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## THEORY VS. FACT

BY JACK HOAG

Dave Harum said, "That good old-fashioned horse sense would carry a man far," and this is certainly true of golf. The theories of golf have formed an attractive field through which the imagination of our writers has been allowed to ramble, and many a man has studied the psychology of golf to the great detriment of his game. Theories form an interesting study with which to while away an idle hour in front of a grate fire but they are of little value to a player on a course and our leading tournament stars are all men who have constructed their game on a solid foundation of fact.

Facts are distinctly material and leave little to the imagination but they can not be ignored and most of our poor play can be attributed to poor thinking rather than to any lack of mechanical skill. Golf is a primitive game which, for all we know, might have been played in the stone age. Cain certainly proved that he could swing a club and, while we have abundant proof that primitive man developed a high degree of skill in hitting the object he aimed at, we have no proof that he possessed a highly developed mentality. Caddies develop a fine game without the faintest knowledge of physics, and years of experience have convinced us that the man who will consign all theory to the wastepaper basket and do a little constructive thinking is on the right road to a good game.

#### ONE FIXED RULE

After a man has learned the principles of stance and grip from a professional he can be safely left to his own resources and his game will develop just in proportion to how much commonsense he uses and to how much he practices. "Hit from the inside out across the line," is the only vital principle in golf. It does not matter greatly how you accomplish it so long as your club head is still swinging outward when it hits the ball, and if you obtain control of such a stroke your golfing career is assured regardless of whether you swing upright or flat or whether you violate half the theories which some scientist has laid down.

A cool, collected mind is a big help in golf and such mental condition is impossible if you are fussing about a mass of useless detail. Constructive thinking is a big help and you must study to develop golfing intelligence of "golf craft" as it is called. Correct thinking in an emergency has won many a match but your mind must be concentrated on the problem of meeting every situation which arises and on getting the ball into the hole rather than on some particular portion of your swing if you hope to win your matches.

#### DON'T ATTEMPT TOO MUCH

One of the most common errors is for a player to attempt too much. When your ball is lying in the rough so far from the green that you could not possibly reach it on your next shot why em-

ploy a wooden club and risk a dub. It is two shots to the green any way and your chances of laying your ball dead to the pin are far better from a good lie in the fairway than they are from a bad lie in the rough or in a hazzard. The same thing applies to an almost impossible carry over a bunker. We have never seen Harry Vardon press a shot and yet we never heard of any one make disparaging remarks about his game; and the first lesson a player should learn is to gage his own abilities and keep his play well within his powers.

It is not necessary to go to the other extreme and never take a chance, for there is a real thrill in going for a shot when you have to, but this should only be done as a last resort. Syndicate play is lots of fun but it raises Cain with your medal card and it's not really good for your game. Golf calls for perfect self-control, the mind must work clearly and logically, it must be taught to estimate the chances of success of every shot and, once your line of action is determined on, the muscles must obey the mind so that the body can execute what the mind plans.

#### CO-ORDINATION NECESSARY

This means that there must be perfect co-ordination between body and brain and this can only be established when the body action is mechanical and the mind is left free to work out the details of the play. Size up the situation as you approach your ball and, once having formed an opinion, never change it. Your first impression is always your best one and to question your decision is to permit doubt to enter your mind, this in turn destroys confidence in your ability to play the stroke called for and mitigates against the success of your play. Confidence in your own ability is a wonderful asset, and the only way to secure this confidence is to practice each stroke until you know that you can play it. If you will sit down and analyze your own play, study the details of each stroke until you decide which way you play it best and then practice it in this manner until the stroke becomes mechanical you will have reached what, for you, is correct form.

Continue this practice until you have developed control of the essential strokes of the game and you will be in a position to play competitive golf successfully. No teaching that a pro can give will give you the confidence in your own ability that practice will, and the golfer who practices long enough is bound to develop a fine game even though he plays it in an unorthodox manner. "Monkey sees, monkey does," applies to golf and the man who plays constantly with better players than himself is bound to learn. Confidence is everything and the man who thinks correctly and has confidence in himself need fear no rival.

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