

No Change in the Wedge

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Clubs of the general type popularly known as "wedge" have been under rather intense consideration by the USGA Executive Committee during the last year.

At its recent spring meeting, the Committee decided to take no legislative action against the wedge. Thus this trouble club remains "legal"—and probably a lively topic for conversation until another flurry of criticism brings it under scrutiny again.

That has been the periodic pattern for the wedge ever since its modern ancestor, a concave-faced niblick with a heavy, rounded-and-flanged sole, made its appearance in 1930. The USGA Executive Committee then lost little time in legislating against it—in January, 1931, it was barred. The report of Herbert Jaques as Chairman of the Implements and Ball Committee then said: "Repeated tests proved conclusively that from grass a ball could strike the club face at two different points in the same stroke." This resulted in adoption of the following regulation: "Club faces shall not embody any degree of concavity or more than one angle of loft."

The concavity of face in the original sandwedge was the basic reason for its abolition. But since then there have been developments in the sale of wedge-type clubs which have caused many lovers of the game to press for modification.

Criticism has originated from belief that the wedge is a sort of foolproof club which takes away much of the need of skill in playing shots from sand and short pitches to the putting green.

There have been honest differences of opinion, even among those who should know the subject. Following are some opinions, and their diversity reflects the scope of the problem which has confronted the USGA Executive Committee.

Con

Herbert Jaques has dealt with the matter periodically for nearly two decades in USGA committees and is an advocate of modifying the club. He has said:

"The feature which makes it a 'self-playing implement' is the angle of the trailing edge of the sole which extends below a horizontal plane, measured from the leading edge, when the *line* of the shaft (not the shaft itself) is perpendicular to the plane." He suggested legislation which, he felt, would do the following:

"1. Eliminate the automatic up-lift or ploughing-out action of the present sandwedge.

"2. Take care of either flat or rounded soles.

"3. Not make obsolete the present clubs, which could be ground down to meet the proposed specifications.

"4. No limitation on width of the sole is necessary to eliminate the up-lift or ploughing-out action."

Tommy Armour has remarked substantially as follows: "The present club should be outlawed because it is of inestimable benefit to the expert but of no particular help to the average player because he doesn't know how to use it properly."

Francis Ouimet has said he feels the club "has no place in the game, and I would like to see it declared illegal. I realize, however, that it has given much consolation to a great many golfers."

Pro

Various shades of opinion have been expressed by various USGA Committeemen. One said: "There should be some specifications to limit the club, but some sort of wedge similar to those in use today should be legal. I believe the club helps the club more than the top pro in spite of the latter's proficiency with it, and it would be a shame to bar all

Original Wedge



Note concavity of face in illustration at left, and flanged sole at right.

wedges. I am sure that many of the sandwedges are far from foolproof; at least, I know mine isn't, judging from the numerous frightful shots I have hit with it."

Another view: "The wedge is more helpful to the duffer than to the pro. The pro can get out of a bunker and down in one putt quite regularly due to the wedge; the duffer can at least get out with this club, where with the old niblick he used to take a number of strokes before achieving the result."

Still another was torn between consideration of the average player and a desire to minimize the work done by the club at the expense of playing skill. "Most courses," he said, "cannot afford to keep their traps raked perfectly, and for the average golfer it is almost essential to have a very heavy wedge to extricate oneself from a deep footprint or a very heavy lie."

In any case, the wedge is still with us—and, probably, so are the problems which it has created. The USGA

JOURNAL welcomes the views of golfers on this and related subjects.

Bulges on Club Faces

A convex bulge from top to bottom on the face of any club, including putters, has been approved by the Executive Committee. The present Rules are not clear on the point, and their phrasing will be changed next year so as to embody the new interpretation.

Radioactive Golf Ball

The Association has been asked whether it would approve a golf ball in combination with a radioactive substance—an invention said to relate to a ball which may be located when lost by means of a detector sensitive to emanations from the ball. The detector used would preferably be a small hand-carried Geiger Counter, it is said.

After consideration, the Executive Committee did not feel it had enough information, one way or another, to make a decision, and thought it best to let the matter develop further so that everything involved in such a golf ball could be taken into consideration. There was a good deal of conversation about the advantage of one player over another if only one could afford the Geiger Counter, about any harm to human beings or animals which might come from proximity to such a ball, if any, and whether or not it would make any difference in the manufacture or flight of the ball.

The matter has been left in an indefinite state because a decision now, based on insufficient knowledge, might have to be reversed later.

Lightning Protection

The USGA recently re-issued its poster on "Protection of Persons Against Lightning on Golf Courses." Copies have been sent to all USGA member clubs, and others are available from the USGA, free. The same material is contained in the USGA Rules of Golf booklet.

In checking the text of the poster, the National Bureau of Standards pointed out:

"If golf clubs could be impressed with

the necessity of calling off matches *before the storm is near enough to be hazardous*, the cases of multiple injury or death among players and spectators could be eliminated."

Mednes Only

Wherever we go down to play golf
The ladies are so numerous they crowd
us off.

Thank goodness Wednesday

Is the mednesday.

—PUNCH