

Learn the Short Shots First

By **BOBBY CRUICKSHANK**

1923 AND 1932 OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP RUNNER-UP

A number of years ago I wrote a series of articles for beginners on how to learn the game of golf. It was my contention then, and still is, that the beginner should start with the putter and work back to the driver. My reason was that in the putting stroke, no matter how short, the clubhead travels in a manner that is repeated with slight modification in all other golf strokes.

The path of the clubhead in a putt is straight and low back from the ball for a few inches and then straight through the ball for a few more inches. Furthermore, the beginner is taught the manner in which the face of the clubhead meets the ball. It is absolutely essential that the face of the putter be square or at right angles to the direction in which the ball is meant to travel, and this is a condition that is oftentimes hard for even a good player when using a full swing.

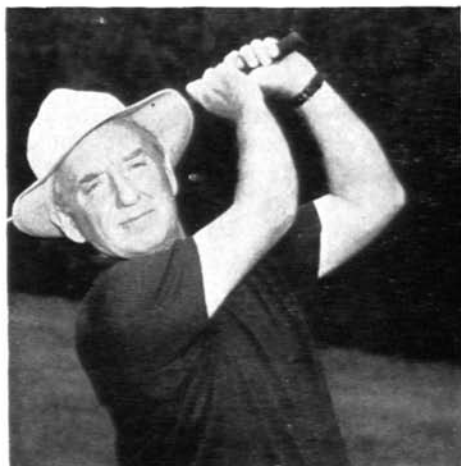
I know that, from results obtained, the beginner has less trouble in keeping the clubhead in this groove when started on the green. Few people have a good sense of direction at first, and I found that it was much easier for them to attain one in the shorter strokes.

I am not going into any detail on how to grip or hold the club, or on the stance or mechanics of the swing. Millions of words have already been written on the subject.

Suffice to say, the beginner is taught the grip, and I favor the overlapping grip for hands large enough to use it or the V grip for small hands and weak wrists.

Next the stance is taught, with the feet quite close together, the right foot slightly advanced of the left, and the balance of weight slightly to the left foot.

The little run-up shot from the edge of the green comes next, with the same swing as used in the long putts. Using a 3, 4, or 5 iron, the ball is hit flat in the back, just like a lofted putt, we used to say. There is no attempt to raise the ball in



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the air in this stroke, but from here on, the chip shot, the pitch shot, on up to the long iron, the beginner is taught to hit down through the ball.

As we progress farther back, the stance varies slightly, and for the first time the legs and the body, besides the hands and arms, get into action. From the short pitch shots on back, the legs and the body play their part in order to accommodate the length and the balance of the swing. And so it goes right on back to the full swing, with each movement gradually increasing and blending together all the way, so that the feeling is one rhythmic whole.

I believe that, in starting on the green, more can be accomplished to give the beginner a proper mental attitude. The concentration of trying to negotiate the ball into the cup and the competitive element that this brings in relieve the player of a good deal of self-consciousness that might be created in trying to start with a full swing. Confidence is gained, once the beginner gets the idea of the putting swing, and drops a few putts to boot.

However, good intelligent practice after each lesson is invaluable.