# PRONATION: THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF GOLF

*The Essex County Country Club Professional Explains His Theory by Excerpts from His Book "Golf Simplified"* <sup>(Doubleday, Page)</sup> & Co.

### By DAVID HUNTER

WHEN I was a boy, I had a wonderful opportunity to learn the game of golf. My father, "Charley" Hunter, was then in charge of the links at Prestwick, Scotland, one of the very best courses in existence, so I learned to play under ideal conditions. My father remained in charge right up to his recent death (on January 24, 1921),



**GRIP WITH BOTH HANDS**

and at that time was the oldest professional in the world. Later on, when I began to think about taking up the teaching of golf as a profession my father told me that there was one thing to which little attention had been given, and which above all others would help me in teaching. That one thing was the pronating!—or, the proper turning of the wrists and forearms at the beginning of the swing.

During the last twenty-five years I have included that theory in my method of teaching. As a result of a special study of this idea my teaching now consists of absolutely nothing but this one idea. I have proved to my entire satisfaction that not only is it the most important point but that it is practically all there is to the game of golf. I have experimented with beginners and with players of years' standing, with young boys, elderly men, and with women, and without exception I have found this a cure-all for their troubles. It is a very simple little thing, and one which, if given a little thought,

will, I think, be a real help to golfers. This I have explained very fully in my book "Golf Simplified," but in this article I would deal briefly with the correct grip, stance and swing—or in other words the correct way to play golf—as dependent upon this fundamental principle, "pronation."

Before trying to swing a club, hold your open left hand in the position which represents its position when holding a club, then swing it slowly and naturally to the right shoulder. From there swing it slowly and comfortably forward, past the original position, until it is in line with the left shoulder. You will note that as the arm swings to

the extreme right, the wrist automatically turns over. You do not have to think of turning it; it turns naturally. The same principle applies to the golf swing. It is so natural that it seems unnecessary to learn it at all. Inasmuch as the whole secret of success in golf—if indeed it can be called a secret— depends on the swing, the student would do well to take plenty of time to it and give it his most careful study. At first no ball should be used and the clubhead should not be raised higher than horizontal. If this is done correctly, the movement will be found to correspond exactly with the experiment just made with the open hand. Begin by taking a wooden club, place the clubhead on the ground, take your grip and stance, keep the hands well down—not pushed out and very slowly move the clubhead backward. This is done by slightly turning (not bending) the left wrist and at the same moment allowing the left forearm to move slowly backward. Be careful to let the first movement be made with the left, and not the right hand. Care should also be taken to keep both feet and heels firmly on the ground.

Nothing should move except the arms, and simultaneously with the backward movement the wrists and forearms should turn, so that when the club is horizontal, the clubhead points straight upward. It is most important that the turning of the



**SHOWING THE OVERLAP**

wrists and forearms (this is called pronating) should begin exactly simultaneously with the first movement of the clubhead. Neither the wrists nor the arms should move before the other; they must both begin moving at exactly the same moment. It is vitally important that the wrist should not bend (or break). Before going further, let me again impress on the reader the extreme importance of these two points—the two most important in the entire golf decalogue: first, the proper pronating, or turning of the wrists and forearms away from the ball; and second, the keep-

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**CORRECT BACK SWING SHOWING THE WRIST TURNED OVER**

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ing  of  the  wrists  perfectly  straight
and  never  allowing  it  to  break.  Get
clearly  into  your  mind  the  differ-
ence  between  turning  the  wrist  and
breaking  it   The  one  is  vital,  the
other  fatal.   After  having  taken  the
club  back  properly  so  that  when
horizontal  the  head  points  straight
upward,  take  it  slowly  down,  past
the  original  position  until  it  is
again  horizontal,  in  front  again,  if
correctly  done,  the  clubhead  will
point  upward.

I  would  recommend  doing  this
over  and  over  again,  until  it  comes
quite  naturally,  being  sure  all  the
time  that  when  in  a  horizontal
position  the  clubhead  points  up-
ward,  also  that  both  feet  and  heels
remain  firmly  on  the  ground  and
that  nothing  moves  except  hands,
wrists  and  arms.   After  continuing
for  a  time,  swing  slowly  and  easily
backward  and  forward  and  not  let-
ting  the  club  go  higher  than
horizontal.   Try  to  let  the  hands
and  club  a  little  higher,  being  care-
ful  meanwhile  to  keep  both  feet
and  heels  firmly  on  the  ground  and
not  to  allow  body  or  head  to  move.
It  will  be  found  that  you  cannot
do  this  without  moving  something.
Then  you  must  allow  the  left  knee
to  bend  inward.   This  will  neces-
sitate  raising  the  left  heel,  and
allowing  the  left  foot  to  rest  on
the  inside  of  the  ball  of  the  foot.
See  that  the  knee  bends  inward  and
not  forward.   Above  all.  let  this
entire  movement  be  as  natural  and
comfortable  as  possible.   There
must  be  nothing  forced  or  uncom-
fortable  about  the  swing.   When
you  get  to  the  top  of  the  back
swing  be  careful  that  the  grip  of
the  left  hand  is  not  loosened,  but,
while  keeping  the  fingers  tightly
closed  on  the  handle,  allow  the
wrist  just  enough  flexibility  to
 "give"  a  little  bit.   The  weight  of
the  clubhead  will  do  this  if  you  will
only  allow  it,  and  by  allowing  it

you  will  avoid  an  unnatural  stiff-
ness  of  the  wrist  which  is  always
a  disadvantage.   At  first  it  may
seem  a  little  difficult  to  keep  a  firm
finger  grip   without  making  the
wrist  absolutely  rigid,  but  with  a
little  practice  it  will  become  quite
natural.   At  the  top  of  the  back
swing  the  club  should  be  horizontal,
with  the  head  pointing  straight
down.

In  the  case  of  wooden  clubs,  the
player  should  keep  in  mind  the
fact  that  the  ball  should  be  swept
away  rather  than  hit.   Having  this
in  mind,  let  the  club  swing  down.
sweeping  the  ball  with  it  as  it  goes.
It  is  a  recognized  fact  in  connec-
tion  with  the  golf  swing  that  the
club  will  come  down  in  the  same
arc  in  which  it  is  taken  back.
Therefore  no  thought  need  be  given
the  down  stroke  at  all.  but  for  the
same  reason  it  is  doubly  important
to  be  very  careful  with  the  back
swing.   Do  not  think  of  how  the
club  is  coming  down  nor  of  the  fol-
low  through,  but  only  of  sweeping
the  ball  away.   If  the  back  swing
has  been  properly  made,  all  of  these
things  will  take  care  of  them-
selves.   With  regard  to  the  follow
through,  do  not  try  to  force  it.  nor
to  check  it.  Just  be  natural  and  it
will  take  care  of  itself.

Let  me  here  emphasize  the  ex-
treme  simplicity  of  this  method  of
teaching  as  compared  with  the
usual  method  in  which  as  much
attention  is  paid  to  the  down  swing
and  follow  through,  etc.,  as  to  the
back  swing;  whereas  I  claim  that
it  the  back  swing  is  properly  made,
no  thought  need  be  given  the
others.   If  this  is  true—and  I  have
proved  it  to  my  entire  satisfac-
tion—just  think  how  much  easier
the  game  would  be  to  learn  and
how  much  less  trouble  it  will  be
to  correct  any  faults  which  may
develop.   After  the  swing  has  been
made  completely  it  is  advisable  to

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make, say, half a dozen complete swings, then start as though to make another, but stop this time when the club is horizontal; see whether the feet are on the ground with the weight on the heels, and whether the clubhead points straight up. If so, you are correct; if not, something is wrong and you had better start all over again. All this should be done for some time before a ball is used at all. Note very carefully that the first movement is with the hands, wrists, and arms only, and that the left is the controlling hand, being careful that the wrist turns, but does not break.

If the reader has read any other books on this subject he cannot fail to be impressed with the extreme simplicity of the method herein described, and I think that the reasonableness of my deductions. Last winter at the largest indoor golf school in New York I watched over a dozen other professionals and not only their methods of teaching, but also their various styles of play. Some use the open, some the square, stance; some use the flat, some a medium and others an upright, swing. They had various methods of gripping the club, but whatever their method of doing these various things, they all—without an exception—had the same way of starting the club back from the ball, although the effects were different, owing to different characteristics and physical make-up. The start of the back swing was always the same: the back movement and the turning of the wrists and forearms always started simultaneously and there was no jerkiness even though some of them had a very quick swing.

The simplicity of this principle and rule in golf is its chief charm. It is applicable to all styles of play and applies to all the shots in your bag. Analyze everything from the back swing. Never work to improve "effects," always go back to the "cause." Briefly my theory—which is now no longer a theory, but a fact, proved demonstratable through years of experience—may be summed up as follows: With grip and stance properly adjusted, be sure you start your clubhead back from the ball correctly. Do not jerk, start slowly, let the backward movement and the turn of the wrists and forearms start at exactly the same moment. Keep the control in the left hand. Pronate properly and finally when you go off your game, do not try to correct the "effect," but go back to first principles and thereby remove the "cause."