-stocked bag, let me remark at the outset that a well stocked bag means adequacy ; it does not mean immensity. The man who travels round the links with a score or so of clubs is not likely to improve his game so expeditiously or so thoroughly as the man who sets out to master the mysteries of, say, half a dozen. I am writing for the novice now. I do not propose to offer advice to those players who know what to do with every club, for they are well enough versed in the matter to do without such advice. The novice, however, is like the young scholar ; his mind is pliable, and he is prepared to listen to the suggestions of experience.

There are two distinct and diametrically opposed methods of learning the use of clubs ; the first is to take one club at a time and practise assiduously with it ; the other is to play willy-nilly, and wait for the occasion to use any club

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in the bag. The first is undoubtedly the wiser course. I am not at all sure that the reduction of a handicap is the desired end of every golfer, but even if it is, it should be a corollary instead of an aim ; it should follow on natural improvement and be accepted as a reward therefor. How many times do we see golfers floundering about on the links with not the slightest sign that they will ever improve. They merely have a club and a ball—one might better describe them as a bat and a ball—and they are merely concerned with the task of “gaining on the hole.” Their ball bounds over the ground like a spring rabbit ; their club swings jauntily and unrhythmically in the air, but they are content because they are getting nearer the hole. That is not golf, that is merely outdoor and healthful exercise, and it is also a nuisance to other occupants of the links.

It is my object here to point out the special, the allotted tasks of the clubs, and in doing so, let me say that clubs are designed for the work required of them. One big mistake made by beginners is that of trying to assist the club too much. Give them a lofted club and they will try all they know to accentuate the loft by trying to slide under the ball. Let the club and the ingenuity of the club maker do the work. Time enough to learn about the vagaries of back-spin, top-spin and other fancy strokes, when the

straightforward game has improved. Golf is like billiards in this respect. The novice, in each game, tries to run before he has learned to walk. At golf, he tries fancy shots, at billiards he is imbued with the presumed necessity of getting "side." Hit straight, hit clean and strive for the poetry of motion with each and all of your clubs.

#### THE DRIVER

Let us take a metaphoric walk round the links with a man who seeks information in regard to the clubs which he has purchased and which he proudly displays in a brand new bag. The very newness of his equipment suggests the tyro, and it is the tyro that I want to suggest. Well, he takes his driver at the first tee and, of course, he starts with an exaggerated waggle, a most clumsy stance, heaving shoulders—and a surprising miss. That is where the tutor comes in to show him the error of his ways. The novice having amazed himself by missing the ball altogether is in better humour to listen to real advice. Well, we place our novice in what is more or less the right position. We give him a nice open stance, tell him how to hold the club and generally teach him orthodoxy tempered by his own natural comfort. It is no use telling a man to adopt a stance which is uncomfortable,

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or a grip which he cannot accomplish. The natural line must, to a certain extent, dominate the conventional.

The driver is designed with one main object ; that of sending the ball as far as possible. There are certain qualified or modified drivers for employment under special conditions, but, broadly speaking, the driver is the power stroke of the game. The novice has a vague idea of this, so he promptly makes his first mistake by calling up all his resources of muscle and strength and flogging the ball. But brute strength is of little avail. Strength is a fine addendum to the ability of a finished golfer, but it is impotent on its own. I suppose I am what is termed a mighty hitter, but then I am not a novice. The man who goes up to his ball and just hits out wildly is never going to get very far, other than by accident. Poetry is better than poundage, and the poetic, the well-timed swing, is going to do a lot more in sending the ball on a long flight down the fairway than contact from a mighty shot which has expended its energy before it reaches the ball or which has not reached its maximum speed at the moment of contact. I do not know of anything more eloquent of the beauty and science of golf than to see a sparsely built man appreciably outdrive a giant from the tee. The driver, then, should be used as a scientific club, not as a mere heavy weapon.

More than any other club it should "suit" its owner and nobody can tell the owner much about this. In every sport there is an affinity between man and his equipment. A cricketer will feel at home immediately he gets hold of a bat which suits him, the mere "feel" tells him everything. The lawn-tennis player knows in an instant when he has found the right racket, and similarly the golfer is told by "love at first sight" which is the club for him. He can consider the merits or otherwise of whippiness and "head load" when he is really a golfer.

The foregoing is not intended to be a technical commentary on the driver, but merely such assistance as I can offer towards that glorious feeling which is second to nothing at golf—the feeling which is exclusively the novice's, when he hears the crack of a well and truly driven ball.

#### THE BRASSY

Next among the orthodox clubs—and I am excluding qualified weapons such as spoons, baffies, etc.—is the brassy. The brassy is, in my opinion, the most difficult of all the clubs for the beginner. It has almost the length of shaft of the driver which it closely resembles except for its being shod with brass and that its face is deliberately lofted. The brassy is the

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reward for a well-hit tee shot on a true course for it should be usable with a ball lying on the fairway. There are times when the ball irritatingly digs in and prevents the unfortunate golfer from using wood, but, as a general rule, the well driven ball at a two shot hole, permits the use of the brassy for the second shot. The brassy should be laid closely to the back of the ball in order that it may be ascertained whether the lie is suited to the club. If there is any doubt—if it seems that the brassy cannot get to the back of the ball, put it back in the bag and take an iron club. The remarks which I have made concerning the driver very largely apply to the brassy, although in modified form. The great endeavour with the brassy should be direction and not distance. Distance will come of its own accord, but the ball will only go where you hit it, subject to such matters as assistance or hindrance from windage. The man who can play a brassy well is at a big advantage among long-handicap players, wherefore it is sound advice to advocate concentration on brassy shots as part of the training.

### THE CLEEK

The cleek is a club which has fallen into disrepute because of the many alternative clubs which have been created for the benefit of those

players who just cannot play the cleek. This club will give you almost as much distance as the brassy if it is used properly, and it permits more accuracy in direction. It is a club which is intended for getting length and therefore comes in the classification of "full-swing clubs." It may be used where the ball does not lie sufficiently high to permit of the brassy being taken, but the cleek should not be used—as it often is used—when there is a lot of growth to be cut through before the ball can be touched. There are not many courses in the vicinity of London which allow very many opportunities of the brassy being played, and it is therefore not surprising that we find the metropolitan golfer, as a rule, more adept with the cleek than are golfers who habitually play on courses which do not call for goloshes in the winter. The cleek should be taken right through the ball and the finish should be similar to those which obtain with wooden clubs. The cleek will never perform its allotted task when it is permitted to stab the ball and then dig into the ground.

#### IRONS

There are many irons with all sorts of lofts on their blades and they suit so many occasions that their employment must of necessity be inspired by local conditions. It is but natural

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that the greater the loft of the blade the less is the potential driving power of the club, the loft being there to give height at the expense of distance. They are usually heavy enough however to carry the ball further than mashie distance. They form an endless variety of clubs with little that is consistent about them, either in regard to blade or shaft and they may be purchased with one eye on the "feel" and another on the course over which they will mainly be played.

### THE MASHIE

The mashie is, to my mind, the master club of them all. It calls for super-accuracy, and is used over varying distances from a few yards to a hundred and twenty yards or so.

There is no prettier shot in golf than the hundred yards approach, in which the ball, describing a lofty parabola falls neatly on to the green, and, with a little run, stays within holing distance. It is a mashie shot. Efficiency with the mashie means much, for the well-played approach may save a shot or two at any hole. The average novice does not take sufficient care with his mashie. It is easy to hit the ball with this club, but it is not so easy to do the right thing with it. Anybody can address a ball with

a short-shafted club and get it away somewhere, but there is more real *finesse* and more ingenuity associated with the mashie than with any other club. He who is tolerably sure of getting his ball on to the green from any distance upwards of fifty yards is a man to fear in club competitions. He is a terror who can make amends for bad shots up to "mashie play."

#### THE NIBLICK

The niblick invariably means trouble, for it is used in connexion with recoveries very considerably. When you are bunkered and a sandy sea surrounds your ball—it is the niblick that is wanted. When your ball is nearly unplayable, it is the niblick which is called upon to extricate it. The niblick is also a useful club for pitching on to the green from short range, since it is possible to impart considerable "stop" with the deep-faced club. The niblick is a club which should not be wanted very often, but when it is, is wanted mighty badly. It becomes acquainted with most of the hazards on its owner's links, and it is sometimes used with more vigour than any of its bag mates. Poor long-suffering niblick!

## THE PUTTER

The putter is the Machiavellian member of the club party. It is the simplest of them all, it is the most abused of them all, and it is the most irritating of them all. It is the stroke-waster-in-chief, and it defies all the attempts of its wielder to sink the ball at such times as one's putting is off. What more nerve-racking than to beat your opponent all the way to the green, to be stroke up within a yard and then to see a piffing little putt send the ball round the lip of the hole. There is no cure for bad putting other than that which lies in the hands of the man himself. It is of no use to tell anybody to take a different stance, to hold his club lower, to look at the hole when hitting the ball or to do one or other of the thousand things which long suffering stroke-wasters have suggested. Hit boldly and give the hole a chance—m'yes. But it is daring to hit boldly when the green is like a sheet of glass and the slightest blow sends the little white chief scuttling madly beyond. Master your putter or it will master you, but as to how you may do this—I wish I knew. Just get out on to the greens and practise; and let the inspiration come to you as and when it may.

There are many other clubs which I have not dealt with at all because they need not concern

the man who is starting out on his golfing career. He will find more than enough to get along with in the straightforward implements referred to above.

#### THE REPAIR OF CLUBS

Prevention is better than cure, and that applies in the matter of the players' clubs, as much as it does to anything else, and, in the first place, it is "up to" the amateur to see that his clubs are of the proper kind. I mean that there are a great many clubs bought in retail shops and warehouses, in various towns and cities, and I have known of a huge number of cases where the implement has practically had to be rebuilt by the club professional, sometimes by alteration of the face, and sometimes by other means. As a piece of advice, I would only suggest that the amateur, in buying his clubs, should at any rate have the advice of his club professional, and if he does that he may be enabled to avoid expending more money on his clubs so that they are worthy of an attempt to play golf with.

Another point which I would press home is that the player should, after he has been using his wooden clubs on wet courses, take them to his professional to have them re-filed, so that

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they may get a proper grip on the ball. The player may then observe for himself how the professional files the club, as, in the event of the golfer slicing or pulling, a great deal can be done in the filing of the club to counteract the pull or the slice.

Should the golfer break his club, or even partially break the shaft at the socket, he should either have a new head fitted or a new shaft entirely, as it is quite possible that there will be a certain weakness in the neck of the club, which may very easily cause a twist at the moment of impact with the ball, this, in turn, being the cause of a great many faults—causing the player to slice or pull in, to him, a most mysterious way.

I have already dealt with the importance of having a good grip fitted to your club, and I would emphasize here that it is utterly essential that the golfer get a firm and a good grip if he expects to play good shots.

In the event of the lead in the club-head becoming loose, see that the club is taken to the professional's shop to be re-filled at once, and I would also advise the player who wishes his club re-weighted, say by half an ounce, to have the lead inserted at the sole of the club, and slightly to the heel side of the centre. This, I maintain, gives a better balance than otherwise, while, to revert for a moment in club filing, the operation should result in the centre of the bulge being

slightly to the toe side of the actual centre of the face.

Finally, I would advocate the periodical taking of the clubs to the professional for overhaul, so that he may varnish or polish the shafts, for many a time and oft have I seen good clubs go to wreck and ruin simply through sheer inattention.



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