



C. J. H. Tolley, Former British Amateur Champion, Playing an Approach Shot at Hoylake, England, Last Summer, During the Amateur Championship

Photo Ilus. Co.

The Snap of the Wrists

By R. STANLEY WEIR

THIS is a loose but conventional phrase to express a real thing in golf. Cavillers may say that there is no such thing as a wrist shot in golf, but there is such a thing as idiomatic English, and the phrase does well enough if we but understand it. Properly understood, it would be much truer to say that all good golf action is of the wrists.

If the player, having taken his club back with turning hands and forearms with a view to coming down again accurately and forcefully, much as one draws back a whip the better to crack it, or, as the French say, *reculer pour mieux sauter*, allows them to follow their natural course (I must not say "bent," for they must not bend) instead of attempting some action purely factitious and artificial, he will find that they naturally indulge in a very rapid twisting motion as the right hand passes over the left at the impact. The action is most readily felt and perceived with an iron or mashie, provided the "wrists" are allowed to act freely. It is very difficult to describe, but what happens is that when the hands have brought the club down to the bottom of the swing the left hand arrests itself to turn sharply leftwards. If this is not done and the left arm extends itself all of a piece there is certainly no snap. This momentary stop

by the left hand with an immediate covering right hand is the cause of the snap and is the life of the stroke. This, indeed, is one of the secrets of golf.

The vice of much golf play is an artificial elongation of the swing, often accompanied by lunge, which interferes with both the rotation of the body and the proper snap or twisting hands and forearms, idiomatically called "wrists."

In proper action, the body does not lunge, but turns on its axis and the hands and club indulge in a nice whipped-up action and follow through.

The vice I refer to spells stiffness with consequent lack of vim and speed. But there is danger in avoiding Scylla that we plunge into Charybdis, i. e., a slackness which means flexing and bending of the wrist-joint. This must be avoided at all costs. There should be no flexing or bending of the wrist joint in golf save in putting and an occasional chip-shot such as I have seen George Duncan use.

The law of golf calls for turning hands and forearms and these turn, twitch and twist the one over the other developing extraordinary power and speed in every forceful shot in golf except the stiff arm action of the push-shot which is *sui generis*. Of course as hands and forearms turn so do also the striking face of one's

clubs. It is safe to say that all shots save push and cut shots and putts are played with turning club-heads.

Let me add that this characteristic action of snap has the advantage, generally unsuspected, of actually directing the club-head in the longest possible arc of the true swing. A moment's experiment with slow action will show that unless the right hand passes over the left the club will turn sharply to the left with consequent abbreviated swing. With proper action the club-head goes "straight" forward to the maximum circuit possible.

It has been the custom to sneer at the doctrine of the snap of the wrists in certain high quarters, but let the sedulous golfer be assured he cannot do without it. Only let him not suppose it is everything. The swing must be visualized as a whole. But he will not go far wrong if, while not neglecting a full rounded swing as he comes down and follows through, he regards this most vital snap with its turning, twisting, hand-over-hand, curiously checked motion in the left hand, as the climax of the full swing with whatever club.

The owner of a pair of sharp eyes—a medical man—has given me this version of the snap of the wrists, a phrase which he entirely approves.

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"Lone Sentinel," ancient palm back of 1st tee on Brackenridge Park Course, San Antonio, Texas

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(Continued from page 15)

"In the upswing the club-head leads, but coming down the hands are in advance but are steadily overtaken by the club-head until the impact when the club-head overtakes the hands and continues its leadership to the finish.

"Now," continued my friend, "at the moment of impact just as the club-head is about to pass on there is visible a distinct arrest of movement in the left forearm for the briefest instant; immediately following this instant the forearms revolve upon their longer axis—the left turning leftwards and under, the right leftwards and over, giving the twisting appearance of which you have spoken and seemingly taking the lead. Without this brief arrested motion of the left and strongly asserted right you would get action as smooth as putting but no snap."

I am satisfied that my friend was right, and so was James Braid when he described wrist action as something like the action of the hand boring a cork-screw leftwards. It is a movement inconceivably swift but well worth any golfer's pains to acquire and to understand. It might be expressed in this way: At the bottom of the swing, hold back the left and go through with the right.

ACCORDING to Bob McDonald, the Bob O'Link professional who led the field in the Metropolitan open championship, one of the most important things for the golfer to remember is that to break the grip during a stroke is fatal. If the club is permitted to turn or twist in the hands even the least bit poor shots and bad direction are bound to follow. The face of the club must be square with the line of flight and it must be kept that way when the ball is struck