GREAT GOLFERS

Their Methods at a Glance

BY GEORGE W. BELDAM

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY
HAROLD H. HILTON
J. H. TAYLOR  JAMES BRAID  ALEX. HERD
HARRY VARDON

ILLUSTRATED
BY 268 ACTION-PHOTOGRAPHS

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NOTE

The device on which the golfers are standing is a square of four feet, subdivided into smaller squares of six inches, measured from the centres of the white lines, which are half-an-inch wide. By counting these six-inch squares the position of the feet to the ball is at once seen for every shot. If the player wishes, by marking these out on the ground he can see and experience for himself the various methods of the different Champions as regards stance, which is of so great importance, and by so doing may possibly adopt for himself sound principles in this respect.
# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Harry Vardon  
The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, Prime Minister  
NOTE. The Stance Device  
Champions of Golf and Cricket, J. H. Taylor and  
Dr. W. G. Grace  

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A statuette of Harry Vardon suggested by the Frontispiece by Mr. Hal Ludlow 481
HARRY VARDON

By HIMSELF

Open Champion, 1896, 1898, 1899, 1903.

Champion of America, 1900.

Born: 1870, Jersey, Channel Islands.

Weight, 11 stone. Height, 5 feet 9 1/4 inches.

Dear Sir,

I herewith enclose the photographs showing my various strokes, and I have endeavoured to put as plainly as I can some hints on the way I play them, and which I hope may be the means of helping some Golfers to improve their game.

Yours faithfully,

12/12/03.

Harry Vardon.

G. W. Beldam, Esq.
PLATE NO. III
HARRY VARDON

GRIP
RIGHT-HAND OPENED
TO SHOW POSITION
OF LEFT THUMB
Plate No. IV
Harry Vardon

Address and Stance with Driver
I stand firmly, with the weight rather on the right leg, which is in advance of the left about 8 inches. Knees very slightly bent. Arms rather away from body. Hands about opposite the ball, which is about four inches behind left heel.

For other measurements, see illustration.
In the upward swing, I feel both hands taking the club back, and both wrists working in unison. My wrists start turning away from the ball the moment the clubhead leaves it.

The wrists should drag the arms after them, and when the arms reach a point in the swing when they could go back no further, the left knee at once commences to bend in towards the right toe to allow the body to turn until the left shoulder is opposite the ball. The head, being kept still and in the same position as when the ball is being addressed, is now looking over the left shoulder at the ball. This bending of the left knee and consequent turn of the body from the hips has allowed the wrists to take the arms still further back, till the club is in a position slightly below the horizontal.

There is distinct pressure on the left toe, and very little more weight should be felt on the right leg than there was when the ball was addressed.

In the swing back, the club-head leaves a straight line behind the ball about three inches from it, and the club, though taken round the right leg, is taken up more uprightly than is usual.

In the photograph, the wrists have hardly brought the club-head into the proper position, viz., the face at right angles to the ground, and the actual stroke resulted, in all probability, in a sliced ball.

There is no perceptible pause on the top of the swing. The club-head should be evenly gaining in speed from the time it leaves the ball, until at the moment of impact it is travelling at its highest velocity. For this reason, "slow back" at the beginning of the swing is a good maxim.
In commencing the downward swing, I try to feel that both hands and wrists are still working together. The wrists start bringing the club down, and at the same moment, the left knee commences to resume its original position. The head during this time has been kept quite still, the body alone pivoting from the hips. When the left knee has turned, I find I am standing firmly on both feet, and the arms are in position as in the upward swing, before the left knee started to bend. From this point the speed of the wrists seems to increase, and the impact is thus made with the club-head travelling at its highest velocity.

Almost simultaneously with the impact, the right knee slightly bends in the direction of the hole, and allows the wrists and forearms to take the club right out in the direction of the line of flight, dragging the arms after them as far as they will comfortably go, when the club-head immediately leaves the line of flight, and the right foot turns on the toe. This allows the body to turn from the hips and face the hole, the club finishing over the left shoulder.

In brasseys through the green I bring the ball rather nearer to the right foot, and stand slightly more over the ball, and, in all other respects, play the stroke as in the drive.

The photo decidedly represents an easy stroke; for a really good finish see Plate No. XXII.

With the spoon I play the stroke the same, but I sometimes use the push stroke with this club.
EIGHT POSITIONS IN VARDON’S SWING

The following eight photographs should be particularly useful in showing the actual positions of Vardon's head, feet, arms, hands, knees, and club, &c., at different parts of his swing.

There are four of the upward, also the same number of the downward, swing after impact. Reference has been made to them in the chapter on "Instruction by Illustration," so no further note will be necessary, except that the exposures were $\frac{1}{1,000}$ th part of a second.
Positions of Wrist and Arms Upward Swing of Drive (No. 1)
Plate No. XXIV
Harry Vardon

Positions of WristS And Arms Upward Swing Of Drive. (No. 2)
PLATE NO. XXV
HARRY VARDON

POSITIONS OF WRISTS AND ARMS UPWARD SWING OF DRIVE. (No. 3}
Plate No. XXVI
Harry Vardon

Positions of wrists and arms upward swing of drive. (No. 4)
PLATE No. XXVII
HARRY VARDON

POSITIONS OF WRISTS AND ARMS FOLLOW THROUGH
(No. 5)
Plate No. XXVIII
Harry Vardon

Positions of wrists and arms follow through (No. 6)
Plate No. XXIX
Harry Vardon

Positions of Wrist and Arms Follow Through (No. 7)
Plate No. XXX
Harry Vardon

Positions of wrists and arms follow through
(No. 8)
PLAYING FOR A SLICE

By comparing this photograph with Plate No. IV the change in the position of the feet will be readily seen.
PLAYING FOR A PULL

There is very little difference in the stance between this and that shown in the drive (Plate No. IV).

The pull, however, is shown by the way the right hand is rapidly turning over.

Had a similar view been taken of the slice, the right hand would have been shown turning rather under than over.
Plate No. XXXIII
Harry Varlon

Showing position of right wrist for pulled ball
J. H. TAYLOR

BY HIMSELF

Open Champion, 1894, 1895, 1900.

Born: Northam, North Devon, 1871.
Weight: 11 1/2 stone. Height: 5 feet 8 1/2 inches.

G. W. BELDAM, ESQ.

Dec. 10th, 1903.

Dear Sir,

As I promised, I am sending you my notes on each stroke shown by your Photographs, which I have tried to put as clearly as I can, and which I hope will prove helpful to all classes of Golfers.

Yours Faithfully,

[Signature]
I stand firmly on both feet, but if anything more weight on the right—both knees slightly bent; my distance from ball is such that I feel I am not cramped, nor likely to fall over the ball.

My elbows are not tucked into my sides but allowed to fall naturally against them.

My right foot is in advance of my left about six to seven inches.
I commence to take the club back with the left wrist principally, and well round the right leg. The moment the club-head leaves the ball, the left knee commences its bending movement. This bend of the left knee should be gradual and even, and should not be completed till the club has reached the top of the swing (it is a great mistake to suddenly bend the left knee at the beginning of the stroke, as this creates a jerk and spoils the even rhythm of the swing). During this time the wrists continue working together in taking the club to the top of the swing, when they should both have turned underneath the shaft. This turn does not come naturally, but I think it will do so if the wrists are allowed to describe a true arc. I am convinced that this turn of the wrists is the keystone of the structure on which the whole fabric of a true swing is built.
PLATE NO. IV
J. H. TAYLOR

TOP OF SWING WITH DRIVER
THE DRIVE AND BRASSEY

Downward Swing

The wrists start bringing the club down; care should be taken not to allow the arms to go away from the body, otherwise the arc described in the upward swing will not be repeated. The club is brought down principally by the left wrist, the right doing very little until the hands are opposite the right leg, when it begins to assert itself, bringing the full face of the club to the ball.

This action of the right hand combines to accelerate the speed at which the club-head meets the ball. Assuming that the club-head is travelling at its highest speed at the moment of contact, and the right knee working properly, the follow through is the natural result. The right knee commences to bend towards the ball at the moment of impact, and the weight is thrown on to the left leg, which has gradually resumed its original position.
PLATE No. XIX
J. H. TAYLOR
SHOWING
POSITION OF
RIGHT ELBOW
POSITION OF RIGHT ELBOW

The club has been caught just at the top of the swing. Note position of the right elbow. Taylor is very strong on this point, and considers this about the proper position.

Taken at \( \frac{1}{1000} \)th part of a second.
PLATE NO. XXI
J. H. TAYLOR

IMPACT
WITH DRIVER
BALL IN FLIGHT
IMPACT (No. 1)

The blurred driver and ball suggest a good deal of movement. The ball has just left the club-head, and came to rest about 200 yards away. The positions of the knees, hands, arms, feet, and head are all worthy of notice, and help to make this photograph not the least instructive in the series.

The speed of \( \frac{1}{1200} \) th part of a second was evidently too slow to catch this view of the ball and bring it and the club out sharply, but far more movement is thereby suggested.
IMPACT (No. 3)

This photo represents the very moment after the ball has left an iron club.

It will be noticed the ball is rising quicker than in the two previous photographs, which show the same moment in the drive.

This was taken at about $\frac{1}{1100}$th part of a second.
Another view of the actual moment when the club-head met the ball in the drive. The ball has evidently not travelled so far from the face of the club as shown in the previous picture.

The most striking feature seems to be the fact that, but for the movement of the ball shown in the photograph, Taylor might be addressing instead of striking the ball. The stroke was evidently made with great ease and accuracy.

Taken at $\frac{1}{1200}$th part of a second.
Ball in Flight Finishing Swing

Plate No. XXIII
J. H. Taylor
DRIVE

BALL IN FLIGHT

Taken just after impact, while Taylor has not got to the finish of his swing, but is coming round. The ball would have been too small to have waited longer before snapping it.

Note the right knee has just commenced to bend to allow the follow through, but the feet are still firmly on the ground.

The right foot, however, must be just about to turn to allow the club to complete the swing, and the body to face the hole.

The exposure was about $\frac{1}{1100}$th part of a second.
PLATE No. XXVI
J. H. TAYLOR

POSITIONS OF WRISTS AND ARMS UPWARD SWING (No. 3)
DRIVING MASHIE

Impact

This shows the moment immediately after the club head has struck the ball; the ball is seen on the left of the picture rather blurred as \( \frac{1}{1000} \)th part of a second is too slow to take the ball in a sharp definition—though the blurred ball naturally suggests more movement. The ball went about 150 yards.

Note position of Taylor’s head—and the club, which is a driving mashie.
JAMES BRAID

BY HIMSELF

OPEN CHAMPION, 1901.

Born: Earlsferry, Fife, February, 1870.
Weight, 12 stone 6 lbs. Height, 6 feet 1½ inches.

Herewith I enclose Photographs, also a few notes on the different strokes. I hope what I have written will be sufficient to help some Golfers on their way.

14/12/03.

Dear Sir,

Jas. Braid

W. Beldam, Esq.
GRIP
RIGHT HAND OPEN
SHOWING POSITION
OF LEFT THUMB
The wrists, principally the left, commence taking the club back; the left elbow at once starts to bend.

The left toe commences to turn when the wrists have taken the club about two feet from the ball; this allows the left knee to bend towards the right toe, and brings the left shoulder round and opposite the ball.

The club is brought into the proper position at the top of the swing by the wrists bending inwards towards the body.

The position of the club at the top should be about the horizontal, and the wrists directly underneath the shaft.

The toe of the club should be pointing to the earth. The head must be kept absolutely steady during the upward swing, the body turning from the hips.

The right elbow at the top of the swing will be found to be about six inches from the side.
Plate No. V
James Braid

Top of Swing with Driver
Plate No. VI
James Braid

Finish with driver
The left wrist principally starts bringing the club down, with no perceptible pause on the top of the swing. My body does not commence to turn till the club-head is about two feet from the ball—viz., at the point when the wrists “come in” to the stroke.

At this moment the left knee turns rather quickly, as at the moment of striking I am firm on both feet; the quickness of the action makes it difficult to follow with the eye, but I am convinced this is what happens. Immediately after impact I commence turning on the right toe, bending the right knee slightly. This allows the right shoulder to come round till the body is facing the hole. It is most essential that this should be done, and then no thought need be given as to how the club will finish, as the speed at which the club-head is travelling will naturally take it well through. In playing for a low ball against the wind, I try to let the club-head follow through as close to the ground as possible.

In playing for a pulled ball the right wrist turns over at the moment of impact; but for a sliced ball I cut a little across the ball, the wrist action being the reverse of that for a pull, viz., the right hand is rather under than over.
finder—and coincides with Vardon’s own ideas of his swing. I mention it too, because there have been many erroneous ideas of how Vardon takes his club back. The upright part of his swing does not come in at the point when his club leaves the ball, but later on in the upward swing, when he unquestionably lifts the club up rather straighter than most exponents.

Another important point worthy of notice is the bend of the left knee. When should it commence to bend in the upward swing? Here Vardon and Braid somewhat differ from Taylor, yet there is no doubt about the final result being the same; no one would accuse any of the three of lack of timing. Vardon distinctly believes that the left knee should not start to bend until the body requires it to do so. Taylor says his left knee commences to turn on the toe almost immediately the club-head leaves the ball. Vardon distinctly believes that the wrists should drag the arms after them in the upward swing, and when the arms come to that point where they cannot go any further round the body, the arms should then commence, as it were, to pull the body round; the left knee must then immediately commence to turn on the ball of the left foot. The whole movement of the body is entirely from the hips. Braid says he does not commence to bend the left knee till the club has left the ball about two feet—this is similar to Vardon’s theory. The photos show that Taylor’s club does not swing past the horizontal position, and his swing is undoubtedly shorter than either Vardon’s or Braid’s. This may be the reason for his left knee turning sooner in the upward swing, and possibly it may be also a more
gradual movement. One thing, however, is certain—it is not a sudden movement. It is undoubtedly a bad habit to bend the left knee suddenly the moment the club-head leaves the ball; lack of timing will be the inevitable result.

The four professionals named all agree in stating that at the moment of impact they are standing firmly on both feet, but immediately, in a space of time hardly conceivable, they let the right knee bend slightly to allow the right shoulder to come round. Therefore, although they differ as to the time the left knee should work, yet all agree that impact should be made with both feet standing firmly on the ground (Taylor's series, Plate No. XXIII). The photographs show also that the centre of gravity of the body has not been shifted in the upward swing by the movement of the left knee, and consequent turn from the hips. It will be noticed that the left knee bends more towards the right foot in the drive and more towards the ball with shorter strokes. The reason, obviously, is that with the longer shots there is more movement from the hips and consequent turn on the ball of the left foot; whereas with shorter strokes the body-turn is less, because the movement of the left knee is not so pronounced.

Another important point is the way in which the head is kept quite still; at the top of the swing it is in the same position as when the ball was being addressed. And in the head are the eyes! (or they should be!) and these should be looking fixedly at the ball; nay, further, at that part of it where the club face is to strike it.

Finally, some may consider that the extra turn of
THE FINISH

BRONZE STATUETTE OF HARRY VARDON