



HOW TO HIT MORE GREENS

You don't have to rip your swing apart to get better. Adrian Fryer reveals six easy ways to hit more greens in regulation...

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When a player starts to hit errant approach shots, the first point of blame is usually their swing. "I left the face open" or "I turned it over" are among the most common phrases heard. But have you ever considered that something else – from the moment you arrived at your ball to starting your backswing – could have gone

wrong and was the reason your ball's in the bunker and not nestled tight to the flag? There are many factors that influence the success of an approach shot. For example, you could make the best swing of your life but if you had the wrong club in your hand or were aligned incorrectly, you'd still miss the green. This report is designed to help you tackle everything else that could go wrong outside of

your fundamental technique. Areas such as your visualisation process, pre-shot routine, course management and rhythm all have a say in whether your ball finds the putting surface or not. So take note of the advice from Adrian Fryer here, complement it with the swing tips in the TG Irons Special supplement from Gareth Johnston and see those eight-footers change from par-savers to birdie chances.

TIP ONE GO SIGNALS, NOT NO SIGNALS

BEFORE EVERY APPROACH SHOT stand behind your ball (once you've selected your club) and feel like you're having an out-of-body experience, seeing yourself execute the shot successfully in front of you. This is feeding your mind a positive picture of what you are trying to do, rather than focusing on what not to

do. By thinking of where you don't want to go, you attract that negative result. Give your brain a clear instruction. Ask: "What would a good shot look like here?" The shape of shot you're picturing should move towards the target. So if the flag is on the left the right-hander would play a draw – and vice-versa.

SEE THE SHOT Picturing the perfect shot before playing removes negative shot thoughts, and stops you getting bogged down with technique.

'THE SHAPE OF SHOT YOU SEE SHOULD IDEALLY MOVE TOWARDS THE FLAG'



TIP TWO THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU SELECT YOUR CLUB

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT YOUR ball, you should be starting to think about your upcoming shot (certainly not what may have gone wrong off the tee) and more importantly, what factors will influence the distance you hit the ball. Incorporating these checks are crucial.

1. Always assess the lie of your ball before selecting your club. Even small depressions in the fairway may alter the angle of attack you need to create into the ball. Certain slopes will affect the distance the ball will travel and the shape the ball moves through the air.
2. The wind is one of the most powerful influences on a well-struck iron shot. So take this opportunity to check its direction and strength by throwing grass into the air or by noticing the movement of the flag or clouds. Remember that you may not feel the wind at ground level, but it's likely to be stronger at the altitude the ball reaches at the top of its flight.
3. Based on the image you've seen in your mind's eye of the shot you're about to play, make a practice swing incorporating a feeling or trait you've been working on in your swing. This is also the time to rehearse the feel of the relevant shape of that shot – for example, a rounded swing and inside approach for a draw. In summary, see it, feel it, do it!



PLAN YOUR MISSES

THE MORE INFORMATION YOU can gather on the practice round of a new course the better, as this eliminates any doubt. Have a clear idea on every hole about where the trouble around the green is, where the pin is located, which side of the fairway has the best line in, how you can leave the ball below the hole and so on. Ideally make a note of all these on your course planner before you tee off. By now, you should have a decent idea of the distance you hit your irons and therefore have all the information you need to plan the shot perfectly. If you make a bad swing, the chances are your excellent work beforehand will leave you with an easier up-and-down.



CREATE PERSONAL RULES

SOMETHING ELSE YOU CAN DO IS set yourself some commandments that are specific to you, that you know will make you play better and score lower, and that you must stick to for all 18 holes. Make sure you give every shot your full attention because each shot is a pencil mark on the card; there are none more important than others. Write your rules down and keep them in your scorecard. That way, you're reminded of them on every tee. This advice – which you can transfer to all areas of your game – will serve to improve your focus on areas of the game you struggle with. For many amateurs, this is when hitting into the green.

Routine advice

On every shot you play, casual or competitive, try to keep everything in your routine the same. For example, the number of practice swings and looks up at the target. This will give a consistent tempo to your play and stop anxiety creeping in.

How are you playing? Before you select the type of shot you wish to play ask yourself how confident you're feeling. There's little point in selecting a high tariff shot if you don't feel up to pulling it off.

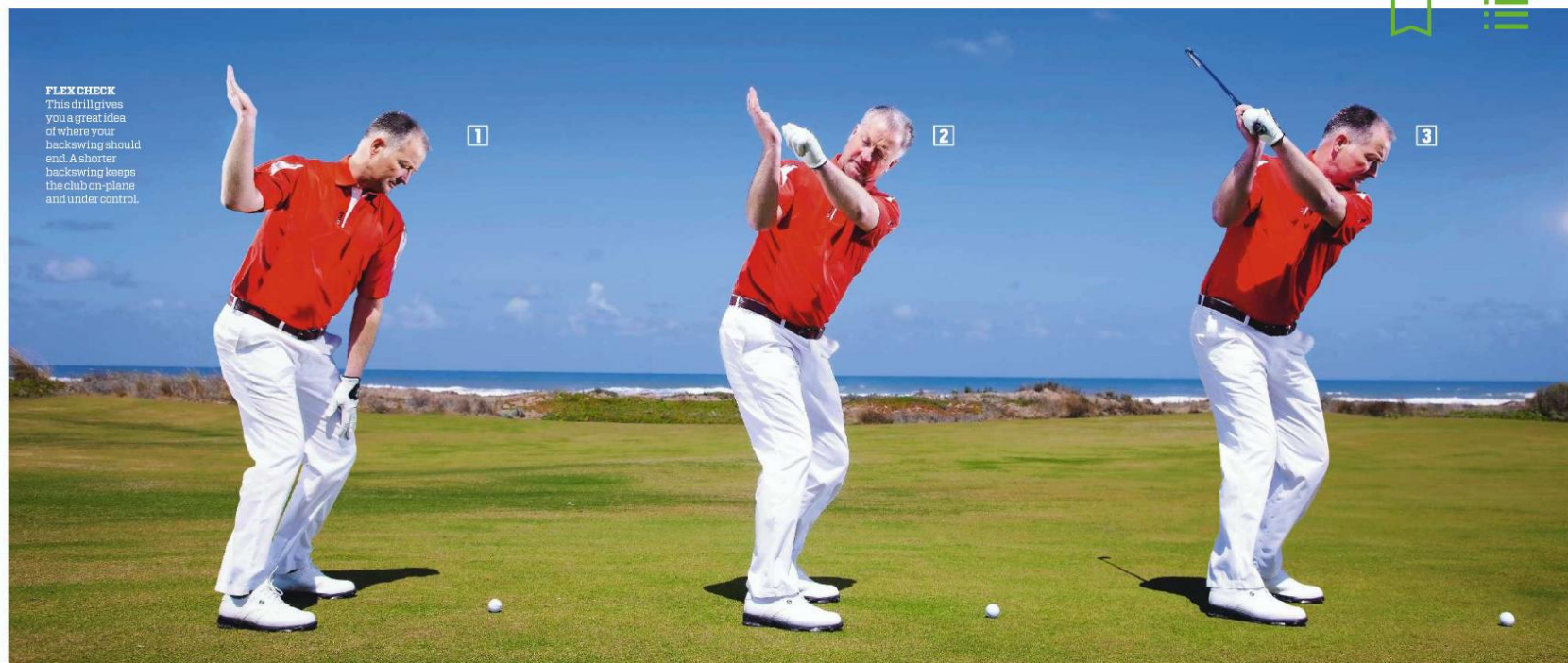
Secondary target Picking something in front of your ball on the line you want the ball to start will help you align the club before correctly when addressing the ball. You could use a leaf, a divot or a discoloured blade of grass. ■

ACCURACY

TIP THREE: SWING SHORT ENOUGH TO KEEP CONTROL

MOST AMATEURS TEND TO swing the club back too far with an iron in an effort to build clubhead speed and power. There's a limit as to how far you can comfortably swing back before the quality is affected, based on your age, flexibility and skill level. But as a rule, a short swing on-plane is better than a long swing off-plane. Even Tour pros will rarely reach horizontal at the top of the swing with an iron so there's no need for you to. Set your right elbow at 90° with your forearm pointing up (1). Then turn away, swinging your left arm up trying to reach your right hand (2). If your right arm is too high and wide that you can't reach it with your left, your swing is too long for somebody with your build. So find the backswing length that works for you to give your hands the most efficient route into impact from the inside (3).

FLEX CHECK
This drill gives you a great idea of where your backswing should end. A shorter backswing keeps the club on-plane and under control.



GET CONNECTED

Form mirror positions either side of the ball, keeping elbows tight to your sides. This will help you feel the connection between the arms and body.



TIP FOUR: FOCUS ON RHYTHM IN YOUR PRACTICE SWING

THE FINAL THOUGHT YOU should adopt before you swing is just put a good rhythm on it. But what is good rhythm? We can think of it as the correct synchronisation of the arm swing with the body turn during the swing. Golfers get out of sync when the arms or legs get too quick from the top. Here's a great drill to help you sync up. Start with the club in front of you, wrists hinged. Soften the elbows to feel the connection between upper arms and body (1). Now, your goal is to match the downward swinging of the arms with the unwinding of the body. You can do that by making short swings with the elbows tight to the body. Look to find these mirror images either side of the ball, with the clubshaft vertical (2 and 3). Capture the right rhythm with your practice swing then recreate this on the ball and your ball-striking and distance control should improve considerably. ■

TIP FIVE CARRY OUT THESE ADDRESS POSITION CHECKS

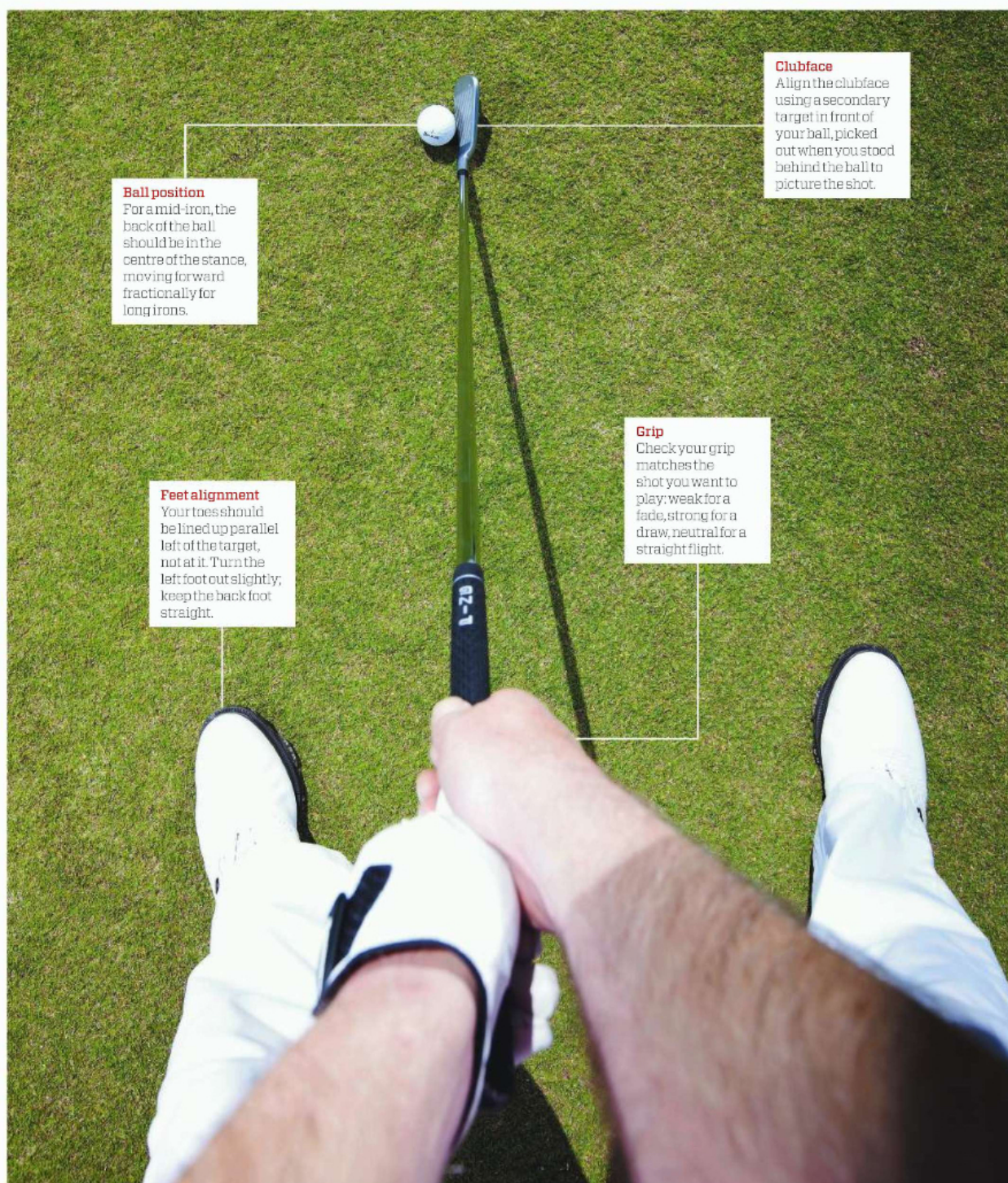
SO YOU'VE CHOSEN YOUR CLUB, visualised your shape of shot and have walked into the ball keeping this image of the target fixed in your mind. Now is the time to orient yourself correctly to where you want to send the ball in order to make your vision a reality. There are four

checks to make here, each as important as the next. Many amateurs don't pay enough attention to some and neglect others altogether but they all have a part to play in the outcome of your shot.

It's recommended you align your clubface initially to where you want the ball to start (remember the clubface is king) and then position your feet in relation to this. So if you're shaping the shot to the flag, the angle of your clubface

should differ to that of your feet at address.

This is also a good time to position your grip for the relevant shape of shot you've chosen. A stronger grip (palms rotated right) will help you draw the ball while a weaker grip (palms rotated left) will help you fade it. Take into account your ball position too – with short irons it can move back fractionally. Tick off these four checkpoints over the ball and you're ready to make your swing.



TIP SIX FOCUS ON A BALANCED FINISH

THE QUALITY OF THE FINISH

position is important because it's a sign or measure of how well you've executed the stroke. A trademark balanced finish indicates you've synchronised the swing correctly. If you can't make two swings that finish the same, it's highly likely that the links in that chain are not going to be

uplicated either and you'll be an inconsistent ball-striker. If you want every swing you make to be the same on most occasions, then that includes the start, middle and the end. All are as important as each other but by the finish, everything has already happened so it's the ideal point of reference.

The right lines

The shaft line should mimic the eye line, meaning you've stayed in posture with the right shoulder lower than the left.

Good leg action

If you've used your legs correctly in the swing your right knee should touch the left and the right shoe turned up on its spikes.

'IF YOU CAN'T MAKE TWO SWINGS THAT FINISH THE SAME, YOU WON'T STRIKE THE BALL WELL'



AVOID A 'FLOPPY' BACK FOOT

A COMMON FINISH POSITION among amateurs is where the back foot is flopped over to the side on the outside of the foot. This is a sign they've hit the ball more with the upper body and the legs haven't been particularly stable during the swing. So focus on finishing with the heel pointing up and the foot resting on the toes with the knees together.



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