

The Glorious Game of Golf

By J. MARTIN WATSON

HILLCREST COUNTRY CLUB, BOISE, IDAHO

IS the real game of golf disappearing? Is the real spirit of the ancient and honorable pastime being supplanted with something less difficult to play and less capable of pleasing? Is it giving way to haphazard, humdrum and monotonous journeys from the first tee to the eighteenth hole in the course of which obstacles are removed at will and the rules of the game not only ignored but treated with a contempt that indicates a total lack of appreciation of what the game of golf really is? What is the answer? Let us see.

The real serious answer is that no person can play any game without knowing and without adhering to its rules. While the "rule shark" is often a pest, the professional ignoramus is intolerable.

If every contestant is to adopt his own code of conduct and each is to treat conditions he is confronted with in a different manner, you will have no contest at all, because you have no test of the comparative skill with which the respective players can overcome the countless obstacles that confront them on the course.

It is these surprising situations constantly arising and the absolute necessity for extricating one's self in strict accordance with golf law that makes the game of golf the most fascinating in the world.

There is a particular reason why rules are more important in golf than in most games. It is the one game in the world in which contestants play frequently at great distance from and not in the presence of each other.

The sole assurance that the contestants are contending for victory on equal terms lies in the fact that each player knows what the rules require him to do and the fact that his sense of honor impels him to do it at any cost to himself.

A player may have the keenest regard for honesty, and yet if he does not know the rules, his honor is of little avail in the presence of his ignorance.

To assert one's honor and do justice to

one's opponent, one must not only be willing to do the correct thing, but also to know, and know for a certainty, just what the correct thing is. This entails a knowledge of the rules. Without this knowledge one may be ashamed to find that he has unconsciously deprived his opponent of a victory one day and he may be equally humiliated by discovering that through his ignorance he has deprived himself of a triumph the next.

In all the activities of life there are rules which well-bred human beings observe, whether it be paying one's social or financial obligations, driving one's motor on the highway, beginning and ending letters with proper terms, taking one's place in line at a desk or ticket office, greeting one's friends and acquaintances, and replying courteously to their salutations; keeping engagements on time, saluting one's flag, baring one's head in the presence of women, kneeling in church, and standing while one's national anthem is being rendered.

It is the observance of these and thousands of other rules of life that imparts the rarest charms to our civilization. Without them we would be a mere mob moping in the dark, conflicting in our customs and ridiculing each other for the odd ideas each improvised for the government of his own conduct.

Now, let us come back to the game of golf. Why deprive it of the foundation of all its most fascinating features; why degrade it by the insinuation that it is the one game in the world in which rules may be cast to the winds? Why belittle it by converting it into a clumsy, colorless, club-swinging performance in which the surest winner is the one who pays least attention to the rules of play? Why boast of the fact that one does not know the difference between a stymie and an unplayable lie, any more than one would boast of not knowing the difference between a club and a spade in a game of auction, or between a foul and a home run in baseball?

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Club Grips and Gloves

By JOHN D. AMES

CHAIRMAN, USGA IMPLEMENTS AND BALL COMMITTEE

ONE of the most important phases of the USGA Implements and Ball Committee's work in recent years has dealt with artificial aids in the gripping of a golf club.

As a general proposition, the Association believes that individual skill in gripping a club is an integral part of the skill involved in playing a shot. It is a part of what all golfers know as "feel." Thus, the Association is generally opposed to club grips and accessories which provide pronounced automatic aid to the player in placing any fingers on the club.

Over a period of many years grips which were not of the traditionally round form have been submitted to the Implements and Ball Committee. Some of them, while of help in enabling a firm hold, did not assist in automatic placement of the fingers; and, in general, such grips were approved. On the other hand, some samples submitted had various indentations and knobs which required the player to place his finger or fingers in one set position. They were, in fact, molded to the fingers. Such grips have been disapproved.

Last year the Rules contained a new general provision on the subject, and this year the provision has been made more nearly specific, in order that all players might be aware of the interpretation which the Association has made to inventors and manufacturers. This new Rule appears as section 4 in the Rules Governing Form and Make of Golf Clubs (*see page 60, 1948 USGA Rules of Golf booklet*), and it provides as follows:

4. "The grip shall be a continuation of the shaft to which material may be added for the purpose of obtaining a firmer hold. The grip shall be substantially straight and plain in form, may have flat sides, but may not have a channel* or a furrow* for the fingers or be molded to the fingers.

**The above prohibition against a channel or a furrow for the fingers will not become effective until January 1, 1949."*

The Rule does not mean, and in fact

does not say, that a grip must be perfectly round. It does not disapprove certain departures from round grips. But it does prohibit devices for automatic placement of any fingers on the club. The furrows and channels referred to have to do mainly with hollowed out grooves extending over the greater part of the grip and which are wide enough and deep enough for thumbs or fingers to fit into.

Aside from grips on clubs, there are certain golf gloves in existence which are so constructed as to be of artificial aid in making a stroke. Some have leather loops or pockets attached so that the end of the shaft may be fitted into a socket or the shaft itself put through a loop, in each instance binding the hand or fingers to the grip by other than the natural means of holding on. These obviously cannot be approved.

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To the gentleman, the etiquette of the game is also equivalent to a rule of the game, just as much as the etiquette of the drawing room is a rule which one cannot repeatedly violate without ostracism.

Let us keep these fundamental thoughts in mind when we take our place on the tee under a clear sky, with glorious fairways stretching away into the distance, and as we smile at our opponents and begin the battle, let us remember that we are in God's great outdoors in search of pleasure; and this being our mission, let us fit ourselves for the play by an understanding of the rules of the great game we are about to play, and thus add a hundred-fold to the charm that comes from knowing just what each crisis calls for, so that in the end one's knowledge of rules, one's devotion to their observance, and one's skill in the use of every club will have played their respective parts in the contest.

In that event, no matter who is the winner or the loser, each will have proven himself a competitor whose companionship is worth cherishing, and golf will continue to remain without a rival as a game and without a peer as a pastime.