

# WHAT IS A SECOND CHANCE WORTH?

by

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**A** SECOND CHANCE! How many of us have wished for such an opportunity! For a chance to redeem past failures, to recall the years the locusts have eaten. Should we profit by it or should we still take the same course involving the same mistakes in spite of our second chance if such a thing could ever be offered to us?

Sir James Barrie, in his delightful play, "Dear Brutus," did not encourage us to hope for much improvement from the opportunity offered by a second chance, but golfers, the most optimistic of human beings, might not agree with him.

If only I had a chance of playing all my bad shots over again! If only I had taken more care with that curly putt! If only I had decided on a different line from the tee! How often have we heard these "ifs" in the clubhouse at the end of a medal round, the might-have-beens of every competition day!

## *What Would the Saving Be?*

Suppose the Rules of Golf allowed us to recall any stroke that failed to satisfy us during a round and we were actually given a second chance to replay any shot. What would the saving be in strokes?

If we had to abide by the result of our second chance, should we dare recall a moderately good shot, knowing full well that we might be worse off after our second attempt? Many intriguing situations would arise calling for careful considerations before claiming a second chance.

I have in my possession the details of a game played some time ago to determine how much a second chance really was worth to a moderately low handicap golfer when playing a medal round.

The match was between A, a six handi-

cap golfer, who challenged B, a scratch player, to play an eighteen-hole medal round on level terms, A being allowed to recall any stroke during the round which he desired to play again, but, for better or worse, having to accept the result of his second attempt.

This novel form of handicapping created considerable interest and speculation amongst members of the club on whose course the match was played, some declaring that a second chance at any shot was worth more than half a stroke a hole, whilst the more cautious doubted if it would save more than three or four shots in all.

What interested me was not so much the actual result of the match, which depended mostly on the form of the individual players on the day, but the number of strokes recalled by A, the result of his second attempts, and the actual clubs with which these recalled shots were played.

After the game an analysis of A's card showed that he had recalled twenty-four shots in all, seven from the tee, five through the green, one in a bunker, and eleven putts.

Only one, or at most two, shots were actually saved on the putting green out of the eleven second chances, a miserable putt being holed at the second time of asking and a long approach putt being laid dead after an indifferent first attempt. Against these gains must be set a disaster when a second chance from four yards resulted in three more putts being taken—a shattering blow.

The five shots recalled through the green definitely saved two strokes, an approach shot played with a No. 5 iron ending a few yards from the pin, the initial attempt being trapped in a bunker, and a second

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chip shot that went stone dead. The other three second attempts neither gained nor lost any definite advantage on the original strokes.

### *Drives Are Improved*

The advantage of a second chance from the teeing ground was very evident, four of the recalled drives being a great improvement and resulting in a probable saving of four strokes. The other three second attempts did not make the playing of the holes any easier. It is interesting to note that all seven of the second drives were equal or superior to the initial ventures.

A summary of the recalled shots is as follows:

Tee shots = seven recalled; probably four strokes gained.

Through the green = five recalled; two shots gained.

On the green = eleven recalled; two shots gained; one lost; net gain = one shot.

Bunker = one recalled; one shot gained.

It is difficult to assess the probable result of the subsequent shots of those recalled, but the player in this particular case undoubtedly benefited by a net gain of seven or eight shots from the 24 second chances he elected to take.

### *Looking Back*

After the round, A said he felt he ought to have saved more strokes on the putting green, but most of his second chances were at putts of several yards in length, the only short putt missed being when three putts were taken after recalling an unsuccessful first effort.

This method of handicapping is obviously not one for golfers on a crowded course at weekends, but when time and opportunity permit it is an interesting and amusing experiment.

The predicament of the long handicap golfer who had made an indifferent approach over a bunker, but is too frightened to recall his shot, or the nervous player who appears to have putted dead and then misses his holing-out putt twice in succession, would cause much innocent amusement to spectators, if not to the players concerned.

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