

DRIVING TESTS AT THE OPEN

by

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FOR the tenth time, driving tests were conducted during the USGA Open Championship, held this year at the Oak Hill Country Club, Rochester, N. Y.

These tests are made for several purposes: one—to check the liveliness of the ball and to determine if there is a measurable change over the previous years in the distance the ball is hit (this also acts as a double check on the work done by the United States Golf Association with its intricate mechanized equipment); two—to evaluate the effect of the fairway width in relation to play and to determine what width is fair and reasonable in its demand upon the players; three—to determine what effect height of the rough has on the recovery value of the shots played from it.

At Oak Hill all 51 qualifiers for the last 36 holes were measured in the third round, on the eighth hole. These players represented the cream of the crop.

Fairway Measured

The fairway was measured from the championship tee markers used on that particular round. Unobtrusive marks were placed every ten yards over the center of the fairway and on each side of the fairway with small dots of sand. In this manner, a true perspective could be obtained of each ball hitting the fairway and the distance it ran after hitting the fairway. These markers were placed from 200 to 300 yards.

A careful check was kept of the exact spot where each ball landed—in the center of the fairway, to the right or left of the fairway, in the rough on either side or in the traps on either side. The hole at the target area from 200 to 300 yards was level, the reason this hole was chosen for the test.

The tee was also approximately level with the target area, although there was a slight dip between the tee and the target area. The fairway was 35 yards wide, with a trap at the right extending from 210 to 230 yards and a trap at the left from 230 to 260 yards.

Of the 51 players in the final field, 33 hit the fairway. The longest drive of the day was 281 yards, hit by an amateur from Houston, Texas, John Garrett, whose ball at the very end of its run went into the rough at the left for a total of 281 yards.

The second longest drive of the day was made by Roberto de Vicenzo who hit his drive on the fairway at 280 yards. Tommy Bolt's drive stopped at 279 yards.

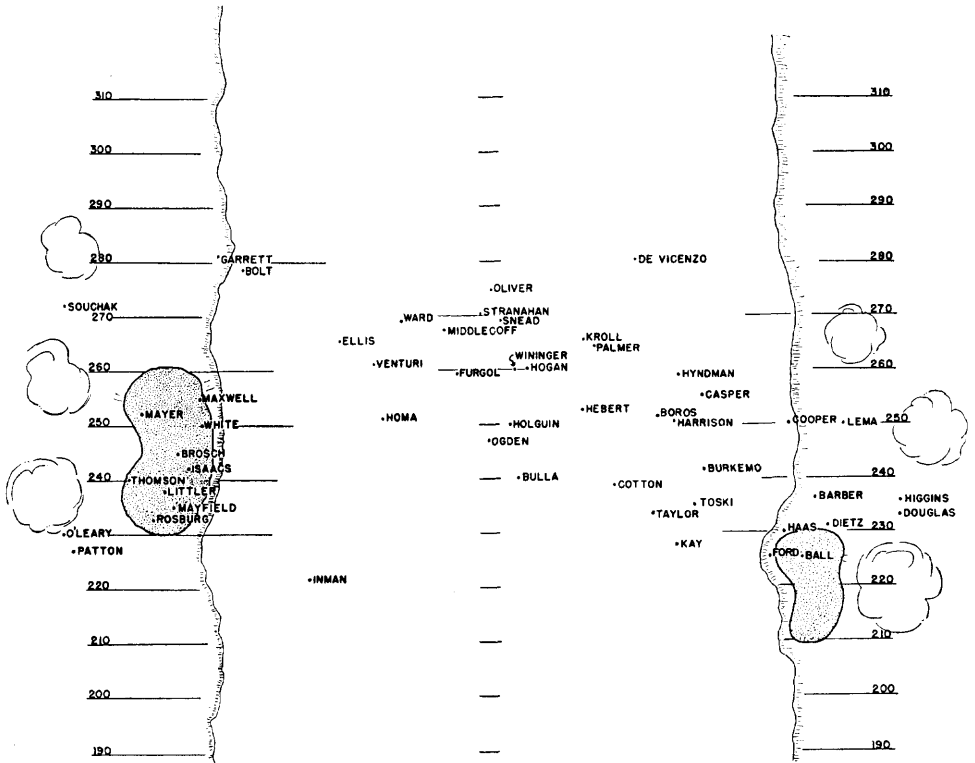
Three of the drives were relatively wild and went out outside the protective gallery ropes on the left side of the fairway. Of these, two were big names—Billy Joe Patton and Mike Souchak. Seven balls went into the rough at the right. Nine balls went into the trap at the left and only one ball went into the trap at the right.

Shallow Traps

It is interesting to note that of the ten players hitting into the traps from the tee, only three failed to reach the green with their second shots, even though the green was approximately 170 yards from the traps. This is primarily due to the fact that there was no mound blocking the shot to the hole. The traps were shallow and there was little trajectory required to get the flight of the ball in the air.

The average carry of the 33 players who drove into the fairway was 239.63 yards. This is almost an exact duplicate of the carries measured in the previous tests made in Open Championships. However, the

MEASUREMENT OF DRIVES — 56TH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP AT OAK HILL COUNTRY CLUB — ROCHESTER, N. Y. Compiled by: Robert Trent Jones



The above diagram, prepared annually after tests held at each Open Championship, is designed to measure the drives of leading golfers. Drives of the 51 qualifiers for the final 36 holes of play in the 1956 Open were measured from the eighth tee of the third round, on the morning of June 16. One of the significant results of the test is that there is no discernible increase in driving distance attained by leading players, when compared with results of similar tests held in the past few years.

average of the total drives, including the fairway roll of the 33 players, was 253.39 yards, as against an overall average of 260 yards ascertained in the previous tests.

There were several reasons for the shortness of the roll. One was the heavy, humid, morning air; and another was the fact that the target area had been heavily watered and then had had a heavy rain the night before. This made the early morning conditions somewhat heavy.

The wind in the early morning was very slight. About 10:00 A.M. a breeze came

up and steadily increased during the forenoon when the drives were measured.

It is interesting to note that nine balls were caught in the fairway trap at the left. It is also interesting to note in the pattern of play that more shots were hit to the left than to the right. It is a well known fact that, because of the swing of the better players, their tendency is to hook rather than to push the ball. Hence, the development of the pattern indicated above, which was probably also partly due to the fact that the fairway trap at the left at

USGA FILM LIBRARY

Latest addition to USGA's Film Library is "Inside Golf House," a guided tour through the shrine of golf in America. The viewer is given an opportunity to see the many interesting exhibits in "Golf House," USGA headquarters in New York, and to re-live golf triumphs of the past with many of the game's immortals. Lindsey Nelson, Assistant Sports Director of the National Broadcasting Company, is the narrator. The film is a 16 mm. black and white production with a running time of 28 minutes.

Thus far, more than 616 bookings have been made for USGA's motion picture, "The Rules of Golf—Etiquette." The film stresses the importance of etiquette by portrayal of various violations of the code in the course of a family four-ball match. Ben Hogan appears in several scenes, and Robert T. Jones, Jr., makes the introductory statement. A 16 mm. Kodachrome production, the film has a running time of 17½ minutes.

The distribution of both prints is handled by National Educational Films, Inc., 165 West 46th Street, New York 36, N. Y., which produced the films in cooperation with the USGA. The rental is \$15 per film or \$25 in combination at the same time, including the cost of shipping prints to the renter.

230 to 260 yards is better located for a modern tournament player than the one at the right.

Hooked Ball Goes Farther

The average in the rough at the right was 232 yards, while the average in the rough at the left, including trap locations, was 237 yards. This served to indicate that a hooked ball, because of the pattern of the swing, normally goes farther than a pushed or faded ball. Also of interest was the fact that Mike Souchak's ball went outside the protective gallery ropes 15 yards off the fairway and wound up 273 yards from the tee.

These tests indicated that the ball is flying just about as it has been over the last few years. It also proved that shallow traps are no particular menace to the modern tournament player, nor is shallow or light rough, as all those balls hit out of the rough landed either on or in the area of the green.

Robert Harris' Opinion

Those who believe the Rules of Golf should be eased might profit by listening to Robert Harris, of London, England, who feels the game has lost too much already. Mr. Harris, who won the British Amateur in 1925 and captained three British Walker Cup Teams, wrote a book titled "Sixty Years of Golf" in which he says, among other interesting things:

"The traditional Rules and directions for play are obvious and simple. A small ball has to be hit by a variety of clubs over grass country of uneven contour into a small hole in the ground. Difficulties in the shape of sand holes, ditches, streams, bushes and other natural objects are met in the journey from starting point to hole. These are surmounted by skillful shots or by-passed by maneuver. The endeavor of the player is to beat his opponent by counting a lower score for each hole. There are certain penalties and forfeits for inefficient play or an unlucky lie of the ball. These penalties have been exacted for centuries and found to operate with all fairness.

"Nowadays the capricious and faint-hearted ask for milder penalties and easier rules. From time to time benevolent authority has granted reliefs, and it is even ordained at the present time that that part of the game which is played near the hole may be conducted under benign option of either the player or the opponent. It is now permitted to play either with the customary clubs or with the hands when the ball lies near the hole.

"Add moving or lifting the ball by hand to a matched set of fourteen steel-shafted clubs and a powerful long-traveling ball, and the soul of golf comes down with a crash. A great game, a fine art, a noble sport becomes engulfed in the turmoil of the machine shop and the merchants' counting house.

"A renaissance will arrive when a different ball is introduced for play, when the numbers are obliterated from the soles of the clubs and when the option to handle the ball when near the hole is withdrawn."