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TREAT 'EM ROUGH

BY JACK HOAG

You oft hear tales of drives which were just swept off the tee and the ball stopped 275 yards away, of midiron approaches where the ball was just spanked up to the pin, and of putts so gently stroked that the ball hung on the lip of the cup before falling in, but who ever heard of a gentle mashie shot. A Scotchman locally famous for his mashie play shanked three mashies in a row at Flossmoor last summer and shaking his head dolefully he remarked, "Just like a woman! Just like a woman! The most treacherous club in the bag."

The late George O. Simpson of Oak Park, said, "That there were either four mashie shots or four hundred depending on the variations," and George was one of the finest mashie players in the country; but regardless of how many strokes there are we never saw one where the club head could be "eased into the ball" successfully. "Treat 'em rough" is the only slogan where mashie play is concerned and there is no club in the bag which makes a better return for the time you spend studying it.

No two strokes in golf are further apart than the drive and the well played mashie shot, and this is probably one of the reasons that so many golfers find the mashie a difficult club to master. The drive is the most spectacular shot in golf and most players practice constantly with their wooden clubs. This constant practice gives them some idea of how a drive should be played, but when they attempt to apply the same principals to their mashie play the result is far from satisfactory, and many golfers never attain any real mastery over this most fascinating of clubs.

Mashie play calls for firmness but relaxation, and the finest players make a real hit at the ball but it is a controlled hit and not a slap at the ball with the wrists as you often see a man play the stroke. As a matter of fact there should be no mental consciousness of wrist action in the stroke, the wrists do bend and the club head is thrown into the ball but this action is not pronounced and the wrists must be held firmly at the time of impact so that the club head will be driven well through under the ball.

There should be no attempt to roll the wrists during the stroke and the wrists should not be allowed to break so that the club head turns over and finishes back of the head as it does in a correctly played drive. If the wrists have been held firmly at the time of impact, the club head should be driven through under the ball and the stroke finished with the club "open faced" and pointing directly toward the flag. Such a finish indicates perfect control of the club, and the golfer who is strong enough in the hands and wrists to play the stroke in this manner is bound to get better direction than the man who allows his club to wobble around and finish where the momentum of his swing leaves him.

Considering the fact, that there should be no conscious wrist action in mashie play, we have written a lot about them

but both the wrists, the foot action, and the pivot, can be left to look after themselves, and the chances are that the average golfer errs on the side of using too much of all three. Direction is the prime factor in approaching, and in order to secure it the club head must be kept close to the line of play during the entire stroke. "The "straight left arm" is a big help and the club should be picked up with the left arm swinging close to the player's chest and the face of the club kept squarely toward the hole.

Chick Evans is a past master of this shot, and his club head is never more than three inches out of the line of play at any point during his stroke. Chick does break his wrists and finish with his club head pointing away from the hole, but this is merely to add a little style and finish to his play and he derives no benefit from it. Much that is untrue has been written about the mashie and its difficulties. So far as actual play goes, you can eliminate all but two of the strokes which are attributed to this club and play fine golf, but you must have command of these two strokes if you hope to reach the scratch mark.

The first is the "pitch and run" and, even here, the longer that you keep the ball in the air the better it is provided that you do not put any cut English on the ball. This is the simplest of all mashie shots, you hit firmly through the ball and finish with the club head pointing toward the flag. The ball is thrown through the air and you make a little allowance for "run" after it hits the ground. There may be a little backspin on the ball, depending on how the stroke was played, but there should be no side English of any kind and the ball should pitch smoothly and run up to the flag. This is pre-eminently a Pinehurst shot and you will find it a most useful one in general play.

The second stroke is the out and out backspin pitch where you want to throw the ball right up to the flag and stop it there and this is a difficult thing to do with a mashie unless you are over 100 yards from the pin. For shorter distances most players combine backspin with cut and, while this makes the stroke more difficult to control, it can be done successfully after a little practice. In this shot the club head is taken back outside the line, the ball is played more off the left foot and, while the wrists are firm during the impact, they impart a kind of flick to the stroke. The club head finishes inside the line of play and most golfers play slightly to the right of the flag to allow for the little kick which the cut imparts to the ball.

A ball hit in this manner should not move more than three or four feet, and many players can stop it dead. The pitch and run is safer where the green is open and you have no hazard to cross, but the "stop shot" is a peach when you get it and, when executed correctly, it brings the finest thrill to be found in golf. The mashie is not a club to be learned in a summer afternoon but once you begin to catch the hang of it you will find it the most fascinating of clubs and you'll never begrudge the time it takes to master it.



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