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## THE REFINEMENTS OF PUTTING

By WALTER J. TRAVIS.

### Putting versus Driving—

I AM NOT a believer in long driving, which is not at the same time good driving, and I think that even yet, after the lesson has been many times taught to them, many players hopelessly underestimate the value of reliable putting. Putting was one of the last matters I made a close study of when I took up the game of golf. The first thing that strikes you when you come to analyze the game is that of the total number of strokes played in a perfect round of golf nearly half the number are absorbed in these little putts on the green. As I have already said, it took me some time to make this discovery. But when I did I gave my whole mind to a solution of the problem. Suppose a hole is a par 5, it is meant that the player shall be on the green in three strokes and shall have two left for the putts. If the hole is a par 4, he has to be on the green in two, and has two left for putting. If it is a par 3, he must be on the green with his tee-shot and has two left for putts.

This is the simple mathematical reckoning of the business; and very few golfers seem to put it to themselves that putting is really half the game; that they have twice as many putts—and, alas! sometimes more—

as drives in the course of a round, and that, therefore, bad putting at a hole is twice as costly as bad driving, and excellent putting infinitely more remunerative than the finest play from the tee. On the green at least, you may, indeed, very often gain a whole stroke; and it is the stroke that tells.

Now watch the man who drives the longest balls throughout the round, and count the number of times when, in his desperate efforts to drive farther and farther, he goes clean off the line and into rough grass or other entanglements; then count the number of times that he loses the hole as a consequence of getting into these difficulties, and reckon for yourself how much his long driving has benefited him.

Unless a man can absolutely depend upon himself surely it is better to practice a little self-denial in driving and keep straight. Let your opponent go into the rough if he likes. Apart from this view of the matter, consider how very seldom does the long driver, even when his stroke is well played, gain anything substantial over the average driver. Take a hole of average length—say 350 yards. The latter drives his tee-shot 200 yards, and, being left with a comfortable iron shot to the

green, is perfectly satisfied that he has done everything that is humanly possible in the circumstances. He is nicely in the middle of the course, clear of all hazards, and his second shot will be as easy of accomplishment as it was ever meant to be. He has insured himself against all accidents; that is to say, he has taken twenty or thirty yards off his drive and been guaranteed for safety. Now what does the long driver do? He smites the ball to the utmost extent of his power with object of out-driving his opponent. Why he does so he himself does not know. He cannot possibly reach the green, 350 yards away, in a single stroke. Therefore, he will have to play another shot to reach it, as his opponent has to do, and the only difference will be that, if his drive has come off as

he intended, he may have his to play from a range of 120 yards instead of 150 yards, as in his opponent's case. That is not a very tangible advantage after all. And he has run all the extra risk of trouble.

If a player stands a chance of gaining a whole stroke by tremendous driving, as distinguished from average driving, at a hole, let him by all means run the sporting risk if so disposed, which he must undoubtedly run when he makes the

attempt; but before he makes up his mind to do so let him mentally map out the play at any given hole and see whether, in the absence of fozzles, there is really any good prospect of his gaining that stroke. If he does this fairly and logically he will see that very seldom does he gain it.

### Direction and Strength—

WHEN I came to study putting at the beginning I realized that there were two chief essentials in it, which, once mastered, made it comparatively easy. The first of these essentials is that the ball shall be made to travel in the proper line for the hole; and the second, that just sufficient strength shall be put into the stroke as to ensure the ball reaching the hole with so very little to spare that there shall be no risk of

its running far past. Anybody can be taught with practice how to putt straight, but nobody can give him a hint of value as to how to putt with the proper strength. This is more an instinct than anything else. Mr. Arnold Haultain, in "The Mystery of Golf," says: "Putting is a fine art. It requires the most delicate and educated touch. To measure the precise amount of force necessary to propel your ball (with a certain spin) 5 feet—50 feet . . .



MR. WALTER J. TRAVIS—Stance and address for putting.

This is not learned in a fortnight. One putter I remember whose putting was a delight to the eye. He seemed positively to infuse sight and intelligence into his ball. The way that small sphere would start from his club, mount an incline, negotiate a curve, look for the hole, and, endowed with some curious spin, drop unhesitatingly in, without dreaming for a moment of rimming it, or running over it or stopping short of it, was a sight to make one wise. It taught one that even on the green—perhaps especially on the green, there was scope, and abundance of scope, for the play of the subtlest and most intelligent skill."

NEARLY everybody has his own style of putting, and it is only with hesitation that I advise particular methods; for if a man is a good putter, as putters go, it is probably best for him to keep to the style which he has very likely dropped upon by accident. You cannot be dogmatic about putting, as you can about the methods of driving, for there is far more liberty in method. However, there seems to me to be some chief principles, adherence to which I regard as very helpful.

### Stance—

THE QUESTION of stance is a very important one, although in the same day you rarely see two players adopt exactly the same stance in putting. Some of them putt off the right leg and some off the left. In my opinion, the right leg is the better. Now, in putting, everything depends upon the proper action of the wrists, and the arms, *from the elbows only*, more especially the right. In a longish putt the upper part of the left arm is brought into play, up to the shoulder, but in a restrained way.

This in the back stroke. The body does not enter into the question at all, for whilst a putt is being accomplished it should be absolutely motionless, and when it is not so there is a much greater likelihood than usual of the putt being missed.

### The Hands—

I BELIEVE that putting should be done always with one hand—with one hand actively at work, that is. The left one should be used only for the purpose of swinging the club-head backwards preparatory to making the stroke. When it has done that its work is over, and the right hand should then be sole master of the situation, the left being merely kept in attachment to it for steady-ing purposes. When only one hand is thus employed, the gain in accuracy is very great. Two hands at work on a short putt or a long one tend to distraction. When the stroke is being made the grip of the right hand should be firm, but not tight, and after the impact the club-head should be allowed to pass clean through with an easy following stroke. The follow-through should, indeed, be as long as it is possible to make it comfortably, and with this object in view, at the moment of touching the ball the grip of the fingers of the left hand should be considerably relaxed, so that the right hand may go on doing its work without interruption. Never hit or jerk the ball, as so many players do. There is nothing that pays so well as the easy follow-through stroke.

### The Grip—

IT WILL be observed from the accompanying illustration that my grip is different from what may be termed the orthodox, the first finger of the left hand overlapping the

little finger of the right. This, I think, facilitates the follow-through and allows a freer relaxation of the grip of the left hand at and following the moment of impact. Both thumbs are straight down the shaft and so closely are the hands together that the right thumb overrides the left up to the first joint, so that both hands are working in unison so far as possible. The shaft is gripped with the fingers, delicately, yet firmly, never tightly. A tight grip, in any circumstances, is fatal to good putting.

#### Refinements—

Now, these are the elements, a faithful observance of which will assuredly prove of benefit.

NOW FOR WHAT may be called the refinements, little things for the most part, but, oh! so potent in the aggregate. For good putting, day in and day out, depends so much on a harmonious combination, a co-ordination of so many little things. Let any one be out of tune, or out of step, as it were . . . let there be the least discord, and the ball simply will not go into the hole. Sometimes, indeed, this keeps up for the entire round.—And then we denounce the greens, or the ball, or the putter . . . or even find fault with our caddie,

or threaten to give up the game. Alas! there are so many of these little things, these factors which are so hard to bring into proper adjustment each and every time, that the wonder is that we manage as well as we do. Let there for instance be more weight than usual on one's heels or toes, or a variation in stance, or grip, or alignment of eyes, or elbows, or improper timing, or faulty taking back of the club with result the ball is not struck in center, or too high, or too low, or that most besetting sin of all, looking up too soon — any one spells disaster.

And yet putting looks simple!

#### Style—

THE REAL VALUE of good putting lies in the cultivation of a style that will yield the best average results, to which end it will be found that

this can best be brought about by doing the same thing in the same way every time. In other words, after a certain method has been found which promises the best results, for one's individual needs, that is the one to stick to, but before settling down to any particular style it would be well to conduct a series of experiments in all the moods and tenses of this elusive business of



MR. WALTER J. TRAVIS—Showing his putting grip.

getting a small ball into a small hole. Try this, that and the other style. It will not be time wasted. For it will be found that even after one has settled upon a certain definite way there will come times when everything goes wrong. Happy is the golfer then who is versatile enough to fall back on what has proved to be the next best method. Indeed, it is not a bad plan, if things are not going right, to switch at once to something diametrically opposite. If, for instance, one ordinarily putts off the right, try off the left; if the club is taken back *inside* the ball, try it *outside*; if a long grip, try one lower down; if a narrow stance, try a wider one. Even try putting with the first finger of the right hand down the shaft. And if all these fail, then do not hesitate to at once equip yourself with a totally different putter. It may be found to tide over the trouble. Indeed, it may lead to the abandonment of one's regular putter.

### Putters—

SPEAKING OF PUTTERS, I am a firm believer in a heavy one—from 18 to 19 ounces. The heavy putter has, in my opinion, *every* advantage over a light one. It has a steadying influence. *It* does the work; the ball may be struck more firmly; moreover, the ball keeps its line better, not being so easily deflected. It is important that the grip should be *thin*, as putting, good putting, is largely a matter of delicacy of touch—tactility. The shaft should be stiff. As for models, my experience is wholly in favor of the center-shafted ones, as the margin of error is wider by reason of there being a greater latitude of striking surface immediately adjacent to the center

of percussion. That is to say, if struck off center, even to the extent of half an inch, the ball will run true . . . something that cannot be said of putters, the shaft of which terminates at the heel.—Which, of course, goes a great way toward simplifying the problem. For putting is a double-barreled affair—after the line is secured—consisting in striking the ball in the center off the true point of gravity or percussion of the club, plus the requisite force.

It is better for all-round purposes to have a shade of loft on the face. Not only does this give more command over the ball, especially on a keen green, but it is more useful on a rough, or soggy green than a straight-faced one; and, moreover, it may be used to run up just off the green.

### The Line—

APROPOS of the line, by which, of course, is meant the line to the hole, there are two ways of getting this: first, by sighting, low down, from the ball to the hole, and, second, reversing the process from the hole to the ball. If there be any question, the latter is usually the correct one. After the line is ascertained, a spot from six to twelve inches should be selected in the shape of a blade of grass or something of the kind, and the putter placed immediately in front of the ball at a perfect right angle to the spot. Then, *without changing the angle of the club-face*, rest the club lightly back of the ball, as closely as possible. Too much importance cannot be attached to this matter of getting the line. After the line is thus secured, the only thing to think about is how hard to strike the ball. In short, you will see, we are trying to make the operation as simple as

possible. Simple, did we say? Simple, nothing—to use some current slang. For putting, of all departments of the game, while simple looking, is really the most delicately complicated part of the game, for, as we have already hinted, there are so many component factors. In driving, there is merely the matter of hitting the ball true. There is no limitation in respect to distance and, mercifully, there is a good deal of latitude in respect to the line. Golf may be likened unto a pyramid—the base representing the teeing-ground, narrowing, narrowing the while the sacred hole is approached, as represented by the top of the pyramid. So that the approach becomes a more delicate operation than the drive, comprehending, as it does, accurate hitting, plus strength, both of which factors are intensified when the putt is essayed, with all the added difficulties of "borrow"—allowance for undulations—and one's preconceived estimate of the strength of the green.

AFTER the line is ascertained, and the putter adjusted thereto rectangularly, that part of the business is settled, absolutely. It is inadvisable to look more than once at the hole after these preliminaries have been arranged, and then only with an eye to the force to be applied. In point of fact, I rarely take a second glance. I have already sized up the situation and usually have a clear idea as to how hard to hit the ball after the first survey. And I find that first impressions are nearly always correct, so that nothing at all is to be gained by more than a single look at the hole. Really, one has already had two—the first of a comprehensive kind which takes in the distance, the character of the "go-

ing," whether fast or slow, the allowance to be made for undulations, or wind; and the second when the question of the line is being determined. Let there be more and doubt will insidiously creep in. Doubt as to the correctness of one's first conception. Then, by the time this is threshed out satisfactorily . . . if ever it really is . . . the line to the hole has been lost. I defy anyone to putt well in such a distracted state. And yet we see the same thing occurring hole after hole . . . with all sorts of objurgations at the inevitable result.

#### **Body Weight—**

A LITTLE WHILE AGO I adverted to the distribution of weight in the stance. It seems a trivial thing . . . but it isn't. Let there be a preponderance of weight on the heels and the character of the back swing is radically different from that which obtains when the bulk of one's weight is on the balls of the feet. In the one case the line of retraction of the club is in toward the body, while in the other it is away from it (always supposing, of course, that the right elbow has been gently rested on the hip, of which more anon), so that the ball is struck at different points, totally different results of course ensuing in the direction of the ball. The same is true of grip, or alignment of eyes, or elbows. Let the grip of the left hand be inward, the guiding line being that between the thumb and the forefinger pointing straight down the shaft—the result will be a pull—unless there be a corrective in the way of keeping the knuckles (I am speaking of the left hand) *up* in going through, which introduces artificiality. On the other hand, if the left hand grip outwardly, there

will be a tendency toward a slice. So with the eyes and elbows. Unless *both* are parallel with the line of putt, there will be faulty direction, according to inclination of either.

### Parallelism—

I SPOKE of the right elbow. Now we approach, if, indeed, we do not penetrate, the chamber of the mystery of mysteries . . . the art of putting—the art which conceals the art. I hold that no man can putt accurately and consistently with a detached right elbow. By detached I mean free from the body. In this way there is no assurance that the line of retraction is identical in any two cases. In all probability it isn't. It could scarcely be otherwise.—But by gently resting the right elbow on the forward part of the right hip and *keeping it there until the ball has been struck*, the backward and forward swing will be similar every time. That is positive. And results are less apt to vary, always supposing, of course, that the body has remained immovable, which is a prerequisite.

### The Pivotal Swing—

The great merit of this is that one is always making the back swing from a *fixed point*. It is like the swing of a gate, or a door. For just as sure as the club-head goes back on a certain line, over and over again, so it will return along the same path, provided of course there is no change of base of the elbow. It is a perfectly natural movement: there is no straining for effect, no artificial attempt to keep the club-head moving continuously along a straight line back of the hole—the prolongation of the line to the hole. That, indeed, is the rock upon which so many players split. The main-

tenance of that line (I am speaking now of a straight line back of the ball) necessitates the right arm leaving the side, which, of course, in the absence of any pivotal point, paves the way for mistakes on the return journey.

To convince yourself of the soundness of this, rest your elbow, as you sit, on any part of your right thigh and wave your hand back and forth. It will be found to invariably describe the same arc. In confirmation of which, take a pencil and a sheet of paper and go through the same performance. Now detach the elbow and see what happens!

It will be noticed that the line indicated in the putt proper by the pencil-mark is not absolutely straight. There is a slight curvature to the left. That is as it should be. Given that the ball is about midway of this line it will go perfectly straight; if to the right or left of the center there will be a corresponding variation. This central point in the actual putt is of course largely determined by the stance and the position of the hands with reference to the ball. This is a matter which anyone may easily work out to suit himself. It may be well to add here that the more the hands are ahead of the ball, in the address, the greater the tendency of the ball to go to the right of the hole. Contrariwise, the more they are back of the ball, the greater the tendency of the ball to go to the left of the hole.—In other words, a slice or a pull may be communicated at will.—Which is well worth remembering.

### The Short Back—

NEARLY EVERYONE takes his putter too far away from the ball in the back stroke. This is a mistake. The

shorter the distance, the less chance of any error creeping in. And the shorter the back stroke, the firmer must the ball be struck and the better the follow-through. Most short putts are missed by not striking the ball firmly, decisively. The holding power of the hole is much underestimated. By all means putt boldly; the ball will hold the line the better the more firmly it is hit. I don't, by the way, like the term "hit." I should prefer to employ one more expressive, were it not for fear that I might be misunderstood. The ball is not really "hit" at all; it is *stroked*, gently coaxed, as it were, into the hole. Hit, somehow, is associated with a jab, a stab, a convulsive movement—a stop. That may be efficacious at times, but it is not conducive to *consistently* good putting.

### "Stroking" the Ball—

Mr. John Low, of St. Andrews, on the other side, is regarded as a very fine exponent of the art. There is a silky smoothness to his putting. So with the late Willie Anderson, and Willie Smith, and Mr. J. D. Travers, and Gil. Nicholls. When in their best vein, they gently, yet firmly, seem to coax the ball into the hole. Certainly there is a complete absence of anything spasmodic in the stroke, and all enjoy the reputation of being—or having been—superlatively good putters.

GOING BACK for a moment to the matter of resting the right elbow on the hip, it should be added, in this connection, that after the ball is struck the right elbow detaches itself from its basic support and follows the club-head along the line to the hole; at the same time the left elbow is allowed to gently rest on the left hip, thus ensuring the follow-

through being as straight as possible.

### Borrowing—

IT FREQUENTLY HAPPENS that one is confronted with a putt, or rather let us say an approach putt, with the slope of the ground dipping away to the right, from the ball to the hole. Ordinarily, allowance would be made by aiming more or less to the left. There is a better, a safer method. Cut the allowance in half. Aim at the intermediate point, *but*, remember to shift the hands *back* from 1½ to 2 inches from the normal address. Don't do anything else. And so, inversely, when the ground slopes away from the right toward the hole, shove the hands correspondingly *forward*. The one induces a pull, the other a slice. In place of the slopes referred to, let there be a strong wind as representing the slopes—the one from the left, the other from the right—and the same methods as suggested should obtain.

As a matter of fact, a sloping putt is easier to negotiate than one perfectly level. In the one case the distance is practically reduced very materially. Depending, of course, upon the degree of inclination, so that if the ball is putted to a certain point more or less distant from the hole, the dip of the ground will do the rest. Then, again, this particular point is not an absolutely fixed one; it depends to a great extent on the initial speed of the ball. So that there is a great deal of latitude offered.—Whereas with the putt on a level surface the ball has to go straight all the way, unless slice or pull be imparted, which is a mistake. Then it is a vice, while, as we have just seen, it was a virtue

under different circumstances. Why a vice in the one case and a virtue in the other? A vice, because on a *level* surface it is harder to hole a ball with either slice or pull than one free from either spin.

A trifle too much slice, or pull . . . and the hole is never even touched.—Whereas a straight ball, even with the concomitant error of too much strength, as in the previous case, stands a mighty good chance of holing, such as I have already observed, is the great holding power of the hole. On the other hand, the slice or the pull, as the case may be, are reduced as nearly as possible to one of approximating a straight line to the hole.

### **Pulling and Slicing—**

CONCERNING slices and pulls, there is another method of imparting either at will which it will do no harm to briefly describe, although, personally, I find the one already detailed the more trustworthy, for the simple reason that it does not involve any change in the grip—as the one under notice does. In fact, that is the basic part of the thing. In *all* strokes in golf the manner in which the hands grip the club exercise a most potent influence on direction. Let the left hand be turned in, *i. e.*, over the shaft, and there will be a distinct tendency toward a pull. This, in turn, may be minimized or accentuated, according to the disposition of the right hand. If the latter be well up, little, if any pull; but if well under, a violent pull—not to say a hook. Always supposing the swing is completed naturally. If, however, the knuckles of the left hand are kept *uppermost* in going through the ball, and the knuckles of the

right hand are therefore *underneath*, there will be a diminution of pull. Just reverse the whole business and the foregoing remarks are equally applicable to a slice. Let it be noted, however, that in the case of a putt, or a ball with a very flat trajectory, the pull or the slice is less pronounced. In other words, the greater the loft, the greater the pull, and *vice versa*. This is something really worth remembering. Quite naturally it may be asked why should there be such a difference, if any? Wholly and solely by reason of frictional resistance of the turf. A ball in the air is not subject to any *side* resistance in the absence of wind. A ball rolling along the true surface of a putting-green, if struck without side spin, will go straight. If sliced, that is, struck from right to left, it will be all the time fighting the frictional resistance of the turf on the left hand side—and the slower the green the less the slice. So inversely, with a pull—the antithesis of a slice. There's no mystery about it. It's all as plain as A B C. The laws of motion are fixed—unchangeable. A ball struck in the same way every time will perform the same motions every time, everything else being equal. It may here be mentioned that on a "sand" green there is very little side resistance. On a perfect green of this kind the good putter will usually show to advantage. There could be no better arena for the learning of the art, or the correction of faulty methods, as one's sins of commission . . . straying from the straight and narrow line. . . are traced on the sanded surface of the green.

### **Adaptability—**

A WORD OR TWO may not be amiss concerning adaptability. To put the

case more concretely, let us suppose the play during the morning round has been over a dry course, the putting-greens being correspondingly keen. This condition calls for extreme delicacy of touch. Before the afternoon round there comes a heavy downpour of rain, making the going all through rather heavy . . . so vastly different that the same application of force which would send the ball right up to the hole from six to seven yards away in the morning will not, in the afternoon, get the ball more than two-thirds of the distance if the character and method of the stroke be unchanged. It is in cases of this sort that knowledge, born of experience, comes in. A man must adapt his stroke to the existing circumstances. With a soggy green the ball should be played a good deal more forward than usual, so that the putter meets it on the ascending stroke just after the moment of impact, imparting a little touch of loft, causing the ball to lightly skip over the first foot or so of the heavy going, thus giving it a maximum of run without any great expenditure of force. It will really be difficult to get the ball beyond the hole. Putting, in such circumstances, is comparatively easy. Now, in order to get the ball *up*, up in the modified way suggested, it is imperative that the stance should be decidedly off the left foot.—And that is where adaptability comes in. "Different diseases require different remedies," as some philosopher has sagely observed.

### Wind Influences—

WIND is less of a handicap up to the putting-green than on it. So far as my personal experience is concerned, I find a moderate wind help-

ful rather than otherwise in the play up to the green. But on the green it is somewhat different. We are now dealing with putting, but putting is so intimately related to the approach that a slight digression seems apposite. It is simply this . . . With a following wind endeavor to be past the hole on the approach, and *vice versa* with a wind against, so that in either case, the more delicate stroke, the approach-putt, may be played *against* the wind. And so in the case of a sloping green, irrespective of wind.

It may be said that on the whole (unless it be a very keen green, and with diverse, and opposing, undulations) putting may be figured out about as easy with as without wind, as I shall endeavor to explain. If we have a cross wind from left to right, or from right to left, or against, we are, in each case, playing against a bank as it were (vide remarks under "Borrowing"). It is more difficult, however, when the wind is with one. So that the account just about balances, taken by and large. It is really only when there is a very strong wind that putting becomes trying, for then it is a very hard matter to properly maintain the right nicety of poise, or balance. And unless the balance be right, in any stroke, the chances are that the result will not be satisfactory.

### Concentration—

AGAIN I venture to quote from that fascinating writer, Mr. Arnold Haultain:

". . . in putting something else besides keenness, alertness, steadiness, and attention seems to be necessary. One writer says good putting is an inspiration. Another that

it is the result of confidence. And all writers have noted the fact that on some days one putts extraordinarily well and on others extraordinarily ill. Is there any generalization whatsoever possible; is there any one practicable rule deducible from this heterogeneity of practise of precept? I doubt it. There are as many styles of putting as there are styles of putters—both personages and implements. Personally, I think more, much more, depends upon the personage than upon the implement. If, when you are five yards from the hole, with that putt for the game, and a gallery looking on (to say nothing of much fame—and more money—on the match), you can putt as if you were alone on your own lawn practising putting for fun. . . . Ah! There perhaps lies the secret of putting.—Under the portrait of Warren Hastings in the Council Chamber at Calcutta, so Macaulay tells us, were inscribed the words *Mens Æqua in Arduis*. That is the prime prerequisite of putting.—I venture to think the great Proconsul would himself have been a præter-natural putter. 'Calm but indomitable force of will,' says Macaulay, 'was the most striking peculiarity of his character . . . There never was a public man whose temper was so severely tried . . . But the temper of Hastings was equal to almost any trial. It was not sweet, but it was calm . . . The effect of this singular equanimity was that he always had the full command of all the resources of one of the most fertile minds that ever existed.'—Character, you see, dogs us in every phase of the game."

I have found that good putting is largely the offspring of determination, a fixedness of purpose to the

exclusion of everything else—concentration, in short. But I rather think determination is the father of concentration. Let me give you an illustration, a concrete case that happened to me quite recently. It was in a four-ball match. While waiting my turn to play, the meanwhile studying the line of putt, something in my looks or attitude gave my caddie the idea that I was rather up against a difficult proposition, or very possibly he could see it for himself, for after a series of undulations there came a corker three or four feet from the hole in the shape of a hog-back, over which in order to stay anywhere near the hole the ball had to pass over a certain well-defined spot, and with just the right degree of speed. Whereupon he volunteered the cheerful remark: "That's a hard one!" Of course, it was a hard one. I knew that. A little nettled, I said, "Young man, you should never say anything like that to your player. Rather tell him it's dead easy. Now, just to show you it's dead easy, watch this." I had to try and "make good," and therefore bent all my energies to the task with all the integrity of purpose possible, with the fortunate result that the stroke was a success. This is not an isolated case. I have in mind several others, where, in order to keep the flag flying the ball *had* to be holed. But I'm not going to weary you with them. The point of the thing of course is the *absolute* necessity of a prime determination to hole the ball, which means the unqualified giving of one's whole mind to the business in hand . . . which spells *Concentration*.

**Be up—**

I ALWAYS ENDEAVOR, on every putt, long or short, to hole the ball.

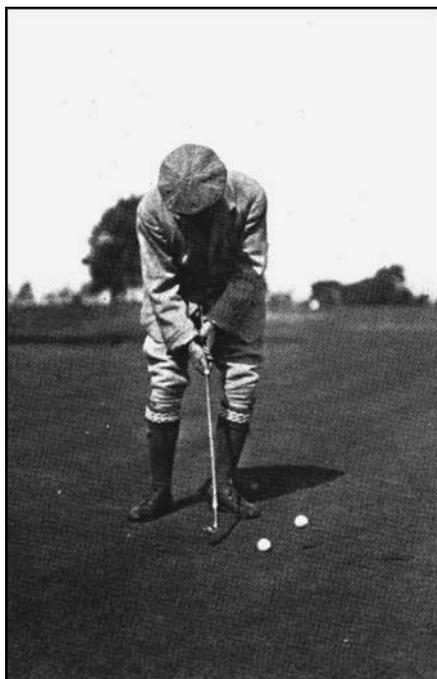
That is to say, I never play short unless I have "two for it," and then only under exceptional circumstances such as a tricky putt or a keen green. It is just as easy to hole from a foot or so beyond as a foot or so short. And there is one thing very certain, unless the ball is at least up to the hole it cannot disappear. In this way many a long putt finds the bottom of the hole.

It is not a bad plan to imagine the hole as being five or six times larger than it actually is, and secure in the knowledge that one has the correct line, everything may be concentrated on the matter of strength. That should be the dominant thought just before striking—how hard to hit to be sure of getting just past the hole.

#### **Disturbing Influences—**

IT WOULD hardly be proper, or fitting, to conclude this essay without some reference to outside influences of a disturbing kind. Let me again interject a personal experience. Some years ago there started out from the first tee at Garden City a joyous four-baller, friendly, yet all spurred up to win. It was an off day, with few present.—But, as we walked toward the first hole I noticed we had a "gallery" in the shape of one lone individual who attached himself to me . . . so that my second shot had to be played with him immediately behind—a thing that I abhor, and, ordinarily, try at once to set straight by courteously suggesting the standing to one side or the other, explaining that any object immediately back of one has a disturbing effect and inevitably tends to the taking of one's eye off the ball. This, however, being just a friendly match, and not wishing to be considered "finiky," I let

it go. On the green I scarce had room to take my putter back; and so on the second and third holes. Foreseeing that this was likely to keep up the entire round, I decided on the third green, after missing a short putt, to put an end to the thing. So I explained the situation. This was not received in very good grace, and the stranger took his departure. Before leaving, however, I observed as we were walking away from the green that he was holding converse with my caddie. This aroused my curiosity sufficiently to ask my boy what the man had said. Somewhat reluctantly he told me: "I know what's the matter with that man Travis; he's afraid I'll get on to his game." A crowd back of one, in the mass, doesn't make a particle of difference, but concentration on the business in hand is, to me, out of the question if there is a single individual in line. One can see him out of the corner of the



eye, and is fearful he may move just as one is coming on to the ball . . . and *sometimes* he does move—there's the trouble. It's all very well to say that one should not be weak-minded enough to allow trifles of

this kind to exercise any influence. —But I have observed that those who put this sort of thing forward and claim that they are not affected would not be adjudged good putters even by their best friends.

