

# GOLF or TRICK SHOTS?

By HERB GRAFFIS

**T**HE USGA has made a cautious statement about limiting the number of clubs carried by players and if that works out like the 1929 edict on the larger and lighter ball the public will respond by yowling loud protests to offset the imperial mandate. As usual, the public will do as it jolly well gives a damn whether the matter concerns golf or general government.

So there need be no fear that the golfers will be compelled to sneak up an alley, press a secret signal button and when the panel slides open whisper to a guy named Gus:

"Say, how about a No. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  iron? I am a friend of Pete's. You know, the little fat fellow with a wart on his ear, who was here when they had the laundrymen's convention in town."

After going through such preliminaries as we learned when we were acquiring internal leaks in the belly dike, Gus would let the stranger in and sell him a 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  iron for \$15, representing \$3 worth of club and \$12 worth of prohibition legislation.

## Is USGA

### Comment a Feeler?

The USGA obviously wants none of that as you will note from the careful manner in which the implement and ball committee comment on club limitation was worded. Said the report:

"For some time the Committee has noted with concern the increasing number of clubs carried by players. It is the opinion of the Committee that the carrying of so many clubs attends to minimize the skill of the game and makes it too mechanical as well as increase the cost.

"Aside from the above important features, it creates an unreasonably heavy burden for a caddie to carry. The Committee is not inclined to recommend at this time any change in the rules which would restrict the number of clubs the player might carry but it earnestly expresses the hope that manufacturers and players alike will agree with our thought that it is important to discourage present tendency toward carrying such an excessive number of clubs."

There can be no doubt of the USGA officials' unselfishness and sincerity in ef-

forts to be of service to golfers. This present instance is an example. The USGA officials knew they would be rapped from plenty of points of the compass when they came out for a reduction in clubs and plainly were willing to take the rap to find out what the score is on this matter of the extent of golf implements.

The USGA has implied that it wanted a showdown on a highly controversial point brought before it by a few and not by "the voice of the people". Therefore, the subject might as well be threshed out instead of left hanging as a threat over a business that hasn't made any money for years and which, for commercial as well as sentimental reasons, is true in its devotion to the best interests of golf.

What is "an excessive number of clubs"? You could putt with a brassie. Stymie putts often are made with niblicks. So should the putter be considered an "excessive" club and either ploughed under or butchered as a New Deal measure with the owners of the putters being paid off for putter non-use, unless the Supreme court rules to the contrary?

### Tricky Technique Would Be Needed

Is the game made "too mechanical" when a player can use a mashie instead of playing a midiron laid back to a mashie loft, or has that a tendency to "minimize the skill of the game"? You probably would get the right answer to that from a million golfers who don't even take a few lessons to learn to use the midiron as a midiron. Most golfers play the game because it's fun trying to get the ball into the hole in fewer strokes than the other fellow and not because they want to develop as trick shot artists or jugglers.

Now about the number of clubs carried at present. Player demand and not the USGA, the manufacturers, or the pros,

rule that. Limitation of clubs on that sound basis has resulted in the elimination of No. 1 irons from many matched sets for the average golfer simply because the No. 1 iron was too hard for the average golfer to play. That discarding of the No. 1 iron took place without any official suggestion.

The amateur and pro stars carry a hefty arsenal because they want to win and not for show. They are not going to wait that for want of a nail a shoe was lost, for want of a shoe a horse was lost and for want of a horse a kingdom was lost as did the crying victim in the old nursery rhyme. The star players want the club for the shot and they will tell you of countless times when the 23rd or 24th club in their bags meant a crucial shot that counted.

Even most of those who take a long range view of golf development don't seem to realize that the unknown fellow who invented the golf bag is the one man who exercised the strongest of all influences on the implements of the game. Prior to the time the bag came into use there were more styles of golf clubs in use than there are today. The difference was that each player used what suited his individual taste and requirements best, and generally to an extent limited only by the bundle his caddie could carry under his arm. Golf books published in the 1870's list general classifications of 16 to 19 clubs and of these there were enough distinctive models in each class to bring the total up to more than today's array of golfing armaments.

#### **Golfer's Army Will Settle It All**

So it seems that golfers for the last 60 or 70 years have been demonstrating that golfers will use the clubs they want and they can afford. The sleight of hand experts who can play in fairly good scores with five or six clubs are entitled to play with only five or six if they so desire. Because they are a small minority, they never have been able to revise the entire scheme of the game solely to their own liking. For that reason, among others, golf has grown.

It might as well be conceded that carrying as many clubs as a fellow thinks he needs and can afford is not a "substantial departure from the traditional". Even if it were, what of it? This year the USGA bluntly said that it was prepared to make a most violent "departure from the tra-

ditional" in "disqualification, if necessary" of unconscionably slow players in championships. The departure from the USGA tradition of having women's national championship matches in the morning resulted in the 1935 championship afternoon play having galleries "larger than ever before".

On the matter of the heavy burdens lugged by caddies, mentioned by the USGA, it often strikes one in the golf business that the trouble is not with the weight of clubs carried as much as it is with the poor distribution of the weight for carrying. There is room for great improvement in the balance of the load in golf bags in such a way that it will not be injurious to the caddies. During the depression there has been a noticeable trend toward larger and older caddies, but the average golf player when he does draw a small kid to lug a big pack is sportsman enough to cut down the load for the boys.

#### **Clubs Cost Less**

Reference to limiting the number of clubs carried to reduce the cost of the game is vague because at present there are no reasons other than the need, the desire and the money controlling the extent of the armament in any player's bag. Manufacturers' and retailers' competition has cut down the cost of golf clubs until golf as a business probably would be very unattractive to USGA officials as good businessmen.

In the cost of golf playing equipment, there has been a most amazing reduction effected by economic conditions and by toughening the ball cover during the last four years. Figures indicate that the present ball remains perfectly playable for about three rounds, considering the play over the nation's 18- and 9-hole clubs. That is about double the figure for 1930. This makes it appear that manufacturers' competition and progress is so dependable a factor in reducing the price of golf that it must be a source of costly pain to the manufacturers themselves.

There will always be fellows with yachts cruising around the world in luxury and there will always be fellows with row-boats, fishing contentedly in ponds. We might as well realize there always will be fellows playing with 20-some golf clubs and others playing with a spoon, a mid-iron, a mashie and a putter. Why try to deal ourselves a hand in what Allah wills?