

Golf And It's Minimum Essentials

by FRANK THOMPSON, AMATEUR CHAMPION OF CANADA.

No. 4—THE WRISTS AND HOW THEY WORK

(By Frank Thompson)

If one is to make headway in golf must use his wrists to a great extent. Ninety-nine players out of one hundred would probably agree with a statement, and yet, in all probability, not more than one of the hundred could tell clearly how the wrists perform their work. The term "wrist" has been used loosely to include movements which have nothing to do with the wrists proper. An instance of this is the confounding of forearm with wrist action. The camera has done a great deal to clear up this confusion, for it catches and holds, so to speak, the transient movements in the swing which are impossible to the eye. When one addresses the ball preparatory to swinging it he usually indulges in a preliminary movement called the waggle. Good players do this. If the reader does not, then he had better start without the waggle little progress can be made. It simply means making the club pass back and forth over the head a few times. The movement

should be done exclusively with the hands. The club head will make a small segment of the arc of the real swing. Although the movement is done with the hands solely, it affects the forearms, legs, and in fact is felt all over the body. It prepares and tunes up the whole body for the swing. It seems as difficult to hit a golf ball without a waggle as it does to pitch a baseball without a windup. Before one set of muscles can be set in operation, others have to be prepared, and this seems to be the purpose of the waggle.

At the end of the shaft, the club head holds the club about the middle of the grip, the exposed part in making the waggle, should pass under both wrists. If the end of the shaft hits the wrists the waggle is wrong. In general terms, analysis of the movements of the waggle shows that the right hand breaks at the wrist joint, whereas the left does not break at the wrist joint, but turns at the elbow or is a forearm movement. The movements of the waggle are practically those of the swing proper, with this qualification, that in the waggle they are more acute, covering a smaller arc

than that of the complete swing. The swing should be commenced immediately after the waggle is finished, otherwise any benefit of the waggle will be lost. In fact the waggle and swing are to be thought of as one continuous movement.

In the swing proper one is sometimes advised to turn the face of the club away from the ball immediately. This is dangerous advice. If the left hand is held midway on the shaft, or perhaps better still, with the knuckles of the first and second fingers visible to their owner, the less one turns the face of the club away the better. In the waggle the left forearm turns sharply, but in the swing proper this turning of the forearm is very small, and is distributed gradually over the whole back swing. In the first foot of the back swing the face of the club goes back almost square to the ball, and as the club face must be square to the ball at impact, prudence would seem to dictate that it be turned away as little as possible. If one examines the left hand at the address (where the first two knuckles are visible) and then examines it at the top of the swing, very little difference is noted. At the top of the back swing the left hand breaks a little at the wrist to allow the club to get into a hitting position behind the head.

The movement of the right hand and arm is somewhat different. The

right arm breaks at the elbow and slips around the body. At the same time the right hand breaks at the wrist in the movement which is known as extension. This movement reaches its maximum at the top, when there is also a further movement similar to that of the left hand, usually called abduction, which simply means that both hands break at the wrists, which permits the club to fall in behind the head at the top of the swing.

In the down swing the left arm, which is practically straight, has little to do but remain this way and do all it can to make the swing of the club swift. As pointed out by Mr. Croome, the more the left arm and the club shaft are able to form one straight line at all times, the better.

The right hand stays in its extended position until the last couple of feet of the swing before impact, when the reversing of the extended right hand speeds up the swing materially. This movement is often described as the flick of the wrist. The left arm is practically straight long before this, and why the movement should be called a flick is hard to understand, for it is simply the natural reversing of the right hand. There should be no conscious turning over of the right forearm at impact unless one wishes to smother the ball. The face of the club must meet the ball squarely. Do not try to make the game more difficult by artificially turning the forearms, for in the swings of experts little of this is present.

What happens after impact is of very little consequence except that relaxation should take place naturally. Remember that it is the speed with which the club head is travelling at impact that is the important point and anything which increases this is to be encouraged.

If one learns to waggle properly and then commences the swing proper immediately thereafter in the most natural way possible, I do not think he will find much trouble with the wrists.

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The next article: "The Wooden Clubs."

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