

Golfing Enemy No. 1

THE SLOW PLAYER

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There is no doubt in my mind that the worst pest in golf is the unduly slow player. He comes in three types which stand out prominently:

1. The player who walks slowly throughout the round.

2. The one who takes an indeterminately long time to play after he reaches his ball through the green, fumbling with his clubs and maybe taking two or three from the bag before he finally selects one.

3. The player who stands most of the day lining up a putt, and looking for imaginary bumps and rolls until he finally sees a lot that really do not exist.

Sometimes a player is a conglomerate of the three types. Such a combination



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should buy a course for himself, or play before breakfast or after dinner. He certainly has no place in a tournament or on a club course when others are seeking recreation which must be had within a limited time.

Of the three types, the slow walker can often be excused, as physical defects require some persons to walk slowly.

As for the second type, however, once a player arrives at his ball he should be able to select a club and play the shot promptly, and not carry on a debate with the caddie and take three or four practice swings with a series of clubs before striking the ball.

The same is true on the green. Alex Smith, the former Open Champion, used to say of putting, "If you are going to miss 'em, miss 'em quick."

I have often heard him say, "There is no

use of going along the line of putt, picking up pebbles or loose impediments. One may throw the ball one way and one may throw it in the hole."

I do not know that I agree entirely, but there is something in it.

It is admittedly in order for a player to line his putt up from both sides of the hole, but he does not need to take three or four minutes to do it.

I recall the great pleasure it was to see how promptly the semi-finalists and the finalists in the 1937 Amateur Championship at Portland, Ore., played the game, even though it was difficult for the gallery to keep up with them.

In the final, John Goodman and Ray Billows played the first 18 holes in 2 hours, 29 minutes, and the second in about the same time, despite gallery interference.

The difficulty with the slow player is that reproaching him seems to make him slower. He never seems to realize how much enjoyment he is taking out of the game for others. Slow players are indifferent to anyone else on the course, and seldom, if ever, think of asking the following match to play through.

It is all quite unbearable. The Rules of Golf provide that committees in charge of competitions may disqualify players who, by delay in play, unfairly interfere with the play of others.

The penalty is entirely too lenient. The damage to the rest of the field is generally done before disqualification can occur. Perhaps it would be well to add an additional penalty, to wit: refuse the entry of a player who was disqualified more than once for slow play.

Golfers in general should "gang up" on the selfishly slow player.

Finally, it is almost universally true that the best players play quickly.