

CHANGE OF FORM

By A. Duffer.

One of the most often remarked idiosyncracies of golf is the complete change of form that comes to substantially all players except the real cracks, without warning or apparent reason. For a season we play "beautifully" and consistently. Suddenly we "blow up." We can't drive, we can't approach, we can't get the ball in to stay in, we can't give any visible evidence of ever having seen a club before. We are hopeless. Or we have a driving streak accompanied by a tearful exhibition of putrid short work or vice versa. We consult the Pro and the book, we search our memories for the odd stunts that have seemed to bring us back in similar situations in the past. Maybe we get back in a day, maybe in a week, maybe not until we have broken our clubs, handed in our resignations and done a cathedral round through Europe. Of course, when we do get back, we know exactly how (perhaps), but the sorry thing is that next time it don't work. And all this and plenty more in spite of the fact that mere luck has nothing to do with it.

No doubt there are many answers, many that are all right. Out of a long experience liberally sprinkled with pathetic events, broken promises and brilliant (?) discoveries, I have dug up one that fits my own case admirably.

I present it with no delusion as to its cure all qualities and no misapprehensions as to its novelty. One Pro says "let the club head do the work," another says "follow through," another "wait until you come to it." They all mean the same thing. Doubtless the only thing new about what I have

to say is the way I say it; and perhaps not even that.

We play golf with two hands. Whatever the grip we use the centers of control of the two hands on the shaft are several inches apart. We swing the hands and the club swings on the hands, or one of them as a center, a moving center. Any shifting of this center from one hand to the other or from one to some intermediate point between the two changes the arc of club head travel and changes it out of all proportion to the change in centers. It is natural for most players to let the left hand do most of the work in the full swing and the right in the short work. That is to let the left serve as a center part of the time and the right part of the time. The result of this is that there is no fixed hand habit. Today the left is dominant. We drive well and approach indifferently. Tomorrow we reverse the proceeding and achieve the opposite result. Next day maybe we mix things thoroughly and use a different center for every stroke in the round.

Of course, this means that the club never feels right, that we can't find a comfortable stance, that we know we are going to go wrong and do. Ordinarily in such a case we figure out that one of our elbows is too low or too high, or that we are standing too close or too far away, or something of that kind. And maybe indeed we are; for when the hands go wrong everything goes wrong; when the hands are wrong, nothing else can be right.

And interesting enough when the hands have decided to work together

right, the player drops into his natural and correct stance without thought and does all of the other one hundred and one essential things without thought. *We play golf with our hands*, and everything that the other parts of the body do is merely a help to the hands; and everything that the other parts have to do they will do right without much attention if the hands are right. It goes even farther than this. It is almost impossible for a player to make other parts go wrong when his hands are right even though he makes a conscious effort to do so. I myself cannot even sway my body when my hands are right. I have tried it often and simply *cannot*. Of course, I do not mean I cannot sway without letting my hands go wrong. The Pro will doubtless have it that swaying *makes* the hands go wrong. This is true and it brings out exactly the point I am trying to make.

The hands do the work and should dominate. If they are taught what to do, and trained to do it, they will dominate, and everything else will follow. Whereas, if everything else is taught and the hands are allowed to get into the game merely through the indirect process of long distance instruction from the toes, the knees, the hips, the shoulders, and elbows, and other things, the cart will always be before the horse, the hands will never really know their business and the player will never acquire a thoroughly consistent game. Now what exactly is having the hands right? Doubtless it is something very difficult for different players, but clearly this at least is certain that no player who keeps changing the hand center of club head travel in like strokes can ever be con-

sistent. A change in hand centers necessitates changes in dozens of other things. The most alert muscles ever strung on a human frame are not responsive enough to meet such a demand. Muscles have habits and object to over numerous changes.

Probably it also is true that the best way, if not necessarily the only good way, is to use the same hand centers, not only for all strokes of a given kind but for all strokes of all kinds. This eliminates all questions as to which to use in any particular stroke and in time give the player a fixed habit. And a fixed hand habit means a consistent game and if it is a good habit it means a consistently *good* game. Hand habits are as hard to change as they are to acquire.

A good one once acquired is acquired forever. Take the player who acquired good hand habits by instinct when a boy, and incidentally let it be mentioned that it takes some plugging to acquire them at any other time or in any other way, such a player can always play and play almost any way. It doesn't matter much how he stands or how many of the usual don'ts he ignores. If he has room to swing he gets away with it some way. Even if he goes without practice he still can play. His hands don't forget.

Just what is the right hand center to use in all shots I, of course, do not know. I myself use the thumb and fore finger grip of the left hand as a center and find it works well. I use it in *every* stroke and never allow any shifting. If this practice is followed the right hand must play around the left, and as the club head goes through the right arm will act as a piston driving the club rather than as a sling swinging it, and in the beginning of

the take back, the right hand will seem to back away from the left rather than to merely swing up with it. Of course, it does swing up with it and turn with and in general subordinate itself to it. The left is the pivot, the right the piston that guides and drives the club around the pivot while the pivot itself is swinging around with the left shoulder as a center. The whole swing can be skeletonized thus.

The left shoulder moves through an arc with the spine as a stationary center, the left hand moves through an arc having the left shoulder for a moving center, the club head moves through an arc having the left hand as a moving center, and the right adds what it can to the speed and accuracy of the movement. The arc of club head travel is determined wholly by the swing and turn of the left hand. The right though gripping firmly and doing a substantial part of the work has nothing to do with the geometry of it. It has no "legislative

function." It is merely the chief executive.

Again if this practice is followed there will be no swinging out from the body on the part of the hands or either of them as they start back. The left hand turns and the right "backs away" and the result is that both swing *around*, well around, and when they come down they are closer in to the body and the club head cannot swing out over the line of play to be dragged in at the moment of impact and so across the line of play for a slice. I say I do not claim anything for this system except that it insures consistency and suits my own particular lack of style. This one help has done more for my own game than *every* thing else I have learned in fifteen years of fairly close application and study. Naturally I think well of it. I think so well of it indeed, that I would even risk recommending it to the men I play with at home.