

CLASSIC LESSONS

BEN HOGAN'S BOUND ARMS

↙ In our series of articles paying homage to some of golf's most famous and memorable tips, we turn this month to Ben Hogan. Ranking among the best-selling instructional books of all time, The Hawk's 1957 work *The Modern Fundamentals* has several such lessons, and we'll be returning to the book later in the series. But here we take a look at one particular image that has helped many golfers down the years – his two arms on the club, bound tightly together.

What Hogan believed

"Keep the elbows and arms as close together as possible throughout the entire swing." This was one of Hogan's most cherished mantras. He had come to realise that, when he pressed his elbows closer together with arms extended,

the elbow joints responded in a specific way:

■ The inside of each joint – what he called "The pocket" – pointed upwards, towards the sky.

■ The pointy bone on the outside of the joint pointed down towards his trouser pockets.

Hogan understood that this orientation of the elbows allowed them to fold correctly – trail elbow back, lead elbow through – keeping the upper arms close to the body and the arms and body connected. A single, simple thought – keeping arms and elbows pressed towards each other through the swing – was all he needed to deliver this important technique.

**Try it for yourself**

Take your golfing set-up, but without a club. From here, bring your elbows closer together by opening your palms out to face the sky. Note how, as you do this, the insides of the elbows also start to turn upward. Turn your palms back in to face each other and this is broadly how Hogan set his arms at address.

ELBOWS TOGETHER WHY IT'S STOOD THE TEST OF TIME

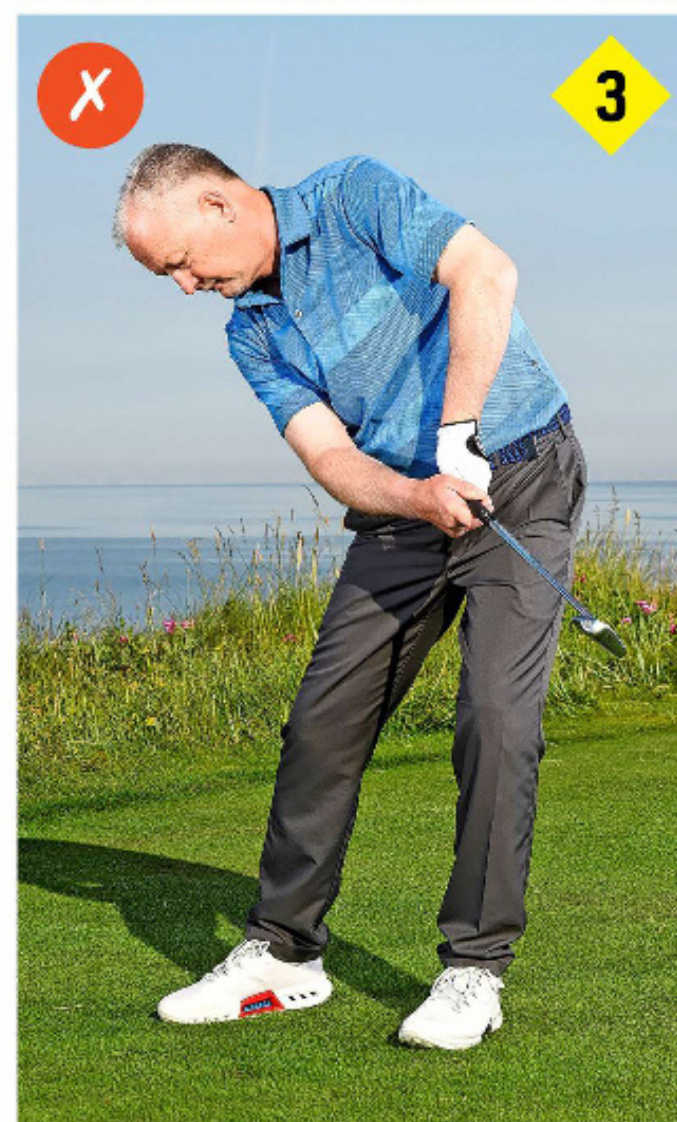
Firstly, because the image of Hogan's arms tethered together was so memorable; secondly, because it was such a simple, achievable message; but thirdly, as we will see here, because it directly deals with some very common swing issues that PGA coaches like me continue to see every day.

**1. At the top Splayed elbows**

When your trail elbow folds correctly, you are able to keep a sound radius and structure to your swing. But if its joint points outwards rather than downwards, that folding motion cannot happen and the elbows respond by splaying. This is typically at its worst at the top of the swing.

2. Elbows together Built to last

Compare that awkward position with this far more co-ordinated one. Here, with the trail elbow able to fold properly, the elbows remain close together and the swing becomes compact and connected. The club can now swing on a neutral path, shaft above the trail shoulder and pointing down the target line.

**3. Through impact Chicken wing**

We see the second most common negative effect of poorly orientated elbows through the strike. When that lead elbow points forward instead of down, it stops the arm from folding and rotating. The usual result is this side-on, army prod that lacks power or consistency.

4. Release and fold

Again, when the elbow is orientated correctly, the difference is huge. Instead of buckling forward, the lead arm is able to rotate, squaring the clubface and remaining close to my side. Note how the elbow gap is as it was at address, and at the top. Use Hogan's famous drill to point those elbows down, and this position becomes so much easier to achieve.

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