

JUST SWING THE CLUBHEAD

By GRANTLAND RICE

THESE are two main approaches to golf instruction and to golf improvement. The first says that, if you do certain things, turn the left side, shift the weight, cock the wrists, get the left hip out of the way starting down, etc., the right golf swing will follow. The second says that, if you swing the clubhead with your hands and fingers naturally and smoothly, all these fundamentals will take place.

This second method is the basis of Ernest Jones' instructive system, which has had amazing success. It was Miss Marion Hollins who became his first active sponsor and had him named as golf instructor for the Women's National Links on Long Island.

One of his latest pupils is Miss Virginia Van Wie who went to Jones for help over two years ago and has since won the Women's Championship twice in succession, stopping Mrs. Glenna Collett Vare in one final and Miss Helen Hicks in the other, winning impressively on both occasions.

Who is Ernest Jones? Briefly, he was one of England's most promising younger stars, one of her best young instructors, when the war broke out. In 1916 Jones had his right leg shot off during a British offensive.

A week after he had left the hospital he was around his



home course in 70, playing on one leg, dropping his crutches to pick up the needed club for every stroke.

Even before he was wounded, Jones had worked out his present system of instruction, which concentrates on swinging the clubhead as the rest of the body follows its natural functions without any conscious effort to force these moves into action during the swing.

What is the Jones system of instruction? Just what does "swinging the clubhead" actually mean?

Here is one illustration. It is Ernest Jones' belief that Bobby Jones is the best "true swinger" in golf, but that Bobby Jones doesn't get this true swinging motion from applying a number of fundamentals, that these fundamentals naturally accompany a true swinging motion.

"If you actually swing the clubhead," says Ernest Jones, "you can't do anything else, or be conscious of anything else. If you do anything else, you can't swing the clubhead smoothly. You can't push, lift or hit, and still swing."

"What do you think," I asked, "about turning the left side, pivoting, the straight left arm, cocking the wrists, etc.?"

"All these things," said Ernest Jones, "belong to the scientific side of golf. I am speaking of golf as an art, not as a science. These fundamentals you mention all take place during a good swing. But I don't believe a good swing can be brought about by consciously trying to adjust all these details in the swinging motion."

"It is something like a jig-saw puzzle," he continued. "There are several fundamentals. The golf swing lasts a little less than two seconds. Who can consciously try to put all these jig-saw parts together in the right places, with the right sequence, and still keep a smooth swing going? I don't believe any one can reasonably expect to do so."

"Just how can you teach the art of swinging without applying these fundamentals?" I asked.

"In the first place," he said, "I want the pupil to take a natural, comfortable grip—not loose and flabby, not too tight—just firm enough to feel clubhead control.

"After that I want him to take a natural, comfortable stance; preferably the square stance, with the toes on a line, and the feet not too far apart. Bobby Jones again is a final example of both grip and stance.

"From that point on, I want him or her to develop the feel of clubhead control through the fingers and hands. I try to teach the pupil just what the actual swinging motion is—just how it feels. For example, if you tie up a weight at the end of a handkerchief, you must swing that handkerchief; you can't hit with it. Try it and see.

"In a natural swing, the left side turns naturally through the back swing, the weight is distributed naturally. In the down swing, the correct fundamentals again take place, not because you try to force them, but because that is what happens in a natural way. Nothing else can happen until you begin to hit or pull or jerk. It might (Continued on page 40)

Ernest Jones, whose practice in teaching golf is to concentrate entirely on conveying to his pupil just what he means by "swing the clubhead," himself exemplifies flawless balance in swinging. He possesses a fine rhythmic swing, in spite of the fact that he lost a leg in the war

JUST SWING THE CLUBHEAD

(Continued from page 5)

be mentioned here that a true swing produces the greatest speed the clubhead can develop on its way through the ball. Any conscious effort or attempt to accelerate this speed merely cuts it down."

Colonel Robert P. Jones, father of Hobby, and himself a good golfer, was more than normally impressed. Few have studied the science or art of golfing with greater keenness than Colonel Jones.

"This method, to me," he said, "seems to be the simplest and the soundest I have come across. I have found out that I can't consciously try to make myself carry out several fundamentals and still swing as I should. The mental interruption leads to physical or muscle interruption.

"This is exactly what takes place. You may recall the number of caddies who have turned into the greatest golfers of today. Why? They absorbed a mental picture of a good pro, swinging a club. They began to swing through imitation, not through copying hip action, shoulder action, or any set of fundamentals. They just picked up a club and began swinging it.

"Later on, they may try to introduce some innovations of their own. I don't say that you can't play good golf and score well as a hitter. I simply say it is the harder road—much the more difficult road for one who didn't start quite young with a natural swing.

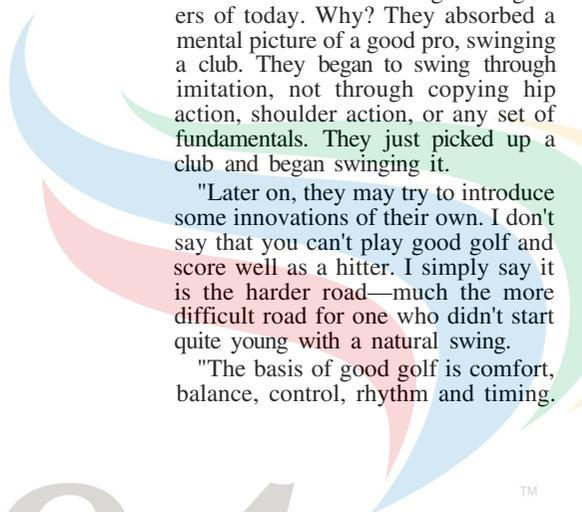
"The basis of good golf is comfort, balance, control, rhythm and timing.

They form a natural blend that can be taught to any one who will concentrate on this one act of clubhead control. The bands are the only part of the body in actual contact with the club. What they do must be vitally important. You don't swing with your hips or shoulders or feet. You swing with your hands. You must get the feel of control through your hands. I think that is reasonable and logical."

Almost every golf duffer, or average player, after watching an Open Championship, comes away with the feeling that hands seem to predominate in swinging the clubhead; and how easy and simple it all looks.

"If you swing the clubhead smoothly," says Ernest Jones, "you also pivot, you cock your wrists at the top, a proper shifting of weight takes place, and your head doesn't pop up, because there is little tension in actual swinging. There is no sudden tightening, no quick hitting, no lunging, no over-exertion."

(Editor's Note—Beginning with the March issue, Ernest Jones will contribute to *The American Golfer* a series of illustrations and explanations of his method of teaching. This method, as explained in the preceding article, centers entirely on bringing the pupil to understand just what is meant by "swinging the clubhead." It is his conviction that once the pupil grasps this meaning, concentration on putting it into practice will cause all corresponding movements to take place in proper order without conscious effort.)



LA84
Foundation