

Play It Clock-Wise

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USGA WOMEN'S AMATEUR CHAMPION

"Aw, go on and hit the putt — you'll either make it or miss it!"

How many times have you murmured that while playing or gallerying? How many times have you glanced frantically at your watch while some friend or tournament player carefully surveyed the green? No doubt you've more than once been a victim of "Hesitation Harry" or "Turtle-Speed Tessie."

There are two distinct categories of golfers, the tournament competitor and the week-end or club player, each with its own underlying reason for slow play.

The former wastes most of the time on and around the greens, possibly overcome with the importance of the situation. This species needs frequent reminding that golf is and should be a game, not work, regardless of the stake. There are things in life more important than winning or losing a match or a championship.

The second category, which includes the vast majority of golfers, is most often guilty of inattentiveness or just plain day-dreaming. Your watch's second hand sometimes makes several complete cycles before the weekend variety says, "Oh, is it my shot?"

Last winter I played in a "fivesome" of women whose handicaps ranged from 0 to 22 at Los Angeles Country Club, a long and treacherous layout. Since one woman had an afternoon appointment, we decided to tee off alphabetically the entire way in order to speed up play. The group left the first tee at 9:30 A.M. and holed out on the 18th green at 12:35 P.M. — an elapsed time of three hours five minutes.

We figured we saved some 30 minutes on the tees by simply being alert and ready through our routine "batting order." Not once were we forced to wait on the birdie shooter who practices putts

on the previous green trying to duplicate her feat.

Slow Play Harms Good Golf

Take it from one who knows, slow play and over-deliberate shot-making are not only unnecessary but they are detrimental to par golf. In 1948 I was among the slowest and, in addition, I was among the most inconsistent and least reliable golfers — something of the birdie, two-over-par type. I hardly trusted my own judgment or ability on a six-inch putt, and the scores showed it.

I resolved to make my game less of an imposition on those with me and behind me, and in so doing I was more than repaid, for I acquired something akin to a golf game.

As I started cutting down on practice swings and nervous mannerisms, I found myself standing up to the ball with a more positive attitude, more assurance. It was around the greens, though, that the greatest strides were made. I stopped asking the caddie's advice on the speed and the break of the greens and soon found that, with few exceptions, my judgment was almost as good as his.

This confidence in my own judgment didn't take long to show up in terms of scoring ability, for there were fewer three putts and more chip-and-one-putt greens. Now I find enjoyment in the challenge that my score is squarely up to me — that I alone am responsible for a 75 or an 85.

No longer am I burdened with such pre-putt talk as, "Play about four inches up on the left side. It'll be slow going up the hill, but slippery coming down."

Try it. The next time you go out, step up to each shot as though you'd hit it before. You'll find yourself developing a continuity of thought and a pattern of confidence you've never known before. And above all, think how appreciative your friends will be!