

Foursomes: Chapman-Style

The popularity of the Chapman system of playing foursomes, which Eloise and Dick Chapman have popularized at Pinehurst, N. C., and Oyster Harbors, on Cape Cod, seems to be spreading, and we have received several inquiries on the subject.

As most players know, the basic system of playing a foursome is to use alternate drives as well as alternate strokes on each hole. Oftentimes, however, in informal play and especially in mixed play, partners have found it more enjoyable if both drive from each tee and then select the drive to be continued in play by alternate strokes.

The Chapman system is simply an extension of the selected-drive method. Both partners drive and then each partner plays a second stroke with the other's ball. After the second strokes have been played, one ball is selected to be continued in play. The ball selected must be hit alternately by the partners from the tee into the cup.

Eloise and Dick developed this system of selected seconds after playing two rounds with Mr. and Mrs. Robert Pearse at Pinehurst in March, 1947. At that time Mrs. Pearse was playing well over 100 and Mr. Pearse in the low 90s. Mrs. Chapman was playing in the low 80s. In an attempt to equalize the sides, Mr. Chapman paired with Mrs. Pearse and the innovation of selected seconds was added experimentally. Each side scored 77! They tried it again the next day and each side returned the same score once more.

The idea of balancing out unequal players in such a manner appealed to Chapman so much that he offered a trophy, honoring his late mother, for a fall tournament and another trophy, honoring his late father, for a spring tournament at Pinehurst. The two competitions are

conducted annually, at stroke play under the Chapman system, by the Silver Foils and the Tin Whistles, the women's and men's clubs, respectively. The Chapmans hold an "open house" for all contestants at their home after each tournament.

Team handicaps were one half of the total of partners' handicaps, except that if the difference in partners' individual handicaps exceeded five strokes, that difference less five was arbitrarily converted to a percentage and that percentage was deducted from one half of the total of the partners' handicaps.

As an example, if A has an individual handicap of 24 and B of 12, the total of their handicaps is 36, and one half of that is 18. However, the difference between their handicaps is more than 5, so the percentage reduction is applied. The difference, in fact, is 12, and 12 less 5 equals 7. Therefore 7 per cent, or 1.26, is deducted from 18. Fractions under .5 are ignored, and the resulting handicap for the team is 17 strokes.

This unique system of handicapping was devised by the late C. L. Becker, of Philadelphia, N. Y., a former Captain of the Tin Whistles.

Neither the Pinehurst clubs nor the Chapmans have had experience in the playing of alternate seconds in match play under tournament conditions and therefore make no recommendations for handicapping this form of play.

The USGA recommends handicap allowances for foursomes, stroke play, of 50 per cent of the combined handicaps when alternate drives are used and 40 per cent when selected drives are used. It has had no experience with selected seconds and therefore has no official recommendations for handicapping this form of play, in either stroke or match play.