

SPORTING WORLD AS SEEN BY EXPERTS

THE RIGHT KIND OF START IS THE SECRET OF PROFICIENCY IN BILLIARD PLAYING, SAYS WORLD'S CHAMPION WILLIE HOPPE



Photos by American Press Association.

WILLIE HOPPE has often been asked why such a small majority of the vast amusement and recreation playing different styles of billiards ever attain proficiency at the game. The answer is simple—they start wrong. And one thing is certain, if they start wrong, they will never attain proficiency. It is a difficult thing to unlearn bad habits and begin right. Willie Hoppe, whose latest portrait is shown in No. 7, says: "There are three things one must learn to play even an average game of billiards—making a correct bridge for all shots, holding the cue properly with the driving hand and stroke. Each of these depends upon the other, and I believe the bridge is the most important of the lot. Although some billiardists may disagree with me, I have oftentimes been criticised because I did not attempt to master the game at the three cushion carom style, but at the two strokes vary so greatly I will not attempt to injure the delicacy of my balk line stroke to please a few curious people who would like to see me attempt that style game. Hence I would suggest that all beginners at billiards take up one particular style and stick to it. I will try to explain in the simplest

language the bridges I have found to be the most effective and easiest to master. Almost all new players grasp the butt of the cue with the stroke hand as though they were handling an ax, their idea being that this is necessary to get force in the stroke. Here they are dead wrong, and they defeat the very end they seek. To gain this force—or stroke, as it is called—there must be absolute freedom of action and the cue must be held in a light, almost loose, manner. Speed does not come from brute strength of the body, but results entirely from the wrist and forearm. One may readily see that to hold the cue tightly with all four fingers and thumb the wrist is of necessity stiffened, and it is impossible to get any freedom of action into the stroke.

The most difficult shot known to beginners is and always will be the art of learning how to make the masse shot at the same time learning the different styles of holding the cue for executing the different shots of this style. The discovery of the masse shot has made it possible for the long runs and

high averages made by the other experts and myself, especially so when controlling the ivory in close work. The inept and faulty position play before the discovery of the masse by Jake Schaefer, the wizard, made it very troublesome to execute and make the long record runs. The beginner, as a rule, is frightened

at attempting to play the masse shot owing to the danger of tearing the bed cloth, which is caused by the extreme force and absolute control of the cue that is required. Show me a player that has become proficient at playing masse shots and you will find that he has a table in his home and gains confidence at attempting to master the masse from the fact that he does not care if he causes injury to the table or cloth; hence he is empowered with confidence after a number of attempts and soon becomes confident that he can control his cue when attempting these short strokes with a powerful drive. The offhand masse bridge, as in illustration No. 1 and 5, is used very seldom in championship matches, but is shown more in fancy and exhibition work, which will enable the executor to get force on the ball for a driving

masse, such as could not be obtained by holding the bridge hand in any position on the table. By using the offhand masse stroke the player can hit the cue ball with such force as to drive the ball the entire length of the table and return without striking the cushions or any object balls. The accompanying illustrations will help to explain the text. Delicate Nursing Stroke.—In illustration No. 2 is pictured the bridge most often called into play. It is used for the delicate nursing stroke. The heel of the hand and the finger tips rest firmly on the bed of the table with knuckles elevated and thumb extended. The cue, slipping easily between the hand and the thumb, finds a solid resting place. This bridge I use mostly for the balk line. Bridge For Close Draw.—In illustration No. 3 is seen the bridge I use for

close draw shots when the balls are so near together that a broader bridge is impossible. Only a few inches of space are required, yet a strong, firm resting "groove" for the cue is attained. Masse Bridge on Rail.—Illustration No. 4 shows the correct masse bridge when the cue ball is close to the cushion. The close masse bridge stroke shown at Nos. 6 and 8 is one of the most difficult shots for the novice. It is used only when the balls are "lined up." The cue is held perpendicular by the stroke hand grasping the cue with the thumb and first two fingers. Only the tips of the fingers on the bridge hand touch the table, the cue merely resting on the side of the hand. It seems an insecure method of guidance, but a little practice will show how serviceable it is. Beginners will do well to either pass up the masse stroke for a time or try it out on an old table. A slight slip means a torn tablecloth. The heavy follow massé, or better known as the "follow through," is the easiest of all masse shots to learn, and I would suggest that the beginner learn to execute this shot properly before attempting the "nip or swing massé."

PRATT PICKS OUT SIX MOST DIFFICULT PITCHERS TO HIT

DERRILL PRATT, second baseman of the St. Louis Browns, is a pretty fair hitter. In fact, he swats the ball about as hard as any of them, though he is not noted for his luck in getting them past the outfielders. Therefore his opinion as to the hardest pitchers to hit is interesting. "Tell us," asked a baseball scribe, addressing Pratt, "who are the six pitchers most difficult to hit in the American league?" Mr. Pratt's brow corrugated after the accepted manner of a gentleman questioned for publication. "The six pitchers who I think generally are reckoned the hardest to hit. They are Ayers and Johnson of Washington, Shore and Foster of Boston, Scott of Chicago and Mitchell of Cleveland. "Of these, five of them are hard for me to hit. With Johnson I never have had much trouble. "It may be parenthetically said that Pratt busted Johnson's scores in a record two seasons ago, when he bounced a double against the right field fence following a single by Gloomy Gus Williams. Nor since has he had any trouble with the "fire ball" king. "A good pitcher, I think," continued Pratt, "is the one who has something more than a curve or speed. They have to have more. There isn't any pitcher in the business who is fast enough to throw them by you. Johnson comes nearest that. "Ayers and Foster have that important ability to mix 'em. Ayers includes in his repertoire a swell underhand delivery, and in a pinch I'd almost rather bat against any pitcher than him. "There is something on every ball

George Foster pitches. He has a splendid curve, and his fast ball breaks either in or out. Then he has the knuckle ball. I believe that Foster possibly has more stuff than any of them. Cicotte used to be such a pitcher, but he didn't show so well this year. "Shore has a long stride and a long reach. Consequently the ball is upon you almost as soon as it leaves his hand. His curve ball is a corker. He always has been hard for me to hit. "Jim Scott deserves the title of the curve ball king of America. He almost doubles his effectiveness by his uncommon ability to hold men on first base. In this way he prevents steals and thereby keeps out of the 'hole.' I like Scott's pitching immensely. "Usually a right handed batter has little trouble with left handed pitchers, but I certainly have had mine this season with Willie Mitchell. He is, I think, the most versatile southpaw in the league, with due respect to Carl Wellman, who is as effective. "Mitchell uses an unusual crossfire, and the ball has an odd quirk to it. Those right handed hitters of us, who have been used to taking a toe hold and swinging away at left handed deliveries, find it plenty hard enough to hit the ball at all without setting ourselves for it. "The question of the hardest pitcher to hit is a matter of opinion. Some batters can hit and hit hard some pitchers that others just as good batters can not touch. Neither Jack Fournier nor myself has led the American league in hitting, but I do not believe any batter in the league has hit Walter Johnson harder than we have. But Johnson is a great pitcher, the fastest of all of them."

Carpentier, French Heavyweight, Keeps In Trim by Weekly Bouts on the Firing Line

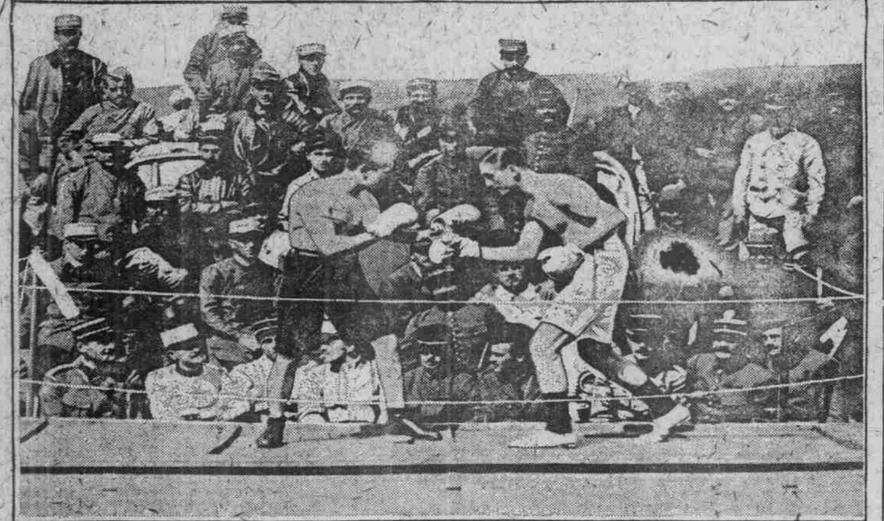


Photo by American Press Association.

Although he has been reported killed or wounded several times, Georges Carpentier, the French heavyweight champion, is hale and hearty. In order to keep in trim Georges engages in weekly bouts on the firing line, and, judging by reports, he still maintains his old time form. Carpentier is a member of the French aviation corps. Picture shows Carpentier, on right, boxing with a soldier of one of the regiments of France.

SPECIALIZATION NOW THE RULE IN BASEBALL AS IN BUSINESS

SPECIALIZATION has become the rule in baseball, as in so many other branches of business. There are not many first class, all round utility men left capable of going to any position on the field and giving a good account of themselves. The greatest player in regard to all round ability that the game ever knew was Buck Ewing, a resident of Cincinnati, all his life and for five years manager of the Reds. When Buck was in the heyday of his fame back in the late eighties, he could assume any one of the nine positions on the field with skill and success. Buck was one of the greatest catchers that ever played the game, with a wonderful arm and a perfect style in backstopping. But he could also go to the box and pitch a creditable game and several times did so when he was a member of the old New York Giants. "He was a corking good first baseman and shortstop and could play the other two infield positions as well as their regular incumbents. In addition to this fielding ability he was a great hitter and a very fine base runner, so there can be no hesitation in declaring him the best all around ball player, not only of his own time, but of all history. "Perhaps the best known utility player of more recent times was Artie Hoffman, who was in his prime eight or nine years ago, when the Chicago Cubs were carrying everything before them. Hoffman would not pitch or catch, as

Ewing could, but he was a fine first baseman or shortstop and one of the best outfielders in the business. He was of great service to the Cubs in their pennant winning days. It would be hard to find today as good an all round player as Hoffman was. "Players nowadays specialize to such an extent that an outfielder who has been playing right often complains if he is shifted to left or center, while he could not have the faintest conception of how to play any one of the infield positions. "The defense has improved in baseball at the expense of the offense. In the old days all the first basemen had to do was to slug the ball for an average well over .300. He might not cover over ten feet around first base, but if he could wallop the old pill he was sure of a job. "Fred Tenney of the old Boston champions introduced a new style among first basemen, showing that the first sacker could cover almost as much ground as the runner and could cut out of many hits toward rightfield. "Nowadays first base is a specialized position, and many a man is carried there for his great fielding when he cannot hit so well as several of the other players. This development has hurt the batting of teams, but it has improved the defense so as to make the game much more scientific and a more interesting spectacle.

A Pitcher the Umpires Liked

President Charles Comiskey of the Chicago White Sox had a big, husky runner on his staff when he began operations in the American league, back in 1900, by the name of Denzer—Roger Denzer. Comiskey used to remark that the big fellow had the makings of the best hurler in the world. Denzer was a man of gigantic stature, square jawed, and his face was bronzed like an Indian's. He was seldom known to utter a word during a ball game. He never noticed an umpire, and no umpire ever heard Denzer utter a syllable. Back in 1898 Denzer was pitching for the St. Paul club, then owned by Comiskey. One day he was pitching for his team against the Detroit team of the Western league. It was one of the hottest days ever

registered on the calendar, and the big fellow was pitching the game of his life. For seven innings not a man had reached first, not a semblance of a hit had been chalked up against the remarkable hurling of the sphinxlike Denzer. Every inning after the fifth the big fellow would walk in and seat himself on the bench without cracking a smile or saying a word. In the eighth his support wavered, and after two men were down and an easy chance had been offered to retire and was fumbled a batter made the first hit of the game. Roger came in and sent himself on the bench, the boys began pouring words of sympathy and many apologies into his ear, and, as the big fellow wiped away the streams of perspiration, he made his first comment, "Gee darn the luck!"

SINGLE SET OF RULES TO BOSS BASKETBALL

BASKETBALL rules have undergone many changes this year. The rules committee has made many alterations in the style of play, but now there is one set of rules which will govern all games instead of many sets. The game as played this season will be more like that indulged in under the A. A. U. rules which governed playing of collegiate teams. The new code just issued cites the changes. Here are some of them: Dribbling must be continuous. The instant the ball is touched by both hands or comes to rest even momentarily in one hand it must be passed. Player with ball can't feint, whirl

around and start dribbling in another direction. A player must not be guilty of tossing in the dribble. Player may shoot for basket after a dribble. Players dribbling or passing the ball may not charge opponents any more than may players guarding them. It's a foul. Special foul is granted in case where a player bumps a rival closer to the goal than himself as that rival is in the act of throwing for the basket. A personal foul is charged against the offender and the opponent is given two free throws for goal instead of one, as such fouling often prevents a field goal, which means two points and gives

the offended side only a chance for one free throw that may net one point. Blocking rule prevents practice of guards facing forwards who have not the ball. Rules make it practically impossible to guard man from behind. Four personal fouls disqualify a player. Players jumping for ball when it is put in play must keep one hand behind them and may not catch it till it has touched another player. It is a foul if a third player comes into the slightest contact with either of two other players who have their hands on the ball.

Had Three Balls In Play at Once

BILL SPEAS, outfielder of the Portland Coast league club, tells what he considers the funniest thing he has ever seen on a ball field, and strange to relate, two major league players have mentioned this same incident as the funniest thing they ever saw. Here's the story: "You might not believe this," says Bill, "but I've got several citations to prove it. It happened in 1905 in the Pennsylvania and Ohio league. I was playing with Minsfield, and Doc Bailey, the old time Columbus pitcher, was doing the twirling for us. Our opponents had us beaten about 40 to 0 when one of them caught hold of one and slammed it down the right field foul line. The umpire threw in another ball, and he knocked it foul against me. Then he slammed one at me in left, and, after breaking my neck to keep it from rolling into the next state, I got it and threw it in to the plate, only it hit the grand stand instead. Well, in the meantime, the fielders had recovered the foul ball, and the shortstop had one running a man down between second and third and the second base-

man had the other trying to catch a runner between first and second. The catcher was chasing the ball I threw in. It looked like a fire in a Chinese laundry, the way everybody was running around. "I was almost sick from laughing out there in left field. The ump eventually ruled the foul balls out of play and held that the ball I threw at the grand stand was the right one, but that didn't change the fact that there were three balls in play at one time. "BONHAG'S VIEWS. On GEORGE V. BONHAG, probably the greatest long distance runner ever developed on the American cinder path, was asked recently to give his views on the present fall in the turning out of fast distance men in this country. "I believe," he said, "that it is purely a question of cycles. Just at present there is a lull, where a few years ago we were turning out fast distance men by the dozen. Probably within a year or two another crop of fast ones will come along. One thing is certain—our distances, as a class, have improved."