

PARK ON PUTTING

Willie Park, the famous British Professional, and winner of the Open Championship twice, is generally regarded as the finest putter that British Golf has ever produced. Park has just taken up his permanent residence in the United States. Hereunder are set forth what he considers to be the essentials and the best maxims for good putting.

AT ONE TIME only wooden putters were used, but these have now being almost entirely displaced by putting cleeks, iron putters, and aluminum putters in great variety. For a long run up the wooden putter, or its aluminum equivalent, is still without an equal, and it is the best also in cases where the putting green is quite smooth and true. If, however, the ball happens to lie in a small depression, it is apt to jump when played by such a putter. This fault of greens, however, is very rare now. It is claimed on behalf of the putting cleek that it has all the advantages of the other styles, and that the ball can be kept under the greatest control when played off iron. This is probably true, and it is found that with a putting cleek the ball may be hit harder in proportion to the length of the putt than with anything else. This is very advantageous on a rough green. More power is applied to the stroke in such circumstances, with the result that the ball travels with greater speed and then pulls up more quickly, so that it is less liable to be deflected by inequalities of the surface of the green. On the whole the putting cleek is the best style of putter, and it should have a fair amount of loft on the face.

IN PUTTING there is a feature of the grip which is different from that employed in any other stroke of the game, namely, that the right hand should hold the club more firmly than the left. This is the opposite to the rule for all other strokes. The fact is that putting should be done to all intents and purposes with one hand. When both hands are used to the full extent, one works against the other. In all cases the right hand is that which guides the club, and it is this guiding of the club that is everything in putting, and particularly in the case of the short putts. There is a great variety of belief and practice in the matter of the place where the club is gripped. Every man

is a law to himself; but it is best to grip the club on the leather at such a place that the player has an easy command of the club without distorting his body to any extent. The feet should be close together with the right much in advance of the left, making the stance a very open one, and the ball should be nearer the right foot than the left. The knees may be bent a little. In such a position for the stroke there is more weight on the right foot than on the left. This is putting off the right leg, but many players putt off the left leg. It is unwise for players to cultivate different styles of playing the same stroke for different parts of the game, but there is less to be said against it in putting than in anything else. The best players alter their putting stances from time to time.

IN THE MATTER of direction and the way of securing it, it may be said that there are two chief systems, one being putting for the hole itself and the other over a line leading to the hole. One might say that holing a long putt is in a sense a secondary consideration. One may hope for it, but has no right to expect it, or to blame oneself if it does not happen. But, on the other hand, all short putts should be holed, and also a proportion of putts of average length, varying according to the distance from the hole. In the case of all putts it is undoubtedly the best way to play over a line to the hole. The argument in favor of this is quite sound. On the part of the putting green intervening between the ball and the hole there must be a spot over which the ball must pass in its way to the appointed place. If the calculations are properly made and this spot is accurately found, then it might be said that the hole in a sense is brought nearer to the player, and all that it is necessary to do is to play over it with the proper strength in order to hole the ball. One is not allowed to make a mark on the grass or to draw a line; but even on the best greens, which seem perfectly uniform, one can always take notice of a particular blade of grass, or something of the kind which will serve as a guide. It is best to pick one's mark comparatively near to the ball; otherwise it will fail in its purpose and one might just as well play for the hole itself.

IN CONSIDERING the right line to the hole, it is best to make the calculation from the other side of the hole and look along it towards the ball. It is not difficult after a little experience to discover the imaginary line along which the ball must travel, and then a spot or mark on it may be selected. But it must be remembered that this line depends to some extent on the strength applied to the ball. If the putt is played fast, or bolted, the ball naturally travels in a straighter line and more directly than if it is played slowly to the hole with only just enough strength to get there. It should be remembered, however, that there is sometimes more than one road to the hole, and that looking at the line from the ball to the hole may give a different result from that gained when the examination is made from the other side of the hole. It is quite possible that the ball may be putted into the hole along either line, and in such a case the player must use his judgment as to which is the easier or more certain. But often the line found either way will be the same.

When the line is known there should be a careful examination of the surface of the green all along it. A very slight indentation is enough to turn the ball off, and a tiny ridge may make it next to impossible to get it into the hole. Plenty of time should be taken over putting; it is a mistake to do it at all hurriedly, and enough time should be taken to make a proper discovery of the line and to place the putter accurately and be sure of the right strength to apply. When these points are determined the play should be made without any further waste of time, hanging over the putting when there is nothing more to be ascertained or

thought about being altogether wrong and bad. The putt becomes more difficult every moment it is looked at.

PUTTING is largely a matter of confidence. When the player goes up to his ball believing that he can and will hole his putt, he has a much better chance of doing it than if he doubts and is given to anxiety as to what will happen to his ball when it passes over a certain part of the green. In such a state of doubt the more quickly he putts the better; the putt will become more difficult all the time. One of the most important points in good putting is to hit the ball and only the ball. A scuffy way of putting, by which the club is dragged along the surface of the green is bad and gives bad results. In order to make absolutely certain of avoiding this scuffling it may be a good thing to aim at striking the ball with the putter a little above the surface of the ground. The ball should be smartly tapped with the club, and the stroke ought to be played entirely from the wrists. It ought not to be a slow heavy blow, nor should the ball be shoved or jerked. The player should take pains to see that in the back-swing the head of the putter is drawn straight back in the line of play, and brought forward on to the ball again on the same line, so that only a forward movement is imparted to the ball. Unless this is done the ball may be pulled or sliced, and these are far commoner faults in putting than might be imagined. When everything is ready for the putt there should be one last glance over the line, which does much to settle the adjustment of the strength, and then the eye should be fixed on the ball for the stroke and kept at that place until the ball is on its way to the hole.

