

The Real "Secret" Is In Reasoning It Out

UNDoubtedly Ben Hogan thought he was selling his secret when he disclosed his use of an old method of club-face manipulation.

Actually Hogan gave away the secret of his success.

He did that in his talk on the PGA Educational committee's program at Atlantic City.

Hogan held 500—the majority being other professionals—spellbound for 50 minutes as he frankly, fully and fluently told them the true story of his development.

The story, or the secret, can best be summarized in one word—logic.

As Ben spoke of how he'd worked on his game there was revealed the operation of a brilliantly logical mind, a mind trained to reason about the golf game in an orderly way, and to discard elements that don't fit into a logical pattern of an efficient swing.

It's hard work to think, and even harder to organize thinking. Hogan organized his reasoning about his golf technique and on that account got more out of practice than others who also have spent hours on practice tees.

Hogan had his talk at the PGA well organized. It may have seemed spontaneous to some but Ben doesn't work that way. If an assignment is important enough to bring him from Ft. Worth to Atlantic City, Hogan, you may be certain, is logically prepared to do well.

Hogan Through? Maybe Not

By logic Hogan is trying to rule himself out of any more major tournaments as a serious contender. "I'm glad I'm just about through with tournament golf. I'll play some; I'll be around with the fellows but I won't be a competitor."

He's trying to reason himself into believing that the hard work he does in preparing for a major tournament is out of the Hogan plan from now on. But, as his talk at the PGA was studied it became quite obvious and logical that Ben couldn't play in a tournament without being an intense competitor.

If Hogan's logical shifting could have determined what's wrong with his putting Ben easily could have been the winner of six and possibly seven U. S. National Open championships. Hogan has had too many 34 putt rounds in recent years.

Cold Reasoning

Quotes from the Hogan talk repeatedly exhibit the cold valid reasoning that explains Hogan's mastery of golf shotmaking:

"I don't profess to be an instructor. I can only tell what I've put into and taken out of my own swing; what I've found will work and what won't work.

"You have to find what will fit you and produce for you. I don't know anyone who knows and can tell the one correct way to swing a club. Anyone can learn to swing a club well in his own way but the big job is to learn to repeat the correct swing.

"There are a lot of movements one doesn't need that try to get into the swing, but actually there are only about five things you have to have correct:

"1—The grip must be the correct union through which you can telegraph all your energies;

"2—Your posture must be such that you look like a golfer. Your derriere must be back of being in line with the rears of your heels and you must be in perfect balance.

Ben — Briefly

Anyone can learn to swing . . . the big job is to learn to repeat the correct swing.

There are only about five things you have to correct: Grip; Posture; Position of arms at address; Coming through; and Body turn.

Golf's an unnatural game—the best swing doesn't come naturally.

I study the course, figure what will win, weigh my game and then go to it.

Slicing? I know no secrets for curing it.

"3—The arms must be in right position at address, with the left arm being fairly straight as though there were just one shaft from the shoulder to the head of the club, with a hinge at the wrist. The right arm is somewhat loose, with the right elbow pointing down.

"4—In coming through the right arm straightens and the left arm bends.

"5—The body must turn smoothly and in good balance.

Golf is Unnatural

"The pro must develop muscle memory for repeating the good swing as golf is an unnatural game and the most effective swing won't come naturally.

"Clothing has had something to do with the golf swing. When golfers wore coats the left arm had to be bent on the backswing.

"Golf teachers are better now because the swing is better understood and professionals know more about teaching.

"The game require specialization. To play tournament golf you have to work at your game 8 hours a day and in doing that you can't run a club job properly.

"I see many who look very good on the practice tee but who don't do well in tournaments because they haven't been schooled in managing themselves for a round. Management is something a fellow has to learn for himself.

"The home club pro is at a great disadvantage in a tournament. He hurries from his own club to the tournament course to compete against tournament specialists. Then when the home club pro and his members are disappointed by his showing in the tournament his members ask 'What happened to Joe?' The explanation is that Joe had been taking care of the members who asked the question.

"Anybody can be a good golfer if they want to work at it. The game isn't too hard or tournament players wouldn't be scoring as they do now.

"I've been playing golf since I was 12 years old. If I had to do it again I'd be playing left-handed—but I don't know whether I would be up here talking.

Says He's Slow Thinker

"Some authorities say that changing a naturally left-handed person into right-handed performances slows them as speakers and thinkers.

"I'm a slow thinker. It takes me days to familiarize myself with a course and make my plans for a tournament. I figure out what will win, weigh my game,

then go to it. Sometimes I have to take chances because I figure that the winning score will be better than my normal game.

"I try to resist the temptation of thinking about what the other fellows are doing. I keep to myself. I want to obliterate everything outside my business.

"It is hard to concentrate for four days. It's hard, too, to ease up when you come in from a round. It takes me a couple of hours to ease up. "I seldom know what my partners have scored. I review what I've done while I'm easing out of the concentration competition requires of me.

"There was no phenomenal job adjusting myself to Carnoustie. Conditions were not too severe. Wind blows hard for two or three holes then stops, then blows again.

"The first two or three days I had sore wrists and hands. The divots wouldn't come out. I played three small balls and three large balls for two or three rounds. The small ball can't be knocked off line as easily as the large ball.

Likes Scots Golf Spirit

"The Scots are great people. I wish we had their kind of golf spirit."

Matters of technique Hogan treated in the Q and A period following his scheduled talk.

He said that he got hooking so he couldn't get the ball off the ground with a wood and left the tour to go home and think out the answer.

At home he got thinking about the old-timers pronating and musing on this one night before going to sleep suddenly thought he'd got the answer. He jumped out of bed and turned his left wrist in the manner he has described as his "secret."

He said he couldn't hardly wait until daylight. He went out to test his theory and arrived so early he had to shag the first bag of balls himself.

The first tournament in which he tested his new wrist action was at Tam O'Shanter in 1951 when he won May's World's Championship.

Ben told of making a grip change that helped him, when he changed from having a long thumb which permitted the club to be loose at the top, to a short thumb that keeps the club under control at the top.

He told of initiating his backswing with a waggle to take out the tension, then after the last waggle placing the club behind the ball and without stopping motion, beginning his forward press.

Ben told his pro colleagues that at the top of the swing he sees the ball but from then on he never does.

The finish is an important detail to Hogan. He told of deliberately thinking about the finish as, by such concentration, he could hold the club against the ball longer and guide the shot. He admitted that this effect might be a case of self-hypnosis in view of the tiny period of contact involved but maintained that he tried to "think" the shot and believed that subconsciously the picture of the desired finish might control some preceding details.

Ben said that in the hitting zone the left wrist of every good player is leading outward and every bad player has the left wrist bent inward when coming into the ball.

Tom Mahan asked Ben if he had a "secret" for curing the slicers. Hogan laughed, and replied that he didn't.

Dugan Aycock asked Hogan what was the toughest golf hole he'd ever played. Ben, with only a bit of hesitation, answered "The dogleg fourth at Starmount Forest, Greensboro, N. C." Aycock said Henry Picard selected the same hole as the hardest he'd seen.

Plan New Course



Moving ahead with plans to build a new golf course near Bakersfield, Calif. is this North Kern county group, currently raising money to finance the venture. In the picture are (l to r, standing): Lance Hopper, county landscape architect; Dave Morgan, NGA founder; Al Hagganstan, secy; Verne Wickham, National Golf Foundation; and Herbert J. Evans, Kern county parks and recreation director. (Kneeling): Woody Lindsay, funds coordinator; George Mifflin, pro-manager, Buena Vista GC; and Chet Foss, pro-manager, Kern River GC.

Second Course Planning Clinic Scheduled for San Diego

For the second consecutive year a Golf Course Planning and Operating Clinic will be among the outstanding features of the annual California Recreation conference scheduled for San Diego, Feb. 12-15.

The first Golf Course Clinic was so enthusiastically received by officers and delegates to the 1955 conference that the National Golf Foundation was invited to join with the California Recreation Commission in repeating the instructive sessions on golf course planning, construction, maintenance and operation.

Because of increasing interest in golf course development in the seven western states to meet the golfing needs of a rapidly expanding population, conference officials anticipate a large attendance.

Leading experts in the field of golf course development and operation will deliver talks and answer questions from the floor on all types of golf course operations for the benefit of delegates contemplating course construction or expansion.

The two days of meetings, to be held Monday and Wednesday, Feb. 13 and 15, will be divided into four principal sessions including: 1) How To Get A Golf Course, 2) Where To Build The Golf Course, 3) How To Operate The Golf Course, and 4) Why A Par-3 Golf Course?

Herman W. Riece, Kern County Supt. of Recreation, will be general chairman; Verne Wickham, former Los Angeles County golf director and now west coast representative of National Golf Foundation, will act as secretary.

Principal speakers for the four sessions will include: R. G. (Reg) Renfree, director of Recreation and Parks, City of Sacramento; Rex McMorris, executive vp, National Golf Foundation; Americ Hadley, supervisor of recreation for golf, City of Los Angeles; William F. Bell, golf course architect, Pasadena and Keith Jacobs, City of Montebello golf course manager.

In addition to principal speakers, each session will feature a panel of experts. Among them will be municipal golf directors, golf course architects, golf professionals, golf course managers and owners.

Subjects to be covered by panels will include: Financing Methods, Use of Municipal Funds, Private Capital, Bond Issues, Community Effort, Land Requirements and Maintenance Methods, Starting Procedures, Reservation Policies, Fund Control and Short Course Operation.