

Going by the book by Patrick Smartt

SEATED IN front of my bookshelves, six of them crammed with books on golf, rather after the manner of an antique collector gazing upon his possessions, two unexpected thoughts assailed me.

Firstly, what a fuss about a game (guilty, as a contributor). Secondly, should we get a better perspective of the instructional value of a book, if it were reviewed by a struggler (for whom it was written), with a number of frustrated years behind him? Or, if you like, a young man in his twenties, close on a single figure handicap? We should then know whether it had helped them or not. Now and again a tip will be discovered. As with a new putter, it will serve its brief time, and then like a snowflake melt away.

The press reviewer knows the game, he sees a lot of it, and can grasp what

the author means. There are some with long handicaps, but I suppose: "Utterly confusing" would not go down well with his editor. In the past, I did some reviewing for a golf magazine, and disliked discussing the technical books. It became a battle between honesty and an aversion from reducing someone's sales. This arose through not being a trained journalist. I cannot claim that distinction, never on the staff of a newspaper or a magazine.

Years of study of the written word, and as many listening to and joining in discussions on the golf swing, or method, if you prefer the modern term, leaves me rather sceptical.

The writings of the great, and not so great, facing me in their serried ranks, books which have been read over and over again, have fixed themselves so firmly in the memory as to

RAIN BIRD®
reigns supreme
(conventional or automatic)

Golf Courses
Race Courses
Parks
Playing Fields
Bowling Greens
Tennis Courts
etc.

In Palm Springs 32 out of 33 golf courses chose Rain Bird equipment for their irrigation systems. 40 years of experience in the design and development of sprinklers combined with modern technology and a high standard of quality control have established Rain Bird as the largest manufacturers of quality impact sprinklers and other irrigation equipment.

For full details of the best in turf irrigation contact our officially appointed area distributors: -
Ian Maiden, Farrods of Ripon Ltd., Dallamires Lane, Ripon, Yorks, Tel: Ripon 4455
Gerry Wilkins, Rainbow Irrigation, Sussex House, 23 Cuckfield Road, Hurstpierpoint, Sussex,
Tel: Hurstpierpoint (0273) 832888

ptc or the Sole U.K. Distributors: -
Irrigation Division, Sterling Works, Bath Road, Aldermaston, Berks. Tel: Woolhampton 2346.

permit stating fairly accurately, the swing plan of the author as portrayed by his scrivener, with little need for reference. One arrives at the point of knowing in the older books, which "ghost" to trust. The tape recorder has simplified this. Any writer or verbal coach knows that words are interpreted differently by the recipients. There is the art of "putting it across".

It is to be borne in mind that what is being "put across" are the opinions, conclusions, the teacher has arrived at. I cannot pick out two books that give identical advice. How dull it would be if they did.

On more than one occasion the question has been put, which book should be recommended to a beginner? It is doubtful if there is one. The reader must have reached a standard when he understands what the author is trying to tell him. He or she can learn the rudiments from a professional.

It is when one has unwillingly given up the game, the different theories can be examined dispassionately. Standing back taking a long view. As so often told before, when something unusual is presented, there is an excursion into the garden and a half-speed swing test made with a lady's club. Followed by a rapid return to the house, like a schoolboy caught at the sweets, for disobeying orders. In short, do not swallow whole all you read—find out.

There is no call to run again through the wearisome list of the different schools of thought. As a proof of their contrariness, I have before me two photographs. They show Sam Snead and Jack Nicklaus, taken from behind at the top of the swing. Both have the left wrist and forearm in line. The wrist has not cupped under the shaft. Two different generations. Memory drove me to Bobby Jones: GOLF IS MY GAME. He describes it: "... so that the back of the hand and the forearm are in the same

plane." Unless I misread him that is what they are doing.

He goes on: "A simple trial will convince anyone that so long as such a relation is maintained, no hand or wrist action is at all possible." That is startling. Two out of three of the finest exponents of the game, disproving the conviction of the other. Jones' competitive career was in the hickory era. Snead started with it. Nicklaus never. There may be something in that. The "hickories" used hand action, which meant more wrist work. After a golfing life, split almost in half between hickory and steel, perhaps it would be better put, by a very ordinary golfer, that either shaft called for a different hand action.

To take another look at Bobby Jones, he wrote that doses of instruction should be simple, direct and practical. He enlarges on this, in saying that should someone try to explain the golf swing to a kid, he would be completely baffled. It is generally thought that Jones was coached throughout his career by Stewart Maiden. In fact he had barely half a dozen lessons. He watched and copied Maiden's and other good players' swings, and found out things for himself.

The longer one looks at it, the more apparent it is that there is no secret, except rhythm. And that should be a relief. If the time ever came when everyone agreed upon one type of action the fascinating, frustrating search would be over.

LAWN MOWER GRINDERS



A comprehensive range of superior machines designed and built to suit operators' requirements. For brochure and full details contact us now.

ATTERTON & ELLIS LTD
Dent. B.G.G. Iron Works, Haverhill,
Suffolk. Tel: Haverhill 2312/3.