

Links and Lunatics

By BOB DAVIS

[It might be interesting to know that when Mr. Davis passed the finished manuscript of this gem of golf humor, he referred to it as "A dissertation on the balmy bores who infest the fairways and client the asylums." We might add that this is one of those rare instances when a manuscript proved entirely too short.—EDITOR.]

"O, what a noble mind is
here o'erthrown!"—Hamlet.

THROUGH the science of psychiatry it has been determined that insanity reaches its zenith among writers because they, striving for expression, sink in the subtle deluge of words.

Next come the painters, who would interpret life in color; failing in which, because of its infinite and ever changing variety, they go under in a prismatic wave that is transmuted into darkness. Lastly, the musicians, who gallop to their doom down a corridor of echoes terminating in discord. Thus the creators crash to oblivion and frenzy.

In my opinion the highest manifestation attains its pinnacle among golf nuts. They stand supreme in the list of leisurely lunatics, each separate specimen obtruding his magnificent madness upon his defenseless fellows. Since the days of Tom Morris these maniacs have occupied the driving tees, the fairways and the putting greens, clamoring for disciples and babbling their imbecilities to the cock-eyed world.

For fifteen years I have been striving for self-expression on the lovely lawns of this my native land, and in far-away places whither I drifted to play the ancient game; for fifteen years I have been thwarted by unsolicited instruction, by interference of rambling, raving, stark mad boneheads. "I do not choose" (thanks to Mr. Coolidge for starting this sentence) to be instructed. In spite of my resistance I have met up with some of the brightest little demonstrators on this shore of the inevitable Rubicon. The scars of those encounters encumber my soul, the recollections are nightmares in my memory.

I now propose to catalogue the disasters that have befallen me through the insistent fanatical interference of well meaning but demented counselors. If this be libel, make the most of it. My first self-appointed instructor was an inmate of the Dunwoodie Club, hard by Yonkers.

"The secret of the long drive," said he, "in strict confidence, is based upon pneumatics. I cite the air drill as an instance. Have you ever observed the violence with which the air drill makes its impact?"

"Yes," I answered, "and I've been kept awake by steam riveters too. What's the idea? Who furnishes the air in this pneumatic stroke of yours?"

"Furnish it yourself. Take your stance, fill your lungs with air, come back slowly—with your mouth shut—and come down with increasing velocity. At the moment the club head reaches the ball exhale vigorously and let her ride. Fifty yards further. Try it. Keep your head down."

Taking a deep breath that strained all the buttons on my sweater I set out for a gargantuan pneumatic sock. "Follow through!" he shouted at the top of my swing. Down came the driver. Coincident with the explosion of air from my bursting lungs, the largest divot in captivity left terra firma and went soaring toward the water tower on Park Hill. "You exploded at the wrong moment," said my teacher. "The trick is to time it. Once more. When I give the signal explode again."

"How can I keep my eye on the ball, and watch your signal for me to blow like a Mack truck?" I asked in all seriousness.

"Good God, I didn't ask you to back-fire," was his scientific rejoinder. "Keep your mind on it. Atta boy."

For the second time I released the self-contained hurricane and slammed the pill at least seventy yards. "Does it work as well with an iron shot?" I queried. "I mean if the air holds out and I don't expire from apoplexy."

For five holes I struggled with the pneumatic stroke and then broke out with a full line of hiccoughs that stayed with me the balance of the

game. Between internal combustions and belchings from the region of the Adam's apple I piled up a score of 117 strokes and lost a three-dollar Nassau. I had him one down on dyspepsia, however.



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The next great scientific advance was made under the tutelage of a Sleepy Hollow bird who must at one time have been the foreman of a section gang. His discovery had to do with what he called the "hammer blow." He was a practical man too, but unfortunate as a patentee.

"Have you ever seen a man driving a railroad spike?" was his initial query when approaching the main issue. "No matter how wide the arc of the wallop he never misses the object. Sure and accurate, timing the sock and putting his whole punch into the impact. New in golf, you come at the ball with a back swing instead of a top swing as in driving a spike. Treat the club as though it were a sledge hammer and—there you are. Swing across instead of down; nothing to it."

"You think the best place to learn the game," I asked, "is with a construction gang?"

"Surest thing you know. Step up there and paste one. And remember: You—are driving—a spike. Sideways. Keep your eye on the spike. Just forget that it is a ball; think of S-P-I-K-E."

"What about the sledge?"

"Forget it. No first class spike driver ever has a thought about his hammer. Just pipe the spike." He was full of his theory.

Humming the first verse of "Drill Ye Tarriers, Drill," I strolled up to the ball with my trusty sledge hammer just like

the President of the Union Pacific Railroad driving a silver spike on a new branch line, in full view of the preferred stockholders. Blam! Right on the nose. Spow—ie! The spike left the tee and pulled its course toward two caddies standing sixty yards to the left, hissed over a privet hedge toward an East Lake cottage well out of bounds and busted a pane of French glass in the parlor window. One of the caddies, in the act of performing a swift duck, broke a blood vessel and had the nose bleed for the next seven holes. The imbecile broke his driver, and a rotten time was had by all. I'm off of that section hand stroke.

Now comes along an interne from Bellevue Hospital. He was all for "anatomical coordination." At some time in his career he had been present at an autopsy and based his bunk on physiological foundations. He read all his golf from Gray's Anatomy, and a chart showing the skeleton, muscles and vital organs of man. He claimed to have a doctor's certificate but I strongly suspect that it was a diploma for idiocy.

His claim was that a golfer not under perfect coordination was in danger of breaking the *clavicle* bone through the sudden pressure of the *trapezius* muscle in the event that a too sudden strain was applied to the *lumbar vertebrae* against the *lalisimus dorsi*; that the small intestine was in constant danger together with the spleen and the liver if, at any period of the downward stroke, the owner of those giblets failed to move his torso in poetic harmony.

Every time I played a round with that nut I felt sure that my kidneys had come loose or that the *vakvula coli* had blown up. After a week in his society I picked up heart disease, rupture and was on the road to diabetes. His idea of a pleasant afternoon was to hold a corner's inquest on ME. If the Life Extension Society ever does anything to prolong his life I will sue them for malpractice, and when he breaks his *humerus*, *patella* or *fibula* bone or strains his *orbicularis oculi* looking for lost balls it will not give me a pain in the large *colon*.

In my opinion golf is a game in which outside interference tends to the downfall of the individual. The private defects we develop should be respected. The awkward form that I have brought to a high state of perfection is mine own. The marvels I accomplish through studied inaccuracy are more thrilling at my age than (Continued on page 49)

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any victory predicated upon good form.

The Sullivan Law in New York opposes my desire to bear arms but it does not retard my inclination. I look forward to the day when I am privileged, at the nineteenth hole, to shoot an instructor and drink his blood. It is admitted that my stance is ungainly, that my drive would give Bobby Jones the delirium tremens; that the manner in which I perform with the mashie defies the laws of gravity, and that in the gentle art of putting I arrest human progress. Be that as it may, I am quite satisfied to reach the green in five and concede myself a long putt. The divers and sundry routes over which that thrilling accomplishment is attained depress me not, and I wish to be let alone.

Hear ye. Hear ye. This is my public announcement that "I do not choose" to be instructed—at least by the "amateur pros."
