

Know How to Fit Clubs Is Pro Sales Service "Must"

By J. VICTOR EAST

Golf, unlike baseball, tennis and other games where the ball struck at is in motion, is in itself such an individual game that it might seem the majority of players would require each club made to order. Such, however, is not generally the case, but, personalized selection for suiting the individual is necessary, and there will follow some of the reasons why.

Let's take the matter of club length and the fitting of same to two people with a difference of 12" in height. Say one is 5'6" and the other 6'6". Put two such people side by side and have them close their hands. It will more generally be found there is very little difference between their closed knuckles and the floor; certainly far and away less than the 12" difference in their over-all heights.

It, however, is this matter of reach or relative distance to the ground that plays an important part in fitting an individual with the length of club he or she can use to advantage; for, when the hands are brought together to the position of gripping the club, it is the distance between them, the hands, and the ball, that has to be accommodated by the club length. The comparatively slight difference of hands to ground between tall and short people accounts for the most part in the narrow spread in club lengths used by players of widely different heights.

In this matter of length-fitting of clubs the next point of influence is the club "lie" best suited to the individual, for obviously if the ball is to be played a long way from the feet the space between the hands and the ball would have to be bridged with a longer club than would be necessary if the accommodating stance be taken with the feet closer to the ball.

Since the distance of hands to ground, and the club "lie" best suited to the path of stroke, are two important essentials for fitting the customer with clubs of suitable length, then it behooves the professional or his salesman to quickly size up the build of each customer. In this regard he should be guided as to whether the individual to be fitted is built for an upright, medium or flat type of swing; as, for the upright type the length will be relatively short, and for the flat type, long, with the medium in-between length. Correspondingly, the "lies" of the clubs will be selected to suit the individual type.

Before passing on to other points of selecting or fitting clubs to the individual it might be pointed out that where the prospective customer has already played it is recommended a study be made of his or her used clubs, as much can be determined by the evidences of use. In looking over used shoes, as is commonly done, it can readily enough be determined if worn shoes are too short, too narrow, too wide, etc. for the wearer. In like manner the scratch or wear-marks on the sole of a wood club will show whether the "lie" is O.K., too upright, or too flat, as it will prove whether the player's build has been accommodating improper length instead of the reverse order, viz., the club length meeting the physique of the owner.

Suiting the Individual

Turning now to suiting the individual with the proper flexibility of shaft, and also the club weight. This is not so complex or confusing as is commonly thought to be the case, for usually it narrows down to temperament and the physical side. If one is muscularly strong, then the shaft flexibility is best to be on the firm or stiff side, with the club weight correspondingly heavier than medium. Conversely, a lightly built person will be able to use a flexible shafted club of lighter over-all weight to advantage.

On the mental side, the professional or salesman takes his cue from the customer's manner of speech, whether rapid, moderate or deliberate, for usually the rate of talking is correlated with a person's speed of action.

A quick talker is almost bound to be a fast club swinger, and so, knowing the tempo of the stroke when striking at the ball is best to be in smooth progression, a club with a firm and not a whippy shaft will be selected. So also, for such a person, will there be a proportionate increase in the over-all weight of the club. Similar reasoning applies to each type of individual, as does the matter of age, for along with any slowing down of muscular effort lighter weight clubs with increased flexibility of shafts are unusually helpful and accordingly prescribed.

While each of the above noted items, viz., length, lie, shaft-flexibility and weight are essential in suiting the individual it should be emphasized that "lie"

is of primary importance, as from it the length and other items of suitability are determined.

As the lie of the club is important it perhaps would be wise to point out that when a club is held in the position of address to a ball by the person being suited the sole of the club should rest on the heel side of center.

The reason for having the sole resting nearer the heel is that when any golf club is put into swinging motion each club actually changes to a flatter "lie" than when in the stationary position of address to ball; therefore, never should a club be selected where the sole is resting at or forward of center when held in the position of ball address.

Many have been the studies for arriving at the range of golf clubs considered best to meet the requirements of the vast variety of people, and in the latest analysis the decisions arrived at have been made by applying the law of averages. That is why, unless a person be of unusual build, each can, from a well assorted stock and

with proper guidance, be suited or fitted with clubs to best serve his or her respective needs.

Supplying players with the proper clubs is a primary function of the pro's valuable merchandising service. Knowing golf, the player, and making more of a study of club design and construction than any other class of merchants selling golf equipment, the pro logically is qualified best to correctly fit the player.

Younger pros have asked GOLFDOM for some basic material on the club fitting responsibility, so we got Vic East, with his extensive experience as a pro and in golf club design and manufacturing, to handle the assignment.

The development of club design and making has been so rapid since World War II ended that the pro must make an intense and thorough study of this element of his business. He will find that in shaft design and construction alone the advances of the past few years have accounted for such marked improvements as to make clubs with pre-war shafts antiquities that cost strokes.

Annual Turf Conferences

1950

- Oct. 15-17—National Turf Field Days, USGA Green Section, Beltsville, Md.
Oct. 25-27—Central Plains Turf Conference, Kansas State College, Manhattan.
Oct. 30-31—Southeastern N. Y. Turf Short Course, White Plains, N. Y.
Oct. 30-Nov. 3—American Society of Agronomy Annual Meetings, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Nov. 27-29—Oklahoma Turf Conference, Oklahoma A. & M. College, Stillwater, Okla.

1951

- Jan. 11, 12—Annual Conference, Mid-Atlantic Association of Greenkeepers, Lord Baltimore Hotel, Baltimore, Md.
Jan. 22-26—20th Annual Rutgers One Week Turf Course, Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick, N. J.
JAN. 29-FEB. 2—22nd NATIONAL TURF CONFERENCE AND SHOW, SHERMAN HOTEL, CHICAGO, ILL.
Feb. 12-14—Texas Turf Conference, Texas Turf Association, College Station.
Feb. 26-Mar. 1—20th Annual Turf Conference, Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pa.
Mar. 5-8—Annual Turf Conference, Midwest Regional Turf Foundation, Purdue Univ., Lafayette, Ind.
Mar. 6, 7—Fourth Annual Turf Conference, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.
Mar. 7, 8—Fourth Annual Turf Conference, State College of Washington, Pullman.
Mar. 8, 9—Annual Turf Conference (Concluding 10-Weeks Winter School), Univ. of Mass., Amherst.
Mar. 12-14—17th Annual Turf Conference, Iowa Greenkeepers Association, Iowa State College, Ames.
Mar. (?)—Annual Turf Conference and Short Course, Minnesota Greenkeepers Association.
May (?)—Annual Meeting, Florida Association of Golf Course Supts., Tampa.