

BRAID ON SLICING AND PULLING

This is the concluding part of the article in which the great champion, James Braid, treats of slicing and pulling and how to do these things when it may greatly benefit the player to do them, and does not discuss them merely as faults according to the common custom. He shows when and how to slice and pull, and how the object of the player may be achieved thereby. The first part of the article dealt with the principles involved in the case of intentional slicing.

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NOW FOR the pull. Just as it is in the result, it is also in the most important details of its method very much the reverse of what the slice is. The stance is reversed, for now we not only bring the ball farther back towards the right, but we place the right foot back and make the stance an exaggerated square.

Allow the body to twist freely, bring the club round more in the upswing, so that it is carried over the point of the right shoulder, and all the way through the swing keep the right shoulder high. With all this, and the right hand turned round a little towards the under side of the handle, you will get a flat swing, and it will come to a finish with the club over the point of the left shoulder. That is the way to pull or hook the ball, and the ball which is only pulled or hooked just a little is generally a very good traveller indeed. There are many players of the first rank who hook regularly as part of their fixed golfing systems, making allowance for it in the direction imparted to the ball in the early period of its flight, and very fine drivers such players often are.

At the beginning of a further consideration of the manner of employing to the best advantage the pulling and slicing shots, which the golfer will in due course have provided himself with, it is well to point out two other distinctive features which these shots possess beyond the swerve in different directions which they give to the ball.

These features are occasionally of value in themselves, so that one may sometimes play either shot when direction or wind has got nothing at all to do with the matter. Again, they are opposite in their results, opening up a further variety of resource to the player who occasionally feels himself in want of such variety. What I have to point out is that in the case of the sliced shot the ball rises very quickly and its flight is high, while its run when it pitches is comparatively limited. On the other hand, the pulled ball always flies low, and for this reason, if for no other, gets a comparatively good length, while it has very great running power when it comes down.

Now for getting over obstacles, or fighting against side slopes of the course through the green, the method of procedure in pulling and slicing is quite plain, and is so simple that no words need be spent upon it. Neither is it necessary, after what has been said, to do more than mention that when the ball has obtained a hanging lie, or an indifferent lie that is not one of the hanging variety, and the circumstances demand that length shall be obtained, while there is the difficulty presented of getting the ball to rise properly if the brassy is employed, a slicing stroke, for which due allowance is made in direction, is calculated to meet the demands of the situation. The only alternative is the iron, and the length-power of the iron may not be enough for the case. Furthermore, it sometimes happens that when a long

second shot is wanted the ball is found lying behind a more or less formidable hillock, or something more than a hillock, at such a distance as to make it very doubtful if in the ordinary course of procedure with a brasseys it will rise quickly enough to clear it. In such a case the sliced shot is clearly the one that should be played. It might be well to mention here, as the converse of the hanging lie, that when the ball is found lying on a slope facing the player there is neither of these fancy shots to be deliberately played, but only an allowance made for the natural and inevitable tendency that there is to pull in such circumstances.

In very exceptional cases it is sometimes a good thing to put a little slice on the ball, with the one and only object of keeping its length short, again, of course, making due allowance for direction. It may be that the length wanted is just under that which would be given by a full straight shot with a wooden club, and yet it might be straining the capabilities of the most powerful iron to attempt to get to the desired point with it. You have, therefore, the alternatives of playing an "easy" shot with the wooden club—always a difficult and very frequently a dangerous thing to attempt—or of forcing it with the iron club. Such a situation may be a dilemma to the player, and it is at such times that he thinks he is a club short. Of course, there is the spoon, but he may not have a spoon, or he may not like it. In such case the full brasseys, with a little slice, may very often do exactly what is necessary; but it goes without saying that the player who tries it will need to have the fullest confidence in his slicing capabilities, for he is avoiding the risks of the straight shots for what will often be a greater risk in the employment of the slice.

Let us now take into consideration the generally most satisfactory of all situations for using pulls and slices, namely, those in which there is a wind blowing sideways, which, with the aid of this extra skill, we shall press into our service and make it an advantage and of very substantial assistance, instead of being an annoyance and hindrance, as it is to the golfer who has only one shot with his wooden clubs at his disposal, the simple straight one—even though it is the best—so that he is reduced to the weak mode of procedure of "making allowances" and suffering an inevitable loss of distance. The perfect, or the nearly perfect, golfer can use all kinds of winds, like the skipper of a sailing boat on the sea.

The winds that we can use and benefit by when pulling and slicing are those which blow across from right to left and from left to right, and more particularly those cross-slanting winds which blow more forward to the hole than back from it. I need not tell experienced readers that the golfing novice would have an entirely erroneous idea of how to use his pull and slice—if he had them—in a cross wind. He would think his duty well done by slicing into a wind coming from the right, and thereby, as he would explain, setting the tendency of the ball to swerve to the right to fight the tendency of the wind to blow it away to the left, with the result that these two forces would neutralise each other, and the ball would be kept straight. And so in the same way by pulling into a wind coming from the left. Certainly the ball would be kept straight, but that would be the solitary advantage of its flight, for all its length would be sacrificed in this fight between wind and ball. The wind would be the constant and serious en-

emy of the player. This will not do; the sideways wind must be taken in alliance as a friend, and instead of fighting the wind from the right with a slice, the ball must join in with a pull.

Therefore, when the wind does thus come from the right, and all the better if it is a little behind as well (let us call it a south-easterly wind when the hole is due north of the golfer), let the golfer face round about somewhat and play his ball, so far as preliminary direction goes, rather across that wind, but with a pull. The facing into the wind and playing into it is simply by way of making direction allowance for what is to follow. Before that ball has gone very far it will have surrendered itself completely to the wind, and the pull that is in it will, if the direction was reckoned aright, be driving the ball straight down the wind and in the line for the hole. Wind-power and man-power are now evidently both entirely favourable to the flight, and while there is some advantage during the time the ball is in the air, there is a greater one when it pitches, for it will then be full of life and have an enormous amount of run. A longer ball can be got in this way than by a straight shot when there is no wind. A very little reflection will show that everything depends on the accurate calculation of the forces at work and their proper adjustment to each other; and thought, experience, and practice alone can ensure success.

The converse case in which the wind comes from the left (west or south-west when the hole is to the north), is by the same principle dealt with by playing well to the left with a slice. In due course, at a point away out to the west, slice and wind join forces and drive the ball at full speed in the direction of the flag. Critical players

who have not yet experienced the satisfaction of these things, may ask whether the advantage gained by getting wind and pull, or wind and slice, as the case may be, to work together during the second and most important stage of the journey, is not largely, or even entirely, discounted in advance by the loss of driving power that the ball must sustain while engaged in the preliminary process of boring its way across the wind to that point where it will turn round and receive its assistance. What is overlooked when such a point is raised is that during this first section of the flight the ball is low and is escaping the adverse wind effect as much as possible, that by the time it has risen it is with the wind, and that, moreover, it is the long run at the finish which is one of the greatest benefits. It is clear on such a reckoning that there is an enormous balance of forward power in favour of the second period of flight.

The situation is clearly somewhat complicated when it is the second shot that is being played (or the tee-shot in the case of a long one-shot hole), and, while the putting green is within range, there is a bunker guarding it on the side on which it is desired to come in either with the pull or the slice. It is then a question of calculation as to how, if at all, the hazard can be circumvented while still getting the length that is available from the wind and the special stroke. If the risk is too great there may be nothing for it but to play short, and in this event perhaps straight. It is a matter for individual judgment upon the precise circumstances which exist at the time; and the game would not be what it is if a rule-of-thumb could be formulated in advance for every conceivable situation, or if there were never any difficulties which are apparently insur-

mountable. But let it be remembered that if it is the second shot upon which the player finds himself in this dilemma, as it will most frequently be, there will probably have been something wanting in the judgment with which he played his first, for it should have been so played that the ball was placed in such a position that this difficulty would not have been presented, or, at all events, would have been presented in the least difficult form. A golfer should always look a shot ahead, and if he did so he would be spared many of the difficulties in which he constantly finds himself. As a set-off to the failure of the pull or slice with the wind to help us out of such difficulties as this, there is the fact to be remembered that it happens frequently as the result of these long swerving balls, hazards which are placed directly in front of the green may be played round, when they would probably catch a straight shot that had no wind to help it.

We have thus considered the cross-wind as a factor in giving us a long run and increased length, when used in conjunction with the pull and the slice; but there are times when the combination arranged differently may be made to be of equal service, cutting short and sharp the flight and run of the ball, that is, by slicing into a wind from the right, and pulling into a wind from the left. The possibilities can best be illustrated by imaginary cases. Suppose you have the wind coming

from the right, and the hole well within full-shot range with a bunker in front of, or to the right of, the green. This bunker might very easily be carried either by a simple shot with mere wind allowance, or by a pull with the wind, as the case might be; but if the hole were only just beyond, or even some little way beyond, even the best player would hardly be able to keep his ball from running past the green, and he would have a second approach shot to play back to it. The shot that exactly suits his purpose in such a contingency is a slice against the wind along a line well out to the left. Thus the ball will be brought to draw in towards the green on the open side, and will come down from its flight dead with very little run. In the same way a pull might be played against a wind from the left with a very similar purpose. This facility for getting a fair length, and at the same time pulling the ball up dead as soon as it comes down, when the necessary cross-wind is blowing, is of considerable value in approach play; for it may frequently serve the purpose with a club a power above an iron—hand much better to play such a shot, say, than by going straight with the iron, when the run of the ball could not be so well controlled and limited.

However, as a last word, learn to pull and slice well, and play these shots when necessary; but remember the straightest shot is generally the best, so use them very sparingly.

