

Birds in the Snow

If the U. S. Postal Service hadn't adopted the slogan to the effect that neither rain nor snow nor gloom of night shall stay the postman from his appointed rounds, something of the sort would surely have been coined at Siwanoy Country Club, Bronxville, N. Y. Only that describes the dogged persistence with which the Siwanoy Snobirds carry through one of the most remarkable tournaments in the game each winter.

Come snow, come sleet, come sub-zero weather or pouring rain, the Snobirds have for 42 years conducted a golf tournament that generally begins the first week in December and concludes sometime around Washington's Birthday.

Snobirds have played in two feet of snow, in 10-below temperatures, in blinding storms of all sorts.

Only twice has play been suspended, to the knowledge of Oscar E. Carlson, Siwanoy's Snobird chairman. Once the course was frozen over with solid ice and the first group could not continue past the second hole, a 425-yard par-4 on which one took an 82. The going was impossible.

The other postponement came when a heavy fall of snow was followed by a dense fog. A little thing like snow would never deter a Snobird, but as the players could not see farther than 10 feet through the fog, there would have been no chance of finding the balls.

"Snobird golf is the great leveler," says Mr. Carlson. "If we were as upset by small distractions as the average golfer often is, we'd give it up. Our tournaments are just one bad break after an-

No Use Replacing This Divot



The snow flies when the Snobirds of Siwanoy mush doggedly over the course in Bronxville, N. Y., in their annual winter tournament. Only twice in 42 years has the weather been enough to stop them. From left, with caddies, are Snobird Chairman Oscar E. Carlson, Joseph N. McDonald, the late Charles G. Wright and George Hussy

other. We learn to take them in stride.

"The icy conditions are the worst for scoring. But scoring varies greatly—and for good reason. If it is clear and there is no mud, the regular course is played. When the weather's bad, we play a snow course of nine holes with well-rolled sand greens. It measures about 3,000 yards and we go around twice. That saves wear and tear on the regular greens."

The sand greens are placed in the rough. Instead of a flagstick, inverted brooms mark the cups. A player is permitted to use the broom to sweep away the snow from the line of his putt. This would not be permitted under the Rules of Golf, but the Snobirds have many rules of their own, some of which might cause purists to swoon.

They include:

Snobird Rules

1. A ball may be lifted and cleaned any time. A player may improve the lie of the ball on the fairway, in the rough or in the traps. This rule applies to mud, snow, sand or water in the sand traps. The ball may be replaced, not nearer the hole.

2. A ball buried in a trap may be placed either in the trap, if trap is playable, or directly in back of the trap, not nearer the hole.

3. A brook or pond is a water hazard. A ball in such a hazard may be lifted and placed with one stroke penalty behind hazard in line of flight. A ball in snow or ice in a hazard may be teed on snow or ice but may not be elevated.

4. When a ball is lost, another ball may be placed and played from where the lost ball presumably landed, without penalty.

5. A ball buried in the snow may be dug out and placed on the snow just back of the place of entry within a club's length, keeping the same line to the hole, without penalty. In placing the ball back of place of entry into the snow the player may remove all or as much snow as he desires before replacing the ball.

6. All putts must be holed out.

7. USGA rules govern otherwise.

The Siwanoy Snobirds tournament was started in 1908 by the late George Semler

HARDY BIRDS



Siwanoy Snobirds pause during a round in comparatively mild weather. From left are Joe Taylor, Dr. T. C. Swift and Oscar E. Carlson, with caddies. The broom Taylor holds is the snow course flagstick, also useful for sweeping snow away from the line of putt.

and has been played without a suspension except for the World War I years of 1917 and 1918. The purpose of the tournament was to continue good fellowship and golf on a year-around basis.

The form of play is a series of eight handicap stroke play Sunday rounds, each of which qualifies the two low net scorers for the match play which decides the champion. A player is not eligible for the match rounds unless he takes part in at least four stroke play rounds.

No Pneumonia Yet

"Everyone must play under the same conditions," says Mr. Carlson. "The first requisite is long underwear. After that, each man puts on as much clothing as he thinks he needs."

"Does playing in all sorts of weather ever cause illness?" he was asked.

"Well, I haven't heard of any of us getting pneumonia," he replied.

"When we play in the snow, the players must start early because they spend so much time looking for balls that they'd never get around unless they did. If a player would take the trouble to change balls for every shot, he'd probably score

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In some manner I always hit it too hard, or not hard enough, or off the line. Moreover, I acquired the asinine habit of mentally saying, "I'll miss it."

Forget the Ball

I began to put the subconscious mind idea into my putting—to forget the hole, or that there was a hole; to give no thought to break or speed—and put my entire conscious mind on the manner of swinging the putter, swinging it just as if there were no ball in its path. It has paid off. Much to my surprise and

delight, however, the nervousness on the first green or two has completely disappeared and my hands no longer have "the shakes."

If any average golfer will merely glance at the hole and the ground intervening between it and his ball, and naturally ground the putter behind the ball, he will unerringly set the face of it on the exact line of the "break" of both ground and grass.

The foregoing is an extract from a book by Mr. Handy not yet published, and is printed by permission.

A Cross-Handed Putting Grip

Methods of coaxing the ball into the hole are endless in variety. Some new ways have appeared in the last year, among them the cross-handed grip described below.—Ed.

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I crossed my hands on the putter in the hope I would standardize my stroke.

I started playing golf as a wrist putter and had fairly good success on slow Bermuda greens where a hit was required rather than a smooth stroke very delicately applied. Consequently, on fast greens I became lost, and in the big championships my confusion led to tension which seemed to be most noticeable in my wrists.

When I tried an orthodox putter grip

(whatever in the world that is, I don't know) with my hands in approximately the same position as on my irons and woods, I found I could not hit through the putt when I immobilized my wrists. I seemed to be hitting against my left elbow and I could not take the crook out of my left arm.

So I just dropped my left hand below the right in a cross-handed position and I was able to get a freer swing and follow through.

Since my main object was to get away from using my wrists, I had to use my shoulders as the hinging point, and whenever I feel them working smoothly and I have no conscious sensation of the head of the putter moving, my putting has been true and decisive. There is not as much tendency for the putter head to roll as in a wrist stroke.

However, I can truthfully say I am still experimenting to find the exact stance, grip and stroke which will produce 100 percent confidence. But by working on a T-square principle of lining up shoulders square, feet on 90 degree angle, hands in a normal comfortable position, and the ball directly under my eyes, I feel I have the best chance to sink putts.

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better, because the frozen ball has less life. Some Snobirds carry pocket-warmers for that very purpose."

The tournament draws 30 to 40 contenders a year, depending upon the weather. All told, 85 signed up this season. But it is not necessary for a man to brave chilblains and frostbite to be a Snobird. Some members only come to the club, post their names, and play cards or watch television: these are known as "Rocking Chair Snobirds." Two prizes go to the rocking chair brigade each Sunday, as well as to the more hardy Snobirds of the golfing breed.