

The Value of the Chip Shot

By FRANCIS OUIMET

IN this day of prodigious tee shot hitting and uncanny iron play up to greens one is apt to overlook-entirely one of the games most important stroke savers, the chip shot from just off the putting greens. There have been hundreds of occasions to my knowledge where a deadly chip has saved the day, even though the opponent seemingly had the hole completely sewed up due to an exquisite iron shot that left his ball within a reasonable distance from the hole. By the same token a poorly played stroke has many times cost a player a match or kept him from winning a medal round.



to length of distance from the putting green

I can well remember the experience of Roger Wethered at Deal in 1923. His opponent was Evan Campbell, the steady plugging type of player who though not endowed with the ability to play the brilliant strokes that Wethered could play was a mighty useful player nevertheless. Eight times during their match Campbell apparently had a hole won. His ball lay on a green whereas Wethered's own ball was short or over, or else to the left or right of the putting surface. A fine golfer such as Wethered is could well be expected to play a successful chip the majority of times he attempted to do so but even a Bobby Jones could hardly be expected to lay eight successive chip shots stone dead.

Yet this is exactly what Wethered did in his match. Eight times he saved himself, from losing holes and on two of these occasions he won holes thanks to the deadliness with which he was chipping that day. And in the end he was extremely fortunate to win the match by a solitary hole, the importance of which can best be realized when one remembers that Wethered won the championship.



BY KEEPING WRISTS RIGID
This permits the player to hit firmly and the ball will not leave face of club suddenly

What clubs are used in playing chip shots? I would say a club that would impart a low jump to the ball at the moment of impact caused by the loft on the face of the club used. Although this could be somewhat contradicted since certain players of prominence are in the habit of employing a well lofted club along the lines of a spade mashie or even a mashie niblick either one of which will produce a shot with rather a high jump to the ball. The choice of the club really conies down to the golfer himself and he will naturally choose the club which he handles the best.

The two chip strokes more commonly used are the chip with run and the chip with drag or cut. The first named is the

one which should be played by the average player because it is the easiest for him to cultivate. The chip shot with drag or stop is only for the advanced players and those who attempt to play this must know what it is all about. Both shots have considerable merit and are the real key to low scoring. There are many theories set forth as to the proper method of playing chip shots but it has seemed to me that the simpler we make them the more success we enjoy and there is certainly nothing complicated about chip shot playing.

I always try to have an accurate knowledge of the condition of a green that I am about to chip to. If it is soft I know I can chip boldly to the green because the soft ground will assist in checking the roll of the ball. By having the ball land on the green you do away with the danger of having a well directed chip hit an uneven surface and break off the line intended. After all, putting greens are supposed to be free from rough surfaces and a little chip to a green removes much of the gamble.

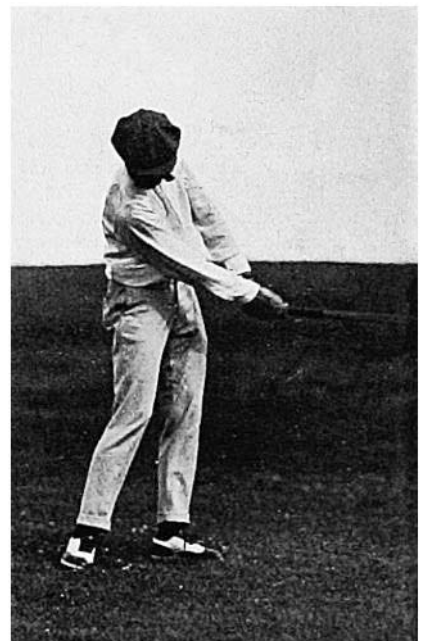
On the other hand if the green is too fast to receive a bold chip a longer run must be expected and due allowance made. The better way of illustrating the two types of shots can probably be made by reviewing the thirty-sixth hole of the final match between Max Marston and Jess Sweetser at Flossmoor in 1923. The eighteenth hole at Flossmoor is something over five hundred yards and these players, all square, fell a few yards short of the green with their seconds. Marston was dead on the line all the way and Sweetser was a bit to the left. The green was of the sloping variety higher on the right and running away rapidly to the left.

Marston had to play first and he chose an approaching cleek or putter to play a chip with run. He played a beauty and the ball starting well to the right took the roll and finally ended two feet from the cup. Sweetser from the left had the face of the green to pitch into and he selected a spade mashie. Instead of playing a chip with run he knew the better result could be obtained by pitching boldly somewhere near the hole because the slope of the green would stop his ball almost instantly. He likewise played a great shot—great because it was executed at a moment when an inferior effort would have cost him the match. His ball landed two or three yards from the hole and rolled perhaps four feet beyond from whence, he dropped the putt for a half.

The average player will, I am sure, attain the more satisfactory results if he adopts an iron such as a number two, three or four. With any one of these clubs he will at least get his ball somewhere near the hole and with little difficulty. Any of these clubs (Continued on page 60)



This firm grip on the ball means a quicker stop when it reaches the green



A PENDULUM MOVEMENT
With arms, wrists and body as still as possible, the movement should be simple

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are easier for him to use than a mashie or mashie niblick. About the only thing he has to think of is to keep his body still. He does not have to think of his wrists, feet or another thing that goes into the other shots; just keep that body still.

The more accomplished players who like the chip which will land well onto the green, such as the one Jesse Sweetser plays so skilfully must use either a mashie or a mashie niblick, and they also must try and keep the body out of the play. Beyond that I believe the wrists should be kept out of the stroke and should perform no duties whatsoever other than those required in moving the club head backward and forward. I am a firm believer in the so-called dead wrist in playing chip shots. A dead wrist is nothing other than a stiff wrist.

By keeping the wrists as rigid as possible it permits the player to hit firmly. The ball will not leave the face of a club suddenly where the wrists are kept stiff and in consequence a better grip upon it is made when the face of the club reaches the ball. Gripping the ball means a quicker stop. Suppose the wrists are played in a loose or flabby manner. Then the wrist action causes the ball to leave the face quickly all of which means much more roll. I do not wish to say that it is faulty to use the wrists in chip shots but one must decide for one's ownself whether he wishes to play a running shot, or not.

The chip shot can not be under valued. It is the vital spark of the golfing machine and makes putting easy or difficult. Many fine golfers prefer the chip shot to the long approach putt because they can get the ball nearer the hole in this way than they do when they have a long putt from the edge of the green. Great golfers such as Jones, Von Elm, Hagen or MacDonald Smith vary their play constantly around the greens. They have become so proficient in playing chip shots they have any one of several different methods to employ depending entirely upon the contour of the green, the condition of the fairway leading up to the green as well as the green itself.

It seems a bit foolish for the ordinary golfer to try a dozen different chip shots when one system will do the trick and bring him the desired

result. Please bear in mind there are a mere handful of great golfers and they are only great because of their natural skill and their wonderful control with the club and ball. The higher handicap members should analyze their own powers and practice shots that come easy to them. During the process of their development it is simple enough for them to attempt the more advanced ideas as their game shows definite progress.

Again repeating what I have already stated the outstanding principle to adopt in playing chip strokes is that of keeping the body as still as possible. A player can move his hands back and forth without turning the body, a sort of pendulum effect. If it seems easier for him to use slack wrists, do so, although I believe the more rigid wrist action will, day in and out, produce more consistent results.