

How To Get The Punch

by Willie Hunter (1923)

Edited by J.I.B. Jones



Willie Hunter (L.O.C. circa 1922)

How To Get The Punch, by Willie Hunter, British Amateur Champion of 1921

Why is it that so many golfers get so far and no farther with their golf? Most players imagine that they are really improving if they make a real first-class shot here and there, but to the impartial observer it appears that some essential is lacking in the ordinary golfers' game which prevents them from quite "getting there." The fact that a real good shot comes off occasionally inspires optimism, and it is this spirit of hope that fascinates all players, so that each time you go out to play the thought is in our minds that we are going to do better.

I have thought over the matter long and often, and have formed the opinion that "punch" is the one thing lacking in the average player's game. This does not necessarily mean that brute strength is required, although strength is a tremendous asset which all of us would like to possess. The trouble is, we do not use what strength we have to the best possible advantage so as to get "punch" and decisiveness into our shots. The reasons for this are many. A good professional teacher can put you right where it comes to placing your hands for the particular grip more suitable for you, and he can correct faults in your swing, as also can he see that your stance is good, be it open or square, but he cannot give you the state of mind which permits perfect coordination of the muscles.

What does the average golfer think of when he goes up to hit the ball? The result of much teaching and studying of the technicalities of the game where such things as "slow back," "keep your head down," "don't go past the perpendicular at the top of the swing," etc., etc., which have been continually impressed on his mind, are probably first and foremost. The mind works so much more quickly than any of us can swing a club that long before the moment of impact all the different things we have been told to do and not to do have passed through our brains and we are

hurrying and scurrying to keep up with our thoughts, and the result is we are too quick back. We are below the perpendicular at the top of the swing and are racing our club down to hit the ball right from the top. There cannot be rhythm in such a swing, as if you are going in "high" right from the top of the swing, you cannot increase speed so as to reach a maximum at the moment of impact to give correct timing and the "punch."

Watch our foremost players hit. There is no subconsciousness about the blow of any of them. Abe Mitchell and Walter Hagen are both tremendous hitters, as also they are strong, powerful men and, moreover, very different in style. Now take Cyril Walker, who weighs but 115 pounds and has quite an orthodox style, and watch him hit a ball almost up to any of the longest. They all get there because of the "punch" at the right time - that is, the maximum speed of the club head is attained at impact. These men hit the ball correctly because they have no other thoughts in their head after once judging the distance and direction, but making the ball go to or near the place they want it to go.

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to take a stick and hit a small object when out walking? The stick is swung in a natural way, and the top of a poppy or some small object is taken off cleanly without difficulty.

If players would judge the distance, get the direction and swing in an arc at the ball, the keeping the head down and all the other little things would look after themselves. There can be no decisiveness, which is what I mean by "punch," if the mind is working on numerous little details of already assimilated teaching. To turn to Coue, the subconscious mind will be attending to these things; all you have to do is to hit the ball to a previously defined position and be conscious of nothing else but your main object - to hit the ball.

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