

WORDS DUNCAN LENNARD  
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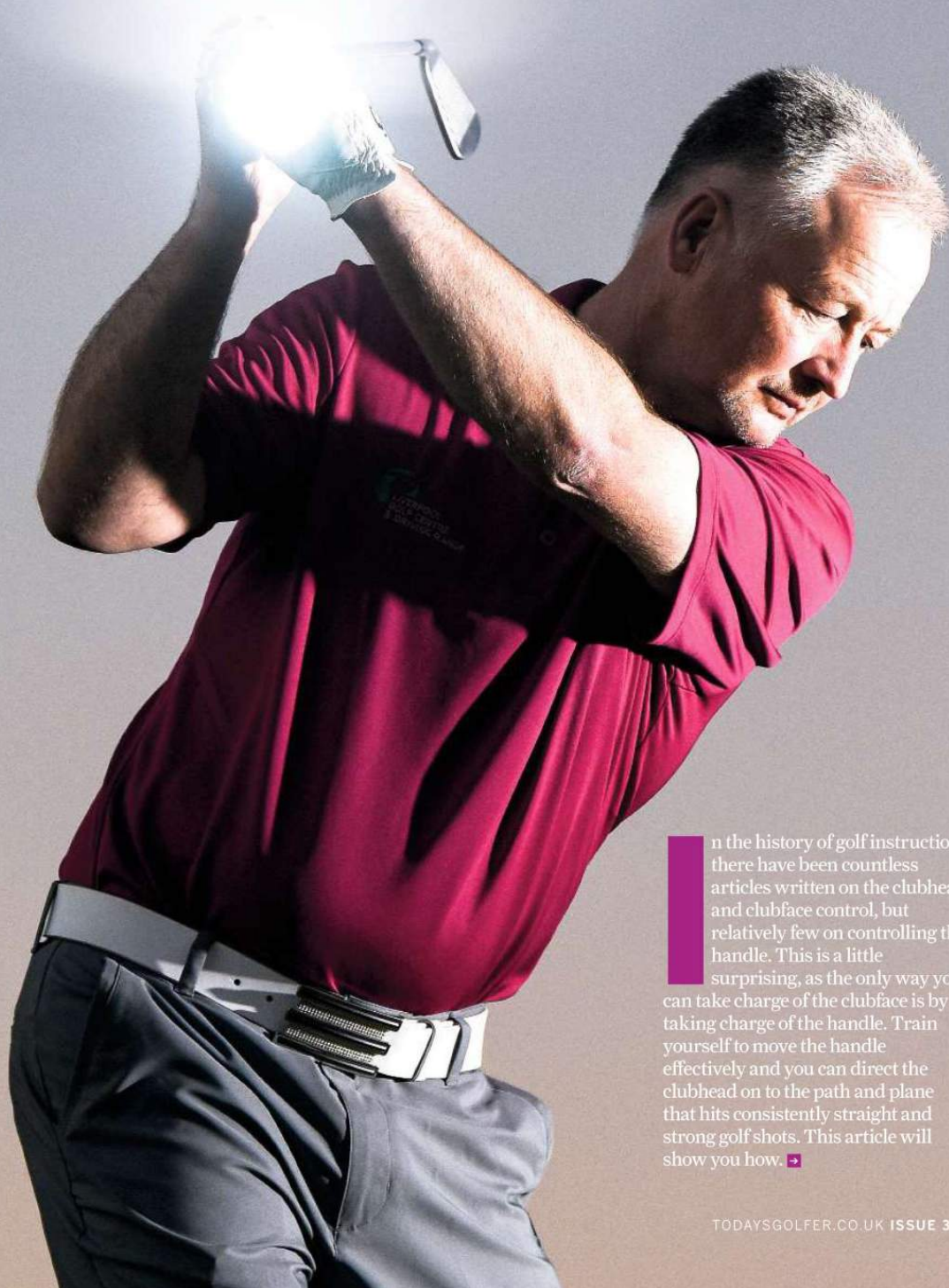
# GET A HANDLE ON YOUR GAME



## TOP 50 TEACHER

Adrian Fryer  
solidgolf.co.uk  
Fellow of the PGA  
based at Liverpool  
Golf Centre, www.  
liverpoolgolfcentre.  
co.uk

Know how to use the club's handle correctly and control of the clubface becomes automatic. These tips and drills will show you how...



In the history of golf instruction there have been countless articles written on the clubhead and clubface control, but relatively few on controlling the handle. This is a little surprising, as the only way you can take charge of the clubface is by taking charge of the handle. Train yourself to move the handle effectively and you can direct the clubhead on to the path and plane that hits consistently straight and strong golf shots. This article will show you how. ➤



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## #1 TAKEAWAY CARRY THE HANDLE

Put simply, the clubhead is in a constant state of reacting to what the handle is doing. Move the handle in and the club responds by kicking out...

and vice versa. This has serious implications for your takeaway, which sets the path of your entire swing. Here's what to do... and what not to do.

### ADDRESS: ON PLANE

When we address the ball, we set the plane for the swing. The shaft rises from the ball, with the butt pointing up to around the belt buckle. As the club gets longer and we stand slightly further from the ball, the shaft and the plane get a little flatter.

### CARRIED AWAY

The important thing to note about address is that the club starts on plane; we have to do something to move it off-plane, and for many of us that starts in the first couple of feet in the swing. In a good takeaway the hands simply carry the handle, without interfering in its direction or path; if your hands take a more interventionist role, you'll see it in the motion of the handle.



### ROLL REVERSAL

This is by far the most common problem for the club golfer — an early rolling of the wrists as the hands and wrists overwork to get the club away from the ball. This moves the handle away from the body; the clubhead instantly reacts by falling behind you and into a hopelessly off-plane position.



### NO ROTATION

Less common but also problematic is a takeaway where the hands work inward towards the body, pulling back behind the trail hip. It's often caused by resisting natural forearm rotation. When this happens, the clubhead dutifully responds by moving up and out... and again off-plane.



## TWO GRIPS THAT PROMOTE A BETTER TAKEAWAY

So by focusing on that simple carrying of the handle through the first portion of the swing, you will promote an action that keeps

the club moving on the correct path and plane. Here are two drills that will help you achieve it.

1



### CLAW GRIP

Take your regular gloved-hand hold but place the webbing between your trail thumb and forefinger against the side of the handle, almost like the putting claw grip. This hold helps stop your hands rolling the club away from the ball.



### TARGET LINE REFERENCE

The most obvious sign of an online takeaway is the shaft and head pointing down to an extension of the target line as it swings back. So place two clubs on the ground, behind the ball but aiming down your target line. Use this new hold to move the handle back, checking the shaft and clubhead point down at the shafts.

### STABLE HANDLE

Note how, with this new grip, hand and wrist action are calmed and the handle remains much more stable during the first part of the swing. Work the club back like this to build your awareness of how this simpler handle motion feels, and aim to repeat it with your regular grip.

2



### BACK-TO-BACK

As an alternative to the claw hold, hold the club again in your gloved hand, but bring your trail hand across so the backs of the hands are touching.



### QUIETER MOVE AWAY

Practise the same takeaway move. Once again, see how the becalmed hand action sets up a simple backward motion of the handle, which in turn allows the shaft to point down to that ball-target line extension. Groove the move before trying it with your regular grip.



## #2 BACKSWING USE THE HANDLE TO KEEP YOUR SWING ON LINE

As the swing gathers pace we start to notice a second truth about the relationship between the head and

handle; in a nutshell, the head will follow where the handle leads. To get the club swinging straight through the

ball then, we need the handle to lead it there. Here's how.



### BUTT CHECK

Keep those two clubs on the ground, and take your 7-iron. Address the ball normally, but grip the 7-iron halfway along its shaft, on the metal below the grip. Swing halfway back, allowing the wrists to cock, until your lead arm is parallel with the ground. From here you can see the handle, and where it is pointing. Its position here will dictate the plane of the swing, and the path of the club.

### ON POINT

If your action is on plane, the butt of the club will point towards the shafts on the ground. If yours does not, move the club into position to improve your understanding and awareness of what on-plane feels like. Then make a series of half-backswings with the half-club, until that position starts to come more naturally.



### ON-PLANE: THE PAY-OFF

The clubhead follows where the handle leads. When you can get the handle pointing at that extension of the target line during the backswing, you will feel it wanting to run along that target line as the downswing begins... pulling the clubhead behind it.



### DOWN-THE-LINE DELIVERY

With the clubhead following the handle's lead, you will arrive at impact with the club swinging straight through the ball and down the target line. A down-the-line delivery means no need for manipulation and longer, straighter golf shots.



## SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE

There are times where experiencing less-desirable positions either side of a good one can be helpful, and this is a good example. By feeling the two flawed positions either side of that on-plane position, you can boost your awareness of what the middle ground feels like and start to hone a more on-plane move.

### TOO INSIDE

As before, grip the club halfway up the shaft and start from your regular address position. But this time swing back so the handle points well inside those shafts on the ground.



### HANDS DROP BEHIND

As you start down, you will feel how the handle wants to move in the direction it is pointing, taking your hands almost behind your body, and well inside the ideal delivery path.



### HEAD FOLLOWS HANDLE

Your hands and the handle will ultimately swing out to the ball but the clubhead, obediently following the handle, follows this in-to-out path. It's a delivery that causes blocks and hooks, but useful to experience in boosting your appreciation of what on-plane feels like.



### TOO OUTSIDE

Now go the other way. Swing back, but this time let the butt of the club point well above the shafts on the ground. Putting the shaft in a laid-off position, this represents an outside-the-line position.



### HANDLE POINTS THE WAY

Again, follow the downswing through and note now, when the handle points above the shafts, it begins moving in the direction it is pointing, out and away from your body.



### HEAD FOLLOWS HANDLE

And once more, as the hands cut in to impact the head reacts by following the handle on a similar out-to-in path. If this is your swing shape you'll hit slices and pulls... but you can use these excessive inside and outside swings to frame the ideal, on-plane action.





## #3 IMPACT HANDLE LEADS THE HEAD TO IMPROVE STRIKE QUALITY

Now we move from the path of the swing to angle of attack. We know that to create the powerful, compressing strike

your iron shots need, the club has to squeeze down slightly onto the ball. The key to this strong strike is sequencing

and weight shift, progressing into that powerful position, not simply pushing the hands forward. Follow this approach.



### HANDS ABOVE BALL

Take your 7-iron and address the ball normally, playing the ball in the centre of your stance. Keep the club in what I'd call a neutral position, the shaft angled very slightly forward so your hands are above the ball.

### DYNAMIC SHAFT LEAN

A neutral set-up – weight 50-50 and the hands only slightly ahead of the clubhead, gives you room to move into. From there the dynamic motion of the hips, shifting then rotating, drives the weight forward and causes the upper body to unwind, pulling the hands forward... which in turn drags the clubhead through.

### FEEL THE FORCE

As we mentioned in part 1, the clubhead can't help but respond to what the handle is doing. So here, as the handle moves forward the head reacts by angling back. The result is the increased forward shaft lean that allows you apply pressure on to the ball... and powerful iron shots.



### DON'T PUSH THE HANDS FORWARD

It's tempting to try to present a hands-ahead impact by simply pushing them forward at address. Don't fall into this trap.



### BACKWARD STEP

Hands forward of the ball is a tough position to sustain. Typically you will back up from here, causing the flipping action you are trying to avoid.

