Ronald Teacher congratulates Paul Runyan as he receives the Teacher Trophy and the winner’s check for the 1962 P.G.A. Seniors’ Teacher Trophy Championship for the second year in a row.
FOREWORD

EVERYONE knows, of course, that Paul Runyan has long been one of the finest players of the game, both as a tournament player and now in the senior class. More than this, I know that during all this period he has been a very keen student of golfing technique and a highly competent and experienced instructor. I can think of no one better qualified to write an authoritative book on golf instruction than Paul.

ROBERT T. JONES, JR.
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CHAPTER 3

THE GRIP

HANDS adhering to the club shaft correctly and getting the right feel are indispensable to good shots. It's like the nursery tale of the woman getting home with her pig. "Stick won't beat dog, dog won't bite pig, pig won't jump fence, and I can't get home tonight." For if the grip isn't right, nothing else will be either. Everything that follows in the swing itself will have to compensate for faulty hand position. And, like the poor old woman, you won't get home either.

Of course, there has always been controversy as to what does constitute the right position, and this is still true. The subject has been discussed in every golf book ever written. And yet we must cover it again here. For it will be worth while if we can add just one or two small details to all that has been said before, or clarify one or two old points.

To begin with, when you take hold of the club with the left hand the shaft should lie obliquely across the palm, with the bell-shaped end tucked firmly under the heel of the hand. (Fig. 1). The shaft is then running through the bottom joint of the middle finger to the middle joint of the first finger. (Fig. 2). The back of the left hand should then be turned over the shaft so that when you look down you see three knuckles. The inverted "V" formed by closing your thumb and index finger should point to your right shoulder. (Fig. 3). The "V" must always be kept closed or squeezed
FIG. 3

together down to the joint of the thumb. This sort of closed "V" is referred to as the short thumb position. If the "V" is entirely open so that the club slides down into it, your swing will be too loose. One of the major beneficial changes in Ben Hogan's grip, between his also-ran and his championship days, was from this long thumb to the short thumb position.

The left hand, now, turned to where you see three knuckles, has put the club into a position of purchase. Under the stress of pivoting it can do its share of getting the clubhead through correctly. Pressure is mainly in the last three fingers, although the thumb itself acts as a kind of set-screw against which the fingers can hold the shaft in place.

Now with the face of the club directionally at right angles to the line of flight the right hand is put on as though it were shaking hands, with the palm exactly parallel to the directional posi-
tion of the club face—or exactly at right angles to the line of flight. (Fig. 4). Another check is to have the inverted "V" of the right hand, which is also kept pinched or closed, pointing straight up at your nose.

The shaft is held entirely in the fingers of the right hand, and runs from the bottom joint of the third finger to the middle joint of the index finger, more square and less oblique than it does in the left hand. The right little finger—with certain exceptions that we'll get to later—normally laps over the left index finger. (Fig. 5).

The left thumb is now contained in the right palm, in the natural cleft caused by bringing the right hand up to what I term a natural position. I'm aware of contributing my bit of prejudice here, for many teachers say this "V" should also point to the right shoulder. But in my opinion the right hand can "trigger" the clubhead action in the hitting area (as Tommy Armour says) far more powerfully from this position.
It is tremendously important to grip the club in this consistent manner. Only when you’ve done it consistently well can you ever hope to combine power and control and set your timing up properly. For if you change the relation of your hands at address you necessarily alter the action you must perform to hit the ball.

I object to the right hand “V” pointing at the right shoulder because it takes away the trigger action most of us need in the hitting area. And when a player is using such a grip, the clubhead must be pulled through the ball more stiffly to avoid a snap hook. For big, young fellows with power to spare, this method often works well, I admit. They can hit the ball far enough simply with a stiff-armed action, like a forehand in tennis.

But those of us who need the wrist snap to develop adequate distance had better put the right hand in the position I advocate, where its full throw or trigger can be delivered without closing the face too much. Especially later in your life this becomes important, because stiff push shots then begin to exert overly severe demands on your hip and back. For proof of this look at the physical troubles many players of this school run into in their thirties and forties.

To repeat—if your hands grip the club inconsistently your timing must be inconsistent also if you are to hit your shots straight. The more I turn my hands back, with both “V’s” pointing to the right, the less I can use my wrists coming into the ball.

Conversely, if I point the left hand “V” at my nose and the right hand “V” at my left shoulder (the weakest and poorest grip I can think of), the thrust or flip of the wrists would have to become too exaggerated, and the arm and body action would have to stop almost entirely for the ball to go straight. Plainly this grip wouldn’t allow me to hit the ball anywhere either.

So get the hands properly on the club. With a semi-palm, semi-finger grip, turn the left hand back until you see three knuckles (and if you insist on experimenting, do your experimenting here, on a limited scale, to find precisely how strong the left hand should be carried). Then grip the club completely in the fingers of the right hand, or throwing hand, with this right “V” pointing
at the nose. (Again, if you want to split hairs, I'll settle for the right eye, but no farther right than that.)

The great players have always demonstrated the year-in and year-out effects of a sound grip. Because they are careful to put their hands correctly on the club they play consistently good golf with a minimum of strain and effort. Number one in this group, in my opinion, because of the artistic look of his long slender hands and fingers, is Tommy Armour. For the thirty years I have watched him his grip has never varied from perfection. Others with equally sound hand positions still cannot match the grace with which he holds a club.

Arnold Palmer's grip is also excellent. In the last four years, I believe, his game improved mainly because of his improved grip. I've heard people say that Palmer points both 'V's' over his right shoulder. Maybe he did a couple of years ago, but he certainly doesn't now.

In my own case, I believe I've always had a good grip. Once in my search for power, I tried the ten-fingered or "baseball" grip and found it had exactly the opposite effect. I was straighter, but shorter. If people with sufficiently broad hands put all their fingers on the club, they seem to end up just pushing the ball. The Vardon overlapping grip normally gives them more of a whipping action. At any rate, I for one decided that I couldn't afford the five or ten yards this experiment cost me.

My only other variation (and this was unintentional) has been a tendency to let the left hand get too weak at times, with two, instead of three, knuckles showing. Then to keep from hitting the ball to the right, I have to cast the club too soon, or too much from the top of the swing. Some of our very best players, such as Gene Littler, unconsciously allow their grips to change from time to time. Occasionally he used to raise his hands; this forced the V's to separate, the right hand to go back a few degrees, and the left to go forward. Phil Rodgers, too, one of our brightest new stars, occasionally slips into this habit.

Dow Finsterwald, on the other hand, has had an excellent grip every time I've seen him. Sam Snead also has held the club well
over an unusually long period of time; he never seems to change one iota. And Bobby Jones was another great golfer whose grip suggested the strong, delicate hands of a surgeon.

Gene Sarazen uses a marked variation of the standard grip described above. The casual observer, looking at Gene’s hands on the club, would say they approximate the positions I recommend. But with his stubby hands and short fingers he found that he could get more flexibility by placing his left thumb, not on the club shaft as in the Vardon overlapping grip I have just described (which probably ninety-five percent of our best players use), but outside the right hand completely, tucked in behind the heel. He then interlocks the index finger of the left hand with the little finger of the right. (Fig. 6). Lloyd Mangrum and Claude Harmon are other exponents of this grip. It is the only sort of interlocking grip I ever recommended, but it still is not one of my favorites. In my earlier teaching days I experimented along these lines, and usually the result, in spite of sometimes adding power, was too much loss of control.
A better variant of the Vardon overlapping, even if it does not work for me, is the so-called baseball grip, where all the fingers are on the shaft of the club, with no interlocking or overlapping. (Fig. 7). Actually it has nothing to do with baseball. The left thumb is still inside the right palm. More than that, the club shaft is still held over fifty percent in the fingers, not entirely in the palms as a batter holds a bat. (Sometimes I have wondered why placement hitters in baseball do not experiment with a golf grip to see if it works.)

This eight (or, counting the thumbs, ten) fingered grip does seem to help many people, women especially, or those with long slender fingers and hands too narrow to cover enough space on the shaft to give firmness to the swing. Art Wall has used it with great success. It firmed up his backswing that had been a bit too floppy because his narrow hands bunched together in the Vardon overlapping grip. Dai Rees, from England, is another advocate of this grip, as is our own Bob Rosburg.

This discussion of how to hold the club now leads us to the subject of different textures of club grips. You must discover by trial and error just what suits your type of skin in various weather conditions. The prospect of rain, for instance, used to make me feel anxious for a whole round, until I hit upon the idea of carrying friction tape with me and twisting it in spirals onto the shafts of my clubs if the going got wet. After that I didn’t even have to keep my hands dry to hold on adequately and get plenty of power in my shots. Furthermore, I could stop looking at the sky and attend to my game.

Aside from the elements, some of us have skins either too dry or too moist for certain kinds of grips. Dry skin, for example, does not go well with leather grips except in the hottest weather. Rubberized grips are much better for such hands. Conversely, if your skin tends to be too moist or oily, the Burke Park all-weather grip is preferable. It is made of rubber and cotton cord. Yet, this kind of grip, though ideally suited to wet weather, must be artificially moistened if you hope to hang onto your club in an extremely dry climate like that in the desert.
Continuous play in a warm climate generally favors leather. But during the cold months this material becomes much too hard and slick to hold. A mixture of glycerine and rose water on the hands—which football players also use against the cold—helps bring out the skin’s natural oils. Beeswax in various commercial preparations is a bit less effective, I find, but better than nothing.

Grip thickness is equally important for a firm, but not tense hold on the club. If your hands are small and weak, you need large grips to keep you from feeling that you are simply holding the shaft in your fists. However, such a big grip should taper sharply, so that your hands can develop a slinging, rather than a pushing action. Long-fingered people also need big grips so they won’t gouge themselves with their finger nails. Only very strong and very small-handed players should ever use very small grips.

Now if you feel I have spent too much time discussing the various kinds of grips, just watch the care with which a great player takes hold of his club. Once, back in Hot Springs, when I was an apprentice in club-making, the great MacDonald Smith asked me to put on some grips for him. He gave explicit orders. I was not to use any glue at all beneath the listing, a light-weight sort of padding underneath the leather itself. He would not blame me, he said, if the grips proved too loose, or even came off in his hands. But under no circumstances was I to add any glue to make the listing adhere.

I nodded and started the job at once. But it seemed wasteful to risk ruining all my work by letting these grips slide off, especially since the tiniest bit of glue here and there might hold them. I was careful, I thought, to use very, very little glue, figuring that beneath the listing and calfskin nobody could possibly detect it. Nevertheless, when Mac Smith came in the shop next morning and wrapped those sensitive hands around the first club I had fixed he looked at me dourly and insisted I do them all over again. I went back to work a little wiser.
PAUL RUNYAN, a 54 year-old professional golfer from La Jolla, California, a national figure in golf for over a quarter of a century, is now enjoying a new reign in the spotlight as champion of the P.G.A. senior golfers, those members who have reached their fiftieth birthday.

In February 1962 in Dunedin, Florida, Runyan duplicated his feat of the year before by winning the P.G.A. Seniors’ Teacher Trophy Championship. He defeated a record field of 392 entrants. Runyan has also twice travelled to Great Britain as the guest of the firm of Wm. Teacher & Sons, Ltd., co-sponsors of the senior tournament, and has twice defeated the British senior champion to capture the World’s Senior Championship.

Runyan first gained golfing fame during the 1930’s and the early 40’s when he earned the nickname of “Little Poison.” Besides taking many sectional titles, he won the P.G.A. Championship twice under match play conditions. His first victory came in 1934 and his second, probably the greatest of his career, came in 1938 when he beat a newcomer named Sam Snead, 8 and 7.

Runyan represented the United States in the Ryder Cup Matches in 1933 and 1935 and was also chosen on Ryder Cup teams in 1939 and 1941 when, however, the matches were not played because of World War II.

In recent years, Runyan has become very widely known as a teaching professional. He has given more than 40,000 golf lessons
to beginners, average players and even to tournament stars like Gene Littler and Phil Rodgers.

In the four years that Runyan has been eligible for the 50 and over Senior P.G.A. event, he has carved for himself a remarkable record. In 1959 and 1960 he tied for second. Then as we have seen in 1961 and 1961 he captured both the P.G.A. Seniors’ Teacher Trophy Championship and the World’s Senior crown. In winning his titles, Runyan defeated such tournament stars as Jimmy Demaret, Dutch Harrison and the inimitable Gene Sarazen.

“One of the greatest things that has happened to golf in recent years is Ronald Teacher’s interest and enthusiasm for the P.G.A. Seniors’ Championship,” said Runyan at the 1961 tournament trophy presentation. “It has given all of us golf professionals over 50, particularly those who have been club and teaching pros rather than touring pros, a second chance, a new incentive.”
I've heard it said that a good carpenter with poor tools can do a better job than a poor carpenter with good tools, and that may be true. But applying this theory to the great variety and range of golf merchandise available, I see no reason for any golfer—good, bad or indifferent—to use equipment which is either inferior or unsuited to him personally. Of course, the abundant supply calls for careful selection. This chapter is included to help the reader find his way through all the equipment available, make an intelligent choice for his own needs and save him hundreds of dollars in the process.

At the outset though, let me say that reading it is not going to mean you can walk into any pro shop and outfit yourself with clubs of the proper weight, proper design, proper shaft stiffness for your particular makeup, or even find a ball with the perfect compression for you. Trial and error is the only way to make sure, and probably even then there will be plenty of room for doubt. I've been at this game for over forty years, and I still experiment constantly.

The golf professional, in this respect, has a relationship to the golf manufacturer comparable to that of the race-car driver to the automobile maker. We're supposed to try out all the crackpot gadgets we can think of to improve performance. If ninety percent of them are never put into general use by the average golfer