

# THREE FUNDAMENTALS COVER ALL

*All Golf Faults Trace Back to Some Violation of These*

By ALEX J. MORRISON

**E**ARLIER along in this series of articles on the correct way to swing a golf club, I made the statement that the three basic essentials, *viz.*, the two hands working together, balance, and keeping the chin back of the ball, appeared so simple in their outline that a great many golfers find it hard to believe that they cover the whole subject, since many followers of the game have come to regard golf as a puzzling, mystifying matter, that just naturally has to have a lot of complications. There is no denying that most of them introduce complications all right. But their perplexities all trace back to violations of the three fundamentals mentioned above.

Consider the matter of balance, for instance. It is a plain undeniable fact that, in practically every kind of effort in which force is applied, the weight must be back of the effort. By that I mean, for instance, a boxer, must have his body weight behind his punch, if it is to carry any force; the baseball pitcher does likewise, and so on down the line. Yet in golf one of the very commonest faults is crowding the weight too much forward onto the left foot at the top of the backswing. There appears to be a deadly fear of swaying. Now, swaying in the sense of moving the head to the right and hoisting the shoulders without pivoting is fatal. One very frequently sees this done by beginners who have not yet acquired any conception of the stroke. And in order to prevent such a practice it has been customary to warn the player against swaying.

But among players who have acquired at least some knowledge of the game, the rigid guard against swaying is just about as damaging as swaying itself, as mentioned above. The middle part of the body must be moved to the right on the backswing, whether in a kind of side-to-side movement, or by a more pronounced turning movement. For most persons of middle age and beyond the lateral movement comes easier. Yet when you try to get the player who is accustomed to having most of his weight at the top of the swing wrongly borne on the left leg, to shift it to the right where it belongs, he thinks he is swaying all over

the place. As a matter of fact, he actually thinks he is swaying to the right, when he gets back about level on the two feet, because of the change from what he has been accustomed to.

Then the practice of tilting the chin slightly to the right is a very simple sug-

gestion for breaking up tension in the upper part of the spinal column, and therefore renders it easier to avoid turning the head to the left as the club is brought down, without any further thought on the matter by the player. In the same way the manner of gripping the club which I have recommended simply makes the swing easier, by

automatically taking care of some of the troubles that are liable to come up.

Yet, in spite of the fact that these fundamentals are simple to state, they are not so simple to put into execution to that point where they become habitual, especially for players who have gone along for some time accentuating faults which are in conflict with these principles. Time and time again, one may see a player lift his head, when he is absolutely certain that he did not, and the same applies to numerous other bad habits.

The editor has suggested that printing the answers to some of the many letters containing questions which have been received may be a very good method of emphasizing the points I am trying to get over, so some of these are reproduced here.

"I am afflicted with that terrible disease known as 'hitting with the shoulder', *because*, when I watch experts play, they appear to me to slam that right shoulder as far into the ball as they can. So that has been my policy in trying to develop a sound swing. I have had several instructors look me over, but none of them ever told me how to correct my trouble.

"Your advice to keep the chin back of the ball throughout the stroke, is in my estimation the greatest thought ever expressed to establish a stroke fundamental. It taught me that these experts, although it appears to the eye that they put the right shoulder in there with the club, actually do no such thing, at least, not with any conscious intent to do so. Keeping the chin back keeps my shoulder in place until the ball is struck, and the final turn of the hips brings it around under the chin. And so I found that my right shoulder should not go in there with the club, as I had come to believe from watching certain good players, but really followed."

P. G. M.

Levick

Keeping the chin back is something that every good golfer does, or at least they all hit past the chin, every time they hit a good shot, regardless of what club is used. And if you will watch a procession of high-handicap players you will find that only three or four times in the course of a round do they do so. Your impression that the

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This action photograph of Willie Klein, well-known professional, about to hit the ball, shows weight transferred to the left, and the chin still back

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right shoulder does a large part of the hitting, when watching good golfers play, is not an uncommon one. The truth is, as you say, it does nothing of the kind—it follows around with the swing, but with an expert player, the timing is so good that one may easily be led to the mistake you made in analyzing the play.

You will recall that I have defined a golf swing as one smooth-flowing motion uninterrupted either mentally or physically. The action of the swing is distributed throughout the entire body, so proportioned that each move is the result of a combined balanced action on part of all factors.

"There is just one point that I would like to have explained about your stance and grip. From the position your left hand occupies on top of the shaft, it appears that you have a feeling of being behind the ball, and in coming down the handle of the club comes first. In other words, your left wrist is almost directly under the shaft at the top of the backswing, which evidently means you do not roll your wrists on the backward or forward swing as one would in a flat swing."

R. W.

The grip and stance which I advocate bring the player into such a position that the left arm and the shaft of the club form practically a straight line from the point of the shoulder to the ball. This is the position he must be in as the club strikes the ball, if he is to hit the ball straight in the intended line. So my recommendation is to start from that position. If the player does this, and observes the other two principles of shifting the weight to the right with the backswing and again toward the left with the downswing, and of keeping his chin back until the ball is hit, he need spend no time worrying about where his hands are at the top of the backswing. The only thing that could then interfere with the proper wrist and forearm action taking place auto-

matically would be tension in the forearms resulting from improper gripping. No grip that finds any considerable tension in the wrists and forearms will produce a good golf shot.

"I have been practicing your principles daily, but it seems that I keep my right leg more rigid, in fact my whole right side seems to tighten, when I try to keep my chin back, on the downswing. Is your right leg perfectly straight in the picture shown on page 18 of the April issue? (Picture shows address for wood club shot.) Do I understand you correctly when you say the swing should be the same for both woods and irons? How do you determine the proper distance from the ball in the address? Do you feel the weight on the balls of your feet in the address?"

R.E.S.

The fact that, when keeping your chin back, you feel that your entire right side is tight means that you are discovering something which has existed in all of your shots, and it took the pointing of your chin to make you conscious of the tension. If you will study the picture in the April issue carefully, you will see that there is a slight turning of the right hip forward. This breaks the tension in the lower part of the spinal column, just as the turning the chin does in the upper part. Incidentally, to answer the question about the right leg directly, the leg is not perfectly straight; there is a slight bend at the knee.

All swings should be alike, body motion being in proportion to the length of the swing. The right way to determine the distance from the ball is to first put the clubhead in position back of the ball and then adjust the positions of your feet at what seems a comfortable distance back from the ball, that distance being regulated in part by the length of the club you are using. While the body must bend forward some in the address, I am not actively conscious of having the weight on the balls of the feet.

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