

How Movies Can Aid Pros to Correct Pupils' Games

By A. T. PACKARD

GEORGE SARGENT'S article in April GOLFDOM marks a definite and radical departure in the teaching of golf. His standing as a professional will make many a convert and he will find willing sponsors among golf writers and others who have long made an intelligent study of motion pictures of golf experts in action.

Reduced to its elements, George favors the careful study of the motion pictures of experts in action, followed by a like intelligent study of his or her own pictures. The study of the pictures of experts will give a composite picture of how the experts get results and the study of one's own pictures, especially when studied with a good teacher, will show the essential features in which the pupil is lacking.

George does not say so in his article, but it seems to me he is ready to go all the way in approving the doctrine that the "Do it this way" method of teaching golf is a back number. Even if he ignores the subject directly, one gathers from his article that he fully realizes the folly of trying to teach golf by imitation when the pupil is beyond the imitative age. The youngster, boy or girl, doubtless can learn faster by imitation than any other method, but the vast majority of pupils are beyond the imitative age and usually have physical characteristics that prevent anything that could be taken as a good imitation.

Let's carry this idea a bit further than getting a composite idea of what the motion pictures teach about the methods of the experts and then applying the composite picture to one's own methods. Let's begin with an agreement as to just what the experts are trying to do. With the drive, for instance, we can agree that the object of each is to have the ball of sufficient length and come to rest on the fairway at a point from which the second shot can be made to the best advantage. Now we go back to the motion pictures of

experts who have, man after man, landed the balls where they wanted and we find that the methods of each were as individual as their facial features. Prove this to yourself by stopping a projecting machine, making a still picture of what really is part of a regular swing. Never take a snap-shot posed picture for any other purpose than to get a likeness of the expert. The only picture that can be of use in determining the elements of a swing are motion pictures and still pictures made from motion pictures by stopping the projector. After you have made this still picture of the motion pictures, cover the face of the expert. You will find that any tournament player or any experienced golf writer can identify the player as readily as if his face were completely exposed.

Picking by Their Poking

That point must be anchored. No better illustration can be given of the apparent differences in methods than occurred in a P. G. A. tournament at French Lick when Sargent was president of the association. There was a hole, perhaps the seventh, where the fairway was level for well over 200 yards and then dipped down for perhaps another hundred yards. The layout of the hole was such that any straight drive of well over 200 yards gained enough from the down-hill roll to pass the 300-yard hole made by the marker when it had been taken up before the tournament. A golf writer took his stand with a friend at this point to watch the drives of the professionals. It was too far away to identify the players as they came on the tee, but nineteen of the first twenty-one were instantly identified as they made their strokes.

Now we get to the point in the statement that practically every drive was beyond the 300-yard mark. Each player was so individual in his methods that he could be identified but the result was practically the same. Manifestly, no two of them

seemed alike in their methods but equally certain was it that they were getting like results. That gave food for much thought to the golf writer and many hours of added study of motion pictures of experts and of the experts themselves in actual play.

The first conclusion was that, in spite of the variations in methods, the experts were about alike in accomplishing the desired result with the ball. This result must be accomplished while the club is in contact with the ball but, right there, demonstration merged into theory, for no human eye and no motion picture camera ever has told us what happens while the ball and club are in contact.

Fortunately, this does not bar general agreement as to what does happen while the club and ball are in contact. Ignoring the various ways a ball must be hit to bring about the desired results, we can agree that the club must have acted properly while in contact with the ball or the desired result would not have been accomplished. Then we can take the next step in agreement that, in spite of apparent differences in methods, the one essential point is that each of the experts is doing an identical thing: making the club act properly while in contact with the ball.

Focus Instruction

Isn't that right where real instruction should begin? Teaching the pupil that the action of the club is the essence of the stroke and the different ways the club must act while in contact with the ball? The ambitious golfer can dig up a mine of information by studying the motion pictures of experts in action but, if he or she is beyond the imitative age, it is no more possible to imitate the methods shown than it is to imitate the features or voice of the expert. But, and here's the point, it is possible for the pupil to try to do and, in a measure, succeed in doing what the expert is doing; provided only that the pupil knows what the expert has in mind. The pupil cannot imitate the expert's peculiarities of method because he or she is not built that way, but any ambitious golfer can become more and more skillful in doing what the expert is doing; making the club act properly while in contact with the ball.

And right there, it seems to me, lie the kindergarten lessons of golf tuition. There is a world of knowledge for the student in the close study of the motion pictures of Bobby Jones in action, but that knowl-

edge must be based on what Bobby is trying to do. He cannot imitate Bobby's back swing, because a Collie fracture in childhood resulted in a slightly stiffened wrist. He cannot imitate Bobby's stance because he must separate his feet farther in order to preserve his balance. He cannot hold his head at the same angle as Bobby, because Bobby's right eye is his master eye while the pupil's left eye is his master eye. He cannot shift part of the weight to the right foot on the back swing in imitation of Bobby because of a troublesome bunion. He cannot in any particular imitate the physical methods of Bobby, but he can know exactly as well as does Bobby, what he is trying to do. That then, is the point of attack. Except in minor particulars, physical peculiarities cannot be overcome. They can be educated to the task in hand but only with the close cooperation of the brain. Begin then with the brain. Convince the brain that the whole effort is centered in making the club act properly while in contact with the ball and the brain, wholeheartedly, will do its share in making the muscles bring about that detectable result.

Begin with the Brain

There has been so much of the topsyturvy in teaching that it customarily begins with the drive, when it would be so much simpler and more logical to begin with the putting stroke. But, beginning with the drive and the pupil being beyond the imitative age, the "Do it this way" method of teaching is futile. Begin with the brain, therefore, and quietly prove that the only possible effect on the ball is while the club is in contact with it. The lie of the club and the relative position and angle of the face can readily be grasped. Cut shots for approach work and side-spin shots for intentional slices and hooks are matters for future consideration. The problem now is to make the club act properly for a good drive. Some glorious day, moving pictures will show that the club acts properly in the drive if, moving at the required speed, the face remains at right angles to the line of flight during contact with the ball and with the hitting spot on the face over the line of flight.

The pupil may be told to dismiss any thought of grip or stance or swing or any effort at imitating any player. Just step up naturally and take a healthy swing with nothing whatever in mind except to make the club act properly. After the first

few swings, the teacher can see a dozen reasons why the club does not act properly. The stance, for instance, is too open and too close to the ball. This forces the club over the line on the down swing and the ball is certain to slice. That must be explained to the pupil and his brain at once accepts the fact as a final reason for the adjustment of the stance which will let the club act properly during a natural swing. Never again will that pupil be guilty of the faulty stance unless his brain goes to sleep.

One after another, the different faults can be taken up and the brain of the pupil can readily grasp the fact that they prevent the club from acting properly while in contact with the ball. If the unbelievable time arrives when the faults are removed and the pupil is stroking the ball correctly, his methods are as distinctly personal as ever. He has learned much from the study of motion pictures and more from the work of his teacher. He has reduced his average score by ten or forty strokes, but his physical peculiarities as shown in the swing, remain about the same. A permanent crook in the elbow caused by an accident or pitching curve balls renders absurd the dictum that one or both arms must be straight at certain points in the swing. But the brain of the pupil readily grasps the fact that the dictum, in general, is a major help in making the club act properly during impact and the brain forces the muscles to do as well as possible under the circumstances.

There are certain principles that enter into the methods of any good swing. These principles can be studied in the motion pictures of experts and compared with the pupil's methods. Then, in the new school of teaching, will come a digest of these principles and a convincing argument to the brain of the pupil that will lead the brain to force the muscles to do their duty, the very best that can be accomplished in view of the unchangeable physical characteristics of the pupil.

Rhode Island Greenkeepers to Meet May 26

THE Rhode Island Experiment Station located at Kingston, is planning to hold a field day for greenkeepers of the state and adjoining territory on May 26. This will be the first field day conducted primarily for greenkeepers and others in-

terested in golf course management. If it meets with success it is planned to make this an annual feature. The program which has been planned will consist of a visit to the experimental grass plats beginning about 10:30 A. M., lunch at the college dining hall, demonstrations of golf course equipment, visit to nearby fields of bent grass grown for seed production, and a visit to one or two nearby golf courses.

Some of the first experimental work in this country on lawns and lawn fertilization was started at this station. A number of the old lawn plats which were established more than a quarter of a century ago, are still being maintained according to the original plans. They show some very interesting results from different methods of fertilizing and handling lawns. In addition many new plots have been added since that time.

Two years ago, more extensive tests were started with different golf grasses. About 25 different strains and varieties of grasses are being grown for comparison as to their value for golf course greens. Twelve different strains are being compared for seed production under local conditions. In another experiment 36 plats are used to test the fertilizer requirements of R. I. bent for seed production. The state is well adapted to growing bent grass for seed and there is a good market for the seed.

An invitation is being extended to commercial firms to exhibit and demonstrate various types of golf course equipment.

It is planned to visit one or two fields of the R. I. bent and velvet bent near the experiment station and then continue to one or two local golf courses.

A cordial invitation is extended to greenkeepers, green-chairmen, and all others who may be interested in this field day.

BUILDING of the \$100,000 clubhouse of the Hot Springs (Ark.) G. & C. C. shows what can be done when a club's operation makes money. For 17 of the 20 years prior to the building of the new clubhouse, the club was operated at a loss which was born by the Hot Springs hotels which realized the necessity of a first class golf club at the resort. With operation showing a profit the club not only made its new home a further attraction to Hot Springs but was warranted in buying ground for a third 18-hole course.