

## ELIMINATING THE BAD SHOTS

By GLENNA COLLETT VARE

A FRIEND of mine, who has fine possibilities as a golfer, was playing not so very long ago with Horton Smith in a four-ball match. During the round he asked, "Why don't I score as well as you? I am hitting the ball as far as you are, and I can play practically every shot as well as you do, and yet you are several strokes better than I am."

"I judge a golfer, not by his good strokes, but by his bad ones," Horton replied. "If his worst shots are not very bad, he is a good golfer. Your good shots are excellent, but your bad ones are terrible. You lack consistency in hitting the ball."

Therein lies the difference between the really good golfer and the nearly-good one; the latter is an in-and-outer. He plays many good shots in the course of a round, but he also plays several bad ones, and the final cost of these bad ones may be, and frequently is, high.

To hit even a few good shots in the course of a round, a golfer must, of course, have something of the fundamental essentials of a correct swing. Why, then, if a few shots are hit well, are not more hit well? Carelessness probably accounts for a fair portion of

the mistakes. Lack of the right kind of concentration is another cause; too often, the player forgets and omits certain of the essentials because of his eagerness in trying to make a long carry, or to steer the ball clear of a bunker or other trouble.

But of late I have come to feel that very many shots are missed by players who should do better, because of a lack of what I will call firmness, and the most notable source of this trouble, I think, lies in their methods of gripping the club. A very great deal has been said and written about tension in golf, and I think a lot of this has been misunderstood, especially as regards the manner of holding the club. Possibly this is because those who have taken warning about tension are able to detect it more quickly in the grip than elsewhere. Yet simply loosening the grip is not a cure for all cases of tension.

The hands, of course, control the movement of the clubhead, and the ball must be struck with the clubhead. So it is evident that the hands should have firm control of the clubhead throughout the swing, certainly until after the ball has been hit. Lack of firmness is manifested by loose, wobbly wrist

action, especially at the top of the swing—"rubber wrists," somebody has called it. Particularly are many women players subject to this trouble.

One frequently hears instruction which recommends that the club be held "firmly but not too tightly." I can't agree fully with this advice, because I think the club must be held tightly with the left hand throughout the swing. Gripping the club securely with this hand will in no wise interfere with the smoothness or rhythm of the swing. On the other hand, this practice will maintain a secure control of the clubface throughout, and that is certainly essential, if the ball is to be hit squarely. It isn't necessary to clamp the club with the thumb and forefinger of the left, but it is advisable to swing on tightly with the last two fingers.

Secure gripping with the left hand in this manner does not interfere with the bending or "cocking" of the wrists at the top of the backswing. That bending is really just exactly the same action as one would perform, if, when the clubhead is in position back of the ball in the address, the club were raised straight up from the ground with the left hand. And it can and will take place correctly at the top of the backswing, even though the club is held tightly with the last two fingers of the left.

With the right hand, the thumb and forefinger exert most of the pressure on the club, and there is no need to grip particularly tightly with this hand. In fact, I think most of the advice about not gripping too tightly has been aimed at the right. For there is a serious danger, if the right grips too tightly, namely that it will dominate the movement of starting the club back, and all kinds of trouble may result from this. At the same time, it is advisable to maintain a steady grip with the right throughout the swing. I know that a number of prominent golfers have a way of gripping very loosely with the right at the top of the backswing, but I don't think the practice makes the game any easier for them.

I had the pleasure of playing in a four-ball match at Pine (Continued on page 42)



MISS MAUREEN ORCUTT IN ACTION

These two action pictures of Miss Maureen Orcutt illustrate the point with reference to secure gripping emphasized in the accompanying article. She maintains a secure held throughout



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Valley recently with Harrison Johnston and Jess Sweetser. I noticed that Mr. Johnston gripped the club so tightly with his left hand that his knuckles stood out white, and he seemed almost to be gritting his teeth in an effort to grip it as tightly as possible. Mr. Sweetser also held it very firmly although not to such an apparent degree.

Someone asked Max Marston about blisters and calluses on the hands. He replied that he never had any because he holds the club so tight with his left hand that it cannot possibly turn.

**Loosening and changing the grip**

during the address arc conducive to a lack of firmness in the swing. Many players take several waggles, realxing and changing the grip each time. This is a bad habit. Get the proper grip and keep it throughout the address and the stroke and hold tight with the left hand at all times. Be sure not to carry the tension of the left hand grip to other parts of the body which should be relaxed. Tenseness or stiffness of the body will interfere with the freedom of the swing, the pivot, weight-shifting and follow through.

Firmness will eliminate many of the

bad shots, especially the irons, pitches, and short shots around the green, and this also applies in full measure to the long woods, as it increases accuracy very greatly without sacrificing distance.

A player may not have great immediate success in adopting a tight left hand grip and firm swing for the first time as it will be strange to him and may make the swing feel uncomfortable for a while, but once acquired and familiarized it is bound to work a great improvement in the consistency of the game of the wild, loose-swinging "in-and-outer."