

PUTTING

BY T. E. E. JAY

I HAVE READ a number of books on golf in general, and have been more amused than helped by the comments on putting. It is no awesome mystery, but an application of common sense and ordinary physics; while most of the books are so taken up with criticising other works and explaining the difficulty of getting the ball into the cup that they wholly omit any adequate directions to the beginner. Though not a good player, I have some success in putting, and think I can help some at least of those to whom it is difficult.

THE CLUB

It does not matter in the least what kind of a putter you use, provided—a big word!—it suits you. No player or professional can help you about that; you must choose for yourself, for though the club be the best in the world, if you don't like it it won't work well. Whatever you choose, after trying a number, *stick to it* thereafter, and learn its "tricks and its manners;" for thorough acquaintance with *your*, not *the* putter is the basis of putting.

Take a half dozen balls on a fairly level green, and paying no attention to line for the time, find out how far your club will send a ball when swung back a half yard, with a follow of half yard; use the same amount of push all the time, as nearly as you can judge. You will find that on the average the ball will go, for instance, about three yards. Then try a three-quarter yard swing, a yard, (which is about as wide as the club should move), etc. Do this until you know, not guess, how far a swing will send the ball.

On a similar green, you can then send the ball near enough to the cup to be pretty sure of running down the next shot, even if you are a good deal out of line; and "never up, never in" will be robbed of half its terrors for you. But if you do not know your club's power, you will always be in the dark about where your ball will end its run.

THE LINE

There are two "lines." One is on a level green; like Mrs. Harris, "there ain't no sich a person," but there are greens nearly enough level to be treated as if they were. The other is a sloped or wrinkled green, of which I will speak again.

Get behind your ball, and aim your putter-shaft at the hole. Be careful that it passes over the center of the ball; then pick out a grass blade about seven or eight inches in front of the ball and directly in line with the hole. Now keep your eye on that blade and get up and stand over the ball; you will be surprised how different that blade of grass can look when viewed from above, and if you "don't watch out" you will lose it. If you do, then go back and find it again, for *no other blade* will do at all; one an eighth of an inch to the right or left is not good enough, for mathematical reasons which are obvious. Frequently that blade will, from above, look quite out of line; but if you change your mind and take some other, you will find that you were wrong to shift.

Now putt, with such swing as the distance from the hole warrants, for that blade of grass; if you don't stub your putter or otherwise flub your shot, you will wind up quite near the hole, usually within fair certainty at the next.

THE BORROW

But if the green slopes that is not sufficient to ensure success, of course. Suppose there is a slant to the left; if you putt straight for the hole your ball will end say a yard to the left. Now if you putt for a point a yard to the right of the hole, as would be natural, you will not run down the putt at all, but will be about a foot to the right; why?

Because the slope gets in its work when the ball begins to slow up, not during the first part of the run; and also because of trigonometrical reasons. No, I am not going to state these fully, nor illustrate them graphically, though that is perfectly possible; but I can say in few words why the ball acts as it does. Suppose your slope is directly facing you, so that your ball runs up it at right angles to its base-line; you feel instinctively (correctly) that *no* allowance or borrow is needed. Suppose your line to the hole is parallel to the base-line of the slope; probably you will be more or less at sea then, but you need the maximum borrow, as much as your estimate of the amount the ball will run down the slope in the length of the putt. Between the two, you will need less than

that, growing less and less as you approach the mathematical normal, or right angle.

On down hill putts, use a little more borrow than you think is needed; because the force of the club is less, and the curve begins to get in its work sooner. Avoid down hill putts if you can, as they are very difficult to plan and to execute; one cannot hit hard enough to control the ball with a fair prospect of staying near the hole; and indeed, on the fourth green of the beautiful Apawamis links, if one gets above the hole when the green is fast he will roll off the green into the bunker unless the putt goes down.

THE STANCE

Any thoroughly comfortable one will do; but you must stand still. I prefer to advance the right foot enough to keep balance well; and to putt from about three or four

inches to the left of the right foot. Other men, other minds. The grip is also unimportant; but it seems best to make *all* the shots with the same grip, whatever that may be.

THE SWING

This is *not* unimportant. The bottom ten or twelve inches of the path of the club should be as nearly as possible parallel to the turf; and the whole swing, except perhaps the last foot, should be on the line of the hole.

PRACTICE

"If I do all these things, can I putt?" You can, my son; but you won't. The second, third, and fourth paragraphs will each take six months practice; and you won't practice, because you want to play golf.

