

Correcting the Common Faults

A Few Common Sense Tips That Can Be Made Very Helpful

By James M. Barnes

(Open Champion of Great Britain)

THERE are certain complicated faults in golf that are sometimes hard to cure. But there are other faults, the more common faults, which can be handled and at least reduced with just a little thought and a little care and attention.

Golf isn't easy, but it isn't nearly as hard as so many have made it. They have put trouble into the game which should never be there in many places.

A short while ago I had one of my pupils come to me with this remark: "I want you to show me a few of the most important things to work on. I never expect to play any star game of golf, but I don't want always to play a rotten game. There are certain common faults that I would like to have corrected and after that I can try something else."

"What has been your main trouble?" I asked him.

"I've got a lot of main troubles," he replied, "but one of them is slicing. I slice every shot I hit, no matter what club I use, how I stand or how I swing."

I made him swing at a few balls, while I watched him closely before saying anything. He was true to his promise. He had one of the most perfect slices I have ever seen, every form of it from the slow, drifting slice to the sharp break at the end.

I noticed in the first place that he was standing too far away from the ball—so far away that he had to fall forward as he struck. This is the finest way in the world to hit a ball up in the heel of the club and develop a perfect slice. I noticed after this that in taking his club back he lifted the head on the outside of the ball, in place of swinging back inside the ball with his left hand in control.

This is another sure way of getting a first-class slice.

In the third place I saw that he was aiming for the left of the course, in order to allow for the slice that he knew was sure to come. This always means that you will pull across the ball.

He had still another fault. On the downward swing he was starting his body in ahead of the hands and keeping the hands all through the swing in front of the clubhead.

Here were four sure ways to bring on a slice, all in one swing. The wonder is that the ball didn't finish up back of him.

To correct these faults I first made him stand about six inches closer to the ball, with his feet almost upon an even line, the left toe only an inch or so back of the right.

I then made him start his backswing with the left hand and left arm in control, starting the clubhead back inside the ball and along the ground, rather than the sudden upward lift he had been using.

He had been gripping quite tightly with his right. I got him to ease up with the right hand

The next move was to make him keep his head still and to start the pivot with his left shoulder and his left knee working together. After this I told him to let the swing pull his body through, rather than try to get his body into the stroke.

I had still another pupil who said he hadn't gotten a ball off the ground for something like a month.

This was especially true of his iron play. So I looked him over. I found, in the first place, that he also was standing too far and was lifting the club with his right hand. But his greatest fault was trying to lift the ball up with his irons, rather than hit on through and let the loft of the club handle that job for him.

At every effort you could see his two wrists suddenly pulling the clubhead up as it got to the ball. Naturally, with the clubhead coming up, he was catching the ball above the center and spinning it along the ground.

I noticed also that as he stood over the ball in a comfortable way he had a habit of straightening up just before starting the swing, which had to throw him out of line.

The first thing to do here was to make him keep his hands down all through the swing until they were lifted by the finish of the follow through. Get the idea out of your head that your hands must do the lifting.

Hit through, with the idea of scraping turf just under the ball and let the clubhead keep on its way along the ground.

When you are topping a ball it isn't a bad idea to turn out the toe of the club just a trifle, as you may be smothering the ball with the face turned in too far.

It is a good idea to keep a firm left wrist that holds the club in its proper place as the right hits through. This will prevent in a great measure the clubhead coming up too soon. These are all simple remedies for slicing and topping, if one will only put them into practice with a little thought, in place of merely practicing without any definite idea in mind.

If the body is allowed to turn naturally with the head held as an anchor, and if the backswing is made with the left hand and arm in control, inside the ball, about four-fifths of the most common faults could be cured in short order.



This photograph especially posed by Cyril Walker, former open champion, illustrates a common fault of standing too far away from the ball in the address

and to keep the left arm fairly straight, but not stiff or rigid.

These were the two most important corrections to take up. He was now swinging at the ball from the inside, where he could let the clubhead go on through in the direction of the green, in place of pulling it across from right to left.

I noticed also that his right elbow had been flying high and wide, so I made him keep this in closer to his body, where he had something to hit with.