

Which Is the Hitting Arm in Golf?

Further Words On a Discussion that Has Raged for Many Years

By GRANTLAND RICE

WHICH arm, including wrist and hand, is the range getter in golf? Is it the left or the right hand that imparts the final punch and that is mainly responsible for the distance you get?

A vast flow of language, written and spoken,

debate moves along. In the pictorial effect herein offered you have views of two one-armed golfers.

One is hitting with the right—the other with the left. Which gives the impression of greater strength? Does it seem reasonable to you that any man can hit as hard, swinging back-handed with his weaker arm, as he can swinging outward with his stronger member? We feel the same way about it.

Ruth's Version

PLAYING a round of golf with Babe Ruth a few days ago we put this query to him: "In driving a baseball, where does your punch come from? How do you use your two arms?"

"The bottom hand," said Ruth, "is the guiding hand. It helps me swing the club, but I get my punch by whipping in with my upper hand."

Ruth is left-handed, so in his case the right is the guiding hand and arm and the left produces the avalanche. But the vast majority of golfers are right-handed. So to carry the point further we asked Walter J. Travis how he figured the case.

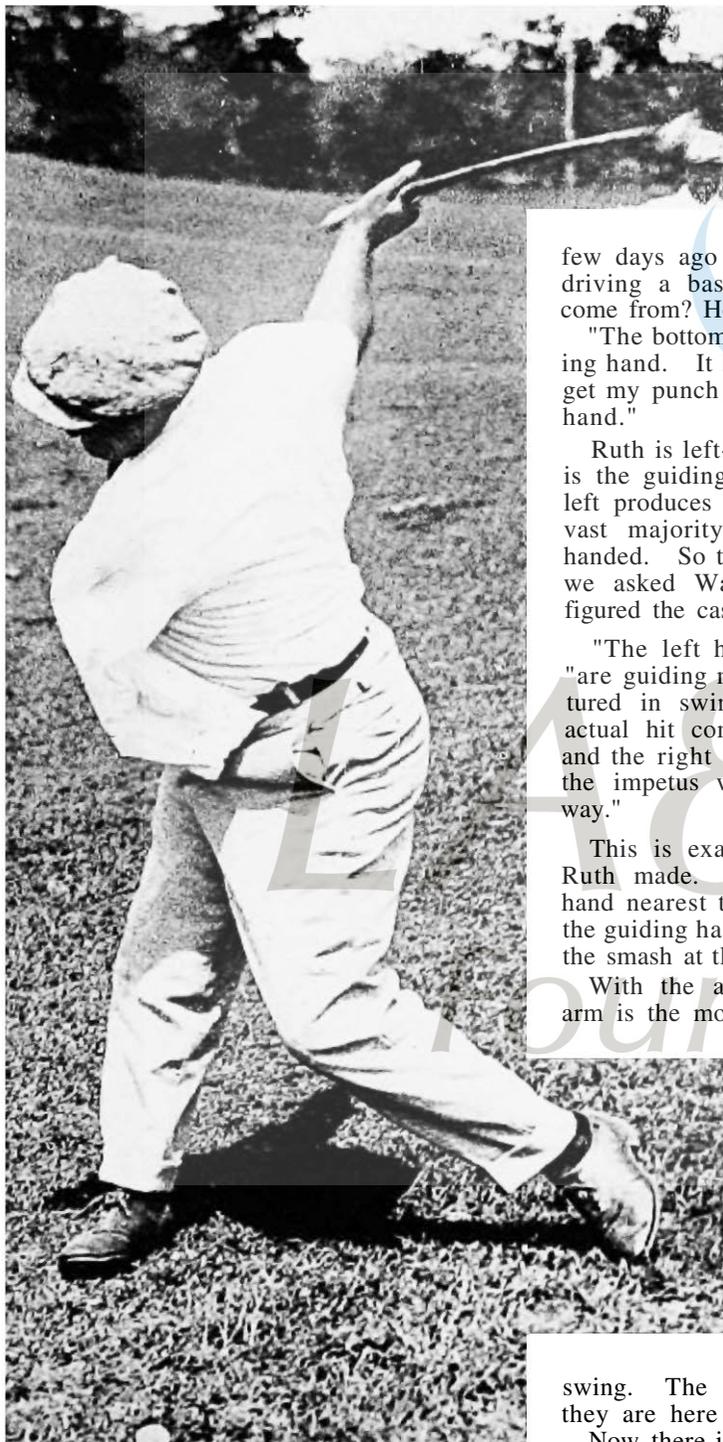
"The left hand and arm," he said, "are guiding members. They are featured in swinging the club, but the actual hit comes from the right arm and the right wrist. It is here that one gets the impetus which sends the ball upon its way."

This is exactly the same point that Babe Ruth made. Both were confident that the hand nearest the end of the club handle was the guiding hand, with the other left to deliver the smash at the moment of impact.

With the average right-hander, the right arm is the more powerful member. And we are dealing here with the average. That being so, it is hard to conceive that any one could deliver a back-handed blow with the left to equal the power carried in a forward blow with the right. The left arm, held in practically a straight line with only a faint bend, is the guide, the pivoting arm. It takes control in bringing the club back. It starts the swing. The right hand and arm help, but they are here employed in only minor rôles.

Now there is a vast difference of opinion as to what happens when the down swing begins. Many contend that both hands and arms here work together. It is our contention that the left arm still starts the downward swing, but at a distance over halfway down the left changes to a guide and the right takes control, whipping the club head through. If the right takes too full control, then a hook is likely to follow. If too much is given over to the left, then a slice results. Not always, but in a majority of cases these results will be found to materialize.

You may have the feeling that you are swinging both arms together on the down stroke, but the hit must come from the power of the right as the left wrist, held firmly in its place, acts as a stopping point to produce the "snap" or the "crack" that should follow.



Louis Martucci who gets wonderful distance with his one arm on a powerful forward swing. He has scored in the low 70's on many different courses

has been used upon this subject up to date and yet both sides are still standing firm. There are many alert professionals and amateurs who insist that the left arm is the controlling factor—that the left arm is far more important than the right.

There are others who insist that the right arm does most of the work. And so the dizzy



Arthur Lyons, naturally right-handed before he lost his right arm, still uses a right-hand stance, and a back swing with his left arm

It is here that the left wrist momentarily is stopped. You are all unconscious of this effect—but for all that it takes place.

If you are to get the best effect from an iron shot, the left wrist must be firmly held at the moment of impact with the right wrist sending the club head on through the ball.

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Foundation

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The two wrists are supposed, by many, to work together. In a way they do, but they have different functions. If the left wrist is properly used as a guide, then the force of the right wrist or arm sends the club head on in the direction of the ball's intended flight. But if the left wrist gets in too soon or is bent at the moment of impact, the club head will come in at a bad angle.

Many of the best putters in golf bring the putter back with the left wrist and send it forward with the right. In this case the left merely acts as a guide. We believe this is the foundation of the entire stroke in golf, no matter what the club. The backswing is directed by the left and the down swing is started the same way.

But the smashing force comes from the stronger hand and arm. "Babe" Ruth, being left-handed, guides the bat with his right, but smashes with his left. Any left-handed golfer would do the same. "I feel sure," says Oswald Kirkby, Metropolitan cham-

panion, "that I swing with my left arm, but that about two feet from the ball I get my distance by hitting with the right, using the left as a guide. The left is still very much a part of the swing. But it has very little to do as a hitting force."

If you have ever seen Augustus, one of the world's longest hitters, swing a club, you may recall these details:

1. That at the start of the downward swing the left arm and shoulder have control of the club.

2. That just after the start of the down stroke the left shoulder is apparently out of it, as the right shoulder dips in to back up the punch of the right arm—and as he hits the ball the right shoulder is several inches lower than the left, proving that in his case also the big smash comes from the right shoulder, arm and wrist. Both arms are needed through the swing—and each must do its part. But in the final summing up the left is the guide and the right is the range producer beyond any question.