

LENGTH, LINE, and CARRY

SINCE the last issue of the Greenkeeper went to press, the 1962 run of events has taken golf writers to a variety of different kinds of course. Moortown for the English, Ganton for England v. France, Sunningdale for the Gold Vase, the Berkshire for the Berkshire Trophy, Porters Park for the new Junior Gold Vase, Wentworth for the Daks and Hoylake for the Amateur. The professional watcher is left with an almost embarrassing wealth of impressions.

One that stands out, though, is the way an extra bit of length in a top player's game can make an astonishing difference to his scoring ability; and how this can be decisive or disastrous, depending on how straight he hits the ball. At the beginning of this sequence we had the new Michael Lunt at Moortown. "The new" is justified, since he has spent the winter shortening and quickening his backswing, and incidentally getting rid of the loop he used to have. The result is a magnificent-looking method, which has not only kept his old length, but actually added to it.

At the 1st, he was able to knock two straight calm woods to the heart of the green, when few others in the field could get near it. At the long 2nd he once got up with a drive and a 7, when others were ending short with two woods; and at the longish 3rd, he was in range of the green with an iron out of thickish rough, when others were battling all out.

Heroic Scramble

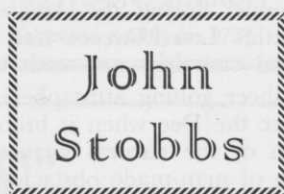
Against Shepperson in the semi-final, he drove straight, and won irresistibly. In the final against Bonallack, he lost his compass and, inevitably, went down, even after a day's heroic scrambling. His sort of length, worth about half a shot a hole when it is under control, can cost $1\frac{1}{2}$ shots a hole when it isn't; even for a man whose powers of recovery are so well-trained by past misdemeanours as Lunt's are.

But the effect also depends on the course. At Moortown many of the long

holes allow a drive straight up the middle and then a straight beat through an open entrance into the green. Other courses are not so kind; and indeed it is a nice point of golf argument whether they should be or not.

Lottery

Certainly it is not any of those long holes which stand out in the mind at Moortown, but a more modest one, the 9th. It is only a drive and a medium or short iron; but, to me at any rate, its construction is classical. The drive is on to a fairway sloping slightly to the right, away from an out-of-bounds wall running right to the green, and then angling behind it as well. On the right of the fairway is open moorland, where the lies are a lottery but mostly possible.



The only easy way into the green is to drive courageously up the middle left of the fairway, disdaining the threat of the wall. If you drive out to the right into the safe country, as Lunt usually did and many others with him, then you have to pitch high through the air straight on to the green, which is plateaued on its right, and guarded there by yawning bunkers, with the pin just on the top above them. Take the safe line for the tee out to the right, and you have to play a really closely calculated and bravely executed pitch, before you get a putt for a three; take the bold line from the tee up the middle, and you have an open shot straight along to the pin. You are offered your choice of courage and challenge; and this seems, to me, to make a good hole.

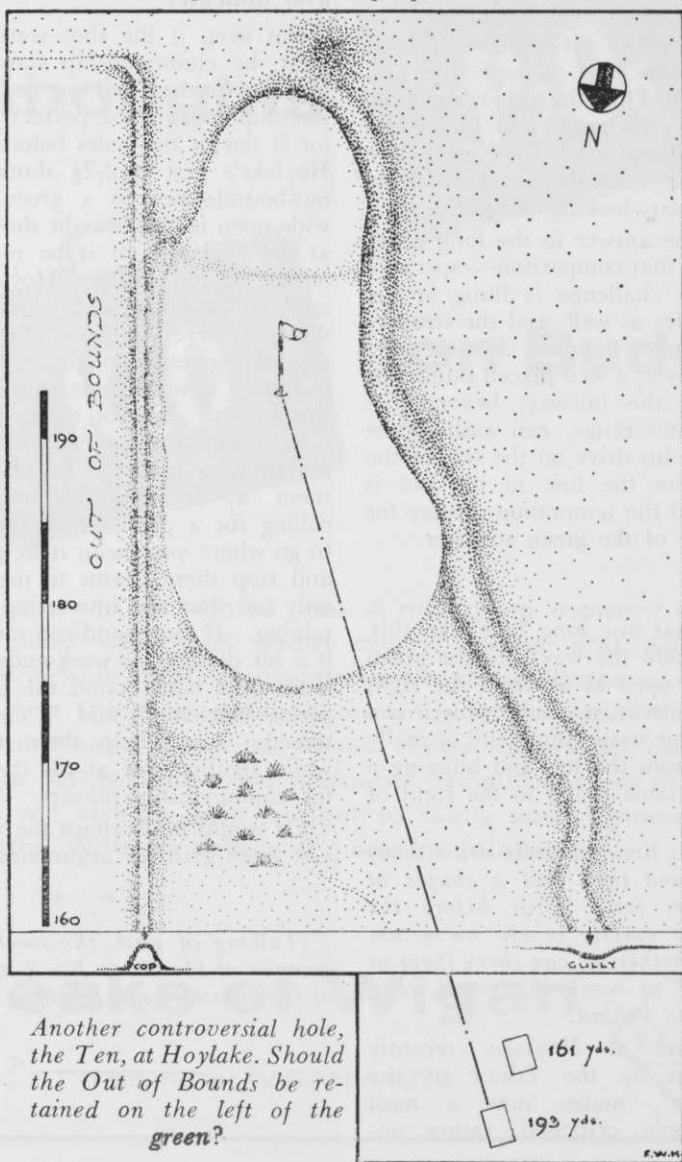
At Hoylake again we saw the long hitting of Joe Carr. It is noticeable, when you watch the construction of his

scores carefully, that even when he goes crooked, as he often still does, particularly with his second shots at long holes, he still wins himself quite a short little pitch or chip. The 15th has an open entrance to the middle of the green; and there, with the wind against, Carr was able to get the length every time; shorter players, after two perfect strokes, would still have anything up to a fifty yard pitch, while Carr, with two not very straight ones, would still have a 20-30 yard flip or chip from the edge of the green. In fact, to put him out,

Chapman had to play some of the mightiest golf ever seen in a championship, making up for his less length by iron shots ruled again and again at the flag, and perfectly judged for length.

He actually covered 12 holes from the third tee to the 15th green, in 9 under 4's; and it was Carr's power which mainly enabled him to hold on so well that he only went down by 2/1. Most other competitors would have collapsed by 5/4 at least.

What golf architects should do about people like Carr and Lunt, and, in the



professional field, Palmer, Weetman and Alliss—had they the opportunity to re-make championship hazards to deal with them—is arguable. Should the long hitter have the green at long holes open to him, so that he gets his reward for controlled strength automatically? Or should he rather have to play for one side of the green or the other, relying on a chip to get his 4?

His opponent might often prefer the latter; and indeed, a green guarded more firmly on one side than the other does in a way present a stronger challenge than one guarded on both sides. If it is guarded on both sides, the only choice is to try to hit straight. But if it is open and safe on one side and heavily guarded on the other, then the challenge at once springs to life in the player's mind and eye! 'Do I go for the pin or would I be wise to keep away from that nasty-looking bunker?

Perhaps the answer to the long hitter lies really in that comparison—especially as the same challenge is flung at the ordinary golfer as well, and the strategy of the hole made definite. For the long hitter, moreover, a well placed bunker or dog leg up the fairway, beyond the ordinary man's range, can easily force him to place his drive on the side of the fairway where the line to the pin is narrower and the temptation of play for the safe side of the green stronger.

Tumps

Hoylake has one long hole like this, the 14th, where the way into the green is only wide open at all from the right side of the fairway, reachable only if you can carry some nasty tumps full of really thick grass from the tee, and hugging a cop with variable rough to the right of it.

Most of us timid mortals drive away safely left, and then find a couple of cross bunkers forty yards before the green almost exactly where we're not quite sure whether we can carry them or not in order to reach the green, even with the wind behind.

The second at Hoylake, recently tightened up by the Editor of the "Greenkeeper", makes now a most interesting hole, criticised, rather un-

necessarily I thought, by one or two as being too tight. Certainly the bunkers close well in to the front of the green, and there is a narrow path in only from exactly the right line from the tee, again a bold one over trouble. But there's plenty of room for a high bold shot from any direction to pitch on the green and hold; and there are no hazards round the back or right hand edge at all: so that it is merely a matter of pitching pin-high straight-right to be safely there for a putt, or at worst a chip.

Too difficult?

But even if the shot were unusually tight, by championship standards—and Hoylake prides itself on being a championship course—the perfect justification for it lies in the holes before and after. Hoylake's first is 2-2½ shots round an out-bounds-area to a green absolutely wide open to the straight shot, and open at the back too, if it be reached with one a bit too strong. Hoylake's third, again, is a fairly wide open long two shotter, where any straight shot will run into the green, though from the right you may have to fade round a bunker thirty yards short of the green on that side. Both of these can be reached by low-running pushes. To place between them a drive-and-medium-iron hole calling for a precise high-struck second to go where you mean it to, pitch there, and stop there, seems to me to be not only fair, but also interesting and entertaining. If long handicap members find it a bit difficult at week-ends, well then a bit of a bank round the back of the green—ancient and unfashionable remedy—could help them to hold it, while spoiling not at all the challenge for championship players.

Or would it? Perhaps the very idea is just more grist for argument.

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[Talking of grist, the week-end compromise at Hoylake's No. 2 is to use one of the shorter tees—Editor.]