

The Wisdom of Harvey Penick

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Harvey Penick's life in golf began when he started caddying at the Austin Country Club in Texas at the youthful age of eight. Over the next eighty-plus years, he enlightened the members of that club with insights into golf and life. In 1992, at the age of eighty-seven, he offered the world that same wisdom in a timeless collection of pieces entitled *Harvey Penick's Little Red Book.* He followed that with three more books, all bestsellers, and all filled with thoughts, stories, and golf advice that had stood the test of time. Now, Bud Shrake, Harvey's friend and collaborator, gathers together the very best pointers, portraits, and parables from all four of Harvey's previous works. Filled with nuggets of wisdom from *Harvey Penick's Little Red Book, And If You Play Golf, You're My Friend, For All Who Love the Game*, and *The Game for a Lifetime* and enhanced with dozens of personal photographs and keepsakes from the Penick family scrapbooks, *The Wisdom of Harvey Penick* is a lasting treasure from the most beloved teacher in all of golf.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
A master of parable and the Socratic method, Harvey Penick, the Texas pro who molded the games of Tom Kite and Ben Crenshaw, emerged late in his long life as the golf world's pied piper. With the phenomenal success of *Harvey Penick's Little Red Book*, his first primer, Penick earned a dedicated international following eager to hang on his anecdotes and embrace the practicality of his gentle advice that always seems more personal than generic. *The Wisdom of Harvey Penick* gathers the best of that first volume and joins it with highlights from Penick's three bestselling successors: *And If You Play Golf, You're My Friend*; *For All Who Love the Game*, which is geared particularly toward women; and *The Game for a Lifetime*. The compilation forms a single, convenient lifelong studies program complete with photos and keepsakes from the Penick family scrapbooks.

About the Author
Harvey Penick lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife Helen. This is his first book.

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Chapter 1

My Little Red Book

An old pro told me that originality does not consist of saying what has never been said before; it consists of saying what you have to say that you know to be the truth.

More than sixty years ago, I began writing notes and observations in what I came to call my Little Red Book. Until recently I had never let anyone read my Little Red Book except my son, Tinsley. My wife, Helen, could have read it, of course, but a lifetime spent living with a grown-up caddie like me provided Helen with all the information about golf that she cares to know.

My intention was to pass my Little Red Book on to Tinsley, who is the head professional at Austin Country Club. Tinsley was named to that post in 1973, when I retired with the title of Head Professional Emeritus after holding the job for fifty years.

With the knowledge in this little book to use as a reference, it would be easier for Tinsley to make a good living teaching golf no matter what happens when I am gone.

Tinsley is a wonderful teacher on his own and has added insights to this book over the years. But there is only one copy of the red Scribbletex notebook that I wrote in. I kept it locked in my briefcase. Most of my club members and the players who came to me for help heard about my Little Red Book as it slowly grew into what is still a slender volume considering that all the important truths I have learned about golf are written in its pages.

Many asked to read the book. I wouldn't show it to Tommy Kite, Ben Crenshaw, Betsy Rawls, Kathy Whitworth, Betty Jameson, Sandra Palmer, or any of the others, no matter how much I loved them.

What made my Little Red Book special was not that what was written in it had never been said before. It was that what it says about playing golf has stood the test of time.

I see things written about the golf swing that I can't believe will work except by accident. But whether it is for beginners, medium players, experts, or children, anything I say in my book has been tried and tested with success.

One morning last spring I was sitting in my golf cart under the trees on the grass near the veranda at Austin Country Club. I was with my nurse, Penny, a patient young woman who drives us in my golf cart a few blocks from home to the club on days when I feel well enough for the journey.

I don't stay more than an hour or two on each visit, and I don't go more than three or four times a week because I don't want the members to think of me as a ghost that refuses to go away.

I don't want to cut into the teaching time of any of our fine club professionals, either. I can see Jackson Bradley out teaching on the practice line, and there are moments when I might want to make a suggestion, but I don't do it.

However, I can't refuse to help when my old friend Tommy Kite, the leading money winner in the history of the game, walks over to my golf cart and asks if I will watch him putt for a while. Tommy asks almost shyly, as if afraid I might not feel strong enough. His request makes my heart leap with joy.

I spend nights staring at the ceiling, thinking of what I have seen Tommy doing in tournaments on television, and praying that he will come see me. If Tommy wants, I will break my rule that I never visit the club on weekends, and will have Penny drive me to the putting green to meet with Tommy on Saturday and Sunday morning, as well as on Thursday and Friday. I know it exasperates Penny that I would rather watch Tommy putt than eat the lunch she has to force on me.

Or I may be sitting in my cart in the shade enjoying the spring breeze and the rolling greenery of our beautiful golf course, with the blue water of Lake Austin sparkling below, as good and peaceful a place as I know on this earth, and the young touring pro Cindy Figg-Currier may stop and say hello and eventually work up the nerve to ask if I will look at her putting stroke.

Certainly I will. I get as much pleasure out of helping a rising young pro like Cindy as I do a celebrated hero like Tommy.

Don Massengale of the Senior Tour had phoned me at home the night before for a long-distance putting lesson. I can't hear very well on the phone, and Helen had to interpret, shouting back and forth as I tried to straighten out Don's grip.

Earlier my old friend Ben Crenshaw, the Masters champion who had grown up with Tommy Kite in the group of boys that I taught at the old Austin Country Club across town, dropped by our home for a visit and brought his wife and daughter to see Helen and me. Ben is one of the greatest players of all time, a natural. When he was a boy I wouldn't let him practice too much for fear that he might find out how to do something wrong. Ben has his own course, designed by Ben and his partner, at the Barton Creek Country Club layout, a ten-minute drive away from us. It pleases me deeply when Ben drops by to sit on the couch or when he phones me from some tournament.

Ben hasn't been gone long before the doorbell rings and it's one of our members, Gil Kuykendall, who brings Air Force General Robin Olds into the living room and asks if I will give the general a lesson on the rug from my wheelchair. They are entered in a tournament, and the general has played golf only a few times. Can I teach him? In the living room? In half an hour?

General Olds is a jolly good fellow, thick through the chest. He was a football star at West Point. He has those big muscles that, as Bobby Jones said, can bend a bar but are no use in swinging a golf club.

I fit the general with a strong grip and teach him a very short swing. Just about waist high to waist high. This man is too muscle-bound to make a full swing, but he is strong enough to advance the ball decently with a short swing. He may not break 100 in the tournament, but he will make it around the golf course.

When the member and the general leave, Helen and Penny scold me. I am wearing myself out, they say. They remind me that before Ben dropped by, a girl who is hoping to make the University of Texas team had come to talk to me about her progress, and I had asked questions for an hour.

It's true that I have grown fired as the day became evening. But my mind is excited. My heart is thrilled. I have been teaching. Nothing has ever given me greater pleasure than teaching. I received as much joy from coaxing a first-time pupil, a woman from Paris, into hitting the ball into the air so that she could go back to France and play golf with her husband as I did from watching the development of all the fine players I have been lucky enough to know.

When one of my less talented pupils would, under my guidance, hit a first-class shot, I would say, "I hope that gives you as much pleasure as it does me." I would get goose pimples on my arms and a prickly feeling on my neck from the joy of being able to help.

Every time I found something about the swing or the stance or the mental approach that proved to be consistently successful, I wrote it down in my Little Red Book.

Occasionally I added impressions of champions I have known, from Walter Hagen and Bobby Jones to Ben Hogan, Byron Nelson, and Sam Snead to Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer to Kite and Crenshaw, as well as Rawls, Whitworth, Jameson, Mickey Wright, Sandra Palmer, and many other distinguished players.

I prefer to teach with images, parables, and metaphors that plant in the mind the seeds of shotmaking. These, too, went into the notebook -- if they proved successful.

Many professional writers inquired during my long career as a teacher if they might write a book for me on how to play golf.

I always politely declined. For one thing, I never regarded myself as any kind of genius. I was a humble student and teacher of the game. What I was learning was not for the purpose of promoting myself in the public eye. I was never interested in money. What I was learning was to be shared only with my pupils, and ultimately the knowledge would belong to my son, Tinsley, and my daughter, Kathryn.

But on this soft spring morning that I mentioned earlier, with squirrels playing in the grass around the wheels of my cart, and a shiny black grackle prowling in the branches above me, I was sitting there wondering if I was being selfish.

Maybe it was wrong to hoard the knowledge I had accumulated. Maybe I had been granted these eighty-seven years of life and this wonderful career in order that I should pass on to everyone what I had learned. This gift had not been given me to keep secret.

A writer, Bud Shrake, who lives in the hills near the club, came to visit with me under the trees on this particular morning.

Penny gave Bud her seat in my cart. We chatted a few minutes about his brother, Bruce, who was one of my boys during the thirty-three years I was the golf coach at the University of Texas. Then it burst out of me.

"I want to show you something that nobody except Tinsley has ever read," I said.

I unlocked my briefcase and handed him my Little Red Book.

I asked if he might help me get it in shape to be published.

Bud went into the golf shop and brought Tinsley out to my cart.

I asked Tinsley if he thought we should share our book with a larger crowd than the two of us.

Tinsley had a big grin on his face.

"I've been waiting and hoping for you to say that," he said.

So that morning under the trees we opened my Little Red Book.

Golf Medicine

When I ask you to take an aspirin, please don't take the whole bottle.

In the golf swing a tiny change can make a huge difference. The natural inclination is to begin to overdo the tiny change that has brought success. So you exaggerate in an effort to improve even more, and soon you are lost and confused again.

Lessons are not to take the place of practice but to make practice worthwhile.

Looking Up

Looking up is the biggest alibi ever invented to explain a terrible shot.

By the time you look up, you've already made the mistake that caused the bad shot.

When I tell a student to keep his eye on the ball, it is usually to give him something to think about that won't do any harm.

I've known only three or four top players who say they actually see the ball when they hit it. Even Ben Hogan told me he loses sight of the ball "somewhere in my downswing."

Hand Position

I like to see your hands toward the inside of your left thigh on every shot except the driver.

With the driver, I like to see your hands at your zipper. If this moves them slightly behind the ball at address, that is fine. It encourages hitting on the upswing.

The Three Most Important Clubs

Herbert Warren Wind, the stylish and learned golf writer, came to see me at the club and asked what I think are the three most important clubs in the bag, in order.

I said, "The putter, the driver, and the wedge."

Herb said he'd asked Ben Hogan the same question. Ben had replied, "The driver, the putter, and the wedge."

My reasoning is that you hit the driver fourteen times in an ordinary round. But on the same day, you may have 23-25 putts that are outside the "gimme" range but within a makable distance.

A five-foot putt counts one stroke, the same as a 270-yard drive, but the putt may be much more significant to your score.

Psychologically, the driver is very important. If you hit your tee ball well, it fills you with confidence. On the other hand, if you smash a couple of drives into the trees, your confidence can be shaken.

But nothing is more important psychologically than knocking putts into the hole. Sinking putts makes your confidence soar, and it devastates your opponent.

A good putter is a match for anyone. A bad putter is a match for no one.

The woods are full of long drivers.

The Grip

If you have a bad grip, you don't want a good swing.

With a bad grip you have to make unattractive adjustments in your swing to hit the ball squarely.

It's no good to make a beautiful Al Geiberger swing unless you grip the club like he does. If Al twisted his hands around into some kind of ugly grip and then made his graceful swing, he might knock the ball out of bounds.

I believe it is a nice idea to try to pattern your swing after that of a professional player who is close to your own height and body structure, but only if you also study and imitate that player's grip.

As a teacher I have learned that one of the most delicate matters to attend to is the student's grip.

If the student comes to me as a once-a-week player who has been playing for years without improving, all I have to do is put his hands on the club in a good grip -- and after the lesson I will never see him again. He will hit the ball so poorly that he will think I am the dumbest teacher in the country.

Changing a bad grip into a good grip requires a great amount of practice. Unless the student is willing and able to do this, I would indeed be a dumb teacher if I demanded a radical alteration from an ordinary player in one lesson.

But with a talented player who plays and practices often, it can be a different, almost miraculous story.

Kirby Attwell was trying to make my team at the University of Texas. He had a good swing but a weak grip

that caused an open clubface. His shots lacked authority and mostly flew off to the right of the target, except when he would try so hard to square the clubface that he would hit a nasty hook.

After I knew the boy and his game well enough, I moved his left hand to the right. Then I moved his fight hand a bit more to the right, also.

Don't think that because you move your left hand you must automatically move the right to make it match. Often it's enough to move one hand and leave the other alone. But in this boy's case, he needed a stronger grip all around.

Kirby looked at his hands as I placed them on the club, and there was an expression of disbelief on his face.

"Harvey," he said, "if I hit the ball with this grip, I'll hook it over the fence."

I asked him to try.

He cracked a long, powerful shot that went as straight as a ball can go. He was astonished and delighted. Kirby became an excellent player at the University of Texas. But he had talent and the time and desire to take his new grip to the practice range and become confident with it before he took it to the golf course.

One grip does not fit all.

The interlocking grip, with the forefinger of the top hand laced between the little finger and the ring finger of the bottom hand, is for people who have short fingers. Gene Sarazen, Jack Nicklaus, and Tom Kite use it.

The overlapping grip, with the little finger of the bottom hand wrapped into the hollow between the forefinger and middle finger of the top hand or on top of the left forefinger, is the most widely used among ordinary players as well as experts, though with many individual variations. Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer, Byron Nelson, Ben Crenshaw, Sam Snead, Al Geiberger, and Payne Stewart are just a few of the overlappers, and none of their grips are exactly alike.

The two-hand or ten-finger grip, with all the fingers on the handle -- sometimes called the baseball grip (although the baseball bat is held more in the palms, and a golf club more in the fingers) -- is especially good for women and older players who may lack strength, although some top professionals like Beth Daniel, Art Wall, and Bob Rosburg have done well with it. Little Alice Ritzman adopted the ten-finger grip as my student and gained enough distance to play on the tour and become one of the longer drivers.

In his famous book, *Five Lessons,* written with Herb Wind, Hogan says the tips of the thumb and forefinger of the bottom hand should never touch each other. Others teach that the thumb and forefinger should meld like a trigger. Bobby Jones used the overlapping grip with the tip of his right forefinger not touching the handle at all. But the back of the first joint of his forefinger pressed against the handle. Victor East of Spalding built special grips with flat places for the back of Jones's right forefinger, which would be illegal today.

I can go on and on talking about the grip until it gets too deep for me to understand.

The fact is, a top player can change his grip enough to cause a draw or a fade, a slice or a hook, and an observer can't even see the change. The top player feels it; and it happens.

I happen to have long fingers, and long fingers feel good on a club in the overlapping grip.

If you will pick up a yardstick and let your hands fit it, that will come closer to giving you a good grip than anything I could write about where to point your V's and all of that.

Just pick up a yardstick and fit your hands to it and swing it.

Then put the same grip on a golf club.

0 There is one thing I like to see in common with all three grips. I don't want the left thumb straight down the top of the handle. I want the thumb a little bit to the right. Byron Nelson told me the left thumb position is one of the most important things I teach. The reason is that at the top of the backswing, that thumb wants to be underneath the club. This gives you control.

Coaching at the University of Texas, I encountered a lot of west Texas boys. West Texas boys were well known for their strong grips, which they develop because they play in the wind so often. They can hit a 7-iron so far you can't believe it. Off the tee they get great distances with a 3-wood or 4-wood, but they can't hit a driver Their strong grips delofted the clubs so much that a driver face would be totally shut.

Billy Maxwell was the first west Texas boy I can remember who had what I would call a good grip, with his hands more on top of the club.

No matter which of the three grips you use, one fundamental is that the hands must be touching each other. They should be joined as one unit. They should feel like they are melted together.

The best thing to do is to find a grip that fits you and feels good and then stay with it.

If the ball is flying pretty well, your grip is all fight.

If you keep fooling with your grip, you will find yourself making a mistake on your backswing to correct for your new grip and then making another mistake on your downswing to correct the mistake you made on your backswing.

As for your grip pressure, keep it light.

Arnold Palmer likes to grip the club tightly, but you are not Arnold Palmer.

The Waggle

I think the main value of the waggle is that it turns on your juice and gets your adrenaline flowing.

The waggle is also a small practice swing and a way to ease tension, unless you get so involved in waggling you forget your purpose.

One of my club players took twenty-one waggles before he could swing the club. People in his foursome would look the other way when it was his turn to hit.

Ben Hogan has a solid piece of advice: Don't groove your waggle. Just get the feel and swing. Bobby Jones said if you saw him waggle more than twice, he probably hit a bad shot.

I don't like to see a player waggle up and down. To me it looks amateurish.

The great Horton Smith used no waggle at all.

Holding the Club

There is an artfulness to holding the club that goes beyond the craft of gripping it. I was teaching at a seminar in New York and, as usual, holding a club. Not that I thought I was Bob Hope, but I always found it much easier to talk to people, especially large groups, if I had a golf club in my hands.

I heard one of the pros say, "Look at Harvey. He holds that club like it's a fine musical instrument."

That's how a golf club feels to me: like a fine musical instrument.

At another seminar in Houston, Jackson Bradley, Jimmy Demaret, Jack Burke, Jr., and I were teaching, and I pointed out how beautifully Jackie Burke held the club. His hands looked perfectly natural.

"Let me add," Jackson Bradley said, "that Jackie's hands look perfect, but so do his clothes." Jackson showed us his own hands. "My fingers are a little crooked. My grip may be just as good as Jackie's, but my hands will never look as good on a club as his do."

Look at the club in the hands of Ben Crenshaw. His hands and fingers fit so gracefully, so naturally, that I am moved to regard his grip as a piece of art.

The same can be said for Mickey Wright and Dave Marr, among others.

Tommy Kite and Jack Nicklaus have a good grip on the club, but they will never look as artful because their fingers are short and they use the interlocking grip which is not as appealing to my eyes.

The Easiest Lesson

The easiest golf lesson I ever gave was to Don January.

Don had been a star player at North Texas State University and a winner on the Texas amateur circuit, a regular round of tournaments that drew so many championship-quality golfers that I could fill up a whole book with their names.

Now Don was wondering if he could make it on the professional tour. He came to see me and asked if I would take a look at his swing and tell him my honest opinion of his game and help correct any flaws.

I watched Don hit a few putts. We went to the practice range. I asked him to hit a half-dozen short irons for me. Then I asked him to hit a half-dozen middle irons, followed by several long irons.

I could tell he was waiting for me to say something.

Instead I asked him to hit a few drives.

When he had done so, he turned and said, "Well? What do I need?"

I said, "Don, you need to pack your clubs and go to California and join the tour."

End of lesson.

Palm Reading

People are always asking me to look at the calluses on their palms, as if the location and thickness of the calluses will tell me whether their grip is correct.

I remember someone asking to see the calluses on Sam Snead's palms. Sam said, "I don't have any calluses." Sam said he holds the club as if it is a live bird in his hands, with just enough pressure that the bird can't fly away but not so tightly that the bird can't breathe. Grip the club this way and you won't have calluses, either.

Hold onto the club firmly but not tightly, with your elbows and shoulders slightly relaxed. This is especially important for women. It helps them to hit with more snap.

Where the calluses come from is a player putting his hands on the club and then twisting them into what looks like a good grip when in fact it is not a good grip.

Place your hands on the club correctly and leave them alone. There's no need to screw them around in a vain effort to make your V's point where you think they should point.

If you insist on moving your hands and fingers after taking your grip, you accomplish two things that you do not want: You camouflage a poor grip; and you get calluses.

Starting Young

The best age to start a child in golf is the time he or she becomes interested in the game.

I don't believe in parents forcing the game on kids who would rather be doing something else. But if a little child four or five years old is eager to go out and play with Dad or Mom, then it's time to start.

Don't be too exacting on the grip or anything else. Just let the kids use their natural ability. Hands together.

Be sure the club you give them has plenty of loft. Problems start when the child uses too little loft and tries to scoop the ball up into the air. The more the child tries to help the ball up, the less it'll get up.

Also be sure the club is light enough. A small child will learn a bad grip by trying to swing a club that is too heavy. My cousin, Dr. D. A. Penick, a professor of Greek who rode around town on a bicycle and was the tennis coach at the University of Texas for fifty years, discouraged toddlers from swinging a tennis racquet for that same reason.

When you take your youngster to see a teaching pro, say that you're going to get some "help." The word "lessons" sounds too much like going to school, which is not always fun. Golf should be fun. With a child I never say "teach" or "lessons."

Group instruction for kids is all right, but in some cases the teaching can be overcomplicated to the point where it interferes with the child's natural ability. Beware especially the group instructor who is a poor player and teaches the kids what he has just read in the latest how-to-hit-it book, which the instructor may not even

understand.

If you see an instructor trying to teach a whole group of kids to imitate the stance and swing of Ben Hogan, for example, take your child out of that group. The way Hogan does it is special to Hogan. Your child is special in his or her own way.

A professional should look at the child's swing maybe once a month,just to steer the game on the right track. No more.

Practicing is an individual matter. When they were kids, Ben Crenshaw was always playing more than he practiced, and Tom Kite was always practicing at least as much as he played. Hogan was a practicer. Byron Nelson was a player and also a practicer.

Whatever the child wants to do -- play or practice -- that's what he or she should do.

Worst of all is when I see Dad, on the range or the course, constantly nagging the child to keep his head down, keep his left arm straight, stare at the ball -- bad information, all of it. This may be fun for Dad, but it is hurting the child's development.

If you are fortunate enough to be able to give your child plenty of free time to spend at a golf course, and the right amount of help from a professional teacher, your child will be beating you sooner than you may think.

Hole Them All

Two proud parents came to me at the club and announced that their young son had just scored his first birdie.

I agreed that was a wonderful event and asked them how long was the putt Junior made for the birdie

The parents said the putt was only two feet long, so they gave Junior a "gimme" to assure his first birdie.

"I've got bad news for you," I said. "Junior still hasn't made his first birdie."

Not only did Junior not sink the birdie putt, it was now planted in his mind that he could pick up his ball two feet from the hole and pronounce the putt as made, not having to face the moment of truth

When Junior reaches a higher level of play, where there are no "gimmes," he may develop an anxiety about short putts that will bother him the rest of his life.

My rule is that a youngster, no matter how small, should be required to hole every putt.

If Junior grows up knowing he has to make all the short ones, that will automatically become part of his game. When he plays on higher levels and faces a two-footer to win an important match, he'll be ready.

Learning Around the Cup

Golf should be learned starting at the cup and progressing back toward the tee.

I'm talking about with children. The same thing applies to adult beginners, but adults think that is too simple. An adult beginner -- especially a man -- thinks he's not getting his money's worth if you ask him to spend an

hour sinking short putts. He wants to pull out his driver and smack it, which is the very last thing he will learn if he comes to me.

If a beginner tries to learn the game at the tee and move on toward the green, postponing the short game until last, this is one beginner who will be lucky ever to beat anybody.

What I like to see is a youngster learning the game on the practice green with one chipping club, a putter, and one golf ball.

A chipping stroke is just a short version of a full swing.

A child will learn a good chipping stroke and the unteachable qualities of touch and feel if the grown-ups will let it happen.

The best stroke in the world is not much good without touch or feel. An individual-looking stroke that the child has confidence in and a feel for how to use, and that puts the ball close to the hole, is the best stroke in the world for that child.

I will take a chipper and putter who has touch any time over someone who has a beautiful stroke but no sense of feel for where the ball is going to roll.

Many of the best putters and chippers in history learned in the caddie yard.

I like for a child to use one ball, chip it at the hole, and then go put it in. This is how the child learns to score.

For a child to chip a dozen or more balls at the same hole, one after the other, is a poor method. It gives too much room for mistakes. If a child can hit a bad chip and then just drag over another ball and hit it again, it does not teach the reality of playing golf, which is that you have to pay for your mistakes.

The best thing is for the child to play games with other children on and around the practice green. I like for them to play each other for something, whether it's matchsticks or a soda pop or an imaginary U.S. Open championship -- just as long as there is something at stake that makes the child concentrate on getting his or her ball into the cup in fewer strokes than the other kids. Some children are natural competitors at golf, some must learn to be, and some couldn't care less. Playing games sharpens or teaches competition. Those who don't care will drift into something else that they do care about.

I remember when Ben Crenshaw was six years old, two years before he took his first lesson from me, he and his daddy Charlie and the great tennis player Wilmer Allison, who succeeded my cousin as tennis coach at Texas, would go around and around and around the putting green, hour after hour. Ben was developing the touch and stroke that made him one of the finest putters in history. It wasn't long before he was winning quarters from the grown-ups.

Not everyone agrees with me on learning the game from the cup backward, of course.

Arnold Palmer's daddy taught him to hit the ball hard at a very young age. There was a shot at their golf course that called for a long carry over water. Young Arnold would stand there and bet the grown-ups coming through a dime or a quarter that he could hit it over the water -- and he could. At the same time, Arnold became a top putter.

That's the thing about golf. Outside of the USGA rule book, there are no indisputable ways the game must be learned or played.

But if your child will learn to play on and around the green first of all, I am convinced that in most cases progress will be more rapid and the skills will be longer-lasting.

Do You Need Help?

IF you play poorly one day, forget it.

If you play poorly the next time out, review your fundamentals of grip, stance, aim, and ball position. Most mistakes are made before the club is swung.

If you play poorly for a third time in a row, go see your professional.

Take Dead Aim

When my student Betsy Rawls was in a playoff for the U.S. Women's Open championship, I sent her a one-sentence telegram.

It said: "Take dead aim!"

Betsy won the playoff.

For golfers who might not understand Texas talk, let me put the advice in the telegram a different way: Once you address the golf ball, hitting it has got to be the most important thing in your life at that moment. Shut out all thoughts other than picking out a target and taking dead aim at it.

This is a good way to calm a case of nerves.

Everybody gets nervous on the first tee, whether it's Betsy Rawls in a playoff for the Open or a high handicapper teeing off at the club in a two-dollar Nassau with pals.

Instead of worrying about making a fool of yourself in front of a crowd of 4 or 40,000, forget about how your swing may look and concentrate instead on where you want the ball to go. Pretty is as pretty does.

I would approach my college players before a match and tell them the same thing: Take dead aim.

This is a wonderful thought to keep in mind all the way around the course, not just on the first tee. Take dead aim at a spot on the fairway or the green, refuse to allow any negative thought to enter your head, and swing away.

A high handicapper will be surprised at how often the mind will make the muscles hit the ball to the target, even with a far less than perfect swing.

The expert player won't be surprised. The expert expects to hit the target. The only surprise here is that the expert sometimes allows disorganized thinking to make him or her become distracted from the primary object of the shot, which is to hit the target.

I can't say it too many times. It's the most important advice in this book.

Take dead aim.

Make it a point to do it every time on every shot. Don't just do it from time to time, when you happen to remember.

Take dead aim.

Beware

One of my University of Texas golfers was playing in a tournament in North Carolina. He won his first match handily.

He phoned me and said, "The guy I play tomorrow I can beat easily. He has a bad grip and also a bad swing."

My boy lost the next match.

"The lesson to be learned," I told my golfer later, "is don't be afraid of the player with a good grip and a bad swing. Don't be afraid of a player with a bad grip and a good swing. The player to beware of is the one with the bad grip and the bad swing. If he's reached your level, he has grooved his faults and knows how to score."

How to Knock Five Strokes Off Your Game

The average golfer does not improve stroke by stroke.

Improvement comes in plateaus.

A player who shoots 95 does not through lessons and practice see his or her score drop slowly to 94, then 93, then 92, 91, 90. Nor does the 87-shooter come down gradually to 86, 85, 84.

Instead the 95 suddenly falls to 90. The 87 will seemingly overnight become an 81.

By the same token, a player who regularly shoots 80 can quickly fall into the middle 70s. Once you reach 75 or so, you are no longer an average golfer but are approaching the expert level, where improvement comes more slowly.

But even some 75-shooters can reach a mini-plateau and see their scores go down by three shots or so after a week of practice.

There can be many reasons why the 95 becomes a 90. Maybe the player learns to cure his slice. The 87 may become an 81 because the player learns to hit the ball twenty yards farther off the tee and now can reach more greens in regulation.

As a general rule, however, the 75-shooter can become a 72-shooter only if he improves his short game -- unless it was his short-game wizardry that made him shoot 75 in the first place.

The short game. Those are the magic words.

The higher your score, the faster you can lower it -- with the short game.

There's no mystery to it. Anybody who plays much golf knows that about half of his shots are struck within sixty yards of the flagstick.

And yet when I see an average golfer practicing, where is he? Most likely he is on the range, banging away with his driver.

If I ask an average golfer what percentage of his practice time he spends on his short game in comparison to hitting the longer shots, he'll probably tell me he gives the short game 10 or 20 percent. This is usually a fib. The average golfer will devote fifteen minutes to stroking a few putts if he has time before he heads for the first tee, and that's about it for the short-game practice.

Well, if you want to see a radical improvement in your game and cut off five strokes in a week or two, you must make a radical change in the way you practice.

For two weeks devote 90 percent of your practice time to chipping and putting, and only 10 percent to the full swing.

If you do this, your 95 will turn into 90. I guarantee it.

I can see the average player nodding his head and saying yeah, yeah. I know that's what I ought to do.

But I don't see him doing it.

Instead I see him on the range, swinging from the heels, hitting forty drives in a row for the thrill of those four or five that might be well struck.

I would never let my college players or the touring pros who come to me for help hit forty driver shots in a row. This causes fatigue and very bad habits.

My college players and touring pros, being experts, understand the immense importance of the short game. Tom Kite, for example, puts in many hours on his full swing, but he practices his wedges and his chipping and putting even more because he knows that's what causes good scores, and without good scores he wouldn't be the all-time leading money winner in golf.

So if you want to knock five shots off your game in a hurry, leave your long clubs in your bag and head for the green.

Bobby Jones said the secret of shooting low scores is the ability to turn three shots into two.

It reminds me of a college match I saw. I had a good player named Billy Munn, who was matched against R. H. Sikes of Arkansas at the old Austin Country Club.

Billy hit every fairway and seventeen greens and shot 67. Sikes hit few fairways and maybe five greens. But Sikes shot 66 and beat Billy 1-up.

After the match I found Billy and said, "I'm very proud of you. You played a wonderful round of golf. But, Billy, don't ever think what you saw out there today was luck."

Sikes had a great short game, as he went on to prove on the professional tour.

You may never develop a short game to equal Sikes's, but if you practice hard on chipping and putting you can bring your score down fast. It's all up to you.

Emerson said, "Thinking is the hardest work in the world. That's why so few of us do it."

Too many golfers think chipping and putting is hard work. That's why so few of them do it.

Reassurance

One of my favorite students, Sandra Palmer, a very successful player on the LPGA Tour, phoned me one night from the site of the U.S. Women's Open.

Sandra was worried about the speed of the greens. She said they were the slickest, fastest greens she had ever seen. The tournament started the next morning, and Sandra was getting the jitters wondering if she could putt greens like this. Should she try to change her stroke?

I knew Sandra was a fine putter and what she needed was reassurance.

"Well, Sandra," I said, "if the greens are that fast, you probably should hit your putts a little easier."

That's all it took.

Students are always asking if they should switch to heavier putters when they go play at a club with faster greens. It's probably true that if you went through the members' bags at Oakmont -- famous for its fast greens -- you would find heavy putters in most of them. But you should stick with your favorite putter when you go to a course with faster (or slower) greens. It's easier to get the feel or different greens than for a different putter.

The Practice Swing

How many times have you seen an average golfer take two or three beautiful practice swings and then step up to the ball and make a swing that is totally different and causes an ugly shot?

It happens over and over.

As a caddie, a pro, a teacher, and starter at the first tee over the past seventy-five years, I have probably seen more golf swings than any person alive. The practice swing and real swing I just described, I must have seen a million times.

And what does the average golfer say? "If I could just hit the ball with my practice swing, I'd be a terrific player."

The reason he doesn't hit the ball with his practice swing is simple: With his practice swing he doesn't have to square his clubface on impact. He allows himself to swing freely. When there's a golf ball in front of him, he knows -- at least subconsciously -- that he must square that clubface, and tension sets in, causing all sorts of faults.

Now let me ask another question: How many times have you seen a player make two or three beautiful practice swings that don't touch anything but air?

These swings are useful for loosening up, but they are no good when it comes to hitting the ball.

From now on when you take a practice swing, make it a point to aim at something. Cut off a dandelion or a blade of grass, or if you are in your living room aim at a spot on the rug (but please don't take a divot and tell your wife Harvey made you do it).

Aiming at something with your practice swing will help you learn to square the clubface. Never take another practice swing without aiming it at something.

One more thing about practice swings.

Taking two or three practice swings before every shot when you are on the course playing golf takes up too much time. In these days of the four- or five-hour round, we need to speed up the game, not slow it down

At many courses in Scotland and England there is a sign on the first tee that says, "A round of golf requires no more than 3 hours, 15 minutes. If you are on the course longer than this, a marshal will come escort you off."

You don't see those Scots loitering in the fairway to take practice swings.

The Average Golfer

I use the term "average golfer" a lot, but sometimes I wonder, what is an average golfer?

I read somewhere that statistics show the average male golfer shoots about 92.

I don't believe it. Not if he counts every stroke and plays by USGA rules. Playing our Pete Dye course from the men's tees and holing every shot, the average golfer won't break 100.

A party of four Japanese gentlemen once showed up as special guests to play our course, which they had heard about in Tokyo.

I asked how well they played so I would know which of our four sets of tees -- women's, seniors', men's, or championship -- I would suggest.

They said they were average players and would use the championship tees because they wanted to see the whole course.

Well, I knew they wouldn't see the whole course from the back tees, because they couldn't hit the ball over our canyons from back there. But they were guests.

It took them twenty minutes and three lost balls to get past our first hole, which is relatively easy -- a sharp dogleg left uphill over a ravine. About six hours later, I realized our Japanese gentlemen were still on the course, and I went to find them.

They were on the fourteenth hole. One was off in the trees, another was down in a canyon, the third was

searching in the deep rough on a hillside, and the fourth greeted me with a smile.

"Very good course," he said.

"How are you doing?" I asked.

"Very good," he said.

Dick Metz said a club pro is half-mule and half-slave. Instead of escorting them off the course, I politely urged them to try to finish before dark, and then I went back to the clubhouse.

Later I heard them figuring up their scores. Every one of them shot in the low 90s.

The fact is, by USGA rules not a one of them broke 100 -- on the first nine.

But of course they weren't really average golfers, either.

How to Tell Where You're Aimed

Take your stance and hold a clubshaft along the front of your *thighs.* Look where the club is pointing, and you will see where you are aimed.

Laying a club on the ground at your feet will tell you very little.

Much is made of how to aim.

Hit the ball solidly, and I can show you where you were aimed. Once you learn this, your mind will tell you how to aim.

Seasoned Citizens

One of the many wonderful things about golf is that it is a game you can play for the rest of your life.

In fact, Seasoned Citizens -- a term I much prefer to "Senior" -- may get even more enjoyment out of the game than they did when they were young, because the deeper you get into golf, the more you learn to value the freedom, the companionship, the joy of being outdoors in beautiful surroundings, and the profound mysteries of the game itself.

Like chess, golf is a game that is forever challenging but can never be conquered.

As a golfer grows older and becomes a Seasoned Citizen, age does take its toll on the eyesight, the muscles, the flexibility, and all too often on the waistline.

But there are many ways a Seasoned Citizen can continue to score as well as when young, or perhaps score better due to the wisdom of age and the new equipment that is available.

First and foremost, a Seasoned Citizen must make every effort to maintain good physical condition.

If you can walk the golf course, do it. Get out of that golf cart. If your companions in your regular foursome

insist on riding, it's all right to go along with them, but you should hop out of the cart and walk at every opportunity.

Carry two or three clubs in hand that you know you may need, and don't be afraid of slowing your companions down. The truth is that a briskly walking foursome will usually go around the course faster than a foursome in golf carts.

Golfers in carts are always driving here and there from one ball to the other, taking up a lot of time. If a rule is in effect that the cart is not allowed to leave the path, golfers are inclined to dawdle over club selection and make unnecessary trips back and forth from the ball to the bag.

Carts are very valuable tools for Seasoned Citizens who can't physically go around the course without them. One of our members is hooked up to an oxygen tank, but the golf cart allows him to continue to enjoy playing the game.

I've noticed that walkers tend to band together. If you walk and either carry a lightweight bag or pull your clubs on a trolley, you'll soon find a regular game with likeminded players.

Walking keeps a Seasoned Citizen's legs strong, and strong legs make for a more powerful swing.

I will stress here -- and this is vital -- that a Seasoned Citizen must let the left heel come off the ground in the backswing.

Let the left heel come up and the left arm bend for a longer, freer swing.

Some modern teachers demand that their students keep the left heel on the ground. I don't agree with that teaching for players of any age, but especially not for a Seasoned Citizen.

One of the most important factors in an older golfer's swing is the body turn. The older one gets, the harder it is to turn. Keeping the left heel down makes it all the harder. Don't raise the heel, just let it come up as it will want to do.

A straight left arm inhibits the turn. If a Seasoned Citizen has become heavy in the chest and stomach, there should be no effort made to keep a straight left arm at the top of the backswing. A player should try to swing longer, not shorter, as the years go by.

Another block to the swing is keeping the head down too long. I doubt I tell one student a month to keep his head down, and I almost never say it to an older player. Keeping the head down prevents a good follow-through because the golfer can't swing past hip-high with the head still down and not give up something good in the finish to do it.

Other than strong legs and plenty of stretching exercises, the first consideration for the older golfer is selecting the proper clubs.

You don't want to fiddle too much with a swing that has been useful to you for decades, but now is the time to add a 5- or 6-wood and especially a 7-wood to your bag. Seasoned Citizens get their loft from their clubs, not from their swing. Adding loft is a reliable substitute for youth and strength.

The older golfer must play with softer shafts. If you used "S" shafts when you were younger, switch to the

"R" shafts. If you had been using "R" shafts, you may need to change to "A" shafts. You are not hitting as hard as when you were young, and you can't get the most out of the stiffer shafts.

Men should use D-0 or lower swingweights. Women should use no more than C-6 or C-8.

Many Seasoned Citizens have problems with arthritis in their hands. Built-up grips are available to help you hold the club. Composition grips are best for arthritic golfers because they give a bit. Leather is not resilient enough.

I don't like to see the Seasoned player change to longer shafts in an effort to get more distance. A longer club causes a big change in the swing plane, from upright to flat. Flat swings require more turn, which is difficult for an older player.

If you can hit the ball solidly, you can get enough distance.

The Seasoned Citizen may want to try the ten-finger grip, which allows the hands to move faster.

One disadvantage older players may have is that they learned the game before the tremendous improvement in golf course maintenance, when it was necessary to hit down on the ball because the grass was sparse. Today's heavy, well-watered fairways make hitting down on the ball an out-of-date technique.

Many older golfers learned to play the ball far back in their stance for an iron shot. Modern fairways have done away with the need for that technique, also. Years ago we would play the ball off the right foot so we could hit down on it on the bare lies. Today the iron shots should be played no farther back than center.

A Seasoned Citizen should at regular intervals visit a professional who understands the problems of older golfers. You don't want a teacher who tries to rebuild a golf swing that you have been using for decades. You want a teacher who will help you get the best out of the swing you already have.

Perhaps most important of all, a Seasoned Citizen should devote at least 75 percent of practice time to the short game.

I harp on the significance of the short game to golfers of all ages. But this is an area where an older player who may have never broken 90 can expect to cut strokes. A retired person has the time to practice the short game. Short shots don't require strength or flexibility.

Don't plead that you are so old and your nerves so frayed that you can't putt. Every golf course has a few old geezers who can chip and putt the eyes out of the cup.

Certainly the older golfer can't hit the ball as far as the young, flat-bellied player. But once you reach the fringe of the green, you and the younger player become no worse than equals. And you can even have the advantage if you are faithful in practicing your short game.

Just as I suggest for children, the Seasoned Citizen will get the most out of chipping and putting practice by using just one golf ball to practice with instead of a whole basketful at a time.

Pitch or chip that one ball to the cup, and then go putt it until you make it, just as you would have to do if you were on the course playing a match. This sharpens your focus and improves your touch.

You have plenty of time. Make a game out of practice. You may be a Seasoned Citizen, but you know you're still a child at heart.

The Left Heel

The left heel is the subject of distinctly different schools of teaching.

Many modern teachers want their students to keep their left heel on the ground throughout the swing.

The old-school teachers like Percy Boomer and the great Scottish pros want the left heel to come up in the backswing and return to the ground at the start of the downswing.

I am of the old school, not because it produces a more classic swing -- which it does -- but because letting the left heel come up is the best way to get the job done.

The important thing is that you do not consciously lift the left heel. You keep the left heel on the ground, but you let it naturally come up as you make your back turn.

I think the reason Jack Nicklaus has such good control at the top is that he lets that left heel come up, releasing a full turn. He doesn't have to complete his backswing by letting loose of the club.

Ben Hogan never worried about his left heel. It either came up or it didn't, depending on the swing he was making.

Shelley Mayfield made the left-heel-on-the-ground swing popular in the middle '50s when he was a winner on the tour. Shelley, who became the head pro at Brook Hollow in Dallas, told me he didn't keep his left heel on the ground on purpose. It was just his natural, individual style.

Often when people imitate the swing of a top player, they will pick out a peculiarity to copy. The so-called flying elbow of Nicklaus or the open stance of Lee Trevino will be what they imitate.

Shelley told me he wished his left heel had let itself come up in his backswing, but it just wouldn't do it.

In my opinion, keeping the left heel flat on the ground throughout the swing will shorten the player's period of Success.

Backspin

An average golfer was pestering Tommy Armour to teach him how to put backspin on his iron shots.

The obvious answer is that if you hit the ball solidly, the loft on the club will put backspin on it. But this was too simple. The average golfer was sure Tommy must know some secret that made a good middle-iron shot land on the green and dance backward.

Finally Tommy said, "Let me ask you something. When you hit an approach shot from 140 yards or so, are you usually past the pin, or are you usually short of it?"

"I'm nearly always short of the pin," the average golfer replied.

"Then what do you need with backspin?" Tommy said.

Heavy Clubs

Every golfer, from the young adult through Seasoned Citizens, should own a heavy practice club that weighs at least twenty-two ounces.

It hardly need be said that a heavy club is no good for children.

Swinging a weighted club, with your regular grip and stance, is the best exercise I know to build the golf muscles. Squeezing a tennis ball and similar exercises might be all right, but I'd be afraid the wrong muscles might get developed.

In golf you don't need muscles that lift weights. You want muscles that can pop a whip -- or play golf.

Swing the weighted club the night before a round, not in the morning before you tee off. Save your strength for the golf course.

Don't swing it so hard you'll hurt yourself. If it is inconvenient to go outside, swing the weighted club indoors -- in slow motion.

A slow-motion swing develops the golf muscles, implants the correct club positions in your golfing brain -- and doesn't smash the chandelier.

Every time you swing that weighted club, slow or moderately fast, aim the clubhead at a fixed spot. Learn a good habit while you are building golf muscles.

The Wrist Cock

I prefer a swing with a full, early wrist cock, but I don't like to use the words "wrist cock" because so many students become so entranced with getting their wrists cocked that they forget the rest of the swing.

One way to mess up students is to tell them to cock their wrists.

Women, especially, try to cock their wrists at the top of their backswing -- and thus they overswing and lose snap.

When you swing back to waist high -- the shaft parallel to the ground -- the toe of the club must be pointed straight up to the sky.

If it is, your wrists will be cocked and you don't need to think about it. Go ahead and make your turn.

To get a clear picture in mind of how the wrists cock, double your left hand into a fist. This is an automatic wrist cock.

Make a golf swing with your left fist and you can immediately see what position the club is in when your wrists cock, then uncock, and cock again at the finish.

Look at your fist in a full-length mirror. The "wrist cock" will cease to be a source of confusion.

Hit a Full Approach

The average golfer seldom hits a middle-iron approach shot past the pin.

Some teachers recommend that the average golfer use one club stronger for his approach.

In other words, some say if you are 140 yards out and think the shot calls for a 7-iron, choose a 6-iron instead and hit it easier.

I don't care for this idea. I would much rather you take the 7-iron and hit it harder, with the thought in mind that you are going to get the ball all the way to the hole.

When you take a stronger club and try to hit it easy, your muscles will involuntarily tell you that you are using the wrong club, and you are likely to flinch and pull up on the shot.

If you want to hit the stronger club anyway, grip down an inch on the handle -- and go ahead and hit it hard.

I like to see a golfer hit the bail hard if he doesn't swing so fiercely he loses his tempo and balance.

When Jimmy Thompson was the longest hitter on the tour, he enjoyed visiting me for guidance because he knew I was one teacher who would never tell him not to hit it so hard.

But always play within yourself.

The main reason so many approach shots come up short is that four out of five are hit off-center.

Bunker Play

Practice your bunker game to become more aggressive with it. You don't have to look at it as being in anticipation of your misses.

If you practice it and learn a few fundamentals, playing a ball out of a greenside bunker is not a difficult shot, even for the average golfer.

First, grip your sand wedge high on the handle as you would for a normal iron shot. This encourages you to take a full swing all the way to a high follow-through without quitting on the shot when the club strikes the sand.

Grip it tightly with the little finger and ring finger of your left hand so the club won't roll over and close in the sand.

Play the ball with the shaft pointing at your zipper and your hands slightly ahead. Take a square stance and open your clubface so that it points right of the target.

Then open your stance by moving your left foot back and taking your hips and shoulders with it, so that now your body is aimed left of the target but the clubface has come around to aim straight at it.

Shift a little more weight onto the left foot than on the right.

Now make a basically normal swing along the line established by your shoulders and body. Hit three or four inches behind the ball and clip the sand out from beneath it. The ball will come out and land on the green in a spray of sand.

Practice this shot for a few hours and you will see what I mean about becoming aggressive with it.

You won't need to worry again about merely escaping from the bunker somehow. You will be shooting at the pin.

The longer the shot, the less you hit behind the ball. The shorter the shot, the more sand you must take.

Don't Relax

You hear it all the time on the range and on the course-relax, relax, relax.

I have even heard a golfer attempt to help a companion by saying, "Try real hard to relax."

If you try real hard to relax, you will become either very tense or else so limp you might fall over on the grass and go to drowsing.

Neither of those states is conducive to hitting a golf shot.

You do want to keep tension from creeping into your muscles, of course, and from allowing fear in your heart.

But I prefer to put it this way:

Be at ease.

If you feel at ease, you are relaxed -- but ready.

The secret is the feeling of "controlled violence," as Jackie Burke, Jr., says.

Positive Thinking

When I am teaching, I never say never and I don't say don't, if I can help it.

I use the words "never" and "don't" in this book rather often, but that is because the reader has the leisure to reflect upon the point I am trying to get across.

But I would never say never and I don't say don't to a student on the range with club in hand and a need to learn while under the stress of being watched and mentally graded.

I try to put everything in positive, constructive terms. I go into this subject more deeply in my remarks on teaching, but the point I am trying to get across to the reader here is that when you are hitting a golf shot, a negative thought is pure poison.

I could have called this discussion "No Negative Thoughts" -- but even that can be construed as a negative thought in the mind of a golfer.

Jack Burke, Sr., said it this way: "Give yourself the benefit of the doubt."

But even that statement has the dangerous word "doubt" in it.

I want you to believe with all your heart that the shot you are about to hit will be a good one. I want you to have total confidence.

This may sound ridiculous to the player who doesn't break 100. The difference is between confidence and optimism. Confidence is when you have hit this particular shot many times in the past with success, and you know you are capable of doing it again. Any 85-shooter has hit every shot in the bag with success many times. The ability is there. Optimism would be if you had never hit this shot successfully in your life, and are hoping this will be the first time.

The 100-shooter can be helped enormously by positive thinking, but he or she needs some groundwork of teaching upon which to base these positive thoughts before they can be distinguished as the feeling of confidence.

Indecision is a killer.

For example, when you pull that 5-iron out of the bag and register the target in your mind and address the ball, you must totally believe this is the right club for the shot. Put your best swing on it.

If it turns out the 5-iron was a club too much or too little but you hit it solidly, you won't be more than ten yards off.

However, if you can't make up your mind whether the shot calls for a 4-, a 5-, or a 6-iron, and you choose the 5 as a compromise, and then are still unsure when you take your stance, you might as well go sit down.

Many conflicting voices are chattering inside the mind of the average golfer. He or she is thinking of the latest swing "tips" heard on the veranda, and wondering if the club is going back too much inside and which "swing thought" might work at the moment, and probably worrying if the teenager remembered to put gas in the auto.

The golfer must learn to turn off all these voices.

A golf swing happens right now, not in the past or in the future.

Think positively and as my big brother Tom, the pro at Austin Muny for thirty years, used to say, "Rare back and hit it."

Psychology

A sportswriter was in town to interview Tom Kite at Austin Country Club. Sandra Palmer and I were standing around, sort of listening to the interview. The sportswriter turned to me and said, "Harvey, I understand you are practically a psychiatrist when it comes to golf."

"I don't know about that," I said. "I'm just a grown caddie still studying golf."

"You used psychology on me this morning," Tommy said.

"When was that?" I asked.

"When I asked you to help me with my putting," Tommy said. "You asked me if I had changed anything since the last time you saw me. I said, yes, I had started choking down on my putter."

"Tommy, don't use that word," I said. "you should never use the word 'choke' in connection with your golf game. Don't think of choking down on your putter -- think of gripping down on it."

"That's what you told me this morning," he said. "That's psychology, isn't it?"

It always made me uncomfortable when Jimmy Demaret talked about his "choke stroke."

What Jimmy meant was he had in his repertoire a simple, reliable type of swing that he could call upon when he was under intense pressure. This swing wouldn't do anything fancy and wouldn't hit the ball as far as normal, but it was a repeating swing that would put his ball somewhere in the fairway or on the green

He should have called it a "no choke stroke."

But I wouldn't have liked that either, because it still had the word "choke" in it, and also the word "no."

The golfing area of the brain is a fragile thing that is terribly susceptible to suggestion. Golfers are gullible.

I tell my players to go to dinner with good putters.

We have all played with people who would try to talk you into losing. They'll stand on the tee with an innocent expression and say, "Gee, look how fight that boundary marker is on the left. I sure hope I don't hit it over there." Or they might say, "That's an interesting change you've made in your backswing, Harvey." Maybe the best one I ever heard was when someone asked, "Do you breathe in or out on your backswing?"

We call these remarks "The Needle."

The Needle seldom bothers an experienced player. Instead, it's a giveaway that the person using The Needle is feeling insecure.

Playing golf you learn a form of meditation. For the four hours you are on the course, you learn to focus on the game and clean your mind of worrisome thoughts

Golf has probably kept more people sane than psychiatrists have.

Stay Behind the Ball

Try to show me a champion who doesn't move his head during his golf swing. You can't do it. Sam Snead comes as close as anyone ever has, but he moves it too.

However, all these great players move their head slightly backward before and during impact -- never forward.

Home-run hitters do the same thing. You'd see Hank Aaron blast one over the scoreboard, and people would say, "He really stayed behind that one."

A golfer also must stay behind the ball.

You couldn't kill a fly with a flyswatter if you lunged your head forward. To get power with a flyswatter you hold your head steady, or pull it back. Byron Nelson dropped his head back nearly a foot coming into the ball.

Before you can stay behind the ball, you must *get* behind it. I mean set up with your head behind the ball and keep your head behind the ball.

If you move your head forward during your downswing or through impact, you will hit a weak, ugly shot, probably a pulled slice.

A student told me about a round of golf he played with Lee Trevino.

On the second tee, a par three, the student hit what he thought was a pretty good shot, about thirty feet short of the pin.

Trevino tossed another ball onto the ground.

"Tee it up and hit it again -- don't move your head forward this time," Trevino said.

"Lee, I've been trying all my life to stop moving my head forward," the student said. "How can I do it?"

Trevino said, "Read my lips. D-O-N'-T M-O-V-E Y-O-U-R H-E-A-D F-O-R-W-A-R-D. Every time you hit a ball today, I want you to think 'Lee is watching and saying read my lips.'"

The student was deeply impressed. He made another swing, this time without moving his head forward. With an authoritative crack, the ball took off in a slight draw, came down ten feet past the pin, and backed up.

"I have created a monster," Lee said.

The student finished the first nine one under par.

At the turn Lee put his clubs in the trunk of his car and said, "I have to leave now, Frankenstein. Don't forget what I told you."

I asked the student what happened next.

"By the fourteenth hole my head was moving forward again," he admitted. "I shot my usual 41 on the back."

Maybe it was the word "don't" that made the suggestion not last long.

A positive way to put it is: *Stay behind the ball.*

Hitting From the Top

Probably the biggest fault for all players has dozens of different names around the world. In England it is called Casting, which is a good description because the movement you make with your right arm and hand is similar to casting with a fly rod.

My friend Darrell Royal, an excellent golf player as well as the head coach of National Championship football teams at the University of Texas, has a colorful name for the fault I am talking about.

Darrell calls it OTTFIG. This translates to: "Over the Top, Forget It."

For this discussion, I will refer to the fault as Hitting From the Top.

Hitting From the Top is what happens when you reach the top of your backswing, and start back down to the ball by throwing your hands at it.

Many golfers play their whole lives Hitting From the Top. Some have managed to play well despite this flaw. Amateur Bud McKinney, a Texan who wore big flashy diamond rings, rang up an impressive record while Hitting From the Top. There are players on the professional tour who get outside the ball on their downswing, which is about the same thing as Hitting From the Top.

But just because some players are athletic enough to make this move and get away with it, doesn't make it any less disastrous for the average golfer.

No one has ever found an instant cure for this particular ailment.

Hard practice on sound fundamentals is a great help, of course, but that is not the answer a one-visit student wants to hear from an instructor.

Here are a number of things that cause Hitting From the Top:

* A grip that is too weak, especially the left hand.

* Misuse of the forearms, meaning the use of the wrists instead of the forearms at the beginning of the backswing and at impact.

* Aiming to the right.

* A stiff left leg at impact. I notice that the expert players who are least likely to Hit From the Top keep their knees slightly bent as they come through the ball. Telling a student to hit against a strong left side, which used to be common theory in teaching, tends to make the student start the downswing from outside the ball, straighten the left leg, and throw the club out and over the correct swing path.

(To demonstrate this point, make a slow-motion swing keeping your knees slightly bent until after the ball is hit. The club will stay inside. Take another slow-motion swing and straighten your left leg about halfway down. Your upper body will throw itself out and over the ball.)

* The clubface too open at address.

But the question the instructor constantly confronts is, how to persuade the student to stop Hitting From the Top without becoming too technical or offering more advice than can be absorbed in one lesson.

I know five ways that have been successful for me.

The first and simplest is to make the student try to hit the ball on the toe of the club for a while. This is often

a one-aspirin remedy for the sickness.

Another simple one is to place two balls on the ground about two inches apart and have the student hit the inside ball without touching the other.

A third and still simple method is for me to hold a shaft about a foot off the ground in front of the student and have him swing beneath it.

The fourth cure, the strongest and most basic, is to make the student learn to hook the ball. Strengthen the grip, rolling both hands to the right in exaggerated fashion. Tell the student to go ahead and hook the ball clear off the practice range. I don't care how much of a big wild hook, just as long as it is a hook.

I tell the student to rotate the left forearm to the right going back. Sometimes I have the student think of rotating the entire left arm. This fans the clubhead open on the backswing. Then bring the club down rotating the left arm and hand (the right hand automatically becomes involved) to the left and close the clubface hard at impact.

This process produces some of the most screaming fishhook-looking shots you ever saw.

But to hit these fishhooks, the student has to come into the ball from the inside.

Once a student learns to create hooks at will, he has usually stopped Hitting From the Top. The problem now becomes curing the hook. But this is relatively easy.

The fifth method is a slow-motion drill, and it's such an important drill that I want to hold it apart and explain it in a piece of its own.

I was demonstrating these methods at a PGA teaching seminar, using a waitress who had never played golf before as the student.

When we came to the fourth way, I was explaining to the pros in the crowd how this can cure the slice, and the waitress stopped me.

"Mr. Penick," she cried, "I don't want to be a hooker!"

The Slow-Motion Drill

The slow-motion drill is a drill you can do at home, and it takes much patience and many repetitions, but the time you spend at it will pay off on the golf course.

Mickey Wright practiced this drill often. As an all-purpose drill that is good for whatever ails your golf swing, this is probably the best. You can do it indoors, so you can do it in bad weather or at night.

When I say slow motion, I mean *really slow, slow motion.* If you think you are doing it in slow motion, do it even slower.

Swing the club very slowly to the top of the backswing. *Always* keep your eye on the blade of grass or the pattern in the carpet that represents the golf ball; watching the clubhead go back is a terrible habit you can accidentally pick up in this drill and take to the course with you.

As you reach the top of the backswing, replace your left heel solidly on the ground and at the same time bring your right elbow in close to your body. Very, very slowly.

Bring the club down in extreme slow motion about one third of the way toward the ball. Then stop a moment and hold it and feel it.

Now start from your holding position and do it again -- swing slowly to the top, plant the left heel, bring the right elbow close to the body, and stop about one third of the way toward the ball.

Do this four times in a row. Don't get impatient and speed up. Very slowly is the key.

After four repetitions, go ahead and make the full swing at last -- still in very slow motion -- into a high finish with the elbows out front and your head coming up slowly as if to watch a good shot. Hold the pose. Feel it.

Now do the whole thing again and again and again.

What is happening is that your golfing brain and your muscles are learning to start your downswing by planting your weight and moving your lower body to the left, and you are coming to the ball from inside with your hands quiet, trailing and still cocked, not leading and spending energy.

Your golfing brain and your muscles learn just as well from repeating the swing in slow motion as from whapping away on the range. In fact, it can be higher quality learning because no mistakes are being made in the slow-motion swing.

Ball Position

Position of the ball is second in importance only to the grip.

Mistakes in grip and ball position are mistakes made before the swing that may ruin any grand plans you have for the shot.

Many instructors teach that the ball should be played off the left heel for all shots.

I don't agree with this. Good players can do it nowadays off good lies. But if you play the ball off your left heel with a 9-iron, you are going to have to have a terribly fast hip shift to meet the club with the ball on the downblow.

The driver and a teed-up 3-wood are the only clubs you want to play off your left heel. This is because you want to hit the ball slightly on the upswing or at the lowest point of the swing with these clubs.

With the rest of the clubs you move back a fraction of an inch at a time until you reach dead center, which is where the 9-iron belongs.

If you have any doubt where to position the ball for any iron, take a couple of practice swings and note where the clubface brushes the ground.

Another way is to put your iron down on the grass with a square face, and you will see where the manufacturer designed the club to be played.

Swing the Bucket

To start a golf swing you need a forward press of some sort that sets off the action.

My favorite image of what I want the forward press to feel like is to imagine you are in your stance holding a bucket of water with your hands on either side of the bucket.

If you're going to swing this bucket back like a golf backswing, you just naturally won't do it from a dead stop. Your hands and hips and shoulders and legs will rock forward a tiny bit to provide the reaction that gives momentum to the backswing. This starts the turn and the shift of the weight to the fight foot that you would need to swing a bucket of water.

Your hands will follow your turn into the backswing as the bucket goes up. Your left heel will rise.

If you are gripping the bucket tightly, you will turn fast. If your grip is light, your turn will be slow and free.

To bring the bucket back down, you wouldn't throw it with your hands. You would shift your weight onto your left foot and turn your left hip, and you would naturally stay behind the bucket as you swing it down and through.

You can picture the release of power as the bucket reaches the forward swing and the water flies out.

A teacher I respect, Chuck Cook, suggests further in the swing-the-bucket image that if you tell your muscles to spill water to the left at the finish, you will hit a hook or draw, and if you spill it to the right, you will hit a fade.

The swing-the-bucket image works. It is especially easy to use to start a forward press.

Remember, don't overdo it. Just take a sip of medicine, not a great gulp.

The Weed Cutter

Of all the thousands of swing-training aids and gimmicks I have seen, the best is one you can buy at the hardware store if you don't already have it in your garage or toolshed.

It is the common weed cutter.

Many years ago Victor East, the genius behind Spalding clubs, sent six weed cutters to me and six to Wild Bill Mehlhorn, who was teaching at a club in Florida.

A few weeks later Mehlhorn sent his weed cutters back to Victor with a note that said, "These things are ruining my business. Students who use them don't need me anymore."

The motion you make lopping off dandelions with your weed cutter is the perfect action of swinging a golf club through the hitting area.

Furthermore, the weed cutter is heavy and builds golf muscles.

While you are swinging the weed cutter, pretend you are being paid by the hour, not by the job.

In other words, take your time.

Placing Your Feet

Most players, including many experts, fail to grasp what a big difference in the length of the swing is caused by the positions of the feet.

Try this and see for yourself. Take a normal stance and turn back to the top of your backswing with your shaft pointing at the target. Look in the mirror. Now set up again. This time turn your left foot out and down the line enough to cut out a good slice of pie. Make your backswing as before. Look in the mirror again. What do you see? Your backswing is several inches shorter.

Set up again with your left foot in a natural position, but bring your right foot square to the line or even point it a bit toward the target. Make your backswing. See? Again your backswing is several inches shorter.

Many players set up with their left foot splayed way out and their right foot square or turned in -- a combination guaranteed to shorten the backswing dramatically.

An average player will adopt this stance because he thinks this is what he sees the pros do. Then he will wonder, where did my turn go?

These foot positions have no real effect on where you are aiming, but they are very important in the length of your swing.

The Turn

The turn away from the ball and back through it again is a simple movement that has been made to seem complicated by differing teaching theories and personal idiosyncrasies.
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As Horton Smith would say, the turn is just like that song children used to sing, "The ankle bone connected to the knee bone, the knee bone connected to the hip bone, the hip bone connected to the back bone, the back bone connected to the shoulder bone...Now hear the word of the Lord."

Do it this way and keep it simple:

Stand erect with your knees slightly flexed and your eyes on the ball. Think of your swing-the-bucket image to start your forward press. Turn your body to the right with your weight shifting to your right foot, and let your left heel gently come up about an inch. It's like turning to say howdy to someone on your right. Your arms keep swinging until your shaft is behind you and points to the target.

Now let your weight shift back to your left foot at the same time your right elbow starts back toward your side, and continue turning as if to say howdy to someone on your left.

You will read and hear many complex instructions about the turn -- coiling the torso and shoulders against the tension of the hips, for example -- but not from me.

I have seen a lot of players who are so concerned with their hip turn they forget that swinging the golf club is the main point. Just remember the turn is a natural movement of the body, and your bones are connected

from the ground up.

Instant Humility

In our hotel room I was nervously going over my notes for the lecture I was to present in a few hours to a large audience of my peers at a PGA convention.

I was starting to feel a little impressed with myself. Here I was, a humble growing caddie, about to give a speech on how to teach golf to a room crowded with the best golf teachers in the world.

"Just consider it, Helen," I said. "Of all the great teachers, they have chosen me to make this talk. How many great teachers do you suppose will be there?"

My lovely wife looked up from the book she was reading.

"I don't know how many great teachers will be there, Harvey," she said. "But it's probably one less than you think."

Maxims

In 1943 Jack Burke, Sr., compiled a list of golf maxims that grew out of discussions with players and teachers, one of whom was me.

1. The wrists play very little part in golf. The crossing of the forearms puts the punch in the golf shot.

2. The face of the club going off the line produces more poor shots than anything I know of.

3. If the club goes back properly there isn't much chance of a bad shot. *(I can't go along with this. For one thing, Jack taught an inside-out swing. I like a swing that is inside-square-inside. What Jack calls taking the club back properly means different things to different people. And many mistakes are made starting down from the top of the backswing. But I agree that if you start the club back properly, you are way ahead. What is proper for you is just to start the club back with your turn.)*

4. Split the ball in half in your mind and play the inside half; the outer half shouldn't be entertained. *(This is too much to think about. Just hit it.)*

5. Learn to pick the ball clean -- don't hoe it.

6. Picture a shot going perfectly to the line.

7. If the hands are joined together as one unit, you would be surprised the amount of relaxation attained.

f0 8. Knock the peg from under the ball. This helps to get the club straight through. (I use this image constantly in my teaching -- just clip off the tee with your swing.)

9. Let the ball get in the way of the swing instead of making the ball the object.

10. Don't try to pick the ball up -- the club is built for that purpose.

11. Hitting behind the ball is caused by the weight being on the back foot. If the weight is forward it is impossible to hit behind the ball.

12. The reason for not going forward is tenseness -- keep the hands together, then the move forward is easy.

13. Picture the shot as you would like to see it.

14. Keep your feet moving to the line of flight. Don't let them freeze to the ground.

15. The shank shot is caused by the club being on the outside of the ball. The heart stops but the mouth doesn't. Put two balls together two inches apart; if you can miss the outside ball, the shank shot is cured. *(I don't agree with the cause and have more to say about this in my remarks on the shank.)*

16. Have a little power left -- don't put it all in the swing. You may need it before the game is over.

17. Let the club go where you expect the ball to.

18. Finishing the swing is very important. Without a good finish, to keep the ball straight is luck.

19. Get a system of some kind in playing. Any kind of a system beats trusting to luck.

20. Topping the ball is caused by closing the face of the club toward the body. *(I think more often topping the ball is caused by stiffening the knees.)*

21. Slicing is caused by the hands leading the head of the club. Tenseness plays a major part. The face of the club is not flush at impact.

22. Anyone slicing the ball has reached the top of his game. The harder he hits it, the more it will slice.

23. A ball lying badly, better try to pick it in preference to hoeing it out.

24. Be honest with yourself. What you would find out in six months of practice, your pro can tell you in five minutes.

25. Hit the ball, then the ground -- that will assure you of getting down to the ball.

26. Let the right hip take the club back and the left hip bring the club forward.

27. Try holding your right shoulder back as long as possible to give your left side a chance to get through.

28. Hold the head of the club off the ground if you are inclined to be tense.

29. Let the hands start slightly before the head of the club on the backswing.

The Mythical Perfect Swing

Here is how to make the Mythical Perfect Swing that all golfers are always pursuing:

Stand a few paces behind the ball and look down the line toward the target.

Walk to the ball from behind, get a good grip, pass the club back of the ball square to the target, then adjust your stance to fit.

Have a slight waggle and then set the club back of the ball again and make a forward press similar to what you would do swinging a bucket of water.

In the first move back as the club gets parallel to the ground, the toe of the club points directly up, and the left heel starts off the ground.

Let the club come on up, keeping your elbows in front of your body, to the top of your backswing, where the clubhead will be pointing almost to the ground.

Return your left heel to the ground and simultaneously let your right elbow move back to your side as it comes down.

Weight has started shifting to your left side. Your forearms cross over as they swing. Your head stays behind the ball, perhaps even moving slightly more behind it.

Finish with your forearms in front of you. A good finish shows what has gone before it. Let your head come up to look at the good shot.

On your follow-through, the right foot merely helps to hold your balance.

If you have lost your balance during this Mythical Perfect Swing, it is probably because your grip is too weak or too tight or both.

Practice this at home in slow motion without a ball.

Be sure you don't watch the clubhead go back. Swing the clubhead at a spot every time.

Force yourself to approach the ball from behind before every swing, even on the carpet.

Make ten to twenty Mythical Perfect Swings each night, teaching your muscles what your brain wants.

Using a weighted club during this exercise can be even more beneficial.

The Magic Move

If there is any such thing as a Magic Move in the golf swing, to me it is an action that I stress over and over on the practice tee and in this book.

You have heard it from me many times by now, but I will say it again -- *to start your downswing, let your weight shift to your left foot while bringing your right elbow back down to your body.*

This is one move, not two.

Practice this move again and again. You don't need a golf club to do it. Practice until you get the feeling and rhythm of it, and then keep on practicing. Be sure your eyes are trained on the spot where the ball would be. Your head will stay well back.

I've read books and magazines that offered the "secret" of The Move. The secret takes different forms for different players. For Ben Hogan the move is *pronating.* For Byron Nelson the move is *a lateral shift and not pronating.*

There really is no one Magic Move.

But when you learn the *left foot-right elbow* move I have described above, you will hit the ball as if it is magic.

How to Practice the Full Swing

Choose a 7-iron or a 6-iron, whichever one you feel the most confidence in, and use it for 80 percent of all your full-swing practice.

The reason for this is I want you to develop faith in your golf swing.

The best way to learn to trust your swing is by practicing your swing with a club you trust.

A high handicapper who learns to hit a good 7-iron can build his or her game around that shot. Even if you have to hit the ball twice on a par four to come within range of your 7-iron, it's a great help to know for sure that your 7-iron shot will land on the green. This will give you a putt at par even though the first two shots might have been poor efforts.

A full 7-iron swing is just about as long as a driver swing. It's the difference in length and the lie of the clubs that makes the driver swing look longer at the top of the back-swing.

The main difference in swinging a 7-iron and a driver is that you want to hit your driver slightly on the upswing, or at the lowest point of the swing, and this is a function of ball position.

Some teachers have their students practice with a 3-iron on the theory that if the student can learn to hit a 3-iron, the rest of the clubs will seem easy.

This is certainly true, but it seems backward to me. It is much easier to learn to hit a good 7-iron, and that in turn will make the 3-iron easier to hit if you just use your good 7-iron swing on it.

Remember that because the number on the iron is lower does not mean you should swing the club harder.

Certainly you must practice a little with every club. But don't devote too much time to the driver. The driver is the most difficult club to hit, which is why they let you put the ball on a peg. The idea of practice is to improve -- or at least to hold your own -- and the surest way to do this is by practicing with a club that gives you good results.

I hate to see a high handicapper practicing the driver. It gets very ugly. The golfer becomes frustrated, and the swing gets worse and worse. Most high handicappers or once-a-week players should lock the driver in a closet and practice and play with a 3-wood.

If the average golfer hits the 3-wood off the tee, the shots will on the whole be more successful. What you will miss is maybe that one good driver shot in a round, and it's not worth it.

Warming Up in a Hurry

If you arrive at the course with just a few minutes to warm up before a round, use that time to hit chip shots.

The chip shot, being a short version of the full swing, tells your muscles and your golfing brain to get ready to play.

Most average golfers with only a few minutes to warm up will rush to the range and try to hit balls fast. This may loosen up the grease, but it also can ruin your tempo for the day and perhaps implant negative thoughts.

Some average golfers think they are wiser because they rush to the putting green instead, and try to hit as many putts as possible before being called to the tee. This is just as bad as rushing on the range. You'll probably miss a lot of those putts you're in such a hurry to hit, and by the time you tee off you will be doubting your putting ability.

To warm up in a hurry and arouse your sense of feel or touch, use the time you have to stroke a few careful chip shots.

This will put your mind on the business at hand -- which is to play golf. If your mind is still back at the office when you go to the first tee, you are in for a rough day.

Chipping

The first and foremost fundamental to learn about chipping is this: Keep your hands ahead of or even with the clubhead on the follow-through. All the way through.

Grip your club down close to the steel. Flex your knees so you can get down to it. Keep the club near to you, instead of reaching out for the ball. Move your weight a little more to your left foot.

Loosen your elbows. Remember that you are hitting the ball with your hands, not with your elbows.

Make your backswing and your follow-through approximately the same length, as in the putting stroke.

Use the straightest-faced club that will carry the ball onto the green the soonest and start it rolling toward the cup.

Off a downhill lie or a tight lie or into the wind or with a fast green, always choose to chip the ball rather than pitch it.

Under pressure around the green, always go to the straightest blade that will do the job. It may require a 3-iron to get the roll you need.

High handicappers should use their putters from off the green whenever it looks feasible. They'll generally get closer to the hole this way.

Putting

Just as in chipping, the first and foremost fundamental to learn about the putting stroke is: Keep the hands even with or ahead of the head of the putter on the follow-through.

There are many great putters -- like Billy Casper and Chi Chi Rodriguez -- who use a wristy stroke and pop the ball as the clubhead passes their hands.

If I see a student using that sort of stroke and making a lot of putts, I won't try to change it. Putting is an individual matter. Bobby Locke hooked his putts. I would never try to teach a student to putt that way, but I sure wouldn't try to make Bobby Locke stop it.

The way I teach you to putt is by using a simple system.

Read your line from behind the ball. Walk to the ball from behind and take your stance with your hands slightly ahead of the ball or straight up. Glance at the hole and glance at your putter blade to make sure it is square to your line.

Now take one, two, or three practice strokes, concentrating on each one as if you are trying to make the putt, judging the distance. I like to see the stroke start with a small forward press, using the swing-the-bucket image.

Then put your putter blade down behind the ball, keep your head and eyes still, and imitate your last practice stroke.

One great value to this system is that it puts your mind on the stroke and not on the importance of the putt. Never -- I repeat, never -- allow yourself to think about what is riding on the putt, whether it's a major championship or just a fifty-cent wager. Hit the putt as you have hit ten thousand putts in the past. Concentrate on imitating your final practice stroke, not on what will happen if you either miss it or make it.

When practicing putting, always choose a level place on the green, or perhaps one that is slightly uphill.

I hate the old saying "never up, never in."

It's true that a ball that never reaches the cup never goes in, but neither does a ball that goes past it.

I like a putt to die at the hole. A putt that dies at the hole will sometimes topple in, whereas a putt that is struck too hard will hit the hole and spin away. Just as many putts are missed behind the hole as short of it.

The cup is only one inch wide for a putt that is struck too hard. The cup is four inches wide for a ball that dies at the hole.

Furthermore, it is much easier to sink a putt when you've left it a foot short than when you've gone three feet past, especially if it is uphill from the cup.

The main reason a putt is left short is not that you hit the putt too softly, it's that you didn't hit it squarely on the sweet spot.

I like to see a putt slip into the hole like a mouse.

One thing all great putters have in common, regardless of their style, is that the putting stroke is approximately the same length back and through.

Try to keep the putter low to the ground, but don't give up a good stroke to do it artificially.

With short putts, concentrate on the line.

With long putts, concentrate on the distance.

I prefer a putting stroke that uses the arms and wrists. But on a very long putt, you will need to use your shoulders and take a longer backswing and follow-through.

Play the ball off the left heel. Place your feet square to the line.

If you are taking the putter too much outside the line, your weight could be on your toes and your eyes might not be over the ball.

There are two reliable ways to be sure your eyes are over the ball. Either hold a ball at eye level and then drop it and see where it lands, or else hold your putter shaft straight down from eye level to the ball.

To take your grip, put your left hand on the putter the way the manufacturer designed the grip to be held. Most great putters have their right hand under a little and keep the blade square because they offset it by weakening the left hand.

Once you adopt a good system for putting, the rest of it is mental. Stay with your system.

I was at the Masters watching them play, and I noticed Jacky Cupit on the practice green. I watched him awhile and finally couldn't stand it. I walked over and said, "Jacky, would you mind if I make a suggestion?"

He said, "Why do you think I've been staying close to the rope all this time?"

He had been hitting a pulled hook with his putter. Trying to correct it, he had yanked his hands way up high. I said, "Son, let's try holding that putter the way the man who made the grip intended for you to hold it. Just make your hands fit it."

Jacky went out and shot a 67, low round of the day until Ben Hogan came in with a 66. Jacky showed me his scorecard with a happy grin and said, "Harvey, we did it!" I hadn't really done anything except give him a positive thought.

I hear people talk about hitting putts with overspin. I say this is nearly impossible. It's like in shooting pool; to put overspin on a pool ball, you have to hit it with the cue tip on the top seven tenths of the ball. You don't want to try to hit a putt like that.

A good putt dies out straight. A bad putt slithers away.

Be decisive on the putting green. Decide what you want to do on a putt and then do it with confidence, even if it should prove to be wrong.

You should make it a habit to carry your putter in your left hand. Or in both hands, if you wish. But never carry it in your right hand alone.

Your left hand and arm are an extension of the putter shaft. That is the feeling you want to have.

I see pros on the tour place the putter behind the ball with their right hand. Then when they put their left hand

on the club, they have automatically changed their aim.

Put your putter behind the ball with your left hand, or with both hands.

Think positively.

The reason I am so hipped on putting is two of my best friends were the best putters of their time -- Horton Smith and Ben Crenshaw.

Horton Smith used a practice putting drill that I recommend. Stroke a few putts using only your right hand. When you get the feeling for it, allow your left hand to join in gently. But I like both hands to work together.

parA good drill for developing touch is to putt a ball 30 feet. Then putt the next one 29 feet. Then 28 feet, and so on.

Play games on the putting green. The more time you spend there, the better golf scores you will turn in.

The Dreaded Four-Footer

A woman at church remarked to me, "Harvey, that game you play doesn't make sense. You hit a ball 250 yards off the tee and it counts one stroke, the same as for a three- or four-foot putt."

Not even the most expert of golfers would argue the point with her. At his home club, Shady Oaks in Fort Worth, Ben Hogan likes to play fairways and greens and closest to the pin, leaving out putting entirely.

Orville Moody said the four-foot putt almost ran him off the tour. "I just can't get over the fact that I can hit two great shots covering maybe 440 yards, and be four feet from the cup, and if I miss that little-bitty putt it counts as much as the two great shots," he said.

This was before Orville got his extra-long putter and started winning big money on the Senior Tour. (Being old-fashioned, I don't like the extra-long putters. They look funny to me. I think there should be a rule in golf that the two hands must touch each other.)

One of the 85-shooters at my club told me, "Harvey, I'd rather face a 175-yard carry across a lake than a four-foot putt."

Teaching seminars I would often start by saying, "Getting up in front of you teaching professionals makes me more nervous than anything except a three-foot downhill putt that breaks to the left on a slick green."

(Upon reading that statement, many of you are probably saying, "Harvey got it backward. Everybody knows a downhill putt that breaks to the right is the hardest putt for a right-hander.")

Just let me say that in many years of conducting seminars for up to 250 pros in a class, not a one of them ever argued with me about the left-breaking downhill putt causing their nerves to get jumpy.

The fact is that both the left- and right-breakers are very difficult. The reason I say the left-breaker is hardest is that you aim to the right of the hole and your stroke tends to come from the inside, hooking the ball through the break.)

Let's think a moment about these dreaded short putts and see if we can remove some of the fear.

An average golfer misses short putts because of fear or a lack of concentration. Instead of thinking about stroking the putt into the hole, he or she is thinking about any number of things -- including the other players who are standing on the green watching for the result.

The average player usually doesn't work as hard lining up a three- or four-footer as lining up a ten-footer that might be an easier putt.

Another major mistake I see in average golfers is that they try to guide the short putt into the hole. They try to use their stroke to steer the ball through the break.

The right way to do it is to approach the short putt from behind and line it up. If you decide it breaks two inches left of the cup then that's where you want to stroke it -- not jerk it toward the hole.

Use the system. Make one, two, or three practice strokes, concentrating on the line, washing bad thoughts out of your mind. Then imitate your last practice stroke. Don't look up and peek at it. Just stroke it on the line. This routine helps to keep your thoughts from being distracted.

Negative thoughts and carelessness cause more missed short putts than any other factor.

If it's a downhill putt that breaks to the left, an aspirin is to stroke the ball on the toe of the putter. This removes some or all of the break.

When I tell students this, they always ask, "Does that mean I should hit the putt on the heel if it breaks the other way?"

My answer is no. Never hit it on the heel.

A three- or four-footer that is straight will always go in if you stroke the ball in the sweet spot on the putter face, provided you are aimed at the center of the cup.

Don't worry about anything but the line. You'll hit the ball hard enough.

Be careful in lining up the short ones. Use the system and believe in what you're doing.

The greatest players in the world miss short putts, but not very often. There's no reason you should miss them, either.

The Shank Shot

A shank shot is so ugly that I hate to write the word.

Let's call it a Lateral Shot instead.

I had a student, a good player, who started hitting these Lateral Shots all of a sudden. He called me to the range and showed me.

Knowing he was a good player and thinking he would work his own way out of it, I said, "I'll bet you can't

do that twelve times in a row."

So he stood there and did it twelve times in a row.

"Now what?" he said.

"Go home and come back tomorrow," I said.

Most people think this shot is caused by hitting the ball with a closed blade at impact, but this is improbable. Usually the shot is caused by blocking off a pull, or what you think is going to be a pull.

The ball may be too far forward. Beginners may be standing too close to it. Experienced players may be standing too far back.

Many times it is caused by the player trying to hold his or her head down too much. This drops the head way down and extends the arc of the club, resulting in a bent left arm at impact.

Or it can be caused by poor eyesight. Any pilot will tell you eyesight will change a bit from day to day.

Cures for the Lateral Shot:

Try conscientiously to hit every iron shot on the toe of the club until you stop shanking.

Never aim to the left. You would do well to think you are aimed to the right.

Feel like the toe of the club is rolling over.

Place a pasteboard box or a tee about one inch outside of the ball lined up at the target. Hit the ball without hitting the box or the tee.

It is almost impossible to hit a Lateral Shot if the blade is closed. Try it sometime. Close the blade and make your best swing and follow through. Keep it closed throughout the swing. The ball may go to the left -- but I don't think you can hit it laterally.

Why I Decided to Become a Teacher

Sam Snead.

I thought I was a pretty fair player and had nagging aspirations to join the tour until a Houston Open in the middle 1930s.

I was practicing putting and one of the fellows said, "Harvey, have you seen this kid Snead hit the ball? He's about to tee off now."

I walked over to the tee and saw the new kid from West Virginia hit his drive. I not only saw it, I heard it.

It sounded like a rifle and the ball flew like a bullet.

I knew right that moment that my future was not as a tour player.

The Stance

Face the ball plain, as if you are about to shake hands with someone on the other side of it. There's no need to get your body twisted into some kind of funny shape. If you were going to shake hands with someone, you wouldn't bend sideways or slump sharply forward like so many beginners do.

If you are slew-footed by nature, it's better to point your toes out the way you walk. If you are pigeon-toed, you'll want your feet more square.

The Hogan foot position is preferred by many good players. This has the right foot square to the line and the left foot turned toward the target a few inches. The advantage of this is that the square right foot helps shorten a too-long backswing, and the slanted left foot helps to make a full weight shift and follow-through.

The average golfer may want the right foot toed out slightly to allow for more turn.

If you want to close your stance, pull your right foot back a few inches from the line. But be sure you turn your hips and shoulders to fit it. So many average golfers think if they just pull back the right foot, they have closed their stance. In fact, if they pull back the right foot but leave the hips and shoulders square, they haven't made any change at all.

To open your stance, pull your left foot back a few inches from the line and let your hips and shoulders go with it.

When you stand to the ball, just flex the knees a little, as if you are making the first move toward sitting down. When I tell students to flex the knees, so often they start jiggling up and down, which looks very amateurish.

I am careful about using this "sitting-down" thought, because the next time I see the student he or she may have swallowed the whole bottle of medicine and really be in a posture that looks like sitting in a chair.

Be comfortable and at ease, not straining anything.

Wesley Ellis, Jr., who played for me in college before he went on the tour, had the most natural-looking stance I ever saw. Wesley just walked up to the ball in his normal stride, stopped, and hit it. He kept the ball in play more than anyone I know of.

Wesley used to have a dog that would follow him faithfully on rounds of golf at Brackenridge Park. The dog would sit quietly, never bothering anyone. What a fine companion.

A Very Bad Habit

Watching the clubhead go back as you start your swing will probably ruin any chance you have of hitting a good shot.

Anything you do wrong taking the clubhead back is not as bad as watching it.

It is amazing how many golfers get into this habit.

The First-Time Student

Before I take a student onto the range, I like to go into the clubhouse for a cup of coffee and a chat.

Usually students are nervous. I want to put them at ease. I want to gain their confidence. I ask about their game, how often they play or practice, what their goals are.

I tell them, "Any mistakes that are made out there today are mine, not yours."

When I hear one of my students griping about how his clubs are no good, I like to say, "Hey, your swings are my fault first of all, your fault second, and the club maybe third."

I'll ask the new student if he or she would rather hit woods or irons, are there any aches or pains, how is life going. I want to understand my students and put them at ease with me.

This takes about twenty minutes, and it gets us off on the right foot.

Kids and Carts

In my opinion, no young player can develop his or her game to its highest potential if he or she rides around the course in a golf cart.

If they are old enough to swing a club, they should be walking, strengthening their legs, learning to feel the rhythm of the game that simply cannot be learned in a golf cart.

It's all right for youngsters to ride on a cart with Dad or Mom and have fun. But four youngsters driving around the course in two carts is a sad sight.

Walter Hagen said to stop and smell the flowers while you're on the course. This sensitivity is a powerfully alluring and educational part of golf. You're much less likely to realize it if you grow up riding in a cart.

A Story by Helen

When we got married sixty years ago, Harvey already had a big reputation in golf. He became head pro at Austin Country Club at eighteen and golf coach at Texas at twenty-six. So I was always known as Mrs. Harvey Penick. Only our friends knew me as Helen.

People would say, "She's Mrs. Harvey Penick. She's bound to know how to play golf." I loved the game, but I was an 18-handicapper. I finally started using my maiden name -- Helen Holmes -- when I would enter a tournament.

The last time I played with Harvey was in a Scotch Foursome at the old Austin Country Club on Riverside Drive. We were matched against Martha and Peck Westmoreland from Lockhart.

Before we teed off, Harvey told me, "Helen, Peck is hitting the ball so bad. It's his grip. Would you mind riding in the cart with Martha while I see if I can help Peck?"

After six holes, Peck was playing very well. Harvey came to me and said, "Helen, Martha is having a terrible time with her putting stroke. Would you ride with Peck for a while, and I'll try to help Martha."

Martha took two putts on the seventh and one-putted the eighth and ninth.

On the tenth tee I said, "Harvey, you helped Martha and Peck. Now tell me what I am doing wrong."

Harvey said, "I don't know. I haven't been looking."

So I quit playing with him.

He used to give me a fifteen-minute lesson and then go hide.

But maybe that's one reason we've stayed married so long.

Learning

I learn teaching from teachers.

I learn golf from golfers.

I learn winning from coaches.

There are many good teachers of golf who teach quite differently from each other. I prefer listening to one who teaches differently than I do. I might learn from him. I already know my own way.

The piano master Horowitz told his students, "Never be afraid to dare. Never be afraid to play without asking advice. I'm not going to teach you, but to guide you."

I read that quote to Tinsley, and he said, "Why, that sounds just like you."

I'll always remember what my cousin, Dr. D. A. Penick, said when he turned over the reins as University of Texas tennis coach to Wilmer Allison:

"Wilmer, I know you'll make better players of your students in four years. But will they be better people? That's the important thing."

Ben Hogan

I was playing in a charity match in Austin with Ben Hogan, and I heard him ask his caddie, "Which way is due west?"

It was a surprise to hear Hogan ask a caddie a question. Ben thought he knew his own game better than a caddie ever could. Ben judged his own distances and pulled his own clubs.

I wondered all day why Ben had asked that question. After the round, I brought it up.

"All other things being equal, greens break to the west," Ben said.

He is right, of course. There are many reasons why, I later found out, but unless the architect has tricked up the green to fool you, your putt will break to the west.

As a young man, Ben had a very bad pull hook. He worked it out himself, getting a good grip with his right hand well on top, the V pointing to his chin.

Pronation is what he called his secret. In the hitting area, his left forearm, or possibly his entire left arm, uncoiled. This got him inside the ball and gave him a snap.

Ben practiced thousands of hours perfecting his swing. At first he felt his swing was too long. He changed his stance to shorten his swing a little by adopting what is now the famous Hogan Stance -- the right foot square to the line and the left toe turned out a few inches. Each of these foot movements shortens the backswing.

I like a long swing if it is kept under control, and Ben certainly learned to do that.

Jimmy Demaret and Hogan became pals. Jimmy told me he called up Ben before the first Legends of Golf Senior Tournament and asked Hogan to be his partner.

Ben replied he wasn't playing often or well.

"Come on and let's have some old-time fun," Jimmy said.

Ben said, "No, I couldn't help you."

Jimmy said, "So what? You never did."

The Sexes

No pretty woman can miss a single shot without a man giving her some poor advice.

A husband should never try to teach his wife to play golf or drive a car. A wife should never try to teach her husband to play bridge.

A Practice Rule

Never practice your full swing when the wind is blowing at your back. If you're right-handed, this means the wind is left to right. The more you practice with the wind blowing left to right, the more you will be inclined to swing across the ball and hit from the top.

Ben Hogan was one of the first to realize this.

Ben would seek out a part of the course where the wind was blowing into his face, either right to left or head-on, and that's where he would practice.

If you practice into the wind, just use your regular swing. Don't try to hit it harder. And please be careful not to practice too many "punch" shots. There's no follow-through on a "punch" shot.

Hooking and Slicing

Hooks don't hurt the average golfer. It's the pulled hook that does the damage. If the average golfer is hitting a shot that flies straight and hooks toward the end, don't worry about it.

If your ball starts immediately to the left, and then hooks, you need help from a pro.

The first place to look is your grip. Take the privilege of making the V's of one or both hands point at your chin.

When one cures a hook by putting the left hand too much on top of the club, it is only a matter of time before the swing gets out and over the ball.

In your swing, concentrate on clipping the tee or brushing the grass. This will take the club straight through.

Opening the face of your club a little at address is practically the same thing as weakening your grip.

The slicer has a much worse time of it than the hooker.

Many high handicappers hit a slice as such a regular thing that they allow for it when they take aim. If you allow for a slice, you are almost certainly going to get one. (Allowing for a hook is also conducive to hooking.)

The slicer should first hold the club lightly and look to the grip.

You have the privilege to make your V's of either or both hands point to your right shoulder.

Again, clip the tee or brush the grass to make your clubface go straight through. Make sure to hold the club lightly. Think of it as a fine musical instrument. You wouldn't try to play a clarinet by crushing it, would you? Hold it lightly all the way through the swing.

A sure cure for the slicer is to pretend you are on a baseball field at home plate. Take your stance to aim your body slightly to the right of second base, but aim your clubface straight at the base. Then hit the ball over the shortstop. Use a 7-iron at first, then a 3-wood.

Be careful the downswing is not from the outside. Come down the line on plane and hit a hard fly ball over the shortstop, using primarily the left forearm and possibly rotating the whole left arm. This is the best cure for slicing that I know.

Read this carefully and I'm sure you can hook the ball.

Long and Short

Jack Burke, Jr., and I were giving a clinic and somebody asked about shooting at the flag with a long iron.

"I shoot at the middle of the green on long irons," Jack said. "Sometimes the ball rolls up by the flag and makes me look good."

Anybody who can play golf very well can shoot at the flag from 150 yards if the greens are soft. When the course is dry, most players will try to hit the ball too far off the tee and will wind up where they can't play to the pin.

There's no reason why the average golfer should take more than three to get down from 150 yards. If you spend most of your full-swing practice on your 7-, 6-, or 5-iron -- whichever is your 150-yard shot -- you will develop the confidence to hit the middle of the green, and maybe it will roll close to the cup and make you look good.

Chip or Pitch?

Always chip the ball if:

1. The lie is poor.

2. The green is hard.

3. You have a downhill lie.

4. The wind has an influence on the shot.

5. You are under stress.

Probably you want to pitch the ball if:

1. The lie is good.

2. You have an uphill lie.

3. The green is very soft.

4. There is an obstacle in the way.

Ability must be considered. The expert player can play a delicate chip with a sand wedge that would be very risky for a high handicapper. These are general guidelines.

A common fault in pitching is for the player to pull up off the shot. This is because the clubhead gets ahead of the hands. To cure this, I will have a student practice hitting a low pitch, as if he wants to hit a shot that would go under a card table. This encourages the student to stay down with the ball and let the loft on the clubhead do the pitching.

Hitting a pitch shot with a sand wedge from any distance, use the full length of the club. Gripping down on a sand wedge is conducive to chili-dipping, which is dropping your head and bending your left arm at impact, causing you to hit behind the ball or else top it.

Never let the clubhead pass your hands on the follow-through of a chip or a short pitch.

There is an important wedge shot to learn for close lies and winter fairways when the grass is dormant. Play the ball off the right foot. Close the blade until it is square to the line and the bounce of the blade does not touch the ground. Adjust your stance forward to compensate for direction. Put slightly more weight on the left foot. Strike the ball and the ground at the same time on the downswing.

This will produce a lower ball with more backspin. It is not a trick shot. It's a shot that comes in handy.

I taught this shot to one of my favorite students, former state senior champion Bill Penn.

He came in and complained, "Harvey, I want a shot that works 100 percent of the time. This one only works three out of four times for me. I two-putted once."

Preparing for a Big Match

Be yourself. Do as you usually do. If you ordinarily have a couple of drinks in the evening, do it. If you have been going to bed at 11 P.M., do not crawl between the sheets two hours earlier than normal. Eat the same food you usually eat, and at the same hour.

You must understand that it is your mind that will have the most to do with how you play in the big match.

That's why you should avoid new or different things that will distract your mind from your normal routine.

Put the results of the big match out of your thoughts. The results are in the future. You want to stay in the present.

At the course before the big match, warm up as usual. If you ordinarily put on your shoes, hit half a dozen balls and go to the tee, keep it the same. Hitting a whole bag of balls will only hurt you, unless you always warm up with a whole bag.

This is no time to make a change in your swing or your grip. You must "dance with what brung you."

When you go to the first tee, don't even consider the eventual result of the round. Consider the shot at hand. Sandra Haynie, an LPGA Hall of Famer who grew up in Austin and Fort Worth, would not watch her opponents hit their shots. I don't necessarily recommend this for everyone, but it may help you stay concentrated on your own shot.

Try and play each shot to the best of your ability, one shot at a time -- and *take dead aim!*

Playing in the Wind

My old friend Jimmie Connolly, a fine player, used to have trouble playing in the wind. The night before he played a thirty-six-hole match in high wind for the Texas Amateur Championship, he asked me for advice. This is what I told him:

Wind tends to make people hurry. I believe more accidents happen on and off the golf course in March than any other month, because of the wind.

On all shots in the wind, including the putter, pay careful attention to your balance. Do not hurry yourself or your swing. Just be normal. With a driver, tee the ball a little lower against the wind and a little higher when the wind is with you.

Scratch players or pros can hit the old Demaret Quail Shot into the wind, but I don't recommend this shot for the average player. It requires precise timing and a great deal of practice.

Instead, I say if your shot calls for a 5-iron on an ordinary day, into the wind you should hit a 4-iron, or even a 3-iron. The loft on the club will keep the ball low.

If the wind is helping on the same shot, choose a 6-iron, 7-iron, or even an 8-iron.

Remember, the wind is blowing as hard for your opponent as it is for you. Take your time. Keep your balance. Don't let the wind make you hurry or swing hard.

Jimmie Connolly won the state title the next day, 5 and 4.

Titanic Thompson

Austin is an easy drive from Fort Worth, Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston, so naturally our town became a place for traveling hustlers to pause for some action.

Ben Hogan told me about a man named Alvin G. Thomas, later famous as Titanic Thompson, who was hustling in Fort Worth. "He's bound to come through Austin and want to play," Ben said. "He can play left-handed or right-handed, and you can't beat him."

Sure enough, one Sunday afternoon things had slowed down and I was sitting in the golf shop when a stranger walked in and introduced himself. "I am Herman Kaiser from Ardmore, Oklahoma." He showed me his PGA card and asked if he could play our course.

I said that was fine. Kaiser pointed to a big, handsome fellow and said, "This is my amateur friend, Mr. Thomas, a member of my club." As Kaiser and his friend started out the door, Thomas said, "Would you like to play with us?" I said no, I guess not.

They went out on the front nine. One of our members who liked playing for a lot of money came in. I told him about Thomas. The member said, "Harvey, let's catch them on the back side and play them. We'll beat them out of a few hundred. I'll pay if we lose."

So I was out practicing when Thomas and his friend came through. Thomas sat down on a bench. He was wearing a pair of cord shoes, not spikes. I said we'd like to play. Thomas said, "We'll play you all for a dollar a hole, or ten, a hundred, a thousand, you name it." He let us see there was a hole in the sole of his shoe.

I said I'd start off playing the back nine for fifty dollars each, which was a lot of money to me.

We began playing. On the third hole, five or six men in street clothes showed up. They had been playing poker in the clubhouse and came out to see us play golf. Titanic flashed a roll of hundred-dollar bills, and asked if I thought they wanted his money.

On about the sixth hole, Thomas said, "I sure like this place. I think I may stay around for a while." This was shortly before Christmas. Thomas pulled out a little brown candy bag. "You want to give your wife something nice for Christmas?" he said. "Give her a few of these."

The bag was full of diamonds.

I said, no thanks, I guess not.

By the last hole, Thomas and his partner had holed a couple of long putts and beat us 1-up.

In the golf shop afterward, Thomas bought fifty dollars worth of stuff to make up for what I had lost. "I was really lucky today," he told me, the way a hustler would. "You guys nearly had us."

A few months later I saw a picture in the paper of Thomas's partner.

Herman Kaiser's picture was in the paper because he had just won the Masters.

We had many hustlers pass through town.

One big fellow who claimed to be an Indian wanted to play with me using my clubs and him using a slingshot. I took him on. He was very accurate from short range, but he couldn't shoot the ball far enough from the tee with his slingshot to beat me.

Maybe the most bizarre hustlers we ever had were the Duke of Paducah and the Masked Marvel. The Duke was selling tickets for a big match of the Masked Marvel against the strongest challenger in town. They decided they wanted to play me for "charity."

We found out why the Marvel wore a mask.

He and the Duke intended to steal the ticket money and escape before the match. We checked up on them and then called off the game and urged them to leave Austin.

Another hustler was hanging around our club trying to get a match when Wilmer Allison walked up and said, "Anybody want to putt against me?"

The hustler's eyes lit up.

"I do," the hustler said. "How much do you want to play for?"

Wilmer said, "The usual -- twenty-five cents."

The hustler grabbed his bag and departed to the sound of our laughter.

A Life in Golf

I once heard a woman ask, "I wonder how Harvey makes a living? All he does is hang around Austin Country Club."

In a roundabout way I have somehow tried to teach each of my students that golf and life are similar. There's nothing guaranteed to be fair in either golf or life, and we shouldn't expect it to be different.

You must accept your disappointments and triumphs equally.

If you're a pro you may go out there and finish second in the big money, and still you will roll and tumble in bed all night, thinking if you had just made a certain putt or two you would have finished first.

One person can put this kind of thinking behind and go on, but the next one can't and continues tossing and turning, suffering in the mind.

To some it doesn't seem fair that Ben Crenshaw can walk onto a course and just naturally play great golf at the age of twelve, where others might work all their life and never approach being as good.

I played in a lot of tournaments, but I felt that I was playing as much for what I could learn from my fellow pros as for any chance of winning. I knew I wanted to teach, and this was an important part of my learning.

Golf tells you much about character. Play a round of golf with someone, and you know them more intimately

than you might from years of dinner parties.

Just watching how close a player steps to the cup when retrieving the ball reveals whether this is a thoughtful, considerate person.

I took care of golf courses for forty years as the superintendent as well as the pro. I used to fight worms. Worms came up through the greens, aerifying them, and as soon as that dirt goes through a worm it's the best fertilizer that could be. But too many worms means too much fertilizer. So we spread a little lye on the greens, turned on the sprinkler, and the worms came tumbling out. We would whip the worms down with a pole and scrape them up with an early-bird rake. We didn't have pesticides. Worms were fine up to a certain point.

We used a spade fork to mash down until you heard the grass pop, aerifying. We would take two men and spend four or five days working from the first to the eighteenth green in the early spring.

Some places put bird boxes around the greens and encouraged birds to move in. When we saw a lot of birds on the greens, we knew we had an insect problem.

When I took the pro job in 1923, Austin Country Club -- which was chartered in 1898 as one of the first two golf clubs in Texas -- was a sand greens course, as were most courses in the state. We had nine holes until March 2, 1914.

The term "tee box" comes from the box of sand that used to stand at the driving-off places. Players would use the sand to build up little mounds, or tees, to hit the ball off.

In 1924 I convinced the Board to put in grass greens. Austin Muny, where my brother Tom later became the pro, was putting in Bermuda-grass greens, and I argued that we needed them, too.

When we moved the course to Riverside Drive, our architect, Perry Maxwell, put in bent-grass greens. Then we moved to our Pete Dye course in the hills along the lake. I've worn out three courses.

In the old days when they started fertilizing their fairways at Dallas Country Club, A1 Badger went over to Fort Worth and got all the cow manure they had at the stockyards. He spread cow manure all over the fairways. This stuff really stunk. Dallas Country Club is in Highland Park, a very ritzy neighborhood. Poor Al took a lot of abuse for that.

If he had used rabbit manure, there wouldn't have been a smell. But how could he have caught enough rabbits, or raided enough hutches, to cover every fairway? Highland Park smelled like cow manure for months.

When they tore down the old courthouse in Austin, they found bat guano three feet deep in the attic. I got an old truck and brought that precious fertilizer back to Austin Country Club. As we drove by the high school in our truck, we passed my daughter, Kathryn, walking home with friends. She pretended not to know me.

I have watched Austin Country Club grow from a nine-hole sand greens course into one of the prettiest, most challenging courses in the country. We have the Colorado River, lakes, canyons, creeks, trees, wildflowers, deer, rabbits, squirrels, birds everywhere.

At first I thought our Pete Dye design might be too difficult for our members. But as our course has matured,

our members on all levels of ability have learned to love it as I do. With four tees to each hole, any realistic player can enjoy the game here.

I feel that good bent-grass greens like ours are superior to good Bermuda-grass greens.

If somebody came to me and said, "Harvey, if you had started as a banker when you were a young man, by now you'd be a wealthy retired bank president. Wouldn't that be better than being a retired grown-up caddie?"

If they had said that, and they did, I would answer, "When I was a young man, you didn't become president of a bank unless you were a member of the family that owned it. My oldest brother, Fred, a teller, was the oldest employee of the American Bank. Fred was perfectly satisfied and happy and retired to a two-story home by Onion Creek. But with my ability and my schooling there was no profession anywhere that suited me as much as golf."

The best part of golf is that if you observe the etiquette, you can always find a game. I don't care how good you play, you can find somebody who can beat you, and I don't care how bad you play, you can find somebody you can beat.

The most important thing I can say to any young man or woman who is contemplating a life in golf is this: Marry a good person like I did.

Thank you, Helen.

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Users Review

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