The Game of Golf

By W. Park Junr.
THE
GAME OF GOLF
BY
WILLIAM PARK, JUN.
CHAMPION GOLFER, 1887-89

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

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Although professional golfers have always been teachers of the game, their instruction has been imparted more by example than by precept. Such a method was and is undoubtedly the best, but it is not available to the same extent at the present day as it was, say, fifty or even twenty years ago, and hence a demand has sprung up for books of instruction. Amateur golfers have hitherto been the sole contributors to the literature of the game, but the belief has frequently been expressed to me that a volume coming from a professional would be read with interest, and it has also been suggested that I should undertake to write one. Encouraged by such friendly remarks, the attempt has been made, and it is hoped that what has been written will be of service to golfers. Being intended for a book of instruction, the history of the game is omitted, and no reference is made either to our famous links or to the past and present heroes of
the game, save with the view of illustrating the more effectually some of the subjects dealt with. An endeavour has been made to write as concisely and briefly as is consistent with giving intelligible information.

I hope that lady golfers will not feel disappointed because they are not specially referred to. There is but one game of golf, and what has been written is applicable to all who play it. Proof is not wanting that there are lady players inferior to none save a few of the cracks.

I have to thank Mr. J. E. Laidlay for kindly supplying me with photographs and diagrams of the style of play of which he is so able an exponent, and I cannot conclude without acknowledging my indebtedness to Mr. John Anderson for the assistance he has given me in preparing this book for the press.

W. P., Jr.

Musselburgh, 1896.
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CHAPTER VI

PUTTING

Reference to the rules of the game will show that the putting-green is defined as the ground within twenty yards of the hole, excepting hazards. Putting applies strictly to play upon the putting-green, the strokes themselves being called putts. While this is the strict meaning, the verb to putt is sometimes used in a descriptive sense; for instance, an uncertain player is frequently told when his ball lies within fifty or sixty yards of the edge of a bunker, which he probably will not be able to carry, 'Just putt up to the bunker,' or he may be similarly advised when he has an approach to play, 'Just putt it up.' Such strokes are not putts within the real meaning of the word, but the expression well applies to the kind of stroke intended to be made, namely, one that will roll the ball up. In dealing with the subject, my remarks will apply only to putting in its strict sense.

Attention has already been directed to the necessity for playing approaches with accuracy; still greater,
with a putting-cleek the ball can be hit harder in proportion to the length of the putt. On a rough green this is a distinct advantage, as, more strength being put into the stroke, the ball which will travel with greater speed and will pull up more quickly is less liable to be deflected by inequalities of the ground. My belief is, shortly, that for good, smooth greens the wooden putter is still able to hold its own, while for rougher greens a putting-cleek can be used to greater advantage. Taking all things into account, and if a golfer desires to use one club only for putting on all greens, I would recommend him to adopt a putting-cleek as likely to prove the more useful for all-round play. A putting-cleek is preferable to an iron putter, and should have a little loft on the face. Some players use an ordinary cleek for putting, but by doing so they put themselves to disadvantage. The flat lie of an ordinary cleek is against proper control being obtained over the ball, as it necessitates standing too far from it; the long shaft, too, is apt to catch and spoil the stroke, and on an ordinary all-round cleek there is usually rather more loft than is desirable for putting.

For putting, the grip of the club may, subject to the remarks made in Chapter III., be taken to be the same as that for driving and approaching, so far as the position of the hands is concerned. There is, however, the very important difference that the right hand
FIG. 38.—PUTTING—ADDRESSING THE BALL
should hold more firmly than the left, thus reversing
the rule for the grip in other parts of the game. Putting should be almost all done with one hand, because, when both hands are used, the one acts against the other; the right hand is the hand which guides the club, and guiding the club is everything in putting, especially in short putts. With regard to the part of the club-shaft to be grasped, there is the greatest possible diversity of practice. Some players grip the putter just above the neck, and crouch down to play; others stand erect, and grip the club at the extreme end; and players may be seen with grips all over the shaft between these extremes. I do not think either extreme conduces to good play, and neither is graceful. The putter should be grasped on the leather at such a place as to give the player easy command of his club without contorting his body.

The stance differs slightly from that for either driving or approaching. It is shown by the illustration, Fig. 38, and the diagram, Fig. 39. Here, as in the former case, $b$ represents the place of the ball, and $aa$ the line of play. It will be seen that the feet are placed much closer together, that the ball is nearer the right foot and also nearer the player, that the right foot is placed considerably in advance of the left, and that the knees are more bent. In this position, which is the one usually adopted, the weight of the body,
while supported on both legs, is mainly borne by the right leg.

Off the left leg may now be regarded as a recognised position for putting. It is sometimes adopted by players who drive and approach off the right leg; and while I do not recommend that different styles should be cultivated by the same person for different parts of the game, varying the attitude does less harm in putting than in anything else. We constantly see the best players altering their stance from time to time, and putting equally well from all positions; in the short game there is the greatest scope for golfers humouring a passing fancy, provided a stiff and cramped attitude is not acquired. Mr. Laidlay is again our authority,
FIG. 40.—PUTTING, OFF THE LEFT LEG—MR. LAIDLAY ADDRESSING THE BALL.
and an illustration (Fig. 40) and a diagram (Fig. 41) of his position are given. As in approaching, the body is thrown over to the left and the weight rested on that leg. A few years back Mr. Laidlay's position was different, but always 'off the left leg.' He stood with the ball almost opposite the toe of his left foot, and placed the right foot behind the line of the left, and not in front as above shown. I may remark, however, that his putting has not suffered from the change; it is still of the same characteristic deadliness as formerly.

There are two methods of putting in vogue: the one is putting for the hole itself, and the other is putting over a line to the hole. Holing a long putt is a matter of secondary consideration; the proper play is to endeavour to lay the ball near the hole—to 'lay it dead,' in golfing language,—with the view of making certain of getting it down with the next stroke. This is subject to the remarks to be hereafter made. On the other hand, all short putts ought to be holed, and a proportion, varying according to their distance, of putts of average length ought also to be holed. For all putts the proper way is undoubtedly to play over a line to the hole. In explanation of this, it may be stated that, in the intervening ground between the hole and the ball, there must be a spot over which the ball will pass in its course to the hole. This spot, which shows the line to the hole, having been ascertained, all that is
required to be done is to play over it with the requisite strength to reach the hole. It is not permissible (see Rule 33) to place any mark or to draw any line as a guide; but even on the smoothest and best kept greens it is always possible to notice a blade of grass, or something of this nature, which will serve as a guide. Such a mark should be selected comparatively near the ball, because if it be far away one may as well not have it,

![Diagram of Mr. Laidlay's Position]

**FIG. 41.—PUTTING—DIAGRAM OF MR. LAIDLAY'S POSITION**

but play directly on the hole: it is intended as an aid. There need not be any hard and fast rule which the player must observe in taking the line to the hole; but it will be found that the best way is either to stand behind the ball and look over it towards the hole, or to stand at the other side of the hole and look over it towards the ball. I prefer the latter mode. Standing in this position, it will not be difficult, after some little
experience, to see the imaginary line which the ball must trace on its road to the hole; and somewhere in this imaginary line, near the ball, a spot or mark such as I have spoken of before should be selected. Keeping the spot in view, the ball should be played over it with sufficient strength to reach the hole. Upon the strength may depend the proper line to the hole, as, if the putt is 'bolted,' the line will be straighter and more direct than if it is 'dribbled.'

There will of course be great diversity in the nature of the ground to be traversed in the putts, and allowance must always be made for any irregularity or obstruction which lies in the way. A slight cup in the green may turn the ball off, or a ridge may make it impossible to get the ball down. In some cases the green may be found to lie on an incline or slope, the putt requiring to be played across. In such cases the line of putt will not be straight—as on level ground,—because when the ball is played forward it will at the same time roll down the slope; hence it is necessary to play up the slope a sufficient distance to counteract the falling off, or, in technical language, it is necessary to 'borrow.' The line will be a curve, the curve beginning at the ball and ending at the hole. Having selected the spot to be played over, and estimated the strength required to reach the hole, the face of the putter should be adjusted accordingly and the putt played. It is usual to rest the club in front of the ball for an instant.
just before playing, and it is now settled that doing so is not a contravention of Rule 34; the practice is, I think, a help to good putting. It is, however, very much a matter of taste and opinion. If the putt be difficult, or if it be an important one, it is worth while to take some trouble with it. It may be an advantage to study the line both from the hole to the ball and vice versa, so as to ensure accuracy. At the same time it must be remembered that the line from each point of view will not necessarily be the same, and both may be correct, as there may be, and very often is, more than one road to the hole. Where both views give the same line, there can be no difficulty; but where each shows a different line, the player must exercise his own judgment as to which he will take. As I have said before, I invariably adopt the line seen by looking from the hole to the ball.

Golfers who desire to play the short game steadily and accurately will never regret taking plenty of time to their putts. It is a grand mistake to play hurriedly. At the same time I do not counsel an undue amount of time being spent near the hole; there is a limit beyond which one should not go, and hanging over a putt is by no means to be recommended; but plenty of time and care should be bestowed upon seeing that the proper line is obtained, and in placing the putter in the proper position. After this has been done play at once. If unnecessary time be taken, the putt is apt to grow more
and more formidable-looking every instant, and when once such a feeling grows over the player, he may bid farewell to the hope of holing. He must also remember that he is not the sole occupant of the links, and must have some consideration for the players who are following up behind.

The art of putting lies to a great extent in the player having confidence in himself. If he goes up to his ball in the full belief that he can and will hole his putt, he has a better chance of doing so than if he is troubled with doubts about this and that rough place his ball has to cross, and if his vision is obscured by the dread of a missed putt. If he dreads the putt, the longer he hangs over his ball the worse it will appear, and the less likely is he to hole it. One of the secrets of putting is to hit the ball, and the ball only—a sclaffy style of putting is fatal; and, with the object of making absolutely certain of avoiding it, rather aim to strike the globe just the least thing above the ground. The ball should be smartly tapped with the putter, the stroke being played entirely from the wrists; and it should neither be struck a slow, heavy blow, nor shoved, nor should it be jerked. Care should be taken to see that the putter is drawn straight back in the line of play, and brought forward in making the stroke in the same direction, so that only a forward movement is imparted to the ball; if this be not attended to, the ball may be sliced or pulled in exactly the same way as
in the long game, and with similar effect, the result being that the ball will go past the hole instead of in. After having got the line of play and adjusted the head of the putter thereto, a final glance may be given over the line to the hole, just to make sure that everything is correct, and to gauge the requisite strength; but keep the eye on the ball when making the stroke. The face of the putter must not be inclined in, so as to hang over the ball.

It is not a good system of putting to dribble the ball into the hole. A putt should be boldly played, and the ball should strike the back of the hole and fall in; one constantly hears a player being coached to 'play for the back of the hole,' and it is one of the golden rules of golf, which has been handed down to us from former generations of players. When the putt is dribbled, there is no way on the ball, and the least inequality of the green will turn it off the line. There is another trite maxim for golfers, which has the like savour of antiquity, viz. 'Never up, never in'; unless there is some excellently good reason to the contrary, such as the state of the green on the other side of the hole, a putt should never under any circumstances be short. If the ball be not up to the hole, it cannot possibly go in. A well-played putt which misses the hole should be, in the case of putts of long or average distance, from a couple of feet to a foot past, and, in the case of
short putts, about six inches past. Not being up is characteristic of a weak game, and, I think, helps to break down a player much more than does being too strong.

A putt down hill is somewhat difficult to negotiate, because it cannot be played boldly, but must be dribbled, and there being little pace on the ball, it is apt to be deflected off the line of play. These down-hill putts frequently require little more than that the ball be put in motion, and, gathering speed as it goes, the ball, if it misses the hole, will often roll out of holing distance for the next stroke. I prefer to play such putts with an ordinary cleek, as enabling back spin or bottom to be put on the ball, which helps to check its rolling too far. A little judgment and forethought will often obviate the necessity for having such a stroke to play. One should endeavour to avoid playing the ball into such a position that a down-hill putt will be the result, and should rather try to keep the ball at the low side of the slope, leaving a putt up hill, which can usually be boldly played with success.

It is on the putting-green that there occurs the position of the balls known as a stymie, and which is shown by the illustration, Fig 42. After being struck from the tee, the ball furthest from the hole must be played first, and a stymie is caused by the opponent's ball lying on the putting-green between the hole and
the ball that has to be played. According to Rule 20, when the balls in play lie within six inches of each other, measured from their nearest points, the ball nearer the hole shall be lifted until the other is played,

![Diagram of a stymie]

and shall then be replaced as nearly as possible in its original position. It will thus be seen that when a stymie has to be played, the balls must be at least six inches apart. There are two ways of playing stymies: the one is by using a putter or cleek, and putting on sufficient **heel or pull to screw the ball** which is being played round the opposing ball; this, however, is seldom successful, unless both balls are a few feet from the hole, and there is sufficient distance between them to permit of the heel or pull taking effect, or unless the nature of the green helps the ball to curl in to the hole. The other method—and it is the best one—is to loft the ball which is being played over the opposing ball. This stroke is best played with a lofter, or, in default of that club, an iron or mashie. The club must be grasped firmly, as for putting, and the ball struck sharply from the wrists, the strength being proportionate to the
length of stroke. In stymies near the hole some players loft the ball right into the hole, while others prefer to make it loft on the green just short of the hole, and roll in. Both methods are equally good, if successful. Where the balls lie at the distance of a yard or so from it, it is hardly possible of course to loft the ball into the hole, and it must be lofted over the opposing ball and allowed to roll in. The stroke is by no means so difficult as it appears to be at first sight, and with a little practice one will be astonished to find how often he can negotiate a stymie successfully. The chief requisite is nerve. The taking out of a couple of balls and practising stymies is, however, quite a different matter from playing one in a match. The stroke is a very delicate one, and the least inaccuracy means a foozle, and the danger, which is great, of either missing the hole and running out of holing distance for the next stroke, or, worse than that, of hitting the opposing ball and knocking it into the hole. Even the best professional players will seldom play a stymie, unless they require to hole in that stroke to obtain a half. I would therefore say to every golfer who has been laid a stymie, and the opposing ball lies dead, if he has to play the odds, he must risk playing the stymie, because it is his only chance to halve the hole; but if he is playing the like, he is better to putt past the opposing ball with the view of laying his own dead,
and so making absolutely certain of a half, than to risk playing the stymie, with the possibility, on the one hand, of being successful, and so gaining the hole, and the chance, on the other hand, of foozling and losing the hole—not getting even a half.
from which a ball is driven to the place where it first alights, exclusive of the distance it may thereafter bound or roll. A long carry or a short carry are used to signify the distance a ball must be lofted usually over a hazard.

Cleck.—A golf-club with an iron head. See page 25.

Club.—The implement with which the ball is struck in playing golf. See pages 17 et seq.

Course.—A golf-course is the ground upon which golf is played.

Cup.—A small, shallow hole in the course, frequently one made by the stroke of some previous player having removed turf.

Dead.—This word is used in two senses: first, when a ball falls without rolling, it is said to fall 'dead'; and second, a ball is said to lie 'dead' when it lies so near the hole that the player is certain to put it in with his next stroke. The term is also applied to putting, and a putt is said to be laid 'dead'.

Divot.—A piece of turf. Frequently used to signify a piece of turf cut out of the links in the act of playing a stroke.

Dormy.—The condition of a player when he is as many holes ahead of his opponent as there remain holes to be played. See page 10.

Draw.—To play a ball so that it will travel with a curve towards the left hand. (Synonymous with Hook and Pull.)
**Driver or Play-club.**—The wooden club with which the ball is usually driven from the tee, and with which the ball can be driven the furthest distance. See page 23.

**Driving.**—Used in two senses: first, playing tee-shots; and second, playing any full strokes.

**Duff.**—To hit the ground behind the ball. With a duffed stroke the ground is hit so far behind that the ball will not be driven any distance; while in a sclaffed stroke, although the ground behind is also struck, the ball will usually be driven nearly as far as if clean hit. See also **Sclaff**.

**Face.**—This word is used in two senses: first, when one speaks of playing a ball over a ‘face,’ it there signifies the rise of the hazard or ground over which the ball is to be played; second, it is applied to the front part of the club-head which strikes the ball. See page 18.

**Flat.**—A club is said to be ‘flat’ when its head is at a very obtuse angle to the shaft.

**Fog.**—Moss; also thick, rank grass.

**Follow-through.**—The continuation of the swing of the club after the ball has been struck.

**Fooze.**—A badly played stroke.

**Fore!**—The warning cry which a golfer gives to any person apt to be struck by the ball which he has driven or is about to drive.
Scare.—The part of the club where the head and shaft are spliced together. See page 18.

Scalaf.—See Baff. The distinction between the two words is somewhat subtle. In baffing a ball the stroke is played with the intention of lofting it high in the air, whereas a sclaffed ball is not necessarily lofted high. See also Duff.

Scratch player.—One who does not receive any handicap allowance.

Screamer.—A very long stroke, so called from the whistling noise made by the ball.

Screw.—To put spin on a ball either by ‘pulling’ it or ‘slicing’ it.

Set of clubs.—The complement of clubs carried by a player.

Shaft.—The stick or handle of the club. See page 18.

Short game.—Approaching and putting.

Slice.—To draw the face of the club across the ball from right to left in the act of hitting it, the result being that it will travel with a curve towards the right.

Socket.—The part of the head of iron clubs into which the shaft is fitted. See page 20.

Sole.—The flat bottom part of the club-head which rests on the ground. See page 18.

Spoons.—Clubs having wooden heads, lofted or grassed, so as to loft the ball. See page 26.

Spring.—The degree of suppleness of the club shaft.
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