

What Your Game Needs Most

George Duncan in the Course of a Friendly Round Outlines a Number of Suggestions for Improvement of Play

By Grantland Rice

THE opportunity to watch George Duncan at close range and to get the benefit of his golfing wisdom for play improvement came just before the brilliant stylist sailed for his home green at Hangar Hill.

The occasion was a three-cornered mainly conversational affair in which Duncan, Irvin Cobb and the writer rambled around the Pelham Course to talk things over at random and get Duncan's friendly advice upon shot making in its main essentials. At the moment neither Mr. Cobb nor your correspondent felt in the mood to have the illustrious Scot tackle a best ball proposition for any substantial stake.

It was all mainly a matter of watching Duncan play with the close-up turned on and no rushing gallery to distract attention.

This — plus his numerous suggestions for correct playing where the elemental factors are concerned.

In The Pivoting

"THE trouble with the ordinary golfer," remarked Duncan, "and with many better players is in the pivoting. By this I mean their balance at the top of the swing is not sufficient to give them any power for the downward blow. They are not in position to hit the ball with any force. Their weight is too much upon the right foot or something else is wrong.

"Where mistakes are generally made is not getting the left shoulder in correctly. The swing must start from the left hand and the left arm and this means the left shoulder also. The left shoulder must pivot well around towards the right. If it doesn't a bad slice is sure to result. Don't make the mistake of keeping the

left shoulder fixed in one place. It must turn in with the swing and start with the swing.

"In making the swing the feet are too often overlooked. In addressing the ball

ning golfer who doesn't do the same thing.

"As the back swing starts the left heel comes up and part of the weight is transferred to the left foot. As you start your down swing the left foot then settles naturally back to earth where you are in a firm position to hit on through."

Stance and Pivot

"I WILL tell you," continued Duncan on his way around, "why I favor the square stance—even having the left foot slightly in advance of the right. It is all because of the pivoting. It is much easier to pivot properly with the left foot out upon even terms with the right. It is easier to get the left shoulder well around, as it should be. I have seen several fine golfers who turn their left shoulder in so far that they seem to have their backs turned to the hole.

"But this must be done without moving the body from its proper place. By this I mean that the body must pivot in the same space it held at the top. A pivot accompanied by a sway to the right isn't a pivot at all. The head doesn't move from its original position. The left knee turns in towards the ball. The left shoulder comes well around and as the left heel comes up there is a firm grip upon the ball of the left foot. In this position you have the balance you need to deliver a powerful blow. Without this position you have no balance, and it is

merely luck if you hit the ball straight for any distance. This matter of pivoting and balance must be figured out carefully if one is to get anywhere. It is the foundation of golf, the most essential thing in the entire game."

(Continued on page 26)



An interesting study in the footwork of Harry Vardon in reaching the top of a full swing. Observe that the ball of the left foot appears to be gripping the ground

Levick



What Your Game Needs Most

(Continued from page 5)

That Compact Feeling

"HOW can one know whether his balance is correctly adjusted?" we asked.

"You can tell mainly by having a compact feeling at the top of the swing," Duncan answered. "This means that your left shoulder has come around—that your left knee has come in—that you haven't lifted the body, nor swayed it—that your right elbow is in fairly close—that your left hand and arm have taken charge of the club on the back swing.

"Compactness merely means keeping essential things together. They can't work when they are flying wide. Keep your swing together always. Keep the hands as low as they can remain in comfort. Don't let that right elbow get away. Hit through the ball, but never try to lift it.

"The golfer who is having any trouble should be sure that his club head is taken back on a line inside the ball and close to the ground. If it is taken back in this fashion there can be no sudden lifting. If the club head is taken back evenly and steadily the player can see that he is at least starting his swing in the right way, something he can never do if he hurries the club.

"I believe it is a fine thing to practise this matter of the correct back swing, something that can be done in a limited space indoors. As the left shoulder turns in the head remains as the anchor, just as it was at the start. Make a practice of having this pivoting come in an easy natural way and practise it until you feel at the top of the swing that you are comfortably fixed to hit the ball with confidence and power."

We observed many details of Duncan's play in this friendly jaunt

around the course. One was that he always preferred a spoon to a long iron. Another was that he always preferred a light iron to a mashie where there was any doubt as to range. Still another unique feature was that after taking the needed club from the bag he always had his grip fully adjusted before he got up to the ball, several strides away, in fact, and that after reaching the ball he never changed his original grip.

With his grip fixed and his mind made up in advance as to how hard he was to hit, the rest was a mere matter of concentrating on the shot. He always seemed to do most of his thinking before he came up to the ball and with most of the important details settled he found it much easier to concentrate.

After taking his first stance we never saw him change. On all iron shots the left was merely the guiding hand with the right hitting through and going out straight for the hole. His balance at the top of the swing was perfect throughout. There was no swaying, no twisting—merely a natural easy pivot with the body occupying no additional space.

Referring back to the important matter of pivoting, Duncan suggested that with winter coming on, it would be a fine idea for each golfer to get indoor instruction in this matter from a well known instructor and then practise the matter of correct backswinging, of pivoting and of balance at home.

This is a tip worth consideration. If any golfer through the winter can only develop his hitting balance at the top of the swing he will be in for a running start next spring with a big advance in one of the fundamentals.