

SINCE 1893

By VAL FLOOD

... being an outline of the history and development of golf playing equipment.

WHEN Val Flood's seventieth birthday was observed at Shuttle Meadow CC last year there was a lot of publicity on the game played by the able and active Dublin lad and the other Connecticut veteran, Bob Pryde. The boys played the Shuttle Meadow course with old clubs—some of them older than either Val or Bob. The long side of the course was played with the old gutty ball and the shorter side with the earlier feather ball.

On match play scoring the contest was halved. On medal play, the score: Flood—53-51—104; Pryde—60-52—112.

The week before the birthday party, Val played 45 holes at Shuttle Meadow in 75-76-36, which gives basis for the conviction that the difference between his 104 with the relics and his regular rounds with modern equipment represents the scoring benefits of up-to-date clubs and balls.

Val himself believes in that angle of pro merchandising so deeply that he is satisfied a pro does members a valuable service by selling the latest improvements just as soon as the pro is convinced these improvements are sound. Progress in club and ball construction is persistent, although from year to year it may not be conspicuously noticeable, points out Flood. He has observed golf playing equipment development carefully since 1893 when he became pro at the Halcyon club in Dutchess County, N. Y.

For a time Bob was with Spaldings as one of that company's early clubmakers.

According to Val's experience, a historical background of golf playing equipment is a helpful factor in selling golf merchandise; and to give some of the younger fellows a picture of the developments he has written for GOLFDOM the following outline of club and ball development.

And now for Val Flood's highlight review:

THE first real golf clubs were made about 250 years ago and resembled hockey sticks. The heads were made of beech, very long and narrow, in sets of five or six clubs, including the putter, which also had a beech head. They were spliced, glued and bound onto hickory shafts. The clubs had various degrees of loft, and were named "play club" for the

driver, "long spoon" for the brassie, "mid-spoon," "short spoon" and "baffy spoon," for approaching. It is remarkable how well some of the old timers did with such crude equipment.

Cleeks Give Impetus

Later came the lofter and cleek. They formed a very great improvement to the set. Of the cleek, I think it was Sir Walter Simpson who said, "No one shall know all the glories of golf until he can play a cleek well." That saying did more to revolutionize the old type of club and bring it up to the standards of today than any other thing.

Cleek-makers became famous. Of course they made lofters, and later niblicks. Still later, the famous Willie Park goose-neck putter.

The introduction of balls began with a ball made like a small baseball, having a leather cover stuffed with feathers. These could be driven 150 yards and met great favor with golfers of that time.

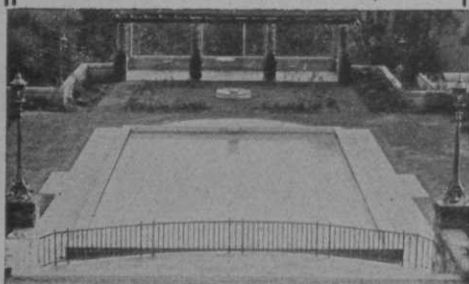
Club-making and ball-making became quite a business both in England and Scotland. About 1848, the gutta displaced the feather ball. At first it was made with a smooth cover, and it was observed that it flew better after it had been hacked and chipped up. So the old masters hand-hammered their own. Later moulds were made with indentations in them, which stabilized the flight of the ball.

Club-making also improved, and midirons were added to the set as well as various types of mashies.

About 1888, golf started here in America and clubs were imported from England and Scotland in small lots. In 1895, A. G. Spalding & Bros. started as manufacturer of golf goods, beginning where Europe had left off, and cooperating with anyone whose work showed merit. They climbed the ladder of fame but still the process goes on. The sciences of chemistry, aero-dynamics and ballistics, plus mechanical skill as accurate as the finest watchmaker, have all contributed and are still contributing to the best American goods.

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the implements of golf. First, the ball. About 1897 was produced the Vardon "Flyer," which had a tremendous vogue until about 1902 when the Haskell rubber core ball appeared. This was patented April 11, 1899. The core was made of rubber thread or tape wound under tension. In 1905, the Spalding "White" appeared—a ball without paint. In 1907, Spalding produced the famous "Glory Dimple"—with a core of bunched rubber thread, moulded in a dimple mould, which Spaldings controlled under license from Taylor of England.

Introduction of the Sinker

Previous to about 1909 all balls were approximately one size and weight—that is they were all light, floating and large. The first change took place when Spalding introduced the "Baby Dimple." To secure greater distance balls were made heavier and smaller. The "Baby Dimple" was 1.65 inches in size and 1.52 ounces in weight and did not float.

In 1915, the "Red Honor" ball appeared, 1.67 ounces in weight and 1.67 inches in size, at which time golf ball manufacturing was placed on a scientific footing never before approached. At the same period, another small ball, the "Bullet Honor," 1.64 inches in size and 1.72 ounces in weight was introduced.

In 1917, the "30" or Midget ball was perfected, 1.63 inches in size and 1.64 ounces in weight. This became standard size throughout the golf world. In 1918, the famous "50" was perfected, 1.63 inches in size and 1.69 ounces in weight.

The movement to increase specific gravity culminated in 1920, when balls were known to be as small as 1.62 inches and as heavy as 1.75 ounces—very powerful ammunition indeed in the hands of a strong hitter.

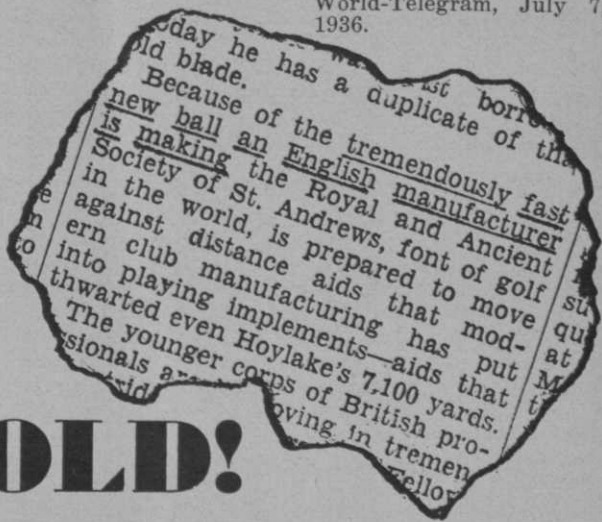
Ball Improved Rapidly in the Twenties

On May 1, 1921, the Royal and Ancient in Britain, and the USGA, in an effort to curb this power, limited the ball to not under 1.62 inches in size and not over 1.62 ounces in weight.

In 1921, experts developed a method by which a thin cover could be vulcanized to a low compression core that still would not cut readily, yet retain distance. They called it the Kro-Flite.

The year 1928 brought the multi-dotted

Reprinted from New York World-Telegram, July 7, 1936.



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ball. On Jan. 1, 1931, the standard ball was changed to 1.68 inches in size and 1.55 ounces in weight—the large, light ball in America. Canada and England remained under the same standardization rulings as in 1921.

On Jan. 1, 1932, the standard ball was again changed to 1.68 inches in size and 1.62 ounces in weight. This was done in the US by the USGA, but in Canada and England the Royal and Ancient retained the same ruling as in 1921, namely, 1.62-1.62. A revival of the paintless ball came in 1932 in the Top-Flight.

There have been all sorts of centers for golf balls, including solid centers, soft bunched rubber thread, semi-liquid, a small hollow sphere, bag tied at neck and filled with semi-liquid substance, dough, glass marbles, and cores of water, liquid ice, honey, dry ice, mercury and innumerable other substances.

Having covered high spots of ball development, let us trace the progress that has taken place in the last 50 years in club building.

Let me conduct you through a factory and note the changes that are taking place. It is 1897. Harry Vardon joined A. G. Spalding to tour America, give exhibitions

and promote interest in the game. He brought his clubs from England. Copies were made of them and named "Vardon Flyer" golf clubs.

Vardon's Clubs Are Copied

Messrs. Curtiss and the Reach boys got together and figured that even these fine clubs could be improved. With that end in view, dogwood was substituted for beech, and a leather face installed. Pig skin was substituted for sheep skin for the grip. This in turn gave way to calf skin. Later persimmon was used for heads, and has been used ever since.

Next the socket was used instead of the spliced head. From this point on, two things were considered vital to the firm—improvement and production. Ways and means to bring this about were started. The Reach brothers were put in control of the factory: The Gold Medal brand was brought out in 1900—and what fine clubs they were! But W. F. Reach was not satisfied. In the back of his head was an idea—to bring about a matching of size and shape, and to have consecutive pitches in exact gradation whereby there was a club for every shot. The clubs were matched in swinging weights, with a dis-

tinctive face marking. This marking was suggested by the fact that a majority of players had the habit of addressing the ball with the top line of the blade set for direction, a hooked ball resulting. It was two-colored, the lower half of the blade being blackened and in a line paralleling the sole. This blackened half blade so captured the eye that the club was automatically properly lined up, setting the direction as the crow flies, and suggesting the name Kro-Flite.

The next thing was to have these clubs registered. Blades, shafts and grips were all weighed and then fabricated so as to have them all feel the same, and when finished they were put in a testing machine to prove that principle. Then a number was given to each club so that if one was broken or lost an exact duplicate could be furnished. Of course this applied to the matched sets of irons as well as the woods.

A standard grip was built into each club so that one could take any club in his hands and feel that the only place that he could grip it comfortably was the correct place.

Now let us look at the steel shaft.

The Knight patent on steel shafts was issued November 22, 1910 but it did not come into any real popularity until about 1922. This was marketed by the Horton Mfg. Co. of Bristol, Conn. It was known as the Bristol Gold Medal Shaft. It was first legalized by the Western GA, later by the USGA.

The Bristol company, under the leadership of Herbert Lagerblade, a professional golfer, continued a long list of experiments that helped to bring the splendid shaft we have today. Others entered the field and are making fine shafts. To Herbert Lagerblade must go credit for the earliest research work. The steel shaft was inevitable and helpful in golf because it is uniform; everyone starts equal, whereas in the case of hickory only a few got the cream of those shafts.

Tommy Duncan, Pine Lake Manager,
Rates Fashion Show As Ace Feature

MANAGERS of first class country clubs who are making a smart play for women's business and want to score can take the tip of Thomas E. Duncan, manager of the swanky Pine Lake CC (Detroit district), and put on a woman's fashion show.

Duncan considers the Pine Lake fashion

show one of the most popular and successful entertainment features ever put on at the club; successful because of the business it brought to the club and the pleasure it gave the women members and their guests. The crowd packed all available space.

Show was put on through arrangements Duncan made with one of the leading women's shops in Detroit. The shop co-operated willingly, for a fashion show at a class club is a display opportunity a live shop doesn't want to miss. Apparel was selected to suit every sports and social occasion at Pine Lake. The array was enough to make any husband's wallet punch-drunk. There were displayed costumes for golf, tennis, riding, beach, bathing and boating. Next in order of display was spectator costumes. The show closed with displays of summer formal gowns.

Tommy figures the bang of the show came from displaying the costumes in their proper setting at the club. Models parading through Pine Lake's glass-enclosed dining room which faces the lake, and along the terrace, made the show aces with women who have been ringsiders at fashion from the Rue de la Paix, Parez, to Lac du Pine, Mich. Orchestral music went with the march of the mannequins.

Manager of the store cooperating has advised Duncan the Pine Lake show was the most successful display the store ever put on, in sales and in accounts opened. Storeman attributes the way the show clicked to the gowns being worn in the absolutely correct stage setting and atmosphere and to the fact that spectators of the show were lurching leisurely and in the right mood for buying reaction.

Do You Talk Yourself Out of Ball Sales?

By J. C. BRYDON, V.-P.,
The Worthington Ball Co.

SOME pros sell more golf balls than other pros with a comparable opportunity. With the same number of members and about the same type and financial status, there is a wide difference in volume and in profit. Let us see why, for greater sales is the goal we are all seeking.

The answer goes to the roots of successful selling—the finding and appealing to the most effective sales incentive for that particular product. Not necessarily the most obvious or the most spectacular or the most talked of; in fact, the most effective buying appeal is often one little considered and exploited.

The correct answer is to be found only in studying the psychology of the buyer.