

# SUGGESTIONS FOR PUTTING

By FRANCIS OUIMET

**N**OTHING else is so commonly bewailed in golf as inability to putt well. Who has not known the man who could have "broken the record of the course," "defeated his opponent" or turned in a better score than the winner of the medal play competition had it not been for "my poor putting"? With a great majority, it is the will-o'-the-wisp of the game. To-day it seems possible to hole everything in sight; to-morrow, the cup looks the size of an egg-holder into which must be driven a pumpkin or squash. The worst of it is that "to-morrow" generally is the day of a match or a tournament, the day of all days when it is desirable to make every stroke count for its greatest value.

In no other branch of the game are all men born so "nearly free and equal." I can almost fancy that the putting end of golf was the product of an exceedingly fertile and ingenious mind, coming about in this wise: A and B were the original pair to play a game which has developed into the present game of golf. A was a mighty man who, with whatever crude instrument was used at the time, could deal a prodigious blow that would send the "ball" a comparatively great distance.

B was of more delicate mould. To A's taunt and laughter over his feeble efforts to propel for any great distance the object hit, I think I can hear B saying: "True, I admit I cannot hit so lustily as you; but I'll lay you a wager I can roll this ball along the ground and have it stop nearer that brown patch than you can."

A accepts the wager and B wins it. Thereupon A is determined not to be so triumphed over and he tries again,—with the same result, for up to this time A has thought of nothing other than the distance he could hit. Now being quite humbled, he determines that in secret he will practice that more delicate stroke so that thenceforth he may not only triumph over B in the matter of distance, but in the skill of making the ball stop where he wishes, or at least nearer to that spot than can B. Thereafter, in their dual play, they decide that both factors of the game shall be included in their wagering, and eventually they conclude that the new feature lends an added flavour to their outings.

To-day I know of many golfers who are only second or third-rate golfers, but whose skill as putters is all that keeps them in the rank that they do hold. From this there may be two deductions; one is that, knowing their deficiencies in other branches of the game, they devote themselves assiduously to practise in that department which alone can place them on a par, or near a par, with others who far outclass them in the matter

of driving and approaching. The other solution is that some golfers are natural-born putters. My personal opinion, however, is that more men are good putters from practice than because they have any pronounced superiority, to begin with, over other men.

One of the greatest mistakes common to golfers who are known as in-and-out putters, to my mind, is that they are as flighty over their styles of putting as their putting is erratic. If a farmer were to plant a row of vegetable seeds on his land Monday and, becoming dissatisfied over their progress by the end of a week, dig them up and plant something else, his neighbours would look upon him as a little weak mentally.

That is perhaps a far-fetched simile; nevertheless, it is hard to understand how a golfer can try one style of putting to-day, another to-morrow and a third the day following and hope to improve that important department of his game. The trouble with him, as a rule, is that every time he sees another golfer get first-class results with a style of putting dissimilar to that which he most recently has adopted, he either consciously or unconsciously adopts that new style. Or, he sees one golfer do exceptionally well with a style of putter different from his own and immediately jumps mentally to the conclusion that it is not his putting style after all, that is at fault, but his style of putter.

All this may sound as if I had adopted one style of putter and putting at the outset of my golfing career and clung to it to the present day. I confess otherwise. Even when I say that I have had generally satisfactory results from the methods which I adopted last, I must admit that there have been times when I have been tempted to copy some golfer who, when I have seen him putt, apparently knew not the meaning of failure.

Before a golfer can putt, he necessarily must have some implement with which to do it, and I would suggest a gooseneck putter with a medium straight face. I have tried the putting cleek with the flat, or upright, lie, but have found it impossible to get over the ball so as to get an absolutely straight line to the hole. It has seemed to me that where you are not directly over the ball, that is, where you have the club-head extended away from you, the tendency is to pull the club-head off the line and then it is speculative whether the club-head has the proper line when it comes back to meet the ball. More often, I think, it comes back from an angle and either imparts a cut or else is prone to hit the ball to the left of the hole.

Now as to the cut stroke in putting, I personally do not believe that the ball so hit will follow as true a line as that which is hit absolutely straight, except that the cut is very serviceable where the ball

## GOLF ILLUSTRATED

may be so lying as to be in some slight depression.

In my putting I take a stance well over the ball, in fact, my head is directly over the ball, and the latter is about midway between the two heels, the stance being fairly open. I have tried putting off the left foot, but found that with this stance there was a tendency to "stab" the ball. Taking the club back, my wrists do not come into play at all, the backward motion starting from the left shoulder and coming back from the right, like a pendulum. It is the right hand which imparts the blow and I endeavour to get a distinct follow-through, with the face of the club-head at absolutely right angles to the hole. I do not attempt to hold a rigid position, but allow my body to go forward slightly toward the hole.

I do not attempt to hit the ball above the centre for a half-top, the stroke which some claim makes the ball hug the ground and be more certain of dropping when it strikes the hole. Rather, my idea is that the follow-through in itself does this work. The club-head, at the finish of the stroke, is between three and four inches from the ground, a result which cannot be attained by a stabbing stroke. To sum it up, my idea is that if the ball were placed on a piece of tape stretched directly toward the hole, the club-head should hold, as nearly as possible, the same position with relation to the tape from the backward motion to the follow-through. It is one of my mottos always to be "up." Sometimes I fail in this, but this is what I have found through experience: That I feel much more certain of holing an eight-foot putt coming back after having overrun the hole, than of getting down a three or four-foot putt if I have fallen short on the approach-putt. In other words, I have acquired the habit of thinking when making an approach-putt of some length, that if I go over, I at least have given the ball a chance and, with nothing to regret, I can make a bold try on the come-back. But when I fall short on the approach-

putt I am apt to dwell upon what a coward I have been, consequently to have a feeling of insecurity over the stroke which follows.

My final word of advice would be this: No matter what your putting style may be; no matter whose style you may try to copy; no matter whose advice you may take about putting,—practise assiduously.



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MR. FRANCIS OUIMET PUTTING

Showing his splendid follow-through

### HINTS IN BRIEF PUTTING

*Stance.*—Heels about 12 inches apart; ball midway between the two; head well over the ball.

*Grip.*—Thumb of left hand down the shaft of club. Little finger and fourth finger of right hand overlapping forefinger and middle finger of left. Left hand holds club and right hand gives impact to ball.

*Up-Swing.* — Movement begins from left shoulder; no wrist action; try to keep face of putter at right angles to hole.

*Down-Swing.* — Club follows imaginary groove which it took going up, like a pendulum; follow-through essential, face of putter stopping three or four inches from the ground after having hit the ball.

*Suggestions.*—Generally try to be past the hole, rather than short. It gives more confidence for the next putt. Try to hit the ball squarely and firmly. Do not study

the line too long and do not putt carelessly. Practise! (This article, which appears in "Success at Golf," is published here with the kind permission of the author and Little, Brown & Company.)

In the May number Mr. Francis Ouimet will give his opinion of America's chances in the British Amateur Championship. In June he will relate his golfing experiences preparatory to the British Amateur Championship. In July and August, with the exception of cabled accounts to a New York newspaper, his impressions of the British Amateur and Open Championships and the Amateur Championship of France will appear exclusively in this magazine.