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Newsletter and Book Review for the Serious Collector

The Most Influential Golf Book Published

What is the most influential golf book ever published? For the last several years we have been compiling a list to find out; a bold undertaking, you might say.

Our approach is more eclectic than scientific, but we believe it yields some interesting insights. We have polled various learned members of the golf community, both living and deceased, to see which books mattered most. For those still in the present we asked a simple question, “What golf book has had the most influence on you?”

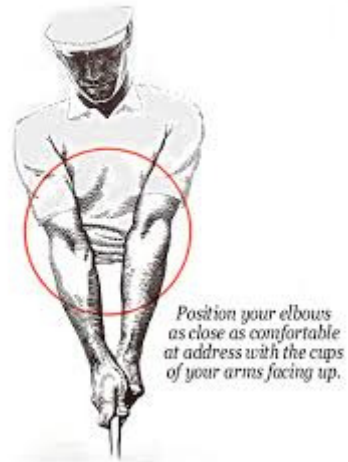
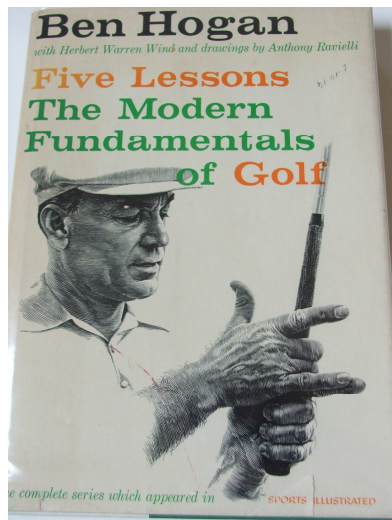
Among the twenty-five respondents, we have tried to include a cross-section of experts with a variety of disciplines in order to get a balanced view, including:

1. Legends of the game – Gary Player, Arnold Palmer, Ben Crenshaw, Tom Watson
2. Journalists – Lorne Rubenstein, Geoff Shackelford, John Derr
3. Golf book authors – Jim Finegan, David Owen, Daniel Wexler, Bradley S. Klein
4. Golf book publishers and editors – Brian Lewis, Darius Oliver, Robin McMillian
5. Golf course architects – Donald Steel, Mike Hurdzan
6. Museums – Michael Trostel, curator U.S.G.A. museum
7. Instructors – Jim McLean, Hank Haney

For those no longer with us we scoured the literature and looked for mentions and references to books noted. We used quite an illustrious list including Bobby Jones, Herbert Warren Wind, Henry Longhurst, Joe Murdoch and John Updike.

Ben Hogan’s Five Lessons

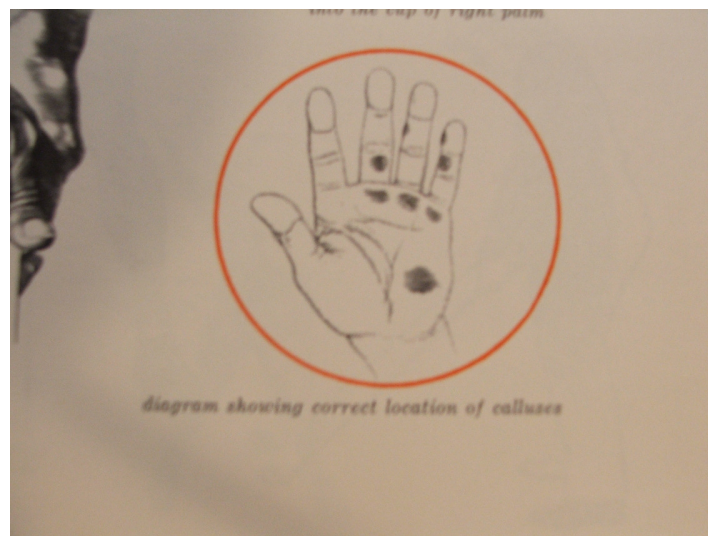
The most influential book—one that received over twenty-five percent of unprompted mentions—was Ben Hogan’s *Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals of Golf*, which has been influential since it was published in 1957 and continues to be a useful reference even today (especially if you don’t want to hook the ball). *Five Lessons* received kudos from not only some of the best teachers in the game, but also from professionals and publishers alike. The most valuable and collectible golf books tend not to be instructional and are often times overlooked (by yours truly as well), so it was a bit of a surprise, although it probably shouldn’t have been based on the book’s longevity as an actively published title and its simple approach. It also isn’t surprising if you look at “self-help” books as a killer category today; if you still actually go into bricks-and-mortar book stores notice how much shelf space is devoted to them in all subject areas.



Ben Hogan's Five Lessons, the most influential golf book ever published

Hogan shares credit for the book with Herbert Warren Wind and Anthony Ravielli, who did the great illustrations. The book is an expanded version of a series of articles that first appeared in *Sports Illustrated*.

I bought a first edition of the book after compiling this list and read through it. Hogan states in the opening paragraph that one of the best shots he ever hit was the 2-iron in the 1950 U.S. Open at Merion to get into a playoff. He says, "I didn't hit that shot then – that late afternoon at Merion. I'd been practicing that shot since I was 12 years old." Therein lies one of Ben's secrets, which is to practice until it hurts. To emphasize the point he even includes an illustration of where your hands should develop calluses from practice!



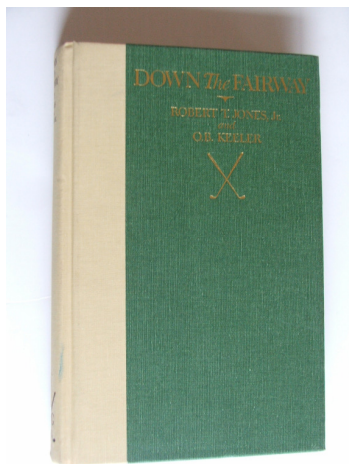
In our world of instant gratification, where there is a desire for immediate results in all pursuits, how is it a 57-year-old book that encourages you to practice so hard you get calluses is perennially one of the best sellers in the golf category on Amazon? Because what makes the game so fascinating is the difficulty of mastering it and as the title states the fundamentals don't change.

Five Lessons was published in both a standard trade edition (D & J H19690) and a deluxe edition with a protective slipcase (D & J H19660) by A.S. Barnes. Bolstering the case for *Five Lessons* being the most influential, Donovan & Jerris state that it had the largest first edition press run of any sports book ever published, with an impressive 200,000 copies in the initial printing.

There were eight additional books that were quite influential and we highlight them below.

Other influential books

Down the Fairway by Bobby Jones and O.B. Keeler (1927) was mentioned by five respondents, given it the highest number of mentions among biographies, which will come as no surprise to my knowledgeable readers. Those mentioning *Down the Fairway* as having a big influence on them include Arnold Palmer, Tom Watson and Herbert Warren Wind.

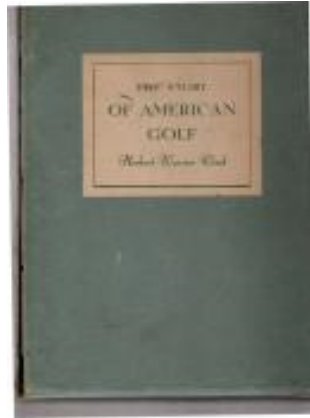


Down the Fairway



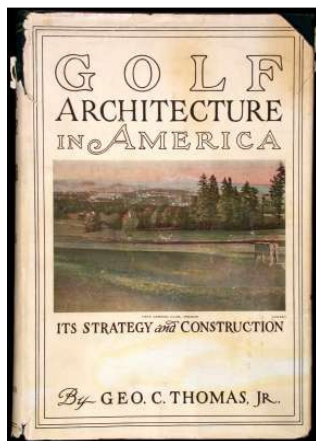
A young Bobby Jones in DTF

Of the fifty-nine different books mentioned, Herbert Warren Wind's *The Story of American Golf* (1948) also had twenty percent of respondents—five—mentioning it, making it a very influential book, likely the most influential history. Wind also had the most overall mentions to his books, not surprising to me.

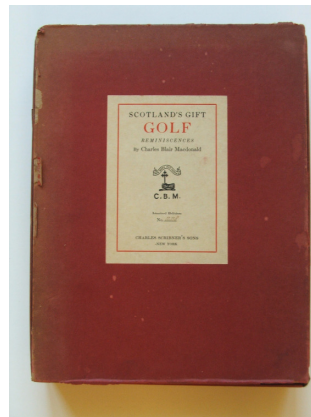


The Story of American Golf by Herbert Warren Wind

There were two books mentioned four times: a strong case can be made that Thomas's *Golf Architecture* (1927) is the most influential book in the architecture category; and there is no disputing that C.B. Macdonald's *Scotland's Gift* (1928) made a major contribution to the game.



Thomas's Golf Architecture



Scotland's Gift by C.B. MacDonald

There were four books mentioned three times and fifteen books mentioned twice. Five of the top eight books mentioned were published during the 1920s; not only was it the Golden Age of golf course architecture, it was also a Golden Age of golf writing.

Books receiving three mentions

The Spirit of St. Andrews by Alister Mackenzie (1995)

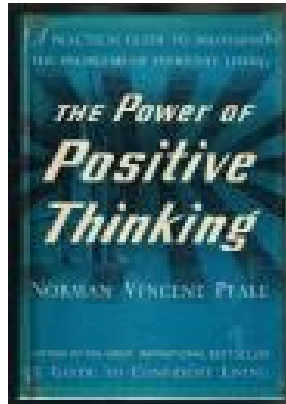
Golf Architecture by Alister Mackenzie (1920)

Following Through by Herbert Warren Wind (1985)

The Clicking of Cuthbert and Other Stories by P.G. Wodehouse (1922)

Among the more interesting responses was one from Gary Player, who mentioned *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale, published in 1952, as the most influential book that has helped him at golf. I was intrigued by the selection and bought a

copy to read, and I must say it was pretty inspirational with its very sunny faith-based outlook.



The full list of survey answers is below:

John Sabino	Golf book dealer (yours truly)	"Herbert Warren Wind's writing has had the most influence on my interest in golf books. His succinct and detailed writing style is unparalleled, especially his writings that appeared in The New Yorker. Right behind Wind is Longhurst, whose wit is amazing. Doak's Confidential Guide turned me on the architecture and the Legendary Golf series are elegant and inspirational."
		Following Through by Herbert Warren Wind (1985) The Best of Henry Longhurst by Henry Longhurst (1978) Golf at Its Best on the LMS by Dell Leigh (1925) The Confidential Guide to Golf by Tom Doak (1994 edition) Legendary Golf Clubs of Scotland, England, Wales & Ireland by Edgeworth and De Jorre (1999) Golf Dreams by John Updike (1996)
Herbert Warren Wind	Legendary golf author	In the introduction to his book The Complete Golfer Wind mentions, "I was impressed by two golf books above all others: Down the Fairway and the Duffer's Handbook. They were always around the house and you dipped into them whenever you had time on your hands and didn't know what to do with it." In the acknowledgment to The Story of American Golf, Wind mentions Down the Fairway again as well as two other books: Martin's Fifty Years of American Golf and the official history of the first American golf club: St. Andrews. He also calls Down the Fairway, "the best book about golf ever written."
		Down the Fairway by Bobby Jones and O.B. Keeler (1927) The Duffer's Handbook of Golf by Grantland Rice and Claire Briggs (1926) Fifty Years of American Golf by H.B. Martin (1936) The St. Andrews Golf Club, 1888-1938 (1938)
Dr. Michael Hurdzan	Author, Architect	"The single most influential book on me was the first one I received which was on Christmas Day 1968 and it was George Thomas' Golf Architecture in America, for it opened my eyes to so many wonderful details about the process and profession of golf course design. In fact it inspired me to write my own book for I thought that someone should document the state and status of golf course design in the late part of the century just like Thomas did for the early part."
		Golf Architecture in America by George Thomas (1927) Golf Architecture by Alister Mackenzie (1920)
Daniel Wexler	Golf historian and writer	"Fifty Years of American Golf is the most underrated, overlooked historical volume in the history of American golf. The World Atlas of Golf is the book that first sparked my interest in courses, course design, etc. The Game of Golf is my primary source in all matters literary. Darwin's A History of Golf in Great Britain is a personal favorite and his Golf Courses of the British Isles exposed me to his genius. The World of Professional Golf is a gigantic research resource of which I still refer to regularly."
		The World Atlas of Golf (multiple publishing dates) The Golf Courses of the British Isles by Bernard Darwin (1910) The Architects of Golf by Cornish and Whitten (1981) The Game of Golf and the Printed Word by Donovan and Jerris (2006) A History of Golf in Great Britain by Bernard Darwin (1952) The World of Professional Golf by Mark MacCormack

		(multiple publishing dates) Fifty Years of American Golf by H.B. Martin (1936)
Lorne Rubenstein	Author & golf writer for the <i>Globe and Mail</i>	The Story of American Golf by Herbert Warren Wind (1948) and pretty much anything by Herb The Happy Golfer by Henry Leach (1914) A History of Golf by Robert Browning (1955) My Life and Soft Times by Henry Longhurst (1971) The Golf Courses of the British Isles by Bernard Darwin (1910) Down the Fairway by Bobby Jones and O.B. Keeler (1927) Five Lessons by Ben Hogan (1957) Swing the Clubhead by Ernest Jones (1952) Scotland's Gift: Golf by C.B. McDonald (1928) Golf in the Kingdom by Michael Murphy (1972)
Geoff Schackelford	Author, golf blogger, architect and historian	Golf Architecture in America by George Thomas (1927)
Ben Crenshaw	Professional golfer, 2 time Masters champion, author, architect & World Golf Hall of Fame member	Golf Architectures in America by George Thomas (1927) The Architectural Side of Golf by Wethered and Simpson (1929) Scotland's Gift: Golf by C.B. Macdonald (1928) Golf Architecture by Alister Mackenzie (1920) The Spirit of St. Andrews by Alister Mackenzie (1995) The Links by Robert Hunter (1926)
Darius Oliver	Author of the <i>Planet Golf</i> series of books	"If I had to nominate one book that I enjoyed more than any other it would be the Spirit of St. Andrews."
		Scotland's Gift: Scotland by C.B. Macdonald (1928) The Spirit of St. Andrews by Alister Mackenzie (1995) The World Atlas of Golf (Multiple publishing dates)
James Finegan	Award winning author whose titles include <i>Where Golf is Great</i> and the definitive history of Pine Valley	"Wind's The Story of American Golf is the best and most useful golf book ever written."
		The Story of American Golf by Herbert Warren Wind (1948) Legendary Golf Clubs of Scotland, England, Wales & Ireland by Edgeworth & De Jorre (1999) Golf Between Two Wars by Bernard Darwin (1944)
Gary Player	Professional Golfer, 9 time Major champion, Author, Architect, World Golf Hall of Fame Member	"The book that has had the most effect on Gary's life and golf career including his design career and he truly loves what Mr. Peale wrote"
		The Power of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale (1952) Five Lessons by Ben Hogan (1957) Golf Dreams by John Updike (1996) The Spirit of St. Andrews by Dr. Alister Mackenzie (1995) The Chronicles of Golf 1457-1857 by Alastair Johnston (1993)

Bradley S. Klein	Award winning golf book author, senior writer <i>Golfweek</i> magazine, former PGA tour caddie and university professor	Golf Architecture in America by George Thomas, Jr. (1927) The Golf Course/Architects of Golf by Cornish and Whitten The Links by Robert Hunter (1926) Following Through by Herbert Warren Wind (1985) The Story of American Golf by Herbert Warren Wind (1948) The Architectural Side of Golf by Wethered and Simpson (1929) Golf Architecture by Alister Mackenzie (1920) The Clicking of Cuthbert and Other Stories by P.G. Wodehouse (1922) The Mystery of Golf by Arnold Haultain (1908) A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold (1949)
John Updike	Pulitzer Prize winning author, novelist and critic	"As the barren months of each winter stretched long, consoled myself vicariously with the pages of such silver-tongued bards of the game as Bernard Darwin and Herbert Warren Wind. It was P.G. Wodehouse, however, who brought me resoundingly into the imaginary world of golf. His wonderful, comical golf stories collected in the Golf Omnibus. Wodehouse's golf stories delighted me years before I touched a club. "
		The Mystery of Golf by Arnold Haultain (1908) The Golf Omnibus by P.G. Wodehouse (1973) Golf in the Kingdom by Michael Murphy (1972)
Donald Steel	Golf correspondent and writer, Architect and winner of the President's Putter	"I was reared on the books and other writings of Bernard Darwin, Henry Longhurst, Herbert Warren Wind and Pat Ward-Thomas. So readable and they never date. The book to which I have referred most often is Darwin's Golf Between Two Wars followed by Herb Wind's Story of American Golf. They were researched so accurately, you never question a word."
		Golf Between Two Wars by Bernard Darwin (1944) The Story of American Golf by Herbert Warren Wind (1948)
Henry Longhurst	Legendary golf writer, former British MP and golf broadcaster	Longhurst was a big fan of P.G. Wodehouse. He writes in <i>The Best of Henry Longhurst</i> , "Another great writer of English as I see it, is P.G. Wodehouse, and from him I learnt two things, one of them particularly comforting, namely, that to write well you do not have to write on a serious subject. The other was that good writing <i>flows</i> , in other words, you may well have the right words, but not have them in the right order. However trivial or hilarious the subject, Wodehouse's writing always <i>flows</i> . What must by common consent be the greatest of the stories, <i>The Clicking of Cuthbert</i> ."
		The Clicking of Cuthbert by P.G. Wodehouse (1922) The Heart of a Goof by P.G. Wodehouse (1926)
Arnold Palmer	Professional Golfer, 7 time Major champion, World Golf Hall of Fame Member, Architect and Author	As a youngster Arnold read and was influenced by the Bobby Jones/O.B. Keeler book, Down the Fairway. He also had a high regard in those days for Byron Nelson and his writings about golf
		Down the Fairway by Bobby Jones and O.B. Keeler (1927) Winning Golf by Byron Nelson (1946)

Ian Baker-Finch	Professional Golfer, Sports Broadcaster, 1991 British Open Champion, Architect, Author	"The most influential book in my life has been Jack Nicklaus's "Golf My Way". I read and studied this book as a teenager and taught myself to play under Jack's guidance. Many of the world's golfer's of my age would say the same I'm sure."
		Golf My Way by Jack Nicklaus (1974)
David Owen	Golf book author, staff writer for <i>The New Yorker</i> and former editor of the Harvard Lampoon	Golf Dreams by John Updike (1996) Following Through by Herbert Warren Wind (1985) The Best of Henry Longhurst by Henry Longhurst (1978) The Clicking of Cuthbert and Other Stories by P.G. Wodehouse (1922) Down the Nineteenth Fairway by Peter Dobereiner (1982)
Robin McMillan	Golf Book author, publisher and editor for <i>Sports Illustrated</i> , <i>Golf Magazine</i> and <i>Time</i>	"The Story of American Golf... Nothing beats a good story and the reason Jim Dodson wrote Arnold Palmer's autobiography. Arnold read Final Rounds and wanted Dodson to write his... If you have ever wondered why the course you're playing is beating you up, here you go, in reference to Doak's Anatomy of a Golf Course."
		The Walter Hagen Story by Walter Hagen (1956) The Confidential Guide to Golf by Tom Doak (1994 edition) The Story of American Golf by Herbert Warren Wind (1948) The Golf Omnibus by P.G. Wodehouse (1973) Scrambling Golf by George Peper (1977) Open by John Feinstein (2003) A Good Walk Spoiled by John Feinstein (1996) Fifty Years of American Golf by H.B. Martin (1936) Anatomy of a Golf Course by Tom Doak (1998) Emerald Fairways and Foam Flecked Seas by James Finegan (1996) The Little Red Book by Harvey Penick (1992) Golf in the Making by Ian T. Henderson and David Stirk (1979) Golf in America: The First 100 Years by McMillan and Peper (1988) Final Rounds by James Dodson (1996)
Jason Dufner	Professional golfer and PGA Champion	"I've been a great follower of Mr. Hogan and everything he's done. One of the first instructional books I ever read was Five Lessons."
		Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals of Golf by Ben Hogan (1957)
John Derr	Golf book author and Sportscaster who covered the Masters for 62 years beginning in 1935	
		The American Triumvirate: Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, Ben Hogan, and the Modern Age of Golf by James Dodson (2012)
Joseph Murdoch	Golf book collector extraordinaire, author and cataloger	From the preface of the Murdoch Golf Library, "I...secured a job with a newspaper and based on the thought that I might amount to something won the hand of the fair maid who is now a matron. It was this matron who excited my interest in golf books by giving me a copy at Christmas 1954 of Herbert Warren Wind's wonderful anthology <i>The Complete Golfer</i> . Having read it, I became intrigued by the question of how many books on golf had been written. This was aroused by

		the list of books from which the anthology had been compiled." "Down the Fairway is the greatest golf book of the 20th Century."
		The Complete Golfer by Herbert Warren Wind (1954) Down the Fairway by Bobby Jones and O.B. Keeler (1927)
Brian Lewis	Award winning golf book publisher, owner Sleeping Bear Press	"MacKenzie's The Spirit of St. Andrews in a way brought architecture back into the conversation. Bob Rotella's first book talked about something new and Hogan's Five Lessons, though it might not be a good instructional book...how can you not appreciate people on the range with the book opened while they try to copy Hogan's hook proof swing"
		The Spirit of St. Andrews by Alister Mackenzie (1995) Take Dead Aim by Don Wade (2002) Golf is Not a Game of Perfect by Dr. Bob Rotella (1995) Five Lessons by Ben Hogan (1957)
Henry Longhurst (take two)	Legendary golf writer	"Every aspiring golfer ought to be starting a golf library. He could begin by keeping a look out for the following, and, of course a selection of vintage Darwin."
		The Art of Golf by W.G. Simpson (1887) Golf The Badminton Library by Horace Hutchinson (1890) Golf My Life's Work by J.H. Taylor (1943) This Game of Golf by Henry Cotton (1948) The Bobby Jones Story by Grantland Rice (1953)
Michael Trostel	Curator & Historian U.S.G.A. Museum	"Wind's book "The Story of American Golf" is one that I read within my first week at the USGA as an education. Others influential books include "Scotland's Gift: Golf" by C.B. Macdonald, "The Architects of Golf" by Geoffrey Cornish and Ron Whitten, "Golf My Way" by Jack Nicklaus, and "Fifty Years of American Golf" by H.B. Martin. As far as storytelling within a particular championship goes, Mark Frost's "The Greatest Game Ever Played" brought golf to the masses like never before.."
		The Story American Golf by Herbert Warren Wind (1948) Scotland's Gift by C.B. MacDonald (1927) The Architects of Golf by Cornish and Whitten (1981) Fifty Years of American Golf by H.B. Martin (1936) The Greatest Game Ever Played by Mark Frost (2002) Golf My Way by Jack Nicklaus (1974)
Jim McLean	Top golf instructor and author	"He left a tremendous legacy with his book Five Lessons. I'd say that all of us have probably read Hogan's writings more than anyone else's. He was way ahead of his time on a lot of things. And he had that Hogan mystique."
		Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals of Golf by Ben Hogan (1957)
Hank Haney	Top golf instructor and author	"As a young man I was an avid reader of golf instruction books. The one that had the most influence on me was Ben Hogan's Five Lessons. I read it over and over."

		Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals of Golf by Ben Hogan (1957)
Tom Watson	8 Time Major Champion and World Golf Hall of Fame Member	
		Down the Fairway by Bobby Jones and O.B. Keeler (1927) Education of a Golfer by Sam Snead (1962)
Roger McStravick	Golf Book Author	"The Colossus of Golf is simply the book that had the most influence on me. I read it, then read it again...then read it again. I could flick randomly to any page and be utterly engrossed immediately. The detail and amount of research set an all time high for historical golf research."
		Tom Morris of St. Andrews - The Colossus of Golf, 1921-1908 by David Malcolm and Peter Crabtree (2010) Fifty Years of Golf, My Memories by Andra Kirkaldy (1921) Reminiscences of Golf on St. Andrews Links by James Balfour (1887) History of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, St. Andrews by H.S.C. Everard (1907)