

# Group Instruction Problems

## Test the Professional

By LES BOLSTAD

Class training is becoming a large department of golf instruction with the high school, college, club women's and juniors', employees' organization and the YMCAs, YWCAs and other groups bringing thousands of new pupils and new problems to the pros.

Many of us have found that there are considerable differences between solutions that we can apply in the cases of individuals and those we often are compelled to use with groups. With the groups the pro is on display and his rating as a teacher may be judged almost as much by his inability to teach some pupil who seems to be hopelessly inept physically, as he will be rated by those he develops into rather good players.

It's a very tough deal for the pro but it's what he has to face and it may be the opening of a big new chapter in the professionals' business advance.

From my own experience as a player, teacher of individuals and classes and the experience of men who are successful teachers in other subjects at the University of Minnesota, I've set down some ideas that I hope will be found interesting and helpful to other professionals who have this great responsibility of group teaching.

### How to Teach Rhythm

One of the comments I find myself making as I move from one golfer to another in group instruction is, "be smoother". Among beginners rhythm is conspicuous by its absence.

Was I telling a pupil enough to point out that his movements were jerky and lacking in flow? Would he immediately become smoother and more rhythmic? Some golfers would, but not many.

It doesn't take long to find that in golf, slowness and smoothness go hand in hand. You can become aware of smoothness, you can think rhythm, and try to grow into it. You can slow down your walk. These are all sensible approaches.

But I found a better answer. I asked Clarence Osell, Professor of Kinesiology at the University of Minnesota, how he taught rhythm to poorly coordinated students who come to him for Adapted Physical Education. His answer was immediate. "I have them swing a weight and

react to the fall of gravity of the weight. All other stimuli are shut out. This practice tends to establish a neural pathway and induces rhythm".

Shades of Ernest Jones and his swing on a weight on the end of a string! Bring on the 22 oz. Sarazen training club!

### Freedom Isn't What You Want

When you watch an expert golfer drive you get the impression of unrestricted free flow and considerable power. There is a full windup of the trunk on the backswing; the club describes a wide arc and in some cases dips over the horizontal on the backswing. The arms swing wide and free from relaxed shoulder joints and make a generous expression both coming and going. The club moving in rhythm and to the delayed cadence of the golf swing gradually builds up into a resounding swish.

Yet the greatest freedom isn't what you want in a golf swing. Harry Cooper brought that out in a conversation we had on the winter tour back in the 1930's and no truer words were ever spoken.

Byron Nelson, who came as close to being a golfing machine as any striker of a golf ball, built his swing on the idea of eliminating any wasted movement. This same idea permeates other sports and is a by-word with many a coach in different lines of athletics.

An instructor can demonstrate the need for economy in motion in this way. He can make a swing where he lets everything go. He can let the head sway, allow the feet to overplay and slough around, permit the arms to break at the elbows, let the wrists drop at the top and going through, and let go of the club with the fingers.

Then the instructor can reverse the situation and show how a controlled swing results when the head is held steady, when one rolls across the left foot with the left heel kept down and barely allowed to come up on the backswing, when the wrist action is considerably restricted, and when the arms are allowed to retain their extension (first the left going back and then the right going through) instead of sagging and giving at the elbows. The grip would be held firm throughout.

The point can be made that you subtract in order to build up. You subtract from head movement, foot action, and wrist play in order to build up more swing of arm, hand, and club.

### When to Teach the Grip

I have been carrying out a group experiment on the grip. The general idea is to get novices swinging before one puts the pressure on them for complete grip development. No definite conclusions are possible but the experiment may point up an alternate way of introducing the grip in golf instruction.

For some time there has been brewing in my mind this question of the grip as it pertained to beginners in golf classes. Should the grip be taught at the outset? Should one place the pupil's backhand on the club saying little about the rest of the grip, mainly demonstrating it? Then, after a considerable period of drilling and swing development when the pupil has gotten into the swing of things, really put the screws on and emphasize the placement of the hands on the club?

When the subject of the grip was brought up in golf classes right at the outset, it seemed to be the greatest single deterrent to progress which could be introduced. Everything stopped as the various class members fumbled, usually unsuccessfully, with their hands and fingers. The placement of the hands seemed for the moment to deteriorate as awkwardness took over. Not much progress in hand placement was made and there was

danger of losing the interest and confidence of the class.

Now with either an individual or a class one can't rush matters and try for too rapid development. Many things concerning the hitting of a golf ball with a club have to be thought over, to be allowed to sink in, to be tried over and over. Golfing thoughts and sensations flash rapidly through an experienced player's mind. But people learning golf appreciate not being rushed. On the other hand, there is a need to progress, to show improvement and to satisfy the would-be golfers' urge to swing and sock the ball.

The assumption on which I have been working is that broad outline movement, stimulation, and action come before grip detail. A golf swing can be regarded as essentially movement which develops into a whirling swishing blow. The swinging move is probably the most essential part of the whole business.

The formula might be stated: Get a golf pupil moving, get him swinging, get him underway before you introduce swing points by details and before you stress positions as differentiated from movement. In the beginning, it seems, something can be lost by introducing detail and position as opposed to muscle flow and rhythmic swing motion.

This is a policy I have adopted and it works reasonably well. I know that purists who believe in starting with the grip

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## BIGGEST GOLF MEETING



More than 1000 golfers of Ontario and neighboring U.S. points attended third annual golf rally of Ontario GA, Royal York hotel, Toronto. Gordon F. Stevens, pres., Ontario GA, Charles S. Watson, and R. D. Young, past presidents; Mildred Zaharias and Jack Redmond were program headliners as were C. Ross Somerville, Canada's top amateur of past 50 years, and Nick Weslock of Essex G&CC, Windsor, Canada's current No. 1 golfer.

acid and sodium arsenite treatments can be used also, he continued. He warned "Be careful of the acid as it is dangerous to handle."

The Milwaukee turf specialist said that you don't need a complete kill of crabgrass on large areas if you keep it from seeding and at the same time give the desired grasses a chance to grow. He cautioned greenkeepers against overlapping weed killer treatments on fairways. The double dosage may be deadly to the grass.

*(To be continued next month)*

## Cowen Tries Hand at Acting Decides to Stay with Golf



Henry P. Cowen, pres., MacGregor Golf Co. turns actor in this scene taken from the Ben Hogan movie, "Follow the Sun", as he portrays the club president in Fort Worth presenting the first trophy Ben ever won. The part of young Hogan is played by Hal Blake, a non-professional actor selected because of his sound game and beautiful swing. Cowen reports he's staying with the golf business since no options have been taken for his services in further film work. "Follow the Sun", the 20th Century-Fox film featuring Glenn Ford as Hogan and Anne Baxter as Valerie, Ben's wife, is currently being released throughout the country.

## Hogan's "Follow the Sun" Tees Off at Ft. Worth

"Follow the Sun", the 20th-Century-Fox movie of Ben Hogan's career had a world premiere at Ft. Worth March 23 that was one of those strictly from Hollywood super-colossal sensational successes. The picture justified the debut which packed three theaters, jammed down-town Ft. Worth with Texas royalty and peasants and alien celebrities. In the midst of the celebration and confusion Ben and Valerie, as might be expected, handled themselves with customary poise and class.

Public reaction to the picture was highly favorable, the film being rated as a story of far better and broader entertainment value than previous sports person-

alities' movies. William Hazlitt Brennan's story, direction by Sidney Lanfield and production by Samuel G. Engel provided a fine set-up for the cast headed by Glenn Ford and Anne Baxter, and including Sam Snead, Jimmy Demaret, Cary Middlecoff, Scotty Chisholm and Grantland Rice. The whole job is pronounced by Variety, the authority on show business, as "a basic human drama of love and courage with an appeal for adult filmgoers." "Its box office possibilities are sound; story and characters real rather than celluloid," Variety adds.

The film is the top championship performance in a sports picture and will do a great job of golf promotion.

## GROUP INSTRUCTION

*(Continued from page 49)*

and who believe the grip means everything will shudder and throw up their hands.

What do you see in individual private lessons? More often than not you see a pro tinkering with the pupil's hands. The question I ask is, "does this ruin the lesson"? Would it not be better to stress swing points through the swing session and then at the conclusion of the 30 or 60 minute period give the pupil a definite grip assignment to work on in the interim?

The class method I am trying is to introduce the grip by degrees. Early in the class series a group is lined up and the three knuckle position of the backhand is explained and every pupil's backhand is personally checked or placed. Stress is placed on the pressure with the palm and the last three fingers on the balancing effect of the left thumb on the side of the shaft.

Then the grip as an entity is demonstrated but no explanations given. The class was asked to get the general idea of hand placement by observation. They were warned that the placement of the forehand gave rise to difficulties. There then would follow several weeks of three times per week of swing development.

After the interest had been built up, after the students had developed some skill in swinging and in striking the ball, then they were given the business of the grip.

The take on the grip seemed better then. Maybe it was my imagination. Further experimentation with groups will tell.

Two observations on grip development: First, when you introduce the more-or-less standard three knuckle grip to beginners, you have a group of potential slicers unless the Frank Walsh non-slice counter-clockwise exercise with the left hand is brought in as a parallel development.

Secondly, there seems to be quite a barrier to placing the forehand in the conventional golf position. You can explain until you are blue in the face that the forehand is brought up to the club as though it were an open handed slap, and still you have the problem. It must be more comfortable to hold the driving forehand around to the side and under the club. Beginners don't take too well, either, to forming the hook with thumb and forefinger of the forehand.

#### Group Instruction Observations

If you work for a college and teach golf, your classes should be filled.

Young people of school age are used to learning in classes and make your job easier for you.

Women at any stage of their golfing life are temperamentally suited to the group approach. They are not in a hurry.

Exercises are sure-fire for groups. Have about a dozen of these and develop calls for them and your job is a lot easier. Exercises only go so far, then they want the real thing but they help in the conduct of a class.

Stories about your experiences, about colorful golfers or famous courses enliven a class and make it easier for students to remember points.

Indoors in the nets you can start

equally well with either the big swing, short swing, or putt.

Out-of-doors it is better to start on the green and progressively work up.

Size of class? If you get more than 20 in a golf group, you are in trouble.

Be sure you teach a non-slice swing to beginners.

Rules and etiquette should come in for their just share. The students want a lot of both.

Stress safety. It pays.

Use visual aids such as golf picturebooks, movies, snap-shots, slide films, etc.

Have a lesson plan, have a method, and explain it to the class.

Have several frameworks or standard types of hourly class sessions.

Limit lectures to 15 minutes. An intricate skill such as golf is learned more by doing than being talked about.

Plan your class groupings, for lectures, exercises, hitting of balls, demonstrations, etc.

Make golf literature available.

Repetition is very much in order.

Give them the works on body movement. Then the base for the swing has been established.

Teach golf to motion. Get a golfer moving and swinging as opposed to introducing swing points by fixed positions. Move-

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## WHAT DO YOU KNOW

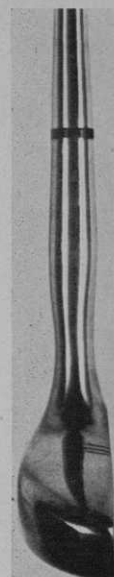
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chine on the grounds, the boy was injured. He sued the club for damages. Did the club legally owe him anything?

**Answer.** Yes—and no. The state court denied his plea for damages in the action brought to that end, but ruled that the club would be liable to him if he should file a claim with the state's Workman's Compensation Board, because of his injuries arising from the accident.

13. A caddy employed by a country club was struck by lightning during a storm while standing near a tree holding a bag of golfsticks. He survived, by a miracle, but was not worth much afterward. Did the club owe him anything because of the injury?

**Answer.** No. To render an employer responsible for accidental injury to an employee, it must appear that the accident (or injury) happened "in the course of the employment," and that it "arose out of" the employment. This one did not arise out of the employment—caddying being neither cause nor effect of the lightning.



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