THE No 4 IRON SHOT

No 1 A comfortable address—left shoulder higher than the right. This is an obvious position to take anyway, because the right hand is below the left on the shaft. Note the elbows kept well together. They remain this way throughout the swing. My nose points well behind the ball and my left eye (the master one) looks only at the ball. Right knee pushed forward and inward.

No 2 An accepted start of the back-swing—an almost imperceptible drag back of the hands as the left arm begins to extend. I do sometimes play with my arm more bent, or even straighter, but in spite of these slight differences, I seem to follow my usual pattern of stroke once the swing begins.

Nos 3 and 4 These pictures show that the club-face is never turned deliberately open at the beginning of the back-swing—a thing I have seen said of my swing and teaching. Jerry Barber, however, whose photograph may be seen on page 126, cocks his wrists and opens the club-face immediately. He does this because he seeks to get a narrow arc and assure his swing of a maximum wrist cock. I make no effort to force the club-face open or shut—I do what comes naturally.

Once the club has got well started and the shoulders begin to turn, the club-face follows the passive arms and hand action.
No 5 As the shoulders tilt, the left knee points forwards and inwards. This movement, easy for me to do, is quite difficult for many beginners to achieve. It has to be learned!

Now with the club-shaft about horizontal and the club-face to the front, I begin to let the wrist cocking help the club-head to follow a longer arc.

No 6 The feet, you may have noticed, are more parallel, one to the other, in my action than in that of some other golfers, who tend to point their toes outwards. The squarer left toe position goes with a definite strong bracing of the left side. The ‘toe-outers’ tend to strike the ball on bent knees and to straighten the left leg, if they do so at all, much later.

No 7 The wrists continue to cock gradually until I reach the point when the down-swing begins. As I pointed out in dealing with the driver action, the club-shaft actually drops further down towards the horizontal in my case, as the hips and feet begin the downward attack on the ball.
THE No 4 IRON SHOT (continued)

Nos 8 and 9  The shoulder turn is being completed and the head has moved fractionally further to the right; note where my nose is pointing now. There is no doubt about the left eye only looking at the ball. There has been no movement of the club-shaft in the hands, the grip being just as it was at address. Many top golfers could not pass this check—they allow much movement of the shaft in their hands. They have found this to be necessary for them; and when I have called on them to watch this action and correct it, they proved to me that they could not hit the ball as well, or as consistently, which is a bit contradictory! Note how the left foot has rolled inwards; left heel is raised and right leg is straight.

No 10  Now the left foot begins to get grounded. The hips and shoulders unwind, the hips faster than the shoulders. Note distance between the shaft and my head in Nos 10 and 11.

No 11  The club-head drops back as the wrists cock more. There is quite a strain coming on the hands at this point. The hands have dropped towards the ball appreciably. Note how the left knee is already pulling away from the right knee in Nos 11 and 12. The shaft is still not moving far away from the head, although the hands have worked nearer to the ball.

No 12  I like pupils to get the impression in this area of the swing of pulling the top end of the shaft down to their right foot. Some get it more
easily if they almost get the idea of hitting the ball with the top end of the grip.

The hips are getting squarer, but the shoulders are behind the hip-unwind.

No 13  It is in this area that there is a speeding up of the arm action, but the wrists and hands, now under strain, are not yet releasing their spring.

At this moment in the swing, above all others, strength and flexibility begin to count, for the hands are holding the club-head back intentionally.

No 14  By the bend in the shaft—an R Pro-fit in this case—the fast pull-down by the arms can be appreciated.

No 15  Already the ‘spring’ is being released.

Nos 16, 17 and 18  The shaft has sprung back to straight, but this spring forward helps only little in the ultimate work the shaft has to do in the hitting area, because this is a heel-to-toe whip and not a to-and-fro one.

If the shaft springs too far past the ‘straighten-up,’ it will be bowed under and, although soon to be asked to operate in a to-and-fro way, will possibly still have the ‘bow’ in it. This will cause a hit off the toe of the club. So many players, knowing this from practice, address the ball in the heel of the club. Study the photographs of Eric Lester and Frank Stranahan on the next page.
As may be seen, professional Eric Lester addresses the ball in the heel of the club.

In the photograph of Frank Stranahan, a most successful American amateur who turned professional, the shaft is clearly oscillating. It is still reacting from the pull down while trying to work in another plane.
Nos 19, 20 and 21  The hips have ‘steadied’ to allow the hands and arms to overtake the body and for the club-head to speed up. This ‘steadying’ keeps the club-head on its arc.

The club-head is now moving fast. I have seen some scientific studies, which indicate that the maximum speed is already almost reached, and that the job of the hands and arms is to maintain this speed at impact.

It is in this area that strong legs and back muscles count, because the centrifugal pull can be up to 100 lbs.

It is quite noticeable, too, that the club-face in No 19, from the accepted position, facing the front, begins to turn down to arrive square at impact.

This position in No 19 is seen in every top golfer’s swing. Therefore, it must be let to the hands to square up the club-face. Why bother too much about trying to square it going back and cramping the back-swing?

Nos 22 and 23  The shaft is throwing forward a little—a sort of natural release following the hand action—but it is soon to be bent back on impact, as it will slow down 20 per cent, with the resistance of the ball, weighing one-tenth of a pound.
THE No 4 IRON SHOT (continued)

No 24  Note how the hand and arm positions in my action at address (No 1) and impact are similar, but my head has been thrown back 'against' the shot—it points more behind the ball.

Compare angles; note parting in the hair and where nose points. I have heard some American pros have even tried deliberately to accentuate this 'throwing back against the blow' by the head. I do it instinctively and so far have not done any good by trying to develop a more pronounced jerk back.

Note how the blade has squared up naturally. We all have this gift, but it requires strength to handle a long instrument weighing around 16 ozs.

That is why, knowing this, I have for many years worked on building up the strength of the hands and arms.

No 25  The effort to stop the club slowing up is an instinctive one and even in 25, where the club-head has advanced a foot, the shaft has not yet regained its straightness; note, however, that the blade is still square, although the ball has already gone two feet.

No 26  It is only when the ball has gone about four feet that the hands allow the club-face to roll naturally to finish the action. There is no point in forcing the club-face through squarely any further, for the ball has long since gone—contact is during one inch only.
Those who do try to hold the club-face square for four to five feet after impact are putting a big strain on their spines and are, I feel, exaggerating.

No 27 There is no big forward (turning through) head movement yet; in fact the head, if anything, seems to have gone more against the shot, judging by the angle of the head itself—though the parting seems to show a slight unwind towards the hole.

Nos 28, 29 and 30 To get where I am in these pictures, loose neck muscles are essential. The short-necked golfers cannot copy this position, however much they try.

The left leg is still fully braced, as it has been since I arrived in No 23 position.

The right arm is still fully extended in Nos 29 and 30—it became extended only in No 28, in fact. The later the hit, the later the arm becomes extended.

If the right shoulder is kept back and the head is kept steady, then a crossing over of the hands occurs much earlier than in the case of the player who lets his head and shoulders turn with the impact.

Nos 31 and 32 Now the head and right shoulder can come through. As I have already said, I am a particularly good ‘looker at the ball’ and No 31 is my normal action—not ‘one for the camera.’