

# I Learned from Rebuilding My Game: Venturi

By HERB GRAFFIS

Ken Venturi starred again with his exposition of the golf swing in the teaching part of the PGA annual meeting education program. Venturi, 1964 National Open champion and in the PGA vote, Player-of-the-Year, related how he learned the hard way. The personable Ken is a protege of Byron Nelson. Venturi as an amateur fell apart to an 80 the last nine of the 1956 Masters to finish second to Jack Burke, and lost the 1960 Masters by a stroke to a birdie-birdie finish by Palmer. He then looked like he was going to be one of the greatest. Then, in 1963, he finished 95th with only \$1,820 won. In 1964 he got well, winning the Open and \$62,465 in 28 PGA co-sponsored tournaments to finish sixth in the cash rating.

He learned from having to rebuild a game; discovering his mistakes and substituting the correct method for the errors. He said that in his first stage he was an upright swinger but drew every shot and always missed to the left. Then he became a flat swinger — short and fast — and got worse. Then he broke down his entire game, writing down every detail of his method and discussing his observations with Nelson. First, Venturi reconditioned his grip and became more careful about finger position and pressure points. He got a swing halfway between upright and flat and devoted a lot of practice to timing.

He found out that if his feet were dead he'd throw out the club at the top. He told of discovering that the heel of his left hand and his left foot moved simultaneously to get him into correct hitting position. He said that he also discovered that his eyes had been fooling him and he had been aiming wrong. He went back into the Nelson high-hands position and paid a lot of attention to his body position as he moved into hit-



Venturi



Casper



Nichols



Jacobs



Marr

ting. He found out that he could control a fade, and he hadn't been able to do that with a hook.

Venturi said he never hooked a tee shot or missed a green to the left in the 1964 Open. He teed the ball on a peg only eight times during the Open. He said that helped him stay down longer. Ken's tribute to Nelson as being a great teacher because Nelson could explain the points so well were echoed in favorable comment on Venturi as a teacher in his talk.

### Casper Tells It Simply

Billy Casper, third money-winner of the year (\$99,541), rated by tourney pros as the greatest of the current crop of great putters, counseled his colleagues to "just keep clubface square to the line, eyes over the ball at address, hands over or slightly in front of the ball and keep your head steady." He said that his short putts look like an abrupt tap but actually the clubface moves two or three inches with the ball. Casper emphasized "never let the clubhead lead the hands."

Casper pointed out that he is a trifle more upright swinger than most of the tournament players and is inclined to a slightly open stance so he plays the ball a bit farther ahead than is conventional. Bill stated that on all his shots he keeps the back of his hand moving toward the target.

Bobby Nichols, 1964 PGA champion, Dave Marr, Chmn. of the PGA tournament committee, and Tommy Jacobs, co-chairman of the tournament committee, also contributed. Stage fright had younger men confused in some instances as to open, closed and square face positions of hands and clubface at the top of the swing but, of course, not nearly as confused as most pupils are when pros talk about these positions. There also was some confusion about shafts and swing weights among the younger playing stars. It served to illustrate the danger of getting tangled in technicalities that are supposed to identify feel as well as material specifications. Dave Marr made an apt comment during one of the amusing periods of the misunderstanding: "Sometimes I like to be dumb. Then I can simply swing. But when I know a lot

about what is happening, golf gets hard."

Nichols also referred to the value of simplicity, saying, "When I'm playing in a high wind the only change I make is to bend my knees and squat a little more.

Jacobs told how he had read that Francis Ouimet had a rather "sloppy" feeling in the left hand at the top of the backswing and that Ben Hogan has said his own left hand was as firm as a board at the top of the backswing. Neither idea worked for Tommy. He found that a firm grip with the last three fingers of his left hand and a lighter grip with his right hand gave him the connection he wanted. He said he thought the pressure points on the fingers were matters of individual requirements.

### Schloss Shows Swing Films

Irv Schloss of the PGA education committee showed loops of motion pictures of the swings of Snead, Nicklaus, Palmer and Player. These films were screened repeatedly so the pro viewers could make their own observations. Schloss made these pictures as part of the PGA instruction program and the players were fully cooperative, but the loops are not available for the PGA teaching program as an association deal due to the stars having made other arrangements for selling their instruction films.

Schloss referred to the current activity in golf swing research in the United States and Great Britain, citing especially the research on club performance that True Temper is financing.

The films that Schloss made can be stopped at various stages so details can be studied. Schloss emphasized that his comments were as he saw the action and each professional might see something different and particularly something that applied to the case of some pupil.

Schloss suggested that pros give close attention to how long the left arm is kept straight and how the right elbow straightens out in the hitting zone.

He called attention to pictures showing that the left hand is not as much on top of the shaft as some circuit players believe it is. He told of comparing these loops with the PGA films of Jones, Var-

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## Venturi's Rebuilt Game

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don and Miss Joyce Wethered and seeing some difference in action in the hitting area which he attributed to the wood-shafted clubs they used.

### Hogan Still A Topic

Ben Hogan's fine showing in his few tournament appearances last year made him a subject of study and conversation at the PGA teaching session. Venturi opined that Ben was the best driver who ever played. Ken remarked that Ben was a guy who learned that it was better to be 10 yards shorter in the fairway than 10 yards longer in the rough. There was much chatter after this observation. Casper commented that he'd never seen a fellow who really was good in the rough. They all got muttering about Hogan's putting yips. Venturi said he had recovered after 2½ years of the yips and as an authority could hazard a guess that the reason Ben got over a putt and froze was that he got too tight in the hands.