

Boiling Three Strokes Into Two

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It has *been* said that Connie Mack, manager of the Philadelphia Athletics, considers pitching the essence and core of a successful baseball team. He evaluates good pitching as representing nearly 80 per cent of a team's success.

What, then, is the most important part of a game that combines power and force with finesse, such as the game of golf? A tee shot requires power whereas a chip shot requires delicacy of touch. Of course, there is really little similarity between baseball and golf, because one calls for team effort, the other is individual.

The important thing in golf will always be getting the ball into the hole, legitimately, of course. How to do it is a mystery that cannot be fully explained.

Years ago while searching for wisdom, we asked Ted Ray which he thought was the most important shot in golf. He answered forthrightly that in his opinion the tee shot was the all-important one. He was a tremendous fellow who could lash out long drives. To be able to hit a golf ball a long distance from the tee gives one the opportunity of reaching the green with a shorter shot.

Then we queried the great Vardon. His comments were brief and to the point. He thought iron play was the medium that produced low scores, because good iron shots put one in a position to go down in one putt sometimes, and certainly two always. Unfortunately this system eluded even the wonderful Vardon every so often.

Not satisfied altogether, we talked to Walter J. Travis who, without any exception past or present, was the most dependable person we have ever seen on a putting green. He may be just a name to the modern golfer, but when he said that he thought putting was the most valuable contribution to any low score or to any match that was won, we, felt he had the soundest reason of all.

Certainly if we are to take present-day

standards as the yardstick to success, we must agree with Mr. Travis. There are so many fine golfers in the United States today who drive well and play irons accurately that it comes down to a matter of putting which decides who is going to be the winner. One can recover from a wild tee shot. We have seen it happen over and over again. An iron shot that turns left or right into a trap is blasted onto the green, and more often than not near the hole.

But when that three-foot putt slides by the cup, it counts just as much as the 300-yard drive in the matter of strokes. It is much more upsetting to the morale of the player. Therefore, we will cast our vote with that of Mr. Travis.

Not so long ago we chanced across an article by Bernard Darwin that appeared in the LONDON TIMES years ago, referring to a British Open won by Walter Hagen. As you may know, Darwin has a most delightful way of writing golf. In this article, he spoke of Hagen's masterly putting that had stood out through four rounds of medal play.

He mentioned the fact that Hagen made many mistakes up to the greens, but it was "his uncanny ability to boil three strokes into two that won him the championship." Think that over when you are trying to determine which is the most important stroke in golf.

In the USGA Open playoff at St. Louis last year, Sam Snead was on the last green, about 18 feet from the hole. Lew Worsham was over, close to the edge of the rough with a difficult chip to make. They lay alike. Worsham played his stroke beautifully and had the fortune of catching the hole-rim as well, which slowed down his ball. Snead putted short, missed the next and Worsham holed his to become the Open Champion.

Worsham could have been excused for taking three strokes to hole out from the fringe of rough, but the records show that he was able "to boil three strokes into two."