

The Molasses-Footed Golfer

By WALTER STEWART

SPORTS EDITOR, THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL, MEMPHIS, TENN.

The shower salon of the country club was rich with steam and needle-fingered torrents which beat soothing symphonies upon muscles long-stretched over five miles of fairway. Tile and metal shone with subdued splendor, and soap stung the nostrils with memories of deep pine woods, but there was surly discontent in the next cubicle.

"Two hours and a half to play nine holes," cried this wretched one. "Two and a half hours behind two guys and two gals who looked over their second shots for ten minutes and then missed 'em. If we hadn't slipped in front of them on ten when they were choking a soda, we wouldn't have finished before dark."

Yea, verily, for this nude and outraged gentleman had placed a moist finger upon golf's major plague spot: the player who is slower than an income-tax refund. For this enthusiastically reviled creature works a blight upon his own game and that of the fuming hordes condemned to play behind him.

He begins by stepping upon the first tee and scowling speculatively at the players disappearing down the slope in front of him. This group is out of artillery range, but he waits until they have left the green 400 yards away and then steps up to his ball. He addresses this much longer than Abe Lincoln did the boys at Gettysburg.

He waggles. He glances suspiciously down the fairway as though he feared that someone had treacherously removed it. The tee (which is wooden and probably susceptible to moisture) is replaced by one of plastic, and the drive is attacked—and sent into the cabbage at a sharp right angle.

This brings on a discussion of fate, physics and the eternal unfitness of things. The ball is discovered, surveyed in and knocked seven yards to the fairway. And now our earth shaker plucks a No. 2

wood from his quiver—puts it back and snatches out a No. 3 iron. Using a platoon system and unlimited substitution, he runs in a No. 6 iron, a No. 4 and emerges with the No. 2 wood which picks up 60 yards. Thirty of these are up and thirty down, but the green is finally attained and the slow-down striker attains full bloom.

He examines every inch of a 60-foot putt—removes invisible shreds of grass and studies a grain he wouldn't recognize if it were a luncheon-club identification platter. An engineer inking in plans for a bridge between San Francisco and Shanghai would be no more meticulous. And now there is a putt—a putt—another putt—and another, until the can is attained by cunning envelopment and the noisome little delegation gathers at the flag to add up scores, talk over old times and plan a fishing trip next October.

The Mounting Fury

This sort of thing goes on for 18 holes and grimly blasts the pleasure of those who follow. For there is no enjoyment in hitting a shot, walking a few yards and waiting five minutes to hit another. This process is a guilty thief of time and makes efficient golf quite impossible. You lose all concentration between blows. Fury boils in the rising blood pressure and you hack and slash as though the ball belonged to the players in front.

The maddeningly tardy player happily destroys his own game in the process, for it is impossible to moon endlessly over a shot and then hit it with crisp accuracy. Instead of attaining concentration, you are picking up partial paralysis, and it serves you right.

In fairness to the dreadful dubs, we must admit that the touring professionals are largely at fault. They have made slow golf a fetish, have carried it to extremes which will someday return to haunt them with five-man galleries. Many

(Continued on Page 20)

the ball and found it to be 128 yards. Her brassie and approach strokes were usually excellent; one approach with the lofting iron dropped the ball dead on the green at the eighth hole. Mrs. Shippen was not in her best form, but her long and high drives were very effective. Poor luck befell Miss Ford at the start, but her second round was in good style. A fall into the brook cost her 16 strokes on the first round, at the second hole.

"The scores follow:

Mrs Charles S. Brown, Shinnecock Hills Golf Club-

Out11 4 9 4 5 7 9 14 6-69
In 7 3 9 4 5 6 12 13 6-63—132

Miss N. C. Sargent, Essex County Country Club-

Out10 5 12 5 6 5 8 10 9-70
In 9 4 10 4 5 6 9 8 9-64—134

Mrs. W. B. Thomas, Essex County Country Club-

Out10 5 10 7 6 10 9 10 8-75
In 8 5 8 5 6 5 9 12 8-66—141

Mrs. William Shippen, Morris County Golf Club-

Out 9 4 6 4 7 7 9 11 11-74
In12 4 8 5 9 7 8 11 7-71—145

Miss Harrison, Shinnecock Hills Golf Club-
Out 9 4 12 6 6 7 15 8 10-80
In 7 4 10 9 5 6 11 10 8-70—150

Miss Anna Sands, Newport Golf Club-
Out10 4 8 5 6 9 10 13 12-77
In 8 10 11 6 6 6 9 15 7-78—155

Miss A. Howland Ford, Morris County Golf Club-

Out 8 16 9 5 9 8 9 12 10-86
In 5 4 10 5 9 9 9 10 11-72—158

Mrs. Arthur Turnure, Shinnecock Hills Golf Club-

Out 9 6 12 5 6 7 7 15 8-75
In 7 6 12 5 7 5 10 19 9-80—155

Miss Helen Shelton, Morris County Golf Club-
Out 8 4 10 5 8 7 11 16 11-80
In11 5 15 4 8 9 9 12 8-81—161

Mrs. Fellowes Morgan, Morris County Golf Club-

Out 7 15 12 7 8 12 9 12 8-90
In 9 8 6 4 5 10 9 14 9-74—164

Miss May Bird, Meadowbrook Hunt Club-

Out10 11 14 5 6 10 12 13 9-90
In10 8 16 4 9 7 8 13 8-83—173

Miss Louise F. Field, Morris County Golf Club-

Out 9 9 13 6 10 12 13 15 10-96
Withdrawd."

The Molasses-Footed Golfer

(Continued from Page 8)

of these snail-gearred pros operate as though they were being paid double for overtime. They take so much time lining up putts that greenkeepers sometimes move the cup before a stroke has been accomplished, and this endless study affects the professional's concentration almost as much as that of the degraded duffer.

And the deliberate professional is taking chances with his witnesses, for, as a group, a golf gallery is rather like a small child. It can remain quietly stationary only so long. Then the strain becomes too great. There is a shuffling of feet as stiff knees relax. There is a splutter of voices and the players flinch before it, when they are almost entirely responsible.

Ralph Guldahl was the most irritating of this species, for Ralph would often walk 180 yards to the green before firing his second shot. The green had been there when he had toured the course that morning, but Ralph wished to assure himself that there had been no hanky-panky in the meanwhile.

Many of the glossier amateurs have fallen into this rut, this rut which runs ankle-deep in chilled molasses. During a tournament last year, we saw Bill Campbell on the 18th green with Wil Wehrle, and Campbell examined the line of his four-foot putt so long that Wehrle lay down and snored gently.

Remember what Alex Smith said — "Miss 'em quick."

Reprinted by permission of the Commercial Appeal. Any further reprinting must be authorized by that newspaper.