

Facts and Ideas



THE PRESIDENT'S PUTTER: G. Micklem, who was beaten by A. A. Duncan 4 and 3 in the semi-final, drives from the fourteenth tee during the tournament at Rye.

IT has occurred to me that some percentage figures—estimates only—might enlighten students on the value of the power they apply to the ball with various parts of their body.

In passing, as a suggestion to relieve crowded 18-hole courses with no place to practise peacefully and dozens of members bursting to spend an hour or two on various sections of their game, why not close a few holes near the club-house for certain hours on certain days a week? Rules can be made about not playing irons off the fairways, but all shots could then be played and one part of a hole could be reserved for those taking lessons so that they could have a peaceful lesson and get value for their money and time.

In the case of a first-class golfer, one who drives the normal minimum distance around, say, 260 yards (I know that this is considered a low figure in some circles, but it is not so very low if the shot is played off the level ground on to the same level and the ground is not like cement), he will use 85 per cent. wrists and 15 per cent. arms and shoulders to produce his maximum impact speed. Seymour Dunn, one of America's foremost instructors, gives the same figures in his estimate of the way the power is applied. Many of to-day's younger players have given themselves serious spinal troubles trying to step up the 15 per cent. proportion. Instead, I have always felt it best to try building up the 85 per cent. part, for it can be seen

that the arms and shoulders play but a small part in building up to the maximum speed. In the case of the average handicap golfer, he will be using much more body, i.e., shoulder and arm, and in an extreme case could actually be employing the reverse of these percentages, but would more than likely be 50 per cent. and 50 per cent.

I realised this many years ago and so began teaching the "hit-and-stop" method as the quickest and best way of improving a player's percentages of power employed, for it was obvious that weak-wristed golfers called upon their "brute force" muscles to generate as much speed as possible to make up for actual lack of wrist speed. The "hit-and-stop" method whereby the left arm and side stopped at impact and the left wrist took the shock and allowed the club-head only to pass the ball, tested out just how good the wrists were at their job. Where, I think, the beginner starts off on the wrong foot in setting about attacking a golf ball, is that he imagines that he has to generate a movement in which, at the climax—i.e., the impact—his shoulders, arms and wrists will all be moving at their fastest. Here is the greatest mistake of all in golfing theory.

The Late Hit

For the shoulders and arms begin to generate the movement down, aided by the unwinding of the body, and this drag-through of the shoulder, the tug down by the arms, lead to a gradual speeding-up, but the release of the full power by the wrists which are kept cocked all this time is delayed until the player feels he can apply this 85 per cent. of the power, and get the net result at impact—the Late Hit.

During this attack on the ball, I have always felt that there is a point which varies in every player, where the left shoulder checks momentarily to allow the "levering" which exists in a swing to take place. It is not correct to sweep "the whole lot" through.

Years ago the late P. A. Vaile and I discussed this action and he used the words "buffer action" as expressing best the sort of minute recoil in the swing which allowed the club-head to overtake the hands, for, if this did not happen, then the initial speed of the shoulders and arms would just take the hands through away ahead of the club-head. The shoulders, after the release of the 85 per cent. power by the wrists, are dragged through by the momentum of the club.

Seymour Dunn, amplifying this theme, says that the golfer is like a chain—no

stronger than its weakest link. The obvious weak link in every golfer is the wrist, and for this reason alone we should not try to apply our maximum shoulder power, because the wrists cannot transmit it; they would collapse or give way under the strain, the club-head trails behind and a slice results.

I often use the expression in teaching, "Do not try to hit harder than you can hold on." This does not seem very clear when put on paper, but it does register with many pupils who have a fast arm-and-body action with no strength in the fingers.

As the wrists are capable of a fast action and they can only whip at their maximum—no more—there is every advantage in leaving this attack till the last moment and so "hitting late." The question of whether the club-face is open or shut at the top of the swing is almost of secondary importance if the player has weak wrists and is setting out to improve his golf seriously. His first step should be to acquire by training an alteration in his percentage of wrist power available in the swing. If he only wishes to make do with what he has got—i.e., use the proportions he has—then he will need to search for an expedient to make his big, slow shoulder and body muscles play their really minor role in a major way.

Players with short back swings have powerful wrists, and use them. Most players with powerful wrists find a way to use them effectively on their own, just as they automatically throw a ball well, but there are many players who do not get the most from their wrists because of faulty grips or by exaggerating a certain movement which they consider essential.

Here is where the instructor comes in, for he can see what the player himself cannot see—himself playing. Whilst there is a lot of talk of the "Swing the club-head" theory being all there is to the golf game, unless the wrists are strong you can swing to your heart's content and not get very far. You have to make the club-head do the work. This is my slogan, and this "make" implies effort, will power and resistance, for the golf-club is more or less a lever and the left hand resists the hit of the right hand.

Henry Cotton

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THE FINAL of the President's Putter was between Duncan, shown driving from the first tee, and L. G. Crawley, who had beaten Martin 5 and 4 in the semi-final.



MR. BERNARD DARWIN holds the famous putter as he stands between the winner, L. G. Crawley (right) and the runner-up, A. A. Duncan. Crawley has won the event three times.