

GOLF ILLUSTRATED



VARDON AND TAYLOR

Another Open Championship has been won and lost and again two of the Triumvirate demonstrated their supremacy in sustained continuous

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play. Braid, it is true, has fallen behind somewhat, but with Taylor yielding premier place to Vardon we merely see again that Amurath to Amurath succeeds.

To win this great prize one must be something more than a golfer; certain temperamental qualities quite apart from manipulative skill with clubs, quite apart even from clever head-work are essential. The nervous excitement on such an occasion must be tremendous. The danger of "cracking" is constant. There comes a time when many a fine player cannot do the thing he would. His muscles refuse to obey; they lose their responsive quality with the result that some disaster-filled bunker is visited or the putts decline to go dead and hope flies away for another year.

It was evident from his splendid achievement in the qualifying round at Troon that Taylor had set out determined to retain his title by all means in his power. And he very nearly succeeded, but for trouble in the fourth round. Vardon and Taylor present interesting contrasts in their styles. It is common to hear that all good golfers play in essentially the same way. The great Vardon himself is of this opinion. He has no patience with the flat swing. The old St. Andrews style has for him useless extenuations. There is only one way to swing a club and he does his best to give us the secret in his books. Yet Mr. H. H. Hilton confesses that he cannot understand the Vardonian swing with its flat beginning and its secondary lift. It is very apparent to students of their play that Vardon and Taylor do not play the game in precisely the same way, although achieving such equal results.

One hears every now and again that Vardon is the greatest golfer that yet has been. The statement is too absolute. The triumvirs, although getting on, have, let us hope, still many years of golf left in them

and it is too early to say who shall have the largest number of Open Championships to his credit or which of them will outstrip his fellows. Vardon is probably the most graceful player of the three. In figure he most nearly approaches the stature of Apollo or the herald Mercury, and there is a beautiful moderation in the rhythm of his stroke that greatly pleases the

eye. But grace in golf, though highly attractive, is not the chief thing. Braid, at his best, has a power and finesse of the first order; they have won him five championships and may win him five more. Taylor plays with a force and directness, an absence of useless flourish, a conservation of power, a Greek simplicity of method that mark him out as in the very front rank. Let us admit that Braid and Taylor have not the grace of Vardon; we cannot yet say they are inferior in effective golf.

In a highly interesting article in the May number of this magazine Mr. Hilton gives credit to Taylor for setting the pace in modern golf. It was Taylor who by the perfection of his approaching style showed the possibility of frequently holing out in one on the green. It was Taylor who first applied to golf the axiom of Euclid that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, and showed the merits of directness, an abbreviated swing and reservation of power for the instant preceding impact. In this article Mr. Hilton says:

"Taylor, in particular, was responsible for many of the old well-worn traditions which seemed ingrained into all classes of players going by the board. He disdained any devious way of arriving at the hole; he simply plugged straight at the pin with every manner of club. It was a species of game which did not exactly appeal to those whose golfing minds had been traditionally steeped in the art of finesse, and who loved to arrive at the hole in some out of the



Photo by Pietzcker, St. Louis

MR. NELSON WHITNEY
Southern Amateur Champion

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THE NEW CLUB HOUSE OF THE MEMPHIS COUNTRY CLUB
Photo by Pietzcker, St. Louis



THE CLUB HOUSE OF THE OLD ELM CLUB AT FORT SHERIDAN, ILL.

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J. D. EDGAR

Who won the French Open Championship at Le Touquet with a score of 288

way, fanciful manner. It was a too direct and forceful way to suit their delicate palates. Taylor took the short cut for home and rammed his putts at the back of the hole, trusting chiefly to hitting the ball truly, and it was a method that paid as he proved by winning the Championship in 1894 and 1895 and tying again in 1896."

A study of such pictures as Mr. Beldam has given us in *Great Golfers* shows a really remarkable difference in method between Taylor and Vardon which has not, so far as we know, been noted in book or print. Taylor plays every shot (leaving putting aside) with a relatively unbent left arm or elbow. Vardon on the other hand distinctly bends his left elbow and the bend is quite in evidence at the top of the swing. This is also a feature of Braid's play. Doubtless a certain leverage is obtained in this way and" equally beyond doubt the method must have its merits; but at present we are comparing styles not merits. Bending his left elbow as he does it is clear why Vardon cannot tolerate the flat swing, and this may also explain why Mr. Hilton, who like Taylor does not appreciably bend his left elbow at all, confesses inability to comprehend the Vardonian swing. Mr. Beldam, through the lenses of his camera, is confident that he perceives in Vardon's action two distinct movements, a flat sweep and then an upright lift; with Taylor there is but the one sweep, our theory being that the differing left-elbow movement explains the differing styles.

R. STANLEY WEIR