

GADGETS, GIMMICKS AND GOLF

By

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You are on the tee of a 575-yard hole. You fit your fingers into the little molds of your driver's grip—immediately all the parts of your hands are in perfect placement. You adjust your harness—the one that guarantees you a perfect stroke every time. You swing. Out into the blue soars your drive. It stops 407 yards away. Your telescopic gauge tells you that you're exactly 168 yards from the target, and that you'd better allow for a 5-degree wind drift from the right. Your wedge with the wide-grooved face sets the ball down a scant two yards from the hole. On this particular course the hole is 7 inches in diameter, and your putt, aided by the mirror-like sighting device on your putter, for a 3 is easy.

This is a moderately fanciful view of what golf could become if the inventiveness of man were to have free, unchecked play over the equipment of the game. The result might be delightful, to judge from the hole we just played, but the game would scarcely be golf as we know it. Further, any so-called advantages over the present game would merely be relative, for everybody would be playing the same game.

To keep golf as golf is one of the functions entrusted to the United States Golf Association by its 2,400 Member Clubs. The clubs and their members have a tremendous stake in both the dollar value of their courses and the sporting values of the game. They must see to it that the relationship between their courses and the playing equipment is kept in balance. That is why, for instance, the USGA has limits for size, weight and velocity of the golf ball. With no restraints, a ball might be developed which could be driven 407 yards, as in the imaginary hole we played—and think what that could do to the golf courses throughout the country. The 6,000 courses and clubhouses in America represent a capital investment estimated at \$1,370,000,000.

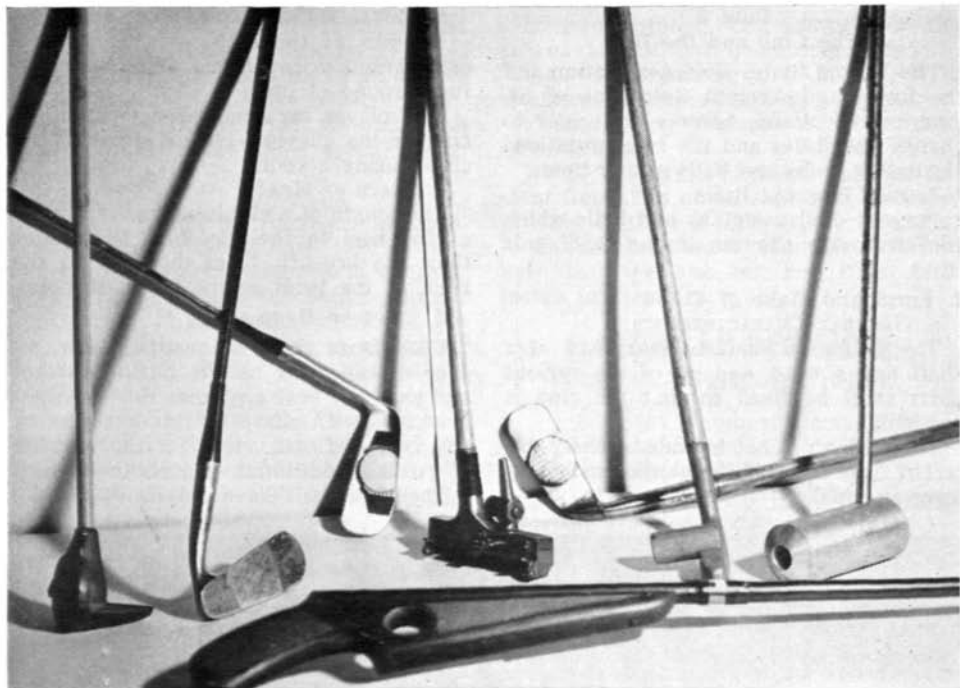
The imagination of golfing inventors has sent a stream of implements to the USGA for consideration over the years. An appreciable percentage of them conform with the Rules of Golf. The others constitute a sizeable collection in "Golf House," our headquarters in New York.

Putters constitute the widest variation in clubs submitted. Many have been devised with mirrors, spirit levels, directional gadgets, two different lofts, and screw-type heads suitable for adjustment during play. Probably the most complicated putter in "Golf House" is one with an intricate angle-and distance device, plus a directional pointer on top with a degree dial, and an adjustable clubhead.

There is one putter with the shaft attached at the toe. Another has a pistol grip handle. One has a movable material—mercury—which changes the balance of the putter. Others have weights, in the form of screws, to alter the balance. Still another has a concave putting face.

Unique variations on irons have been submitted frequently. A lofted club with teeth somewhat like a rake was designed to cut down on surface contact and facilitate shots with a floater ball in water and shots from sand and from high grass. Another iron has 20 holes drilled completely through the club face. There is a "pancake" wedge, so called because the head is almost round and measures 4x3 inches. An oversize No. 3 iron was submitted, almost six inches in length. One wedge has a section where a corkscrew shaft was inserted to give more spring. A sand wedge with a concave face was designed to ease the pangs of being bunkered. It is well known, of course, that the Rules limit the width and the angle of markings on iron club faces, but, "Golf House" has relics of other days when deeply slotted and ribbed clubs were not illegal.

Woods have been constructed to try to overcome either a hook or a slice. One of



PUTTERS?

Putters constitute the widest variations of clubs submitted to the USGA. A few of the strange variations: an odd-shaped putter with a circular face and directional pointers; one with the shaft attached at the toe so the user's head could be over the ball; a blade putter with a plastic insert attached to the clubface; an aiming putter with four different adjustments for angle and distance; another blade putter with a round metal insert attached to the clubface; one with a screw-type chamber at the top of the clubface with removable weights inside; a cylindrical putter, and a pistol-grip handle putter.

the oddest drivers has a wire running outside the clubhead up through the center of the shaft and adjustable at the top of the grip. The designer contended it gave substantially more whip to the club. The earliest steel shaft was perforated; it sort of whistled when swung.

What about the objective of the game—the hole itself? It is standardized at $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and attempts to introduce different sizes over the years have been abortive. But recently someone devised an offset flagstick which was designed to be stuck in the rear of the cup; the net effect would have been to enlarge the rest of the hole when the flagstick was in position. Further, there was envisioned a broad, flat flagstick which, when offset at the rear of the cup,

could have served as a sort of backstop for putts. Consequently, the Rules were amended for 1960 to specify that the flagstick must be straight, must be circular in cross-section, and must be centered in the hole (Definition 12).

Artificial devices have been created periodically to give golfers aid in gauging or measuring distance or conditions which might affect play, and in gripping or swinging the club. Such items do not conform with the Rules. Players of the game rarely have occasion to read Rule 2, which regulates the club and the ball, so I am quoting it below. It is basic in preserving golf as golf and in preventing people, with perhaps less than golf's best interests at heart, from making a mockery of our grand game.

Rule 2 The Club and the Ball

The United States Golf Association and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland, reserve the right to change the Rules and the interpretations regulating clubs and balls at any time.

1. Legal Clubs and Balls

Players shall use clubs and balls which conform with Clauses 2 and 3 of this Rule.

2. Form and Make of Clubs

a. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The golf club shall be composed of a shaft and a head, and all of the various parts shall be fixed so that the club is one unit.

The club shall not be substantially different from the traditional and customary form and make.

b. MOVABLE PARTS PROHIBITED

No part of the club may be movable or separable or capable of adjustment during a round of play.

The player or other agency shall not change the playing characteristics of a club during a round.

c. SHAPE OF HEAD

The length of a clubhead from the back of the heel to the toe shall be greater than the breadth from the face to the back of the head at the broadest point.

d. FACE OF HEAD

Club faces shall not embody any degree of concavity on the hitting surface and shall not bear any lines, dots or other markings with sharp or rough edges, or any type of finish, made for the purpose of putting additional spin on the ball.

The club shall have only one face de-



IRON CLUB ODDITIES

Variations on iron clubs sent to the USGA for consideration have included an over-size No. 3 iron with a head almost six inches in length; a wedge with a corkscrew shaft inserted to give more spring; a lofted club with teeth somewhat like a rake, to facilitate shots with a floater ball and shots from sand and from high grass; a "pancake" wedge with a head almost round and measuring 4x3 inches; a sand wedge with a concave face, and an iron with 20 holes drilled through the clubface.

signed for striking the ball. However, a putter may have two faces if the loft of both faces is practically the same.

Iron Clubs. The face of an iron club shall not contain an inset or attachment. Markings on the face of an iron club shall conform with USGA specifications (see Note to this Rule).

e. SHAFT

The shaft shall be fixed to the club-head at the back of the heel, either directly or by attachment to a neck or socket. The shaft and the neck or socket shall remain in line with the back of the heel, or with a point to right or left of the back of the heel, when the club is soled at address.

Exception for Putters:—The shaft of a putter may be fixed at any point in the head. (A putter is a club designed primarily for use on the putting green—see Definition 25.)

f. GRIP

The grip shall be a continuation of the shaft to which material may be added for the purpose of obtaining a firm hold. The grip shall be substantially straight and plain in form, may have flat sides, but shall not have a channel or a furrow or be molded for any part of the hands.

A device designed to give the player artificial aid in gripping or swinging the club shall be deemed to violate this Rule even though it be not a part of the club.

(Other artificial devices—Rule 37-9.)

Note: Players in doubt as to the legality of clubs are advised to consult the USGA. Specifications for markings on iron clubs have been issued to manufacturers.

If a manufacturer is in doubt as to the legality of a club which he proposes to manufacture, he should submit a sample to the USGA for a ruling, such sample to become the property of the USGA for reference purposes.

3. Weight, Size and Velocity of Ball

The weight of the ball shall be not greater than 1.620 ounces avoirdupois, and the size not less than 1.680 inches in diameter.

The velocity of the ball shall be not greater than 250 feet per second when measured on the USGA's apparatus; the temperature of the ball when so tested shall be 75 degrees Fahrenheit; a maximum tolerance of 2% will be allowed on any ball in such velocity test.

a. EXCEPTION

In international team competition the size of the ball shall be not less than 1.620 inches in diameter, and the velocity specification above shall not apply.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE: Disqualification.

Note: The Rules of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland, provide that the weight of the ball shall be not greater than 1.620 ounces avoirdupois, and the size not less than 1.620 inches in diameter.

HANDICAP DECISION COURSE-WITHIN-A-COURSE

USGA Handicap Decision 60-4

References: Men - Sections 2-7, 6-1

Women - Sections 12-7, 16-1

Q: Our ninth hole is the farthest hole from the clubhouse. Consequently, in the winter when the weather is unpredictable, many of our girls do not wish to play the complete 18 holes. Some feel that if we play the nine holes which are near the clubhouse twice—thus making 18—we should be able to use these scores for handicapping. However, in order to play 18 holes in this manner, we do not play consecutive holes. We play them in this order to make up the nine—1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. We then repeat this procedure. This order of playing is definitely not so difficult to score on as our regular 18-hole course.

It is my understanding that you must play the regular 18 holes consecutively in order to use the scores for handicapping. I would appreciate your ruling.

Question by: Mrs. Fred Brewitt
Bremerton, Wash.

A: Computation of USGA handicaps is based on "Handicap Differentials" which are the differences between gross scores and the course ratings of the courses played. Scores made on "unrated courses" are useless for handicap computations as the handicapper has no way in which to arrive at "Handicap Differentials."

If the course rating committee of your district golf association has assigned a rating to the nine-hole course comprised of holes 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and it is a recognized course, scores made thereon must be used for handicapping purposes provided it is played twice in immediate succession.