

Kent Golfer Article

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“How To Turn Easily and Consistently”

In last month's article I promised to tell you how you can develop the 6 key basics of a good golf swing – turning, weight shift, rhythm, balance, coordination and relaxation. I also told you that there are some major misconceptions that make it difficult to achieve them on a regular basis.

This month I want to talk to you about the first of these, turning.

To start off, just take another look at the Positive Impact Golf logo at the bottom of my article. It may surprise you to learn that, despite appearing so simple, it actually took our team a few weeks to design it. It was important to find something that truly corresponded to our coaching philosophy. You will notice that there are no straight lines and the same can be said about the golf swing.

The golf swing is as rotational as any throwing movement. I am not a lover of technical jargon but I'll allow myself one in this article – 'Centrifugal Force.' This is the same power that is generated when you see a discus or hammer thrown in athletics or you go on a Wurlitzer at the fair ground. In my experience, many golfers fail to create enough of this powerful energy in their swing and one of the main misconceptions that prevents this is the idea that the club should follow a straight line away from the ball and again as it comes through the hitting area. I can see how easy it is to fall into this trap as we all want to control the ball towards the target. After all, there is a straight line from the ball to the centre of the fairway or the centre of the green so why not keep the clubface square to that for as long as possible?

Now, whilst a straight line swing of the mallet is true in croquet where you stand with your eyes immediately above the ball and your feet either side of a straight line to the hoop, it isn't in golf. In our sport, we stand to one side of the ball even in putting, although Sam Snead famously tried to putt like this until the 'powers that be' decided that this made it too easy (!) and made it illegal.

The clubhead must swing on a curved line both back and through and can't suddenly change track to adopt a straight line. When our coaches question golfers about this subject, the reply is often find that they are trying to go straight back away from the ball for a distance of 1 – 2 feet then move away from the line before rejoining it again on the downswing before impact. They then believe that the club should stay straight through the ball for as long as possible before letting it curve back away from the line as late as possible. How does this

sound to you? Straight to curve to straight then back to curve again! Complicated? Certainly!

Let's take a look at the consequences of this idea of straight lines in terms of how your body will translate it into movement. In all probability your body will stay facing the ball instead of turning, especially as you swing through the hitting area. Yes, just when you want to profit from that rotational energy your body has to prevent it from happening. And yet we all know that good golfers turn through the ball more than we do.

This concept will favour an upright and steep type of swing producing tendencies to slice long shots, pull short shots and hit too much ground, often before the ball. It will also limit the distance you hit your long shots and drives in particular.

Now, to the most damaging misconception in golf; **HEAD STILL.**

I would advise that your head should move with your body in a coordinated way throughout the swing. Away from the target on the back swing and then forward towards it on the through swing. Even as you hit the ball your head should not stop, just as in any throwing movement. The human head is relatively heavy and, if it gets into the wrong position, it can have a damaging effect on your balance and on your ability to keep the club on its ideal curved path. Additionally, keeping it still and down too long can make it extremely difficult to turn through and finish your swing well and can cause back and neck injuries.

In their book 'The Search for the Perfect Swing,' a scientific study of the golf swing carried out in the 1960s, the authors Cochrane and Stubbs carried out experiments that showed that average head movement in the top players of the era with a driver was over two inches away from the target on the backswing. Why, forty years later, do most amateur golfers still believe that it should stay still?

Just a few months ago, whilst surfing the net, I came across a video clip of Tiger Woods on 'youtube' entitled 'The Eye of the Tiger.' It shows him hitting shots with a camera on the peak of his cap pointing down at the ball. As he swings the club away from the ball his head rotates considerably to his right. Yes, even Tiger moves his head! Whilst the commentator says that his head stops just before impact, Tiger himself is aware of keeping it down **TOO LONG** and has said recently that he is trying to let his head move more freely through his shots. When his head stays down too long his body rotation gets a little blocked and his hands either over-react, thus creating a hooked shot, or themselves get blocked thus provoking a wild push to the right.

The last element of the rotational theme to this article is something I discussed in detail in my August article 'Heel Up or Heel Down when I said the following about the heel of your front foot: *'The heel must come off the ground, especially on long shots, as players get older and less supple. I would also include anyone who doesn't play to a professional or low-handicap level. Of course, these are generalisations and there are exceptions, but the vast*

majority of you will play more comfortably and hit longer and better struck shots if you develop more footwork.

Can you imagine the effect of keeping your heel on the ground AND your head still? This combination is guaranteed to limit your body's ability to make a comfortable turn in your backswing and the chances are that a restricted body turn going back will lead to a lack of momentum and rotation going forward.

In practical terms, I wouldn't suggest going out to TRY and move your head or your foot. Awareness cures, trying fails! Please, this article can bring new awareness of what you believe and what you have unknowingly been trying to conform to. After that, just let the rest happen naturally.

I write these articles in the hope that they will help the average golfer to play a more relaxed, natural and easier game. Please do let me have your feedback and comments.

In the meantime, have a Happy Christmas and a Merry New year, especially on the golf course.

Next month: 'How to Optimise Your Weight Shift'