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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Many works on Golf have appeared, most of which seem to have been written, not so much with the idea of helping the enthusiast, as of making pleasant reading, and, I take it, this is not the sumnum bonum of every golfer's existence. Every such enthusiast, and I venture to believe there are many, has taken to himself, either consciously or unconsciously, some golfer in quite the first flight, as his model, whose style he considers most coincides with his own ideas of the game as it should be played,—and which appeals to him as the most likely to fit in with his own peculiarities or physique.

Should such an one find in these pages his own ideal, I hope the photographs, together with the letterpress facing each, will be of some use to him, as showing the methods of the golfer he has chosen for his example. For he need no longer take a railway journey of many miles to try to gauge for himself the position of his model's feet to the ball—how far back his club swings or how his club finishes for each kind of stroke. In these pages he can see the stance at a glance, as each golfer is standing on a square of four feet divided into
improving his game in any degree; and I trust that the photographs taken on an entirely novel method will prove of value, not only to such an one as a means of progress, but also to others who care to study the various methods of those who have excelled, and still excel, in the Royal and Ancient game.

I am glad to say H. Vardon, Taylor, Braid, and Herd, each most kindly consented to write some notes on their own strokes illustrated by my photographs of them; these notes have been left unaltered, and they should be most valuable and interesting as showing their different views of the game as they play it.

I am also fortunate in getting Mr. Harold H. Hilton to write a few words on each of the amateurs, criticising their game as he sees it. As Mr. Hilton is the only amateur who has twice won the Open Championship, and has a most keen power of observation beside vast experience of the game, his views are a great addition and help to the correct interpretation of the photographs.

Mr. Hal Ludlow, the well-known artist, has most kindly given his valuable services towards ensuring the truthful reproduction of the photographs in the halftone process. Mr. Ludlow plays from the scratch mark himself, and I feel my indebtedness to him is great.

Owing to the necessity of having numerous photographs, the number of the players had to be limited.

One rather regrets that the famous quartette of Open Champions are the only professionals in the book, as there are others, both amateur and professionals,
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.

A.B. shows direction, the squares are 6 inches.

The camera looks up and down line C.D. and the ball is placed where C.D. joins A.B.
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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]
GRIP

I grip the club in the bend of the fore-finger of the left hand, the thumb pressing on the top of the shaft. The two middle fingers just exert a controlling influence; with the little finger I grip a little tighter. The grip of the right hand is similar in every respect, except that the thumb lies over the shaft, and the little fore-finger rides lightly on the first finger of the left hand.

The principal pressure throughout the grip is with the first finger and thumb of each hand; but as the right thumb only lies over the shaft, the gripping power necessarily comes from the left fore-finger and thumb and the right fore-finger.

At the top of the swing the grip of the right fore-finger is somewhat slackened, to allow the right wrist to drop underneath the shaft. On the downward movement, the pressure with the fore-finger is gradually renewed, until at impact it is the same as when the ball was addressed. The left-hand pressure is retained throughout the whole swing.
Plate No. III
J. H. Taylor

ADDRESS
AND STANCE
WITH DRIVER
DRIVE AND BRASSEY

ADDRESS AND STANCE

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
Plate No. V
J. H. Taylor

Finish
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.
CLEEK AND DRIVING MASHIE

ADDRESS AND STANCE

I play the cleek and driving mashie on practically the same lines in regard to stance as the driver or brassey, only of course I come slightly nearer to the ball as the club is shorter, keeping the hands well down so that the heel of the club is resting on the ground. The club face is slightly turned outwards to counteract the tendency to pull with iron clubs, this tendency possibly creeping in on account of the tighter grip, and because the stroke is more of a hit, hence the right hand is fighting more for the mastery, and if it succeeds, a pulled ball will be the result.
Plate No VI
J. H. Taylor

ADDRESS
AND STANCE
WITH CLEEK
PLATE NO. VII
J. H. TAYLOR

TOP OF STROKE
WITH CLEEK
FULL CLEEK, OR DRIVING MASHIE

UPWARD STROKE

I swing the club well round the right leg, at the same time a little more upright than in the drive. I stand firmly on both legs, but rather more weight on the right. What I said about knee action in the drive also applies to this stroke, only the movement is not so pronounced.

The club is taken back by the wrists and forearms which are kept rather stiffer than in the wooden club strokes.

The position of the club at the top of the stroke is not past the horizontal, otherwise control would be lost. This stroke is more of a hit, because the hips, wrists, and forearms are kept rather more rigid.
FULL CLEEK, OR DRIVING MASHIE

Downward Stroke

The same principles apply in bringing the club down as in the play with wooden clubs.

The grip of both hands must be tighter at the moment of impact than in the drive—and this firmness should characterise the whole stroke. At the moment of impact the hands are slightly in advance of the clubhead, which has the effect of keeping the ball low.

Great care should be taken not to allow the body to lunge forward at the ball, as these strokes are played principally with the wrists and forearms only.

Finally, keep the head steady throughout the stroke.
FULL MASHIE

ADDRESS AND STANCE

For the full mashie shot I get nearer and more over the ball than in driving mashie shot; I stand firmly on both feet, knees a little more bent than in long iron shots—weight evenly distributed, rather more on right leg if anything, with the heel of club pressed down.
FULL MASHIE (90 yards)

Upward Stroke

I take mashie back principally with the wrists, left wrist governing the whole stroke. I keep my right elbow close to the side and allow it to recede round the right side. The upward swing should be quite a smooth even movement from the wrists, which are kept firm but not rigid. The club is taken back thus until it is just short of the horizontal position.

In taking the club back, the left knee bends rather more towards the ball than towards the right toe. The right knee is eased a very little in the upward stroke.
Plate No. XI
J. H. Taylor

Finish
With Mashie
FULL MASHIE (90 yards)

Downward Stroke

I always try not to press my mashie to its full extent, and though possibly I might get 110 yards or more in forcing this shot, I find by doing so I lose accuracy. I therefore consider about 90 yards quite far enough for a full mashie.

As in all iron shots, let the arms go well away after the ball—in other words, let the left hand take the stroke well through. If there is the slightest suggestion of pressing with the mashie, I prefer taking a half shot with the next club.

On the downward stroke the left knee resumes its previous position, and directly the club-head meets the ball the right knee commences to bend to allow the body to turn, until at the finish it almost faces the hole.
MASHIE (about 70 yards) WITH CUT

ADDRESS AND STANCE

In addressing the ball for this shot I stand rather nearer, and more facing the hole. The heel of the club should be well down, with its face turned well out, which gives the appearance that the stroke is being played to the right of the hole.

The weight of the body is still more thrown on to the right leg, and the stance is decidedly open.

I notice my photographs show my head slightly on the right side of the ball; possibly my reason for this is that I endeavour to concentrate my gaze underneath the ball.

I consider this most important and absolutely necessary if the club is to "nip" in between the ball and the ground.
Plate No XII
J. H. Taylor

ADDRESS
AND STANCE
MASHIE WITH CUT
RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED,
BREAD STREET HILL, E.C., AND
BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

First Edition, March 1904
Reprinted, May 1904.
DEDICATED

BY KIND PERMISSION

TO

THE RIGHT HON. A. J. BALFOUR

PRIME MINISTER

WHO HAS DONE SO MUCH FOR

THE ROYAL AND ANCIENT GAME