

G O L F G O S S I P

Walter Hagen Talks of "Goat-Getting"—Horton Smith's Penchant for 4's—Jones Begins Rehearsals

By O. B. KEELER

WE were talking of this and that, one afternoon at Pinehurst, in the rather spacious sitting room of Clarence Chandler's cottage, and Walter Hagen—the conversation turning on the gentle art of goat-getting in golf—was disclaiming more or less ingenuously some of the traditions which have gathered about his methods in competition.

"I'm not so terrible," Sir Walter insisted, modestly. "The way I see it, the other fellows mostly get their own goats. The real goat-getter these days is Horton Smith. He does it by the simple and effective process of shooting 4's at them until they are dizzy. That is the best system. But it was always a hard one, for me.

"Of course, it doesn't help an opponent any, to watch you pull a drive far off the fairway, play out short of the green, and pitch up and can a good putt. . . . Remember that match Bobby and I played in Florida? Remember the first hole?"

I did—without effort. Bobby was right down the alley from the tee and Hagen was deep in the pine trees at the left, the ball lying on sand. It had looked to me as if Walter did not make a real effort to reach the green with his second. I mentioned that impression. Walter grinned.

"I didn't try for the green," he said, "for two reasons. It was a very tough shot, from where I was, for one thing. Then, if I had brought it off, and got on the green, which was small and well guarded, Bobby would have taken his usual pains with his simple iron-shot. I deliberately played to be safely in front of the little green, and plenty short. This made things look rather soft for Bobby, and he smacked boldly for the pin, played too much of a shot, and saw the ball curl off the lefthand rear side. I popped one up there and got down a 10-footer for a win. I sometimes think that first hole at Sarasota was the match."

The Haig Tells 'Em the Truth

ANYWAY, it seemed to me that all through the first round of that match and half of the second, Bobby never was able to get it into his head that Walter was

getting pars consistently following wild shots hither and yon about the premises. By the time Bobby got the idea, Walter had settled to a miraculous spin of 32 on the second nine of the second round, and with half of the 72-hole match played, he was just 8 up.

"These days," said Walter reflectively, "the only goat-getting I do in a conversational way is to tell the boys of the truth,"

I recalled an old trick of the Haig's—I saw it last, I think, at Pelham in the P.G.A. championship of 1923. The drives at what

then was the third hole—a long one—were good and about even, except that Walter had a yard or two in range, so his opponent had to play the odd.

Walter walked over to the ball with his caddy, looked carefully at the distant green, and picked out his big iron. His adversary saw it. Obviously, he reflected that if Walter could get home with a big iron, so could he. He tried it—and was worse than 30 yards short. Walter put up the iron, banged the ball with a brassie, and was well on.

"Well," admitted Walter, "that wasn't precisely truthful, though I didn't say a word. And that's a stunt that won't get by, these days. Not often. The boys are too cagey.

"You know, in a match, there usually is a little running talk about the wind or the putting surface—things like that. Now, if I say that a head wind is holding up the shot a lot, I mean it. If I happen to remark that the next green is awfully fast, I mean it. I'm on the level. But the boys don't believe me. They think I'm giving them a bum steer instead of saying just what I honestly think. So they don't take a stronger club against the wind, and are short; and they hit the ball firmly on the green, and it runs eight feet past. I'm not trying to outguess them. I'm telling the truth, and they are trying to outguess me."

One Caddie at Memphis

SOMETIMES a caddie has his own ideas of quietly conveying information as to conditions. In "Ida Broke," the engaging book done recently by Barrie Payne and Chick Evans, there is a chapter called "Memphis Memories," in which Chick tells of his first tournament bout with Bobby Jones, and of a happening in its course.

It was in the morning round and both players were going cautiously, like boxers sparring for an opening. I saw the occurrence; and at the least it displayed exceptional acumen on the part of Bobby's caddie, who was a big, black negro—an ex-pugilist, we were told. Perhaps he had learned in the ring something of the art of dissembling

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International

Much has been said of Walter Hagen's applied psychology in golf. This picture was made at the start of his match last year with Archie Compston. Wonder what remarks were passed during this little tête-à-tête

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a bad situation. Anyhow he knew how.

Anyway, both players were well off the fairway from the tee, Bobby far to the right, Chick equally far to the left, his ball, moreover, with a tree not far ahead and directly in his line to the green, a full iron shot distant.

Bobby played the odd, and produced a badly swung shot far to the left of the green and probably in a dismal patch of woods and rough. Neither Chick nor his caddie saw where the ball went; and Chick began to study his own shot with great care. It made a lot of difference to Chick whether Bobby's ball was on or near the green, or in another bad place. So while he was considering the tree and the line to the green, Chick also was obviously waiting for some sort of a tip on this information.

For his part, Bobby stood watching Chick for half a minute, while Chick stared at the intrusive tree. Then Bobby lay down on the fairway, flat on his back, and put his crossed hands under his head, as if making up his mind to be comfortable. As for his caddie, the boy had simply walked out into the fairway with Bobby and stood beside him, the picture of sleepy contentment. There was nothing about his appearance to indicate that his player's ball might be lost in the tiger country. He looked rather as if he knew exactly where the ball was, and that it was on the green.

Nobody said anything. Chick finished his deliberation at last, evidently with the decision that he had to go for the green. He tried it, the ball caught the tree's foliage and dropped straight down.

Then he laughed.

"Taking a nap, Bobby?" he asked, as Bobby was getting up leisurely.

"I thought maybe you were waiting for the tree to fall down," Bobby responded, good-humoredly; and after Chick had played his third shot walked on with the Sphinx-like caddie to look for his ball, deep in the jungle. I think he won the hole with a 6 at last, but he lost the match—a wonderful one—on the home green, 1 down.

Horton Smith Still "Fours Them"

ADVICES from Great Britain, which at this writing reveal the British as victors in the Ryder Cup match at Moortown—no bad thing for international golfing competition, by the by—indicate that Horton Smith, winning his singles match with the veteran Robson, is managing with his unwonted, and unwanted, hickory-shafted wood clubs to continue the practice epigrammatically attributed to him by his admiring fellow professionals on this side. "He 'fours' you to death," they say. And after being 1 down at the 27th, he traveled the next seven holes in 1 below 4's, winning five of them and his match, 4-2. He was 2 above 4's for the match.

At Pinehurst, in winning the north and south open, this young man established the longest consecutive run of 4's and 3's, unbroken by a 2 or a 5, I ever saw. Beginning with the fifteenth hole of the competition on the No. 2 course, Smith went thirty-three

consecutive holes in nothing but 4 and 3. His second round, a 70 against a par of 72, contained sixteen holes in 4 and two in 3. He shot the first eleven holes of that round in 4 each. In all he traveled forty-seven consecutive holes, from the fifteenth through the sixty-first, with one single 5 in his string of 4's and 3's. And he had only one 2 in the entire competition.

This naturally recalls Bobby Jones' long string at Sunningdale, England, in the qualifying rounds of the 1926 British Open. Bobby went the first twenty-seven holes of the thirty-six before he picked up a 5, and later got a 2. His first round consisted of a dozen 4's and six 3's, and a new course record of 66. This was the nearest perfect round of golf I ever saw, in competition or otherwise, from the fact that he misplaced only one shot in the entire round; an iron that rolled off the green of one short hole coming in, and was chipped up and holed in one moderate putt for a par 3. It was the most typical round of what Mr. Bernard Darwin calls "brilliantly dull" golf I ever witnessed. Mr. Darwin said at the time it was the finest round ever played in Britain.

Bobby Starts Rehearsals

THE latter part of April found Bobby starting in at his home course, East Lake, at the rate of a couple of rounds a week, getting a bit of practice in advance of the first of the two big tournaments he will play in this season—the National Open, at Winged Foot. Bobby said he would play somewhat oftener during May and in June might slip off somewhere, possibly to Asheville, for a week or so of rehearsal on a course with greens somewhat approximating those on which the National Open will be played. This, of course, is his big handicap, in Atlanta.

I inquired how he was going.

"Oh, I can't tell," he said. "East Lake is easy right now. I did a 65 there last Sunday, but that doesn't indicate much of anything."

I fancied a 65 was not without significance of some sort on any course 6,600 yards long, but all Bobby could recall was what he termed a funny finish.

"I came to the seventeenth tee with a par 4-3 left for a 66," he said. "The seventeenth, as you know, is about 400 yards and the eighteenth about 190. I finished 2-4, for a 65."

He hit a very long drive at the seventeenth and holed a mashie-niblick pitch to the circus-ring green. Then, with a chance to tie his 1922 record of 63 with another deuce at the home hole, he shoved out his tee-shot, failed to chip close, and missed the putt for a 3. Still, as suggested, no 65 can be exactly terrible.

Bobby is trying out something with his wood shots—backing off three inches farther from the ball in taking his stance. He got the idea somewhere that his usual stance did not allow sufficiently for the arm-extension caused by centrifugal force in the stroke.

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up on my toes at impact," said Mr. Jones.

Frank Ball, professional at East Lake, says Bobby is hitting considerably farther from this stance.

"Recently we were playing a round and Bobby took a spoon from the sixteenth tee. There is a cross-bunker in front of the green, the bunker being some 320 yards from the tee. I kidded him about taking the spoon.

"Do you really think you could reach that bunker with a driver?' I asked him. He said he thought he could; there was a slight breeze back of him, but not enough to count. I bet him a dollar, and he took that old Jack White driver he got at Sunningdale and banged one straight into the bunker. It was worth the dollar to see that shot I think he is driving farther than ever before."