

QUIRKS

Patrick Smartt

Those who have made a lengthy study of golfers swinging a club, will have noticed a number of quirks peculiar to different individuals.

Quirks that are natural, not gimmicks. The latter which I was once given to understand, not by an editor, were useful for selling purposes. There are times when one is driven to bluntness. Gimmicks are "instant cures". The Aspirin and Enos after a bibulous night out.

People do very odd things. A young lady I know, had a habit of kicking off her shoes before driving her car. That, I suppose a nearly an eccentricity. I recall apprehension that a stockinged foot would lack weight when applied to the brake pedal. On a very hot day she discarded her golf shoes, and completed in golf socks.

Unlike the occasion when Sam Snead did the same thing, in his younger days, there was no dissentient uproar.

Saddled with a compulsive habit of watching, detail catches the eye. It has been made clear, many times, I hold the breaking down of the swing into sections results in confusion. But, there is some searching in the mind over certain habits. Why for instance, do some players after years and years of experience fiddle with their grip before starting the swing? The first class players take the club in their **fingers**, without any fuss. There may be slight adjustments to correct a change that has crept in unbeknownst.

I have read somewhere of a golfer who was worried, for his left hand grip on the club always tightened as he started the backswing. I have seen two others who suffered from this

quirk. If they are told to grasp more firmly with that hand in the first place, they will only tighten up.

It looks wrong, and what looks odd usually is wrong. Any sudden change in the grip must be detrimental. It is much the same as letting go at the top. Not for the first time, I have interrupted writing to find the factual consequence. Using a normal grip, with the club head on the ground, I deliberately squeezed with the left hand. The club face opened, slightly but perceptibly.

Like the batsman in cricket, who quite unconsciously has several tugs at his cap peak, Arnold Palmer gives a hitch to his trousers. In the past, when a youngster asked a notable professional (I am near certain it was the late Archie Compston), what he did when the pressure was on, was told he tightened his shoe laces. One could never be sure how serious that character was being. It seems logical, in the sense that it could give a feeling of bracing up to the task. There may be something in that.

Bobby Locke, when he discarded plus-fours for trousers after his car smash, turned the ends up twice. He still does. I always meant to ask him why? Quirk, or for a good reason? He was not a man who indulged in quirks. Sandy Herd, one of the old-time greats, was noted for the number of waggles he took. A treasured story is of a spectator saying to him: "You take a hell of a lot of waggles, Herd". To be answered: "Yes. But I hit a hell of a lot of good shots."

Fred Daly took an inordinate number of waggles, prior to putting. That may have been incipient 'twitch'. His quirk was to whistle his way round. Many a golfer takes a pull at his glove before gripping the club. This obviously began from a desire to feel the glove fitted closely, an essential. Gloves stretch, but even with a new one, it has developed into a custom with some.

In watching the 'name' players of today, you seldom, if ever see the putter blade rested in front of the ball, and then grounded behind it. I do not know who started that, but many of us followed this system. Were I still playing, I would do so. What purpose did it serve? Perhaps we thought it helped in aiming, or was it to create the feeling of a follow through—now out of fashion.

There is no reason, though, to suppose the angle of the putter face behind the ball was precisely the same as when it was rested in front. Which is probably why it has departed from the ritual of putting.

A few when lining up a putt, dangle the club in a perpendicular position before their eyes. Several times the purpose of this has been explained to me, leaving me none the wiser, and causing a squint.

There are the gestures from players demonstrating their reaction to a shot. Originally they were compulsive, became habits, and are widely copied by lesser golfers. The forward kick of delight as a long one drops in the hole came from America. The clenched fist of Gary Player when he holes a vital one. And for those who remove the glove before putting, it is a **must** that it be put in the hip pocket. Why? Because Arnold Palmer did it.

One quirk, if it can be deemed so, has always puzzled me. It is that of the champion kissing the ball after the winning stroke. It was not responsible for his success, whereas the putter was. Others hurl it into the crowd, which is preferable. So far we have been spared anyone kissing his caddie.

In this glance at peculiarities, superstitions, quirks, or what have you, there is one piece of nostalgia. I should love to see one of the old Artisans (a vanishing mould), spit on his hands before grasping the club.

R. C. CRAIG

AND CO. LTD.

SPECIALISTS IN THE REPAIR AND
MAINTENANCE OF ALL TYPES OF MOWERS

* Agents for: RANSOMES SIMS &
JEFFERIES LTD.

* LLOYDS & CO. LTD.
WEBBS LAWN MOWERS

* Distributors: DENNIS BROS. LTD.

GANG MOWERS FOR HIRE

We will gladly call on you to advise
on your grass cutting equipment or
arrange demonstrations. Ring us now

*

**153 Arch Stamford Brook
Station, LONDON, W.6**

01-748 5415

S. H. GOSS & CO.

WEED CONTROL

SPECIALISTS

Selective or Total Weed Control
Grass Growth Retarding
Brushwood Control
Aquatic Weeds
also
Worm Control
Fertilisers Applied

Fairoaks,
Little Warley,
Hall Lane,
Brentwood, Essex
Telephone: Brentwood 216107