

# When is an illegal putter legal?



*A blade in front of a hammer design  
made Vic De Carlo's putter conform to the rules.*

By DESMOND TOLHURST

What do you do if you can't find a putter you like? Buy another. That's the answer for most golfers. But what if the one you want isn't available? Make it. That was the extreme course Vic De Carlo took. Little did he know then what a tough road he had chosen.

Vic, a manufacturer's rep who plays his golf at Northwood GC, Rockleigh, N. J., became dissatisfied with the putters available to him late in 1961. "The weight in a conventional putter is distributed in a line away from the golfer from heel to toe, and not along the direction of the stroke, that is, from the face to the back of the club," Vic says.

This means that the golfer has had to steer his putter, De Carlo claims, otherwise the weight of the head may well twist the clubface either way during the putting stroke.

"The first design, which I carved out of wood, copied the general design of a hammer," says Vic. "However, I seemed to remember that this was banned by USGA rules." It was: Rule 2 states the length of a clubhead (from heel to toe) must be greater than the breadth (from clubface to back of the club).

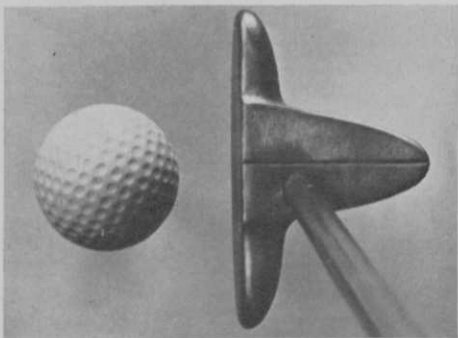
What Vic did to solve the problem was simple—he carved a blade and glued

it to the front of the hammer, the result was Putter No. 1 shown above. He then made it up in aluminum weighted with lead (No. 2), and his problems began.

De Carlo patented this design and spent the next four years perfecting his original concept.

The putter swung and felt fine, but on sloping greens the long "tail" would stub the ground on the backswing. One time De Carlo tried it for a shot from a low-lipped trap and touched the sand on the way back. "That loss-of-hole penalty did it," Vic says. "The tail had to be shortened and had to curve up from the face

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*Salient feature of new putter is that over 2/3 of the weight is centered behind ball.*

Photos by Ron Scaleria

## LEGAL PUTTER

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toward the tip so that it cleared the putting green."

Vic's next putter (No. 3), incorporated these improvements, but his friends still found the putter clumsy looking. Worse, the flat sole of putters 1 and 2 resulted in the toe or heel being off the ground on uneven lies.

"This problem," says Vic, "put me on the road to the final solution. I had had a lot of problems weighting putters 2 and 3. Getting the lead to stay in the aluminum was time consuming and in putter 3 the shorter tail gave me less surface into which to pour the lead."

Vic decided to reduce the size of the whole putter. This allowed him to go to bronze for the first time, and eliminated the weighting problem. He also curved the sole. (The wood model for this was No. 4, above.) "At this point I thought I had it made. I drilled the hole for

the shaft in the center (No. 5), inserted the shaft, and took it out to the course," Vic says, "I used this putter at a 10 oz. weight for quite some time and was well satisfied. But people I showed the putter to still thought it was wrong!

"Most putters are around 10 oz. and I had been using this as a guide to weight my putter. Then I realized that in my design, most of the weight is centered along the swing path and the weight is not felt as much as in a conventional putter. I decided to make the putter heavier—nearer to 12 oz.

"The other problem I also discovered by 'feel.' With the shaft entering the center of the head at about 75 degrees, I was taking weight out of the part between the center and the toe. This unbalanced the putter, causing the very 'twist' I was trying to avoid in the first place!"

The solution was to have the shaft enter the head slightly toward the heel

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## LEGAL PUTTER

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of center. "This was the difference between having a putter and not having one," Vic says. "When I took this one (No. 5) to the course I got a lot of favorable remarks. Another plus was that it allowed me to put a line down the center of the putter, making a good sighting guide as the golfer lines up his putt."

But Vic's problems were not quite over. After about an hour or so, some of the golfers complained the rounded sole did not sit flat on the ground. They found they had to "float" the club off the green at address, which was uncomfortable, and tended to increase tension.

"I took out a file and flattened the sole a little in the center, and while I was at it, filed down the 'wings' of the putter, thus bringing out, in the mind's eye, the central 'hammer' portion. This improved its general appearance immeasurably."

The end result, which De Carlo has

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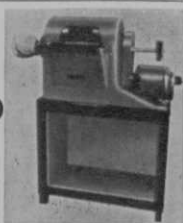
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named the Bull-Head Putter, is shown as No. 6 and at bottom right (p. 48). This putter conforms to USGA rules. "That's the story," says Vic. "If I had to do it all over again, I think I would have quit cold. Luckily for me, my wife Joan kept prodding me just enough to keep going. I also received a lot of help along the way from professionals to whom I showed the club, especially Fred Ferrara, our pro at Northwood." •

## GRAFFIS' SWING

Continued from page 9

of Recreation Park, Long Beach, and the cartographers went on from there . . . But now all is well; the mistake no longer is a mistake . . . At the suggestion of Long Beach citizens who've enjoyed Lake's 30 years of service, the Recreation Park casting pool has been named Lake George . . . George Lake, by the way, while sec. of the PGA Junior Golf Promotion Committee, organized pros nationwide into the kid golf program.

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