

# Pro's Study of Tourney Stars Dramatizes His Teaching

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ONE phase of the tournament circuit that is of value to the pro when he is not playing in tournaments but has to be teaching at his club, is the opportunity of studying the swings of the expert performers. It is a refreshing change from the homeclub pro's necessary continuous study of the inexpert swings of his students. This positive factor I know helps the instructor in his work with and for his pupils.

Then, too, as I have noticed from my own experience, one is more apt to be impressed by the salient points of the swings of the stars when you see them only once a year than one is when travelling the circuit with them and seeing them often.

I recently reviewed the notes I made in 1943 and 1944 when the big shots were in Minneapolis for the Golden Valley invitation tournament. In 1943 I'd seen none but club golfers for a year hence the features of the experts' games were especially conspicuous.

First I was struck by the bold way the stars went for their long putts. The putts were stroked with daring, with imagination, and with an eye to getting the ball into the hole rather than just coming close to make the next putt easy. The attitude of the players was positive. They were out to make something happen and not waiting for something to happen to them.

To a man the head was held "steady". The record of hitting past the chin was 100%. They stayed in position for the blow and then released the head to let it move forward with the swing.

A less than full swing with the woods was noticeable in Nelson, Demaret, Wood and Cooper. The drive was one shot that seemed to be taken for granted. Nelson and Wood never missed a shot to the left of the course. If a shot went askew it flew straight or to the right.

Hand action predominated. There was no body swing, no right side interference and no fast body action.



Les Bolstad gives pointers to Beverly Hanson, center, and Dot Kiely, two of the many fine players who have developed under his guidance.

Most of the swings were definitely grooved. There were very few off-balance swings and only a few jerky swings. Some action photographs made of Wood showed his positions remarkably duplicated, even to the tilt of his cigarette. This, you'll bear in mind, was when Craig was enjoying a temporary respite from the back injury that continues to afflict him.

## Gallery Likes Punch Shots

The low punch iron from a half swing was extensively used. The gallery liked this shot.

The explosion shot, that bane of the average golfer, was no trouble at all to the tournament stars and usually went dead to the pin.

The iron shots were hit for the flag. You could see that in the player's set at address, in his attitude.

Revolta's firmness on all short approaches was outstanding. To see him smack those short ones was like getting a dash of cold water in the face. That's what has kept Johnny in the money for almost 15 years.

Some of my friends commented on the shortened holds taken on the club and the tendency to slug the drive, but I had other eyes.

The short swing for irons was particularly noticeable in Hogan, Nelson and McSpaden. That makes for a swell con-

*Golfdom*

trolled shot—usually a low one—and with no loss of distance.

The better performers made a distinct swing through the ball, with plenty of use of the right hand. I was impressed by this swing out after the ball. The backswing and the body action seemed subservient to this swing through. Form and detail didn't appear to matter too much if this swing through was accomplished.

#### Notes on Nelson

Nelson's best shot was his tee shot. Several players remarked that although By was noted as an iron player, he'd actually had the best drive in golf for the past five years. The same thing used to be the case with Armour when he was in his playing prime. He was famed as the iron master but has said that his wood play then was distinctly better than his irons.

Nelson was using more of a palm grip with his left hand. His left thumb was extended down the shaft and half on the side. He said this thumb position steadied and balanced the club at the top of the backswing. He made other meaty statements: "I hold onto the club with my left hand and hit with my right. I try to lead the swing with my left hand and arm and to control the path of the swing with the left. With the right hand I feel the club and make the blow."

There was the usual array of curious putters, indicating the desperation of even the stars in trying to discover the baffling secret of consistently good putting.

One point of coordination and control was prominent: the right arm was always moving forward close to the side of the body.

Ben Hogan, especially, was a great subject for study. His position at address was alive with potential power. He was always in motion. His weight was on his left leg. It was remarkable the long, low iron he could hit using only a brief swing. Then, in contrast, pictures showed him to have the balance and the control to use a longer swing and a more generous move on the drive than anyone else in the field.

Sam Byrd had a new putting stroke (probably in an attempt to minimize tournament tension). He played the ball well forward of his body and used an arm stroke with no wrist action. I doubt if Sam putts this way now, but the point is that he was open-minded and alert to change and suggestion. Sam is one of the smartest pros in golf with a wealth of ideas on how to swing. He didn't get those healthy ideas by resisting change. No sir, he's always changing, experimenting, and building.

The dubs in golf have a fear and mistrust of change. They are sure that any attempt

at introducing new swing technique will disrupt their existing habit patterns and leave them with nothing.

My notes on that tournament read: "McSpaden was deadly in scoring but Nelson and Hamilton seemed to be standouts in execution." That was the week before the PGA at Spokane where Hamilton defeated Nelson in the finals.

#### Pro Sees for Pupil

Such random notations have been invaluable to me in keeping lessons interesting with reference to golf personalities. While it is certainly true that the pupil's own game is infinitely more important to him than the game of any of the stars, it does help get the instruction story across by bringing in some point of an outstanding player's game that dramatizes the detail you want to emphasize.

It also develops keener attitude toward study and practice on the part of the pupil. Instinctively he gets to associating himself with good golf rather than being entirely overwhelmed by the problems and discouragement of his own game.

Then, too, this plan of passing along your observations is bound to give your pupils the impression that you are forever on the job trying to acquire something that can be used in improving their play. It may encourage them to develop a habit of watching the tournament players' swings themselves instead of merely rushing around wildly to see where the ball goes. Their interpretations may be wide of the mark but you can correct that confusion and error. The profit will come to them as a result of their greater interest in good golf. A pupil who is "swing smart" learns faster.

#### CHICAGO PROS AND OFFICIALS STUDY LESSON SITUATION

Officials and pros of Chicago district clubs have been informally discussing the instruction situation in the district, not with any idea of recommending standard practice but for the purpose of getting a district-wide basic picture. Lesson fees range from \$2 to \$5 a half-hour, with \$4 and \$5 being the usual charge at the private clubs. In the course of discussions the matter of half-hour periods as customary for lessons was questioned. Some pros expressed opinion that 15 minute or 45 minute lessons would fit individual cases better than the arbitrary half-hour sessions.

Also examined was the greens fee range which extended at private clubs from \$1 week-days at a few clubs to \$8 for Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. Other subject considered was playing hours for women which became a hotly controversial subject at some clubs last year.