

# THE SECRET OF STRAIGHTNESS

Example of Great Masters

By ARCHIE COMPSTON

"DISTANCE lends enchantment to the drive!" That is a new version of an old proverb that sums up the mental attitude of the youngsters of the present day.

But you don't see many of their drives scraping the paint off the direction post! Most of them could knock half a dozen strokes off their handicaps if they would only think up a golfing version of another ancient "wise-crack," and remember that "A drive in line saves nine!"

What is the secret of straightness? For the average golfer, if all he wants to do is to make sure of hitting a straight drive, the simplest plan is to make himself into a golfing robot by cutting out the wrist action altogether.

A flat, grooved swing, with the arms working dead stiff from the shoulder sockets, is the easiest way of all to make sure that you are bringing the face of the club back square on the ball, and if straightness were the only thing that would be the way to get it.

I have persuaded two or three of my pupils to try it; but, though it works all right, I have never got any of them to be satisfied with it.

You see, it makes a fearfully wooden movement of the whole thing. It takes all the artistry out of the stroke. And, of course, the man who plays stiff-wristed is not going to get so long a ball as the man who uses his wrists to get more power.

You could teach yourself to keep straight this way, but you'd never make yourself into a class golfer.

The man who wants to play in the champion class has got to be long as well as straight, and straight as well as long.

You often hear it said that it is in the short game that matches and medals are lost and won.

But when it comes to the championship class no man can hope to make good who is not a fine player of the wooden clubs.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF LENGTH

Length counts for so much, because only the long driver can leave himself so well placed for the second shots that the fours come easily and he has a fair chance of snatching an occasional three.

The man who is taking a mashie or a mashie-niblick for his approach does not need to worry much about a hanging lie or an uneven stance, but if he is trying to reach the green with a brassy, or even a long iron, a bit of awkwardness in the lie may make all the difference between a four and a five.

The problem is how to get distance and direction at the same time.

The two straightest hitters the game has ever known are Harry Vardon and Bobby Jones.

Jones makes hitting a drive of 250 yards down the middle seem the easiest thing in the world. He always leaves himself in first-class position for the second shot, and from any distance you like he will cover the pin as often as not.

The same is true of Harry Vardon and of Abe Mitchell, another mighty hitter, who keeps the ball consistently on the line.

If you analyse the swings of these three

you will find that the only thing they have in common is the rhythm of the whole thing and the pace of the movement.

In the swings of all three the head of the club is travelling quite slowly until the hands are about opposite the right hip. Only in the last quarter of the down-swing do you get the forearm thrust that drives the club-head at full speed through the ball.

The first essential of straightness is that the club-head should travel through the ball along the line of play for as great a distance as possible.

You will find that in the case of Vardon, Jones and Mitchell straight travel along the line of flight extends for several inches on either side of the ball.

## A COMMON FAULT

The main cause of the trouble with the average player is that instead of keeping the club travelling along this line he comes across the ball from the outside in.

He braces the left leg and side all right to form a pillar for him to swing against, but when the pace of the swing is too fast the left side is forced to turn and the line of the club's travel is from right to left across the true line.

In the case of the three players I have mentioned there is no similar turning force being brought to bear on the left-leg pillar

because the pace of the swing is such that the hands are back almost opposite the ball before the full force of the blow begins to develop. In their case instead of a turn of the left side you get a stretch up.

Watch Abe Mitchell driving. You see the same marvellous poise as in the case of Vardon and Jones. When the head of the club is a couple of feet from the ball both knees are still bent and the bunching up of the left side still plainly visible.

It is while the club-head is travelling through that last couple of feet before impact that the left side stiffens into the firmness of a post, and it is the timing of this extension movement to coincide with the last two feet of the down-swing that is the secret of those three players' straightness and power.

## THE BRACED LEFT SIDE

We all talk about this theory of hitting up against the braced left side. I have tried myself to make it clear to you by the old illustration of the post and the gate.

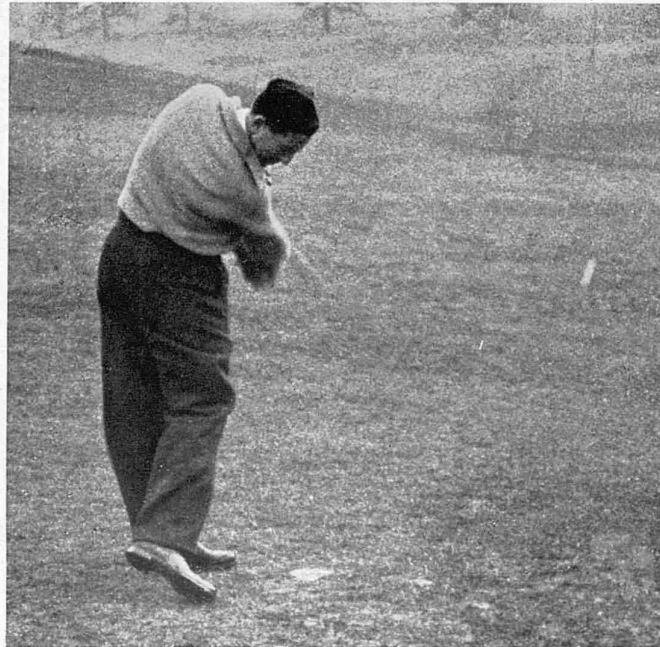
You have got to have a firm post if you want the gate to swing.

Before the club reaches the ball you should have the left heel firmly planted on the ground, and, at the moment of hitting, the left leg and left side must be firm.

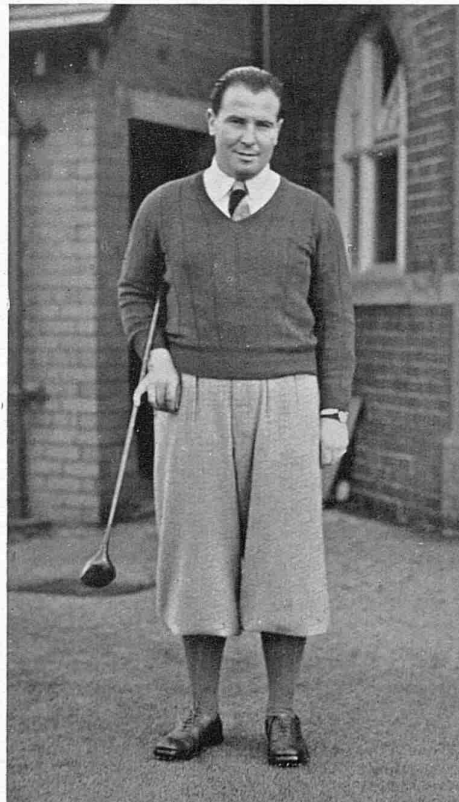
The trouble is that if this bracing-up movement is brought in too soon the whole thing is ruined. It should be automatic with the delivery of the blow.

It is terribly difficult for most men to swing a club smoothly and to keep it travelling as slowly in the first stages of the down swing as do Vardon and Jones.

There is not one man in a million who can do it!



*A CASE IN POINT: Henry Cotton, chief modern exponent of the "inside out" theory, which Compston discusses in the accompanying article, demonstrates the value of keeping the club-head on the line as far as possible. Note also the bracing of the left leg and the position of the head. The ball can be seen in its flight.*



*HIS NEW APPOINTMENT: James Adams, the Scottish champion, is now installed as professional to the Royal Liverpool Club at Hoylake. This is a very enviable job and we wish Adams every possible success.*