

Nothing Seriously Wrong With Arnold; Laughs at "That" Wedge Shot

Arnold Palmer, the guest artist at the annual spring clinic of the Illinois PGA, displayed ironic good humor in telling what had gone on the week before at the Masters when he wedged himself out of the Augusta affair on the 72nd hole. More than 1,100 persons attended the gathering in mid-April at Chicago's Congress Hotel and more than half remained for the banquet.

Palmer, who probably already has replayed his famous, or possibly infamous, sand shot at Augusta National a couple thousand times either verbally or in his mind, revealed that his wedge skidded into the ball instead of getting under it and lifting. So, instead of dropping gently onto the green, the ball went flying across it. Arnold didn't have any more miracles left in stock and so it took him three more to get down, enabling Gary Player to back into the championship. Palmer, making wry allusions to the happenings around Augusta's 18th green, maintained that the wedge is one of his favorite clubs and has earned much more money for him than it has forfeited. On a great many occasions he uses it for pitching.

Describes Wedge Play

In describing his method of maneuvering the wedge, Palmer said that ordinarily he plays it with a more open face than most pros, attempts to get under the ball with it instead of trying for a kind of closed face contact, and aims to pop the ball up in the air. Strong wrists enable him to play the club in this fashion. Arnold added that in most cases his club stops moving forward almost immediately after contact.

Mentioning that he had once been a notorious duck-hooker, Palmer said that he had corrected this by moving his left thumb counter-clockwise so it rests almost squarely on the top of the shaft. The result is that he addresses the ball with a slightly more open face than formerly and the duck hook has practically disappeared.

Catches It on Downswing

Discussing other aspects of his wood play, the Latrobe strong boy said that he either hits the ball on the downswing or

at the exact bottom of the arc with his driver and, unlike most circuit pros, doesn't catch it on the upswing. He conceded that this undoubtedly costs him distance but he is convinced that it gives him better control. To compensate for loss of elevation because of this method of contact, Palmer uses a driver that is slightly more lofted than average. Arnold maintained that he hits "inside-in", meaning that he stays inside the line at all times. But he emphasized that in taking the club away, he keeps it square to the ball for perhaps the first 18 inches.

As for that famous Palmer dictum, "hit it as hard as you can," Arnold modified



Fred Kuehn photo

Lou Strong, PGA pres., and Harry Pezzullo, pres. of the Illinois section, seem to be enjoying Herb Graffis' remarks so much that Goldfom's editor must be revealing some secrets that Arnold Palmer would be just as happy to suppress. Photo was taken at Illinois Section banquet.

this by adding "but stay within your ability to control the ball." Like most circuit pros, Palmer pointed out that even on the hardest hit shots he still has 20 per cent of his strength in reserve.

About the only statement Arnold made that may have caused doubt in the minds of his listeners was to the effect that the first movement he is conscious of in the downswing is that of his hands. One heckler, asking for repeated demonstrations, insisted he wasn't keeping his right elbow snug to his body throughout the swing, but the general consensus was that it couldn't have been much closer unless it had been bolted.

Questioned as to his attitude or approach to tournament golf, 1960's leading money winner said that one reason he gives the game all he's got is "that it's a nice way to make a living — and if I weren't doing this, what the hell else could I do."

Harry Pezzullo, pres. of the Illinois PGA section, introduced the speaker and served as the middleman during the question and answer period.