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Comment

I am back in Florida now and ready for the fall and winter golfing season. Golfing in the high altitude of 8,500 feet with a light atmosphere and then down to sea level with heavy air, is a huge difference at some 10 to 15 % in distance. It does make you feel good when you see a 6 and 7 iron going 175 yards in the air. Florida golfers prefer the lower running ball flight with a driver, mostly due to the Florida breeze. There is one thing you must remember about the ball going lower. You are depending on ground firmness for the run and if the ground is soft you get no roll with the ball coming down sooner. Instead of gaining distance, you lose distance. Too many golfers are using 8.5 and 9.5 degree drivers. It is a macho thing and in reality they should be using more loft on the driver like a 10.5 or 11.5 degree driver. More on this in "launch the ball" noted within this issue. So first, fly the ball as high as you can, as far as you can, as there are no hazards in the sky! The after-flight roll, or end roll, is always a bonus.

As a teacher I often hear my students say I found something while practicing the other day and it really worked. I like that discovery thing because there is always room for self-improvement. Most of the time the entire experience of a lesson is the teacher becoming a sounding board, not an answering machine. Often the real answer is in the player. When confirmed by the teacher who helped lead you to that answer, it makes for one heck of a confidence builder. The purpose is to make you better than you were before by teaching you to learn and replace it with something excitingly new, "the wow effect", by teaching you the skills to modify or adjust what you are doing so you can reach your goal or dream, and giving you some options so you can choose and develop to allow your point of view and develop your own style.

Swinging turns or turning swings?

Turn and you will swing is sometimes not so. I see people turning themselves into pretzels with no gain in arm swing. I have always preferred the players who swing their arms, which makes them turn well without even thinking about turning. The turn does not guarantee arm swing. If you have the feeling of arm swing around you and the turning of the body as a result of the freedom in that arm swing, you have a good swinging action called "swinging turns." There are always

exceptions. If your body is tight, rigid or tense, turning is not going to happen. So try to make swinging turns and not turning swings. Arms are the engine of the swing. Club speed comes from tension-free arm swinging unencumbered by any resistance. Goal: To swing the arms, turn the shoulders (in response) and cock the wrists. You need all three. Relaxed arms will make good things happen more often than not.

Launch the ball

More loft on the driver allows the club to hit the ball when the club is at the very bottom of the arc instead of at the end of the flat spot. What an interesting concept! The idea of when the club has travelled to the end of the flat spot, the club has lost some speed, but if the ball is struck at the beginning of the flat spot or exact bottom of the arc, the clubhead speed is faster, therefore gaining a few precious yards.

This example of a driver with more loft is like a putter with more loft, (i.e. 6 degrees instead of 4). This allows the shaft to lean toward the hole by forward pressing the hands like Phil Mickelson does, yet allowing the ball to be struck on the downswing with the ball then "rolling" because of the loft. The adventure of discovery is to learn. Try that sometime. Borrow or try an 11 or 12 degree driver and hit the ball at the very bottom of the downswing and see what happens. Some have been presently surprised.

The order of things

Routines allow an orderly movement of things, like starting your car. Open the door, get in, put the key in, push the button, into to gear, then go. The three things to do before you swing are: 1) aim the clubface, 2) hold the handle and 3) aim yourself. The only thing left to do then, is swing. Once you get to "swing", there should be a clear key, a visual picture or feel. As soon as you get a clear picture or key...Go! All this is done within three to four seconds. A clear mind can work wonders. Clogging your mind with several thoughts is a tension builder and a sure way to inconsistency. Remember "one more look and Go." One more look at where you are going, then swing.

Perfect Practice

There are three parts to perfect practice. First, warm up with 12 to 18 balls. Not using a target, just warming up to find your rhythm. Second, practice what you have learned, a key for the day. New posture, a better turn etc.! Lastly, challenge yourself by going for a specific target, changing targets and clubs on each shot, see what your shot pattern is for the day. This way you make practice like play and you keep your mind fascinated by focusing. Transferring to the course is made simpler.

Practice and lessons

The objective is always to make yourself better than you were before. To unlearn and replace it with something excitingly new. The wow effect! As a teacher, I am trying to help you reach your dreams and help you with the skills to modify or adjust the swing so that those dreams can be reached. I try to give my students many options so they can develop their own point of view, their very own style like Jim Furyk or two gloves Gainey or Jason Wagner (a big wobble).

Bunker shots

There are two simple cures to bunker shots. First, lean or tilt the left shoulder down, slightly lower than the right at the address. This helps enormously with a descending strike into the sand. By having the left shoulder higher than the right, you will tend to have upward strike or thin scoop. A lower left shoulder helps on downhill iron shots or hybrid shots. Many find this valuable with iron shots on a normal flat lie. By feeling like the left shoulder is lower or pointing down on the downswing, you get a firmer, more solid strike and compress the ball more easily.

The second is to make sure both knees remain bent until the ball has left the bunker. This keeps the player lower, longer ensuring the club “slides” behind and under the ball.

Success in chipping

Even in a little chip shot, make sure you allow the shoulders and chest to turn to face the target. Try to end facing or shaking hands with the pin. Swing to the target, not to the ball. Swing through it, not to it! Maintaining the pace of the swing in chipping is a huge plus. There should be no sudden movements. The short simple chip swing, flowing with no interruptions, ending up as “same, same” - same pace back, same pace forward.

Challenge your putting

The best way to learn putting is to putt. This challenge is one of the best things you can do to make yourself a very good putter. Stroking ball after ball from two or three feet is not going to make a great putter on the golf course because most of the time you have at least a twenty footer! This challenge will really improve your putting. Take three balls. Go out forty feet and try to get all three balls putted out in a total of six or less. That means you did not three putt any. Then, go to another point on the green farther away and do the same thing again. This creates the feel of the long lag putting stroke, and to putt out the balls near the hole. This way you practice and learn both putts, long and short all at the same time. The goal is to try to keep a three out of the

challenge. If you have someone with you, challenge them to a two putt from anywhere on the green. The object on the very long putts is to get the ball as close as possible, where the next putt is a tap in.

Putting gems

Having spent many hours around some of the very best putters in the world, here are some “gems” to help your putting from three time US Open winner, Suzy Maxwell Berning:

All good putters do the following:

- 1) Keep their head very still;
- 2) See the line and feel the distance;
- 3) Hold their finish, then look;
- 4) Trust their read; and
- 5) Keep the putter low to the ground.

(The belly putter would be an exception to keeping the putter head low)

All great players in any sport have the eagerness to work. The difference between a great shot and a smart shot is having the guts to try it. ~Phil Mickelson

The feeling of certainty

The feeling of certainty comes from mechanical efficiency, mechanical simplicity and the trust in it. Those are born from endless hours on the practice area or area of learning, “in the dirt” as Ben Hogan said, “endless hours of trial and error.” The result should be a simple, repeatable swing that you can depend on day after day, week after week. It does not matter what it looks like. The ball does not care, the ball just reacts!

Moe's Corner

On a hole that was a drive and a wedge, Moe would hit the wedge first, then the driver. I asked him why he did that. He said, “just to have fun, just to have fun.” Did no one object, I asked? He said, “No, there is no rule against that, and I still made a birdie.”

When Moe played, there were often events that had the final rounds of 36 holes in one day. Moe often bemoaned that he hated 36 holes in a day because his afternoon shots were in his morning divots.

Ben Hogan said that, “a straight shot was an accident.” Moe told Ben Hogan to “Come with me, I will show you a thousand accidents.”

“I am the straightest that ever lived” he said, “if there was a tournament at midnight I would win every time. I know where my ball is going to be, right down the middle. I wish the fairways were four inches wide, the ball will fit onto that!”