

GOOD GOLF IS EASY—NO. 7

By ERNEST JONES



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Here are five sequence pictures of Bobby Cruickshank, at varying stages of the swing, showing what takes place with his head. Note that the position in No. 2, as the club nears the ball, is identical with that in No. 1, the address. In No. 3, well after impact, the head is beginning to turn only slightly. Nos. 4 and 5 complete the swing

KEEP your eye on the ball" sounds very simple and easy, but it is amazing how very complicated even so simple a thing can be made to appear, or at least has come to appear to some. With the many varied admonitions passed on to persons trying to learn the game, such as, "Keep your head perfectly still," "Hold your head as though it were in a vise," "Don't fail to keep in mind that your head is the anchor of the swing," "Keep your chin back of the ball," "Look at the ball with the left eye," and so on, it is not strange that the real reason for looking at the ball is overlooked.

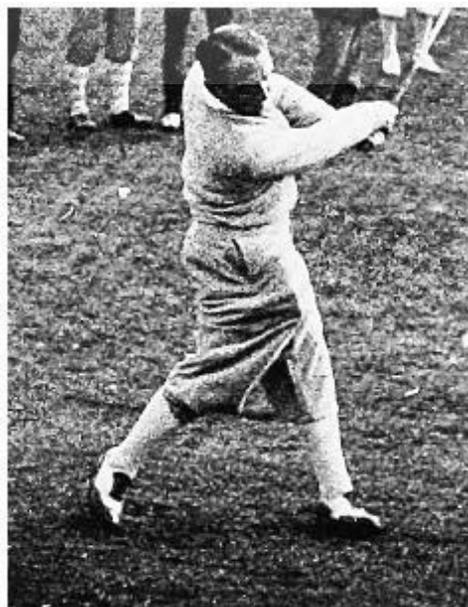
Swinging an axe, wielding a broom, or striking something with any kind of stick or club is a definite action. As parts of that action there may be many movements, so that one is apt to become confused as to what is initiative action and what is responsive movement in producing that action. In trying to hit a golf ball, one is attempting a definite action, aimed at bringing the clubhead into contact with the ball at right angles to the desired line of play.

I always point out to my pupils that, if you try to hit anything accurately, it is a good idea to look at the object. Most of us can bear testimony to what happens in the case of failure to do so in driving a nail with a hammer, for instance. The same applies, if you are wielding an axe; you look at the spot at which you expect to strike. If you are trying to swat a fly, you look at the fly; if you are shooting at anything you look at the target, and so on.

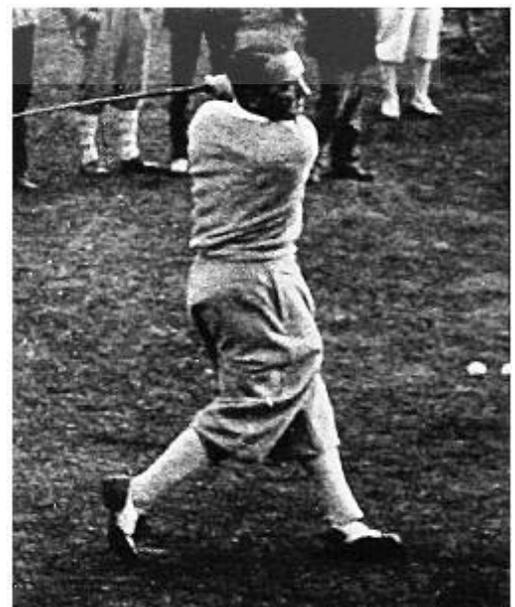
Yet, in none of these cases would you concern yourself in the least in how you held your head. You must realize, of course, that if you are looking at a still object, your head will remain still without any conscious effort on your part; if you are looking at a moving object, your head will instinctively move to allow the eyes to follow the object. This is equally true in hitting a golf ball with a club, and, if you will only satisfy yourself on this point, it will prove very helpful in swinging the club.

The pictures of Bobby Cruickshank, which appear along with this article, show clearly what takes place, so far as his head is concerned. As a matter of fact there is little if any perceptible change between the position his head holds in addressing the ball, and that shown in the next stage of the swing, where the club is well on its way down to the ball. But you may be fully assured that he was paying no attention whatever to trying to keep his head still, or to when it began to move toward the left.

I find that there is a surprisingly large number of golfers who seriously upset their freedom of swinging a club by trying to keep their heads absolutely still. It happens to be a fact that the good golfer in swinging the club moves his or her head very little in playing even a full stroke, until after the ball has been hit. But the important thing to remember is that, whatever movement there is—and even more important, whatever freedom from movement exists—is responsive and not initiative, in the sense *(Continued on page 42)*



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that the player consciously thinks of what he is doing in this respect.

Golf is played with a club and a ball, and you hold the club in your hands to strike the ball. These are the only things of which you should be conscious. You must be able to feel what you are doing with the clubhead all through the stroke, and you must, if you are going to be any good at all, look at the ball until it has been struck.

What makes it difficult to keep your eyes on the ball is the fact that we are all blessed with a certain amount of intelligence and, as far as our golf goes, with the curse of too much undue curiosity. We will persist in looking at the place we wish the ball to go to, instead of feeling that we are swinging the clubhead on the line we wish the ball to travel. The result is that both our own head and the clubhead are traveling at the same pace. If this happens, the shot is bound to be faulty, for the simple reason that you can not move both ends of anything at the same pace and still swing it. Anything that is swinging must be moving faster at one end than the other. That, of course, is obvious; still it is very extraordinary how these simple things are overlooked.

Regarding which eye you should look at the ball with, I would say, so far as I am aware, I don't know which eye I look at the ball with, any more than I know which eye I read with. I use both my eyes. If there is any virtue in looking at a golf ball with only one eye while hitting it, I would suggest the use of a shade over the other whilst playing. I think perhaps it would be the most logical thing to do, instead of trying to hold your head sideways, which to my way of reasoning must set up a degree of strain, and any form of strain retards the force that we are trying to generate into the clubhead.

The idea that I try to convey to my pupils is that looking at the ball must become a habit, but it is not an action of holding your head in any position. I was very interested to read about Capt. Lowry, a blind golfer who plays a very good game although he is unable to see the ball at all. He says, "Generations of golf novices have heard the phrase 'keep your eye on the ball' driven into their ears by the instructor. Repetition lends authority to a slogan, but it is much more important to 'keep your mind on your swing.' The clubhead will automatically return to the ball in the exact position it occupied on the address, provided that the swing be properly grooved."

I absolutely agree with the gallant Captain. Of course, everything has its compensations; the fact of being blind overcomes the natural desire to look to see what kind of a shot has been played before the ball has been struck. I often get my pupils to practice swinging with their eyes closed. If you will try it, you will find that it makes you focus your attention much more definitely on what you are doing with the club itself. That is the reason why Captain Lowry plays better games of golf now than he used to do before losing his eyesight.

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