

*Long Spear.*—In addition to the natural propensities of the boar himself, the use of a weapon that is not certain in its effects, and which brings hunter and hunted on more equal terms and at close quarters, is a further item of excitement in the sport of pig-sticking.

At all times and in all countries where pig-hunting has found followers, it has almost invariably been carried out with the aid of some form of spear. By the inhabitants of Ancient Britain, by those of Albania, Central Europe, New Zealand, South Africa, Algeria, by the Pathans of Biluchistan, and the Brinjaris of Hindustan, boar have been, or still are, run down on foot and killed with assistance of dogs and spears.

As I have said, the idea of hunting the boar on horseback was only introduced as a substitute for bear-sticking some hundred and twenty years ago by British sportsmen quartered in India, and for a long time the old form of spear was adhered to – a big, broad-bladed head, set on to the thick end of a short, heavy, bamboo shaft. This weapon was thrown at the pig.

It was in 1827 that Johnson wrote: "When hunting with a party I disapprove of jobbing the spear into the hog, that is spearing a hog and not quitting your hold of the spear. It is attended with considerable danger of dislocating the shoulder" (!) "and prevents all the rest of the party from participating in the sport, the horse and rider are more liable to be ripped; and it requires no dexterity comparatively with throwing the spear, though more resolution and strength of arm; and it is not considered a fair method of sport." Since then, however, the system thus decried has been generally adopted, and the spear has undergone great changes in weight and dimensions, to make it a weapon adapted for being retained in the hand under all circumstances.

Two kinds of spear are used in India, the long or "underhand" spear, and the short or "jobbing" spear.

The long spear is generally used in Southern and Western India, and in the Meerut, and one or two other clubs in Northern India. It consists of a light, tough bamboo shaft, from seven to eight feet long, with a small steel head, the whole weighing from two to three pounds. The shape of the head depends to a great extent on the fancy of the hunter. The spear is used "underhand," that is, it is grasped about two-thirds of the way back from the point, with knuckles turned downwards, thumb pointing along the shaft which is carried below the forearm with a free play of wrist, elbow, and shoulder.

The advantages claimed for the long spear are that it is easy to use, that a pig, and particularly a "jinker," is more quickly reached with it, that a charging boar is held at a safe distance from the horse, and that the whole impetus of man and horse are given to the force of the blow.

The disadvantages are said to be that it is unwieldy to carry among long grass, bushes, trees, etc., and that being easily diverted by stalks and twigs, etc., it is useless for spearing purposes in such places; and owing to its length, and the manner in which it is held, it cannot be used against a boar charging from behind or from a flank.

*The Short Spear.*—The short or "jobbing" spear is generally used throughout Bengal and Upper India, and is thicker, heavier, and shorter than the long spear, being 6 feet 6 inches extreme measure, with a weight of lead on the butt, so designed that when the spear is grasped within 6 inches of the butt, it has a certain balance, and can be wielded from the elbow. Its weight is from two to four pounds, and it is used "overhand," that is, with the knuckles to the front, thumb upwards.

Its advantages are that it can be better used among jungle, since its action is more perpendicular than that of the long spear, and, therefore, is not so liable to be interfered with by bushes, etc. ; that it can be carried without inconvenience through any jungle where a horse can go (the butt being held in the hand, and the shaft lying alongside the horse's body, pointing to the rear) ; that it brings the hunter into closer proximity with the boar, hence allowing a better mark and a more exciting time; that the stroke, being a perpendicular one through the back, is most deadly; and that a boar charging from the right or right rear (the most usual direction of attack) is easily received.

Its disadvantages are that it requires more skill and strength on the part of the wielder, and also the use of a good horse; that in the event of a fall it is more liable to wound the horse or rider; and that it allows a boar to come into too dangerous proximity to the horse, when being speared or when charging.

*Comparative Merits of the two Spears.*—The comparative merits of the long and short spears have been and always are a subject of much discussion between "pig-stickers" and "hog-hunters." Mr. John Watson, A. Cruickshank, Lord W. Beresford, and Mr. N. Symons, pig-stickers of the first flight, have all of them used both spears alike, and have given their verdict in favour of the short one. The first-named, perhaps the finest pig-sticker ever seen in India, used as it were to "smash" the pig down with his powerful short weapon, and the last-named, even though hunting in a country (Bombay) where long spears are the rule, invariably used the jobbing spear.

Dr. Kavanagh, and some others who have used both, while recognising most of the good points of the short spear, condemn it on the ground of its letting the boar in so close as to be dangerous, and, therefore, unfair on the horse. I have, therefore, been at some pains to ascertain whether the percentage of horses cut by boars is larger in clubs where the short spear is used than where the long spear is general, but the results of the inquiry do not show any reliable difference between them. Apparently such accidents are compounded of so many other elements, such as nature of country, breed of pig, excellence or otherwise of both horses and riders, that no true comparison on this head can be drawn. As far as figures went (but "anything may be proved by figures"), the percentage was in favour of the short spear.

Having myself had some experience of both spears, I have no hesitation in saying that, although the long spear is undoubtedly best for first spearing a running, and particularly a jinking, pig, and so bringing him sooner to terms, the short spear is undoubtedly the most handy, and the most deadly for receiving charges, and for fighting

in jungle or crops. When hunting by myself, I have carried a medium spear, using it "underhand" at first to bring the boar to, and changing to "overhand" for fighting and killing him. My favourite and most deadly spear measured only 5 feet 10 inches ; and the district I hunted in (Muttra) included almost every class of country to be met with in pig-sticking centres, such as grass plains, bush, tiger grass, and tree jungles, nullahs, river beds, and stony hills.

I cannot help thinking that the short spear, besides being the more fatal, is the more "sporting" of the two, and that two of the points alleged against it are actually in its favour. It is objected that more skill is required in its use, and that it allows the boar to come in too close to the horse; but to me it seems that these two points tend to fulfill the premises which go to constitute the sport: namely, the one gives scope for the practice of the individual proficiency of the hunter, while the other gives the quarry a better chance against his pursuer.

However, the choice of spear to be adopted for general use by a Tent Club is usually governed by local circumstances, such as proportion of jungly country to be met with, the character of the general breed of pig in that district, etc. Thus the short spear is used in countries like Bengal, where long grass, jhao, thick crops, etc., are common, and where the boar turns to charge as soon as he is collared, without waiting to be pricked. Whereas in wide, open countries like Western India, where the pig trusts a good deal to his speed to take him out of danger, and where jungles are few and far between, the long spear is preferred, as being the better weapon with which to harass and bring him to bay.

The spear is, of course, used for hunting other animals than boar, and panthers very frequently appear in the bag when out pig-sticking in wild districts like the Kadir. In a large percentage of cases of panther hunting, the hunting is done by the beast himself for part of the time, as he has a nasty knack of suddenly crouching in the middle of a run and springing on to the back of your horse as you go by. Also, cat-like, he has several lives in hand and takes a deal of killing. I have, with a crowd of others, run down a wolf, but as a rule, unless he has recently dined, the wolf will wear down the average horse and get away. Hyenas are also a frequent prey to the spearsman, and black buck and nilghai are frequently speared; but, somehow, I have never had the heart to do this, excepting on one occasion when I was charged by a black buck in close cover.

John Watson created a record in this direction when in riding a nilghai his spear broke off short in its back when it was close alongside his horse. He promptly threw himself from his horse on to the back of the deer and rode it while he drew out the broken spear and gave it a final stab which brought quarry and rider to earth.

*Spear Heads.*—There are in existence spear heads of every variety of shape and temper that a sportsman's fancy can desire, but the beginner cannot go far wrong if he select one of the more ordinary kinds to begin with—either the "Bayonet" shape (made by Wilkinson, of Pall Mall; Thornhill, Bond Street; Hill, of the Haymarket; or Rogers, of Bond Street), or those known as the "Bodraj," made in Aurungabad (Bombay), and

obtainable all over India.

The *Bayonet* head is a tapering three-edged spike, long, triangular in section, with blade 6 inches long and three-quarters of an inch width of side, socket and neck 6 inches, which, owing to its shape, slips easily into the flesh and between bones with comparatively little pressure, and can always be as easily withdrawn, and its point is solid and strong enough to pierce the bone of the shoulder-blade or skull. In selecting a head of this kind, the buyer should be careful to take only one whose blade and socket are made in one piece, and not connected at the neck by solder and a bolt up the inside.

The *Bodraj* head is a flat oval blade tapering to a point. It is 4 inches long, three-quarters to 1 inch broad at the widest part, with a neck and socket of 4 inches long ; a projecting rib runs from point to socket along the centre of each side of the blade, standing about one-sixth of an inch, and sharpened along its back. This head is particularly adapted for use in Pig-sticking Cup Competitions, as the channels along the bottom of the rib are apt to retain a certain amount of blood after inflicting a wound, which may often be a decisive proof in the case of a disputed first spear, while a smooth spear blade will frequently become so greased and re-greased in passing in and out again of the pig through his layer of skin fat, that it fails to retain even the drop of the blood of the interior wound necessary for substantiating the claim to first spear.

The main points to be insisted on in the selection of a spear head are that:—The socket should be wide enough at its mouth to admit the bamboo shaft without necessitating its being trimmed or planed down, as a great portion of the toughness of the bamboo lies in its external skin.

The neck connecting the socket to the blade should be strong and unbendable—the whole head being made in one piece; those which are jointed and soldered together, or otherwise weak at the neck, are apt to bend or break off on contact with the boar's skull or other hard bone.

The blade itself should not only be of a shape that will ensure its easy entrance through skin and muscle and between the ribs, etc., combined with an ability to retain blood, but which will also enable it to be withdrawn again without risk of its being prevented from coming out between the ribs or through the original slit in the tough hide after having received a turn in the wound, and yet it should be of sufficient size to make a hole capable of admitting the socket into the wound. For this reason, wide or thin (not "narrow") blades or those with shoulders to them, and especially the "diamond-shaped," should be avoided; they may slip in easily enough between the bones if they happen to be held the right way, but half a turn of the wrist in the struggle will probably lock them against withdrawal by placing them athwart the openings by which they entered. The blade must also be of well-tempered steel, and have strength at the point to enable it to pierce bones and not to be bent or broken in the attempt. English-made medium-tempered heads are the most satisfactory in the long run. An under-tempered blade, the usual result of the Indian artificer's work, becomes blunted after a few contacts with the boar's tough hide, and its point becomes turned into a hook on striking a bone; while on the other hand an over-tempered blade, which the English

maker is rather apt to recommend, is very liable to chip and break at the edges and point. On the whole, then, it is better, within bounds of course, to have a spear head rather under- than over-tempered; sufficiently tough to pierce a bone, and yet not so hardened as to be "chippy." A blade of this kind has also the advantage of being easy to sharpen with the roughest appliances, whereas a thoroughly hard piece of steel would require a regular grinding apparatus.

*Spear Shafts.*—In selecting a shaft for a spear, a tough, springy, seasoned, male bamboo, with the knots close together, should be chosen. Its absolute straightness is not an indispensable point, as ordinary curves can be rectified by the local carpenter, or by hanging the shaft with a 16 lb. weight attached to it. For a short spear the bamboo should be thick at the butt and should taper rapidly towards the head, whereas for a long spear it should be light, straight, and of very gradual taper. Indians say that the bamboo for this purpose should be cut at night when the moon is new, but I will not advance this theory as one of my own ; though I *will* say that it is preferable to cut your bamboo at the end of the hot season, while the sap is chiefly in the roots.

*Fitting the Head.*—In attaching the spear head, the thin end of the bamboo shaft should be fixed in the socket with glue after having been cut to such a length that the mouth of the socket fits on just where a joint occurs, as extra strength of wood is thus obtained at the critical point. Then either the outside of the socket should be filed down to come flush with the wood, or else the latter should be " whipped " with waxed thread, or varnished string, for a few inches above the socket. In any case the object is to ensure no projecting edge of the socket being left to catch under the pig's tough hide, which is apt to close very tightly round the shaft when the spear has passed into his body. Indian carpenters are very liable to trim the bamboo down to fit the socket, or to level the edge of the socket to the surface of the shaft by a gradually decreasing coating of glue; but both these methods are bad. The former weakens the shaft at the point where it requires to be particularly strong, and in the second case the glue usually cracks and breaks off, leaving the rim of the socket projecting to catch under the bones or skin of the wound.

The point and edge of the spear head should be frequently looked to and kept quite sharp. They are very liable to become blunted from frequent contact with the tough hide, bones, etc., of the pig, and with the branches of jungle, and from being driven into the sand: many a man has been unable to substantiate his claim to first spear from carelessness in this respect where his spear, although fairly delivered, has been too blunt to pierce the tough hide opposed to it—

"His brawny sides with hairy bristles armed  
Are better proof than thy spear point can enter."

— from Sir Robert Baden-Powell, *Pig-Sticking or Hog-Hunting — A Complete Account for Sportsmen — and Others*, London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1924.