

DON'T SLIGHT THE BACKSWING

Certain Observations on the
Effects of Too Much Hurrying

By HELEN L. HICKS

THE more carefully I watch other golfers, and the more intently I study my own game, when things are not going so good, the more fully do I become convinced that advice to concentrate on the backswing is about the best that any golfer can receive. Whether a correct downswing will follow a correct backswing in all cases I am not prepared to say, but I am confident that, if the backswing is faulty, the shot will almost surely be a disappointment.

And when I speak of concentrating on the backswing, I mean to say not only that it is made deliberately, but also that it is as fully completed in its extent as the shot at hand demands. Not long ago I played a round with a golfer who ordinarily shoots in the middle 80's, but for the first four holes, he just could not get his game to working right. Finally he confessed that he had not the slightest idea what was wrong, but that it seemed he just could not hit a shot. I suggested that he appeared to be hurrying his swing, and that I didn't think he was taking a full enough turn. From then on, he kept this in mind, and his game immediately came back to him.

I have had the same experience, and there have been times that I have gone through a whole round without locating my trouble. Something is wrong, and try as we may, we can't seem to locate it. Under the circumstances, we try harder and harder, and all the time we are simply making matters worse. The hurried backswing throws the timing of the swing entirely out of gear, and the more we try to slam the ball, the worse we become.

When conditions such as the above develop, the best thing for the player to do is to check up immediately to learn whether or not the swing is being hurried too much. More than likely it is. If it is, then it is almost a certainty that the player is not taking a full free turn. In one way of looking at it, he or she is actually trying to start the operation of hitting the ball before the backswing has been completed. Where this takes place, all sense of timing is destroyed, and furthermore the urge to hit almost invariably results in throwing entirely too much body effort into the swing, instead

of allowing the body to turn leisurely, so that the arms can do most of the swinging.

To make a real golf swing, that is for a full shot, the body must turn well around toward the right in taking the club back. The weight must be dropped over mostly on the right leg, with the left side from the waist down easily relaxed. These things are necessary to get the club back with the body, arms and hands in the right position to swing the club properly. In short, the body must be in a position which gives a feeling of power in starting the club down. And if, for any reason, the player fails to do this, he can't in any possible manner make up for it in the downswing.

And this is true in shots of every length from the drive right on down to the putt. Of course, I don't mean to claim by that statement that as much turn and body action are required in the shorter shots as in the long ones, but I do mean to say that hurrying will cause trouble in just the same way, and I believe that the tendency to hurry is even greater in short shots than in the long

ones. And it destroys timing and rhythm just as much in the short ones as elsewhere.

I have even noticed in putting that stabbed putts are mostly the results of taking the club back too hurriedly, because when one does this, it is reasonably certain that the club will at the same time be lifted too much, and the result is too much hitting and not enough stroking. The player who strokes the ball consistently on the putting green is one to be feared, and stroking means a smooth steady action.

Of course, hurrying the swing is always traceable to a mental condition. I don't mean that all players are alike in the time they take in swinging the club back. Some are naturally faster swingers than others. But the fast swinger must have a fine sense of timing to be successful. If the entire movement is well coordinated, he can speed up without bad results, but most of us find this difficult. And certainly few middle and high-handicap players are going to build up a smooth swing pitched up in the high speed class.



Here are two views of Miss Hicks at the top of the backswing. Note how fully the shoulders have turned. Most of the weight is supported on the right leg, while the left is easily relaxed. The arms and hands are in position to apply ample force in swinging the club down and through. Unless the player is careful to complete the backswing fully, it will be very difficult to get the right body and arm co-ordination