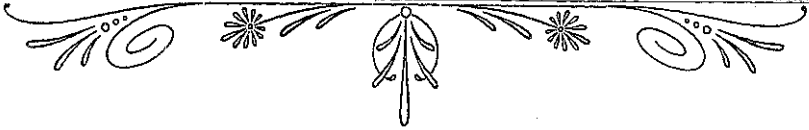




FORM IN GOLF.

By C. E. S. GILLIES.



BY form in golf, I mean a man's style of play, and the extent to which he conforms to the fundamental principles of the game, and not the "form" referred to when we ask a stranger what his form is. In the latter case we are asking him briefly, and in golfing language, what is his recognised status as a golfer in his own club, or in reference to some recognised standard.

We cannot say a beginner has any form at all. His golf is a mere series of spasmodic attempts, but gradually he begins to acquire what we call form, and approaches the stage when he can be considered a golfer. He may never acquire sufficient accuracy or brilliancy to become a scratch player, or even to reduce his handicap to single figures, but nevertheless, he has acquired some sort of form which is recognised as his own, and which gives him his own little niche in the club handicap list, whether it be near the top or the bottom. He is then a golfer.

Every beginner should endeavour to acquire a sound style of play, for only by careful, but not slavish, adherence to the principles of the swing can he hope, after many months of play, to acquire a high class form. Style is a detail of form, and if the beginner develops a poor style of form, he will never get beyond a certain stage, and there is only one hope for the aspirant who has reached the limit of his form, viz., to give up his old form, and acquire a new and better style—a most difficult matter.

Given a fair eye and a good physique, there is no reason to prevent a man becoming

a good player, though, in golf, few men after twenty-five can acquire high class form. The exceptions are only those talented few, who from a wonderful natural endowment, seem able to play any game well. The best players are also the most natural. Though nothing can compensate for hard practice, the quickest and surest way to progress at the royal and ancient game is to thoroughly grasp the idea of a true mechanical style.

But, says your beginner, what is the true style? To that you can only answer, there is no one style that can be said to be the only true one. Take a few of the finest professionals, and you will find that they all differ in various ways from each other, even to the extent of playing an entirely different stroke for the same distance. Your bewildered beginner probably fails to note that the essential principles of golf in each man's game are however, the same. The adoption of a slavish adherence to a particular style, or to the recognised maxims of the game, is often a stumbling block.

The great thing for the beginner is to get a true idea of the underlying principles of a good style of game. He must then work out his own individual style for himself, and keep rigidly to it. His position and style of play must crystallize on to a model, probably a compound of several styles of play, but it is his own, and he must keep to it with unflinching adherence. It is absolutely fatal to be chopping and changing in the endeavour to copy a better player.

He should endeavour so to learn, that he has not to unlearn. A very common and