

# The Secret of Long Driving

By EDWARD RAY



THE man who can putt is a match for anybody," is a saying attributed to Willie Park, winner of two open championships; and J. H. Taylor, the first champion of the succeeding generation, capped it with the observation that the man who can approach does not need to putt. I think I can best sum up the sentiment of the rubber-core age by adding that it is the man who can drive who gets the chance to approach. In these days the pride of every one of the great courses is its two-shot holes, the holes which can only be reached by an average player with a drive and a brassie. At these holes it is only the man who can drive far enough to be able to take some sort of iron for his second who has the opportunity of judging his approach with the accuracy needed to make a four certain and a three barely possible. And at the long holes, where it requires two of the very best to get up, even ten yards farther on each stroke will make all the difference between being on the green and having to try to lay a chip-shot dead with the odd. It is still true that the game is won and lost on the putting-green, but you have first of all to get there, and in a hundred ways the long driver has the advantage, not the least of them being the moral effect upon an opponent of being constantly outdriven.

What is the secret of long driving? I am not going to pretend that I do not con-



Position of Hands at Top of Swing

sider myself better fitted than most people to answer that question, and I have no hesitation in saying that the secret of long driving is simply hard hitting. But that statement requires a lot of amplification.

I fancy I can hear a chorus of dejected beginners complaining that that is the very thing their teachers are continually warning them not to do. Well, both I and these teachers are right; and that is exactly the reason why I have kept these hints on long driving for a separate article instead of including them along with my other observations regarding the tee shot. It is simply ruination for a player to attempt to drive far until he has learned to drive surely and steadily; and the player who ignores this warning will never acquire either steadiness or length.

Besides, it is only the man who can drive steadily who can afford to drive far. It is not always sufficiently appreciated that the drive of 180 yards which deviates 20 yards from the straight line would have been 30 yards out of line if it had been hit hard enough to travel 270 yards, and that quite apart from the greater chance of mishitting which is the inevitable result of putting more power into the stroke than you have learned to control. Some people, of course, imagine that length is the only thing that matters, like a certain long handicap player on a course where the "out-of-bounds" rule has continually to be referred to, who declared to the smoking-room on one occasion that "In that last match of mine I am sure there were more than a score of my drives that carried over two hundred yards." "Draw it mild, old man!" said someone. "Remember there are only eighteen holes in the round, so you couldn't have had twenty drives altogether!" "Couldn't I?" retorted the swiper indignantly. "I tell you I had five from the sixth tee alone!" This may be magnificent, but it is not golf.

*Slow back; don't press; head still; keep your eye on the ball.* These ancient maxims summarize the primary lesson of the links, and I do not think any beginner will go very far who neglects them. But after all they are no more than the primary lesson, and are not to be elevated to the position of the laws of the Medes and Persians, as if the rules of conduct which governed our golfing childhood could suffice for our later years. I consider that many teachers of the game do more harm than good by the way in which they drive home the time-honored advice, without a hint that there is anything beyond.

When a golfer has learned to drive 170 or 180 yards with reasonable certainty, he has often to go through a period of quite unnecessary despair. He is commendably ambitious of being able to drive much farther than that; yet it becomes painfully evident that the most faithful attention to the advice to go slow back and not to press will never take him a yard farther forward. So he ceases to take his club back slowly, and he does press, with the natural result that his drive goes all to pieces; and he

is lucky if it does not take many painful months to build it up again. And all because no one has taken the trouble to explain to him what *don't press* really means.



Stance for the Drive

*Slow back* itself is often misunderstood, and the novice who retorts that he has watched nearly all the champions and that not one of them takes his club back slowly sometimes waits in vain for an explanation. The truth is that once a player has learned to swing correctly and with practically mechanical accuracy, it matters very little whether the upward swing be fast or slow. But the slow upward swing always makes it easier to be accurate. Therefore the more difficult the lie, or the harder you are trying to hit, the more necessary is it that you should be careful to swing back slowly. It is only when you are playing an easy stroke which your muscles—if I may so put it—have learned by heart, that you can afford to swing back carelessly.

This is one point where the would-be long driver nearly always commences his search for trouble. He swings back quickly (which is nearly always to say jerkily) under the impression, it would seem, that the force thus uselessly expended in the up-swing will in some unexplained way add to the impetus of the down-swing. Whereas the fact is that the jerky back-swing is not only a waste of energy but is almost certain to throw the whole swing out of gear and imperil the accuracy of the stroke. Besides this, the player is almost bound either to over-swing or to stop his club at the top of the swing with an abrupt jerk that may easily throw the club out of its proper position and, in any case, puts a strain upon the wrists that there is no sort of need for. For all

these reasons the essential preliminary to a long drive is a slow up-swing.

On the down-swing, on the other hand, I believe that it is hardly possible for the player to hit too hard or the club to travel too fast—always provided that the stroke



Driving—Top of Stroke

is timed properly. And this brings us to the real problem of long driving: What is timing? To understand it, it is necessary to remark that the blow delivered by the golf club is not the result of one but of many forces. The body itself is swinging round as if pivoted on the backbone; the arms are swinging from the shoulders, the forearms from the elbows, the club itself from the wrists. All these motions are more or less independent; the aim of the player must be so to balance the different muscular forces by which these motions are governed that they all attain their maximum at the same time, and that time should be the moment when the head of the club comes into contact with the ball. This is timing, as I conceive the meaning of the word. And pressing is neither more nor less than an error of timing by which one or more of the muscles exerts its force at the wrong time and the wrong point of the swing.

The beginner who is making his first attempts at long driving is nearly always sure to fall into the error of exerting too much force at the beginning of the downward swing. Even if he remembers to take the club back slowly he tries to make up for lost time, as it were, by getting up speed as quickly as possible coming down. The usual result is a jerky, uneven swing, and a fozzled drive; but even if the ball is struck truly, there is no gain in power, because part of the force has been expended long before the club reached it. What the golfer must realize is that at the top of the swing the club is for an infinitesimal space of time at rest. And whether the player is letting himself out at the shot or sparing it the speed of the club's motion should increase gradually and

evenly from this position of rest until club-head and ball meet at the bottom of the swing.

In its worst form the sin of mistiming is responsible for many a fozzle. For instance, if the arms do their share of the work too soon, leaving the elbows and wrists behind, the hands are away in front of the ball by the time the club-head reaches it, and the result is almost certain to be a foundered drive. And apart from such grosser forms of sin, it only requires a very slight error in timing to rob a drive of much of its power.

This brings me to a feature of my own play which has, I believe, aroused more hostile criticism than all the rest of my little idiosyncrasies put together: I mean the swaying of the body. I have already said that the power that impels the ball in the drive is the result of several more or

## When Hubby Came Marching Home

BY AMILIE ADAMS HARRINGTON

In the past six months I've had a rest  
For husband's been tied up  
With helping Woody Wilson  
To win the Kaiser's Cup.

But now the War is over,  
He rushes out to see  
If he can make the course in one  
Or eighteen-sixty-three.

He's bought new golf sticks by the score  
And golf balls by the brood;  
There isn't any money left  
To even pay for food.

He fondly gazes into space,  
Then smiles and says with glee,  
"Mc. Tavish says in two more months  
I'll make an eighty-three."

That sweet, elusive "someday"  
Of every golfing fan  
Has knocked his good sense winding—  
Made a Nut of my old man.

less independent muscular forces. By swaying my whole body in the up-swing slightly away from the direction in which I am about to drive, and swaying back on to the ball in the down-swing, I bring into play a fresh and additional force, and a very important one too, seeing that it has behind it the whole of my somewhat considerable avoirdupois. There is, however, one great difference between this new source of power and all the others: none of the rest force you to move the head; but if you sway you must move it. And that is a big difficulty, because to move the head is to move the eyes, on whose view of the ball the whole mental calculation of the stroke depends. It is obvious that if the head shifts its position even a few inches the position of the ball relatively to the player is appreciably altered. It follows that any considerable swaying of the body

must be made at the expense of the accuracy of the stroke. As a matter of fact, I do sway through a very small angle indeed.

Yet slight though it is, the sway is there, and I consider that it is partly the reason of the power which I get into my shots from the tee. At the same time I should like to warn any players who may have in their minds to imitate me in this matter, that the use of sway belongs to the advanced stages of golf, and should certainly never be attempted by anyone who has not completely mastered the other branches of the art of driving. Sway, if it is used at all, should only be adopted as a sort of crowning ornament to an already reliable and finished style. In this also the great matter is good timing. If after swaying back you fail—as you may quite easily do—to come forward again quickly enough, the result will probably be a slice of the most egregious kind.

Now, in order that the body should not fall behind in the forward sway it is essential that it should pivot freely. In my opinion it is impossible to do this if the left foot is kept with the toe turned in, in the attitude which photographs of players driving towards the camera have made so familiar. In my own drive, as the club comes through and the body swings forward, I turn on the ball of my left foot, which at the finish of the stroke is pointing almost straight towards the hole. I find that this not only helps me to get the weight of the body behind the stroke, but makes the whole swing smoother and easier.

One final word of warning I should like to emphasize. Height, reach, and physical strength are not everything in golf. They are not even the main thing. But still they count. It is quite a mistake for the man of small frame and slight physique to imagine that he ought to be able to hit as far as his bigger and stronger opponent,



Driving—Finish of Stroke

for, other things being equal, the odds are on the man who can hit hardest. Hard hitting is no use without correct timing; but if you time the stroke rightly, in my opinion the harder you hit the better.