

# Building Up a Game

## VII—The Swing

*Seventh of a Series of Articles Taking Up in Complete Detail a Course in Golf Instruction*

By Walter J. Travis

**T**HE swing is a complicated piece of business. Some cheerful cuss has said that there are no less than fifty-two elements that enter into a perfect drive. I have no doubt that is true; in fact, I purpose dealing with one or two more than this number, just for good measure—to take the whole piece of machinery apart and dissect each component factor, so that a clear understanding of the delicate mechanism may be laid bare.

Let not the beginner be discouraged. Anyone might be taught how to play golf. Not all, by any means, will wear laurel wreaths. That glory is reserved for comparatively few. But I am quite sure the large majority of players can be immensely benefited by a careful, conscientious perusal of what I have already written under this head, joined to that which I still have to say.

A word of warning, however. Most players read articles of this kind as they would a novel. They want to get to the end as quickly as possible. The result is an ill-digested, confused jumble. One or two things perhaps stand out more markedly and these, and these only, the more ambitious golfer endeavors to reap some benefit from by practice, neglecting entirely the, to him, little things, the things he considers unimportant. No substantial improvement can be effected that way. After all is said and done, it is the little things, the sum of little things, that count. The best way, the only way, is to endeavor to first get a clear, composite picture of one in action and then to go out and, step by step, practice each little thing.

### *True Golf Swing is Artificial*

**T**HE true golf swing is purely artificial—the sum and substance of many minor details, all of which have to be more or less painfully acquired. Only youngsters acquire the art imitatively. Others have to seek aid



Number 2—Medium Swing

from competent instructors, as, unfortunately, only a very few have the time or the patience to work out their own salvation, and even then they labor under the insurmountable handicap of not being able to see themselves, and can judge from results only whether they are putting into actual practice the precepts laid down.

Quite apart from professional or friendly aid, there will be found quite an array of helpful suggestions which, irrespective of practice, may be found useful by the more experienced player who is temporarily off his game.

I indulge the hope that not only pupils but the professional coaches themselves may derive practical assistance from these articles. They are in no sense theoretical or academical, but are the fruits not only of actual personal experience, but also of close observation of all the leading players, amateur and professional — and I am satisfied of their soundness. Many a fine player can bring off the shots, but somehow lacks the ability to impart information as to precisely how it is done—the *modus operandi*. They can produce the effect, but lack a true perception of the cause. More than half the intellectual pleasure of the game consists in knowing *how* the various shots are made. A ball struck in the same way will act in the same way over and over again. The laws of motion are immutable.

### *Golf a Trinity of Games*

**T**HERE is no royal road to success. The path is not an easy one,—which is one of the chief reasons why golf has such enduring lure. Golf is really a trinity of games—three in one. There is the drive, the approach, and the putt. In the long game, distance and a fair measure of accuracy are the cardinal requirements; the approach calls for regulated strength, plus accuracy of direc-

tion, for all kinds of distances and from a variety of lies, while the putt is a modified approach combining strength and accuracy in the highest degree, joined to delicacy of touch. Ability in any one of the three departments does not necessarily carry with it skill in the other two. It is the coordination of all three at one and the same time that spells success. The wooden club play on a given day may be flawless, and the approach work quite satisfactory, yet both are rendered nugatory unless followed by good work on the greens. Weakness in any one essential will largely undo the finest kind of performance in the others, more especially if that weakness manifests itself on or near the greens. A single putt covers many shortcomings, while the failure to hole one of under a yard counts just as much as a missed drive.

A good hole may be likened unto a pyramid laid on its side, the base representing the teeing-ground and the apex the putting-green. The nearer the apex the more the difficulties increase—or should.

### *Duffers Get the Most Fun*

**T**HERE never has lived a perfect golfer—there never will. Perfect golf means holing out in one stroke on a par 3 hole, one that can be reached from the tee, and so on. Of course this is a measure of skill impossible of consecutive attainment for the full round or anything more than a hole or two in the round.

I am very much inclined to think the duffer gets more real pleasure out of the game than the crack player. It is not measured by the number of strokes one takes. The poor player's score may be 90, even 100 or more, as against the star's 72, yet in that 90, or over, one or two shots may be pulled off that even Vardon in his palmiest days could not excel. These, being wholly unexpected, yield such

*(Continued on page 21)*



Number 1—Upright Swing



Number 3—Flat Swing

# Building Up a Game

(Continued from page 10)

exaltation of joy as to completely and utterly eclipse all recollection of the legion of wretched stroken, till regarded as a matter of course and part of the day's work.

The secret, the Great Secret, has been found! The recollection of these phenomenal shots, joined possibly to improvement here and there in other strokes beyond the accustomed, live long in the duffer's memory. How he exults, not only in their execution, but in his detailed description later to his long-suffering friends! Compare his proud feelings with those of the chap who has just done a 72, made up of strokes which he fully expected to bring off and which carry no thrill, with one or two putts that hung on the lip and which would have given him a 70, possibly a 69. How he bitterly laments over them!

Verily, it is a wonderful game!

However, let us quit moralizing and return to the player whom we left standing on the tee, till ready primed for the swing.

## The Swing

SWINGS may be classified under three heads upright, medium and flat. Let us glance at each in turn. Reference to Fig. 1, illustrating an upright swing, shows several points of difference between that and the medium and flat swings as depicted in Figs. 2 and 3, respectively, these differences being reflected in the behavior of the ball in flight, more especially in regard to trajectory, Fig. 1 swing driving a higher ball than in the two others. This is due to the club being taken back from the ball more upright, the immediate result being more carry. Note the different action of the right elbow.

In Figure 3 it is tucked in to the side of the body move closely, as a direct consequence of a flatter are on the upswing. This produces a lower ball, not so great in carrying power but with more compensatory run, a very useful thing in a wind. The angle of the shaft is not so acute as in illustrations 1 and 2, the tendency of which contributes toward a slight pull, encouraged also by the flatter swing, the club being taken back a little closer to the body and finishing, at the top, further away from the side. Observe also the direction in which the club points in 1 and 2.

The chief value of these illustrations lies in the fact that the methods are quite sound in each case, although there are slight differences in style. In other words, they demonstrate that no one particular style of swing is the only correct way of hitting the ball—that equally satisfactory results may be accomplished with any one of the three. As a matter of fact, the balls actually hit finished up virtually the same lengths, that from No. 3 being a trifle longer, due to a longer run from the slight pull imparted, despite the fact that the swing was the shortest of the three. Some men are so built as to show a natural leaning in favor of one style more than another. It is the part of wisdom for players generally to adopt that particular style which best suits them.

## Overswinging

MOST players take their clubs back too far on the upswing. The shorter the swing the more control, control of the club and, consequently, of direction. If a player

has full command of the club there is no doubt that, other things being equal, he can propel the ball further with a full swing than a three-quarter one and measurably as straight. But, generally speaking, it is safer policy to resist any inclination, to allow the club to dip below the horizontal at the top.

Many players allow the handle of the club to twist or turn during the swing. This is fatal. Others, to guard against this, grip like grim death. This is almost as bad. With a very tight grip with both hands it is very difficult to swing the club—it is rather *lifted* up, and this stunts and cramps the swing and means loss of distance. In my own case I overcome both of these faults by gripping the underneath part of the handle with the tip of the forefinger of each hand, pressed rather firmly against the leather, causing quite a crook or bend from the second joint and projecting them above the level of the other fingers. Slight pressure is also exerted against the second finger by the thumb of each hand, locking the hands, as it were, the other fingers gripping quite loosely.

By this method it is impossible for the club to twist or turn even when wet, and at the same time there is ample freedom to permit of the club being swung properly. I may add that the grip or pressure of both hands is about equal and remain constant until the head of the club is a foot or two from the ball on the downswing. Then it instinctively tightens when the ball is hit, followed by relaxation of grip immediately after. It remains to be said that this Crooking of the forefingers, especially the left, enables one to get the hands very close together, the little finger of the right hand being partly tucked away under the left forefinger. I employ the same grip for all strokes except putting —of which more anon.

## Things to Remember

**"Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" all that is said before making a start.**

**To get a high ball, play it well off the left foot.**

**To get a low ball, off the right foot.**

**Don't overswing.**

**Don't grip too tightly.**

(To be continued)