



## JOHN L. LOW ON PUTTING

### THE SECOND PART

*of a deeply interesting article in which the distinguished Scottish golfer, who is wise philosopher and leader of the game, as well as one of the ablest amateurs of the time, and an amateur championship finalist, continues his observations on that part of the game in which he is pre-eminent. They were made and printed some time ago, but this is the first time they have been offered to American readers. He discusses the methods of Willie Park, now of the United States, who is admittedly one of the greatest putters who have ever played the game. He deals in the stymies also.*

THERE HAS APPEARED an article on Willie Park's putting, which, inasmuch that it purports to express the great player's own views, is of considerable interest. The writer, Mr. W. L. Watson, has cross-examined Willie, and found out from him his methods and theories and reasons, and retails them for the benefit of the public. The paper should be read *in toto* by all interested in the subject, but some of the points may not unfittingly be noticed here. The writer opens his argument with the following very extraordinary statement: "The good putter is not the man who runs up stone-dead every time, but he who holes out confidently at from five to six feet. . . Therefore it would appear that the whole

art of good putting lies within that margin." Personally, if I could lay my long putt stone-dead every time, I would not bother about the six-foot ones. In approaching, one very seldom gets within six feet of the hole, even off a very good shot; the extra good approach being more than likely ten feet away. The six-foot putt would, therefore, rarely enable the player to hole out in one on the green, while the steady two man would be picking up a lot of holes by his sounder methods. Another reason which makes long putting far more important than the six-foot business is that the man has never yet been discovered who can always "find the cup" from a six-foot range. The man who is a really good approach putter will, from distances of about ten yards, be able to get within a yard of the hole, and may then consider he has a fair right to expect to hole his next. But to keep on putting in the six-foot ones is terrible work, and quite outside what can be expected when the nature of the club, the ball, and the ground surface are taken into consideration. Six feet is twice the length of a full-sized wooden putter—seventy-two imperial inches; to hole a series of putts of this length is too difficult a matter altogether.

The question of what putts can be holed with accuracy, and what laid dead with a fair amount of consistency, leads to the kindred question of what length of putt to practice. My idea of good practice



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hand come into greater prominence as compared with the left. But in putter play I have now come very strongly to the opinion that the left hand should be the master. Especially is this the case when the club is being *swung* — not *drawn* — back from the ball.

IF IN PUTTER-PLAY the right hand dominates the left, the result will be that the ball will be pushed, not freely struck, and will probably go to the right of the hole. I am inclined to think, after a good deal of practice with the club, that the necessity to use the pushing shot is more urgent with the Park putting cleek than with the ordinary cleek. At least my trials have shown that if the ball be struck freely with one of these clubs a pull is almost always the result, and this experience I find shared by that fine putter, Mr. Everard. And, moreover, from what I remember of Park's own putting, it always gave me the impression that he was playing for a pull. And with other players who use the club successfully, I have noted that they never seem to "let the club go" when hitting, as in driving, but guide it onwards and outwards after it has come in contact with the ball. With regard to all these various methods of hitting the ball in putting, there is not necessarily a right and a wrong way of doing the thing; there are probably two or three right ways, and certainly very many wrong ones. But for each individual player there is only one right way of striking, and there is only one right place on which to rest the eye during this operation. The truly-hit ball generally knows its proper goal.

When the opponent's ball lies in such a position that the hole is hardly open to your play, the Scots say that a stymie has been laid, the English describe the same situation as a "fluky" or unfair condition of affairs. The situation, however, is one of the recognised chances of the game and often affords opportunity for very skilful play. Golf would perhaps be "fairer" if we were allowed to tee our ball for every shot, but a game without luck is no game at all; it is not without purpose that we shuffle the cards instead of arranging them in sets of equal value before starting our rubber. I do not wish it to be supposed that I think that injustice is not sometimes done by the stymie in such contests as the championship. But in the game of golf the stymie, I feel certain, is good, and without arguing

the case at length I would venture to give it as my opinion that no match has ever been lost entirely by the stymie rule. True, you did not manage to screw round the opponent's ball from a range of six feet at the eighteenth hole, but what, my good friend, about the two-foot putt you missed at the second, when there was no excuse and a fair field? We had better keep our old foe, the stymie, for if we kill him we shall rob ourselves of many a nice-looking excuse.

STYMIES are of two sorts—those that may be putted and those that must be pitched. If the ball of our adversary lies between us and the hole, and we miss our putt, even though there may be a big borrow from one side, we say that the stymie cost us the hole; it is a pious belief, and hurts no one, but as a matter of fact there are few stymies that are unplayable.

Taking the pitching ones first we find that most of them are easy. There is, to begin with, the short pitch and long run, when the other man's ball is a foot from ours and the hole a yard or more. We play this shot with great freedom, for we know in our heart of hearts that it is almost easier than a common putt; if we fail we have a fair excuse, and if we succeed we are the happier. A shot of this sort is played with the natural loft and our most lofted iron, almost like a putt, the pitch of the club being sufficient to carry over the ball, and straightness and strength alone remain to be considered, just as in a fair putting stroke. When the opponent's ball lies within a foot of the hole, and ours, perhaps, two or three feet further back, we have a more difficult business in hand. There is now hardly room to loft and run, for a shot of this sort will probably bound over the hole after it has carried the ball. A good plan here then is to play the shot with aside cut and a medium loft, playing to pitch short of the intervening ball and to jump over the side of it on the first bound of our own ball; we may even play right outside to the left of our adversary's ball and work round with a skidding stroke.

Lastly, we come to the pitch directly into the hole, and there is no room left for run, so close to the hole lies the hazard. For this stroke the niblick serves best, owing to its extremely lofted face. No cut is needed, the natural pitch will do the work

if only we hit truly. What must be seen to here is that our ball be not topped. For some reason or other the player seldom gets down to this shot, and often when playing to win the hole loses everything by knocking his opponent's ball forward. Like to these strokes are the little chips from the edge of the green, three different shots being open to choice, even from a fair lie. We may either pitch just over the yard or so of rough ground which lies between us and the green, by means of the natural loft of the club, the shot running out its full distance and receiving no check. Or we may play to cut the shot low from the left; the ball breaking in and having an intermediate stop upon it. Or we may pitch right up to the hole side with a lofted tool and plenty of backstop or underspin. Of these methods the second I believe to be the soundest; it is in fact a sort of running shot, played with a lofted club, and has the approval of the most scientific golfers in the professional ranks. Personally, I like to play these little running-up shots with a straight-faced club; but this stroke is more apt to overrun the hole, and depends entirely on a "touch," a rather fickle thing.

BUT THE LITTLE PITCHES have taken us from our greenwork and the stymie, and from the common method of defeating this difficulty by putting. Unfortunately many

putting greens are flat; if it were not so there would be little cause for complaint; and after all it is no fault of complete golf that it is sometimes played under un-golf-like conditions. But on proper golf greens there is no absolute flatness, and therefore seldom any difficulty in dealing with a ball which slightly obstructs the straight way to the hole. If the opposing ball lie on the right of the direct line, we may make our ball come in from the left by drawing our hands inward as the stroke is made; this is a trick which all the children of the links know how to attempt. But when we have to draw the ball in from the right and play what the curlers call the "natural shot," we find that a very unnatural and difficult stroke presents itself. As a rule, the best chance is to play a pulling shot with slightly lofted iron, the converse stroke of our iron shot, with break from the left. With the putter it is a difficult business. The club must come from you, the striker, outward as it meets the ball; the spin must be from the left towards the right. The ball must work round with a movement which is contrary to the natural instincts of the hitter, who is always more ready to slice than to pull. This is a simple injunction, but the man who can use his club so delicately as to command this stroke is past the need of instruction.

