



A pleasing panorama on the course of the Beresford Country Club at San Mateo, California, showing San Francisco Bay in the background. Photo by Courtesy of THE FAIRWAY

As They Think

The Mental Attitudes of Casual Players Compared with Those of Champions

By Mary K. Browne

BEFORE we approach this intricate and fragile mechanism—the brain from the standpoint of equality of force or weight, in games—let me divide participants into two classes—the casual players and the champions—for what suffices for one, is not at all sufficient for the other.

My deductions are the result of secret envy for the detachment of the casual players and sympathetic understanding of the involved champions. The essential qualities of the casual player are simple to analyze in comparison to the super competitive spirit. I shall therefore pass over them lightly as a means of comparison.

In playing the game for fun, when winning is of little consequence—as it should not be with the average run of players—then concentrate on having a good time. Exert yourself sufficiently to benefit by the exercise and to give your opponent a good game. Learn to play as well as you can, with limited practice as a matter of pride. Don't be too deadly serious or you will not reap the benefits, if it is made a matter of life and death. Bask happily in the background, with no desire to appear in the newspaper headlines.

On the other hand, if you wish to be a champion and remain one, your entire mental attitude must be reconstructed, for you are competing now with players who are working to attain the heights. Specialize as you do in competitive business. It is absolutely necessary to cultivate concentration, determination, and self-confidence.

However much one may decry the business-

like methods of the amateur champions, they are merely working for efficiency and they must apply themselves to the exclusion of other interests or they cannot expect to remain on top.

There has been a tremendous improvement in all games, resulting in keener competition. Then, too, international team matches have placed a great responsibility on the shoulders of the champions. They are called upon to defend the honor and supremacy of their country, which appeals, and the response is the utmost in skill, spirit, and physical stamina.

I have little patience with players who say—"Well, I guess I'll never learn to play in tournaments; I just haven't the temperament." Temperament—a much abused word—means nothing more than bodily fitness and self-control.

There are certain fundamentals of correct mental attitude that can be acquired in the same ratio as the physical mechanics of stroke production. There is no necessity for a wholesome athlete to have the physical strokes and still go about a mental invalid.

If you want to become a champion, ask yourself if you play the game according to the standards of champions, which are generally as follows:

You cannot dally with a game—you are out to win.

Put before yourself the picture of winning, not of course through any methods other than those actuated by the spirit of fair play.

It is no compliment to your opponent to do less than your best.

It is a grave risk to slacken concentration. Many matches have been lost through over confidence or indifferent play, which arises from having under-rated your adversary because of previous easily won victories.

When playing shots—don't play them casually. Be of only one intention—that of getting the ball to the spot for which you are aiming. I have seen good players hit a short putt with the back of their putters, not troubling to take their stance. Often they are missed. To me it always seems "stagey" and slack.

Many times you play under difficult circumstances, when the elements are raging against you. The proper attitude then is that the conditions are the same for both sides, and you should do the best you can under the circumstances.

Never get disheartened or give up trying; often matches have been won by doggedly hanging on.

Try to be calm and collected whatever difficulties arise, never worried or hurried. Make up your mind—you can—that nothing, no matter how irritating, shall upset you. No outside interference must be allowed to distract your attention.

School yourself to meet the unlucky breaks with indifference. You should never lose confidence on account of failure, but rather endeavor to diagnose, and sift the causes, with a view to increasing your knowledge.

Self-confidence is a big part of the battle and must be evident always,—not displayed necessarily in the form of conceit. "Self praise has a bad odor." On the other (*Continued on page 76*)



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hand self-abnegation is rather hypocritical. There is always a graceful way to let it be known that you believe in yourself.

Too much kindness of heart is unnecessary exhibition of sentiment. I do not mean that reasonable consideration should be ignored. A "soft" frame of mind is in direct contrast to the all important "will to win" spirit. The hard brain is what you want for the acme of concentration.

There are some athletes who are born with a natural competitive nature, and it is more or less simple for them to observe the essentials of the mental code, while those of retiring natures have an additional battle with themselves as well as with their opponents.

For example—I was talking with two women golfers who had both played in England. We were discussing the difference in playing the American courses and the English sea side links which are very different, in that they are not groomed like our courses. They are rough—tough—with the elements raging. To one player it aroused all of her sporting instincts; she felt as though she were battling a forest fire and loved the excitement of the battle, while the other golfer, a very much better player of strokes, just wanted to cry and take the next steamer back to America.

What a pity that the strokes of one could not be combined with the nature of the other.

The question of "chucking" games

and holes to your opponent is not "done" in championships. The majority of players are proud and would rather lose in love sets or ten and eight—than to feel that they have been given a game or hole out of courtesy.

The guarding of your best asset—confidence—is very subtle. Do not at any time betray to your opponent that you are discouraged.

I recall my match with Miss Louise Fordyce in the National Golf Championship at Providence. After being two down, I had evened the match at the fourteenth hole. Going to the fifteenth tee Miss Fordyce remarked that she could never keep a lead. Being an "old head" at competition, immediately I thought she was discouraged. It gave me additional confidence and the net result was that I won. An inferior golfer won a match because the superior player of strokes lost her confidence.

In conclusion, I may say that the player must balance the two questions: Are you taking up the game as a pastime, or do you want to be a champion?

In the first case, play for the sake of a good time and keeping fit. In the second case play the game to win. Apply your intelligence, ingenuity, backed by the spirit of fair play. The casual player will have more fun; the champion more work, but still compensated by the knowledge of a job well done.