

#1 DRIVING

MAKE SURE YOUR SECOND SHOT IS NOT A DROP

By Adrian Fryer

Shot Scope identifies a specific golfer most at risk here: a 12 to 21-handicapper who drives the ball between 240 and 270 yards. This golfer lacks some control and has the power to find the neighbouring field. They will drop on average four shots per round due to lost balls/out of bounds from tees shots, and see plenty of doubles on the card. Straighter driving is about aligning face and path to take curvature out of the shot. This plan will help.



Retrain your attack
Among club players, by far the biggest path error is across the ball from outside to inside the target line. Of course, it leads to slices and pulls. So work on this by developing an in-to-out path. Use sticks, tee pegs, balls or range baskets to build an in-to-out gateway, one obstacle behind the ball and slightly outside the ball-target line, and the second forward of the ball and slightly inside the line.



2

Inside delivery

Very simply, all we are going to do here is get used to delivering the club through the gate – the clubhead missing the back and forward obstacles. As you swing down, the presence of the rear obstacle, just outside the ball target line, will encourage you to attack the ball more from the inside... and on a shallower angle.

Exit right

Similarly, the forward obstacle works to stop you pulling the club left through impact (right-handers). Retraining your path will not happen in five swings, but spend some time with this drill – swinging over a tee peg – and you will start to develop the mechanics that will help you straighten out that old, cutting action.



Change your grip to square it up

If you slice across the ball, you'd better open the face to stop it going well left. It's this divergence of face and path that starts to create the side spin. At its best, it's a soft fade; ... more often, it's a wicked slice.

So as we square up the path, we also need to square up the face. For the right-handed golfer, turning your hands clockwise on the grip – gloved hand more on top of the handle, lower hand more underneath – will help you do that. Use your thumb/forefinger crease as a guide; make sure it is pointing up towards your trail shoulder – as indicated by the tee peg – when the clubface is square.

2

Throughswing: Seek closure

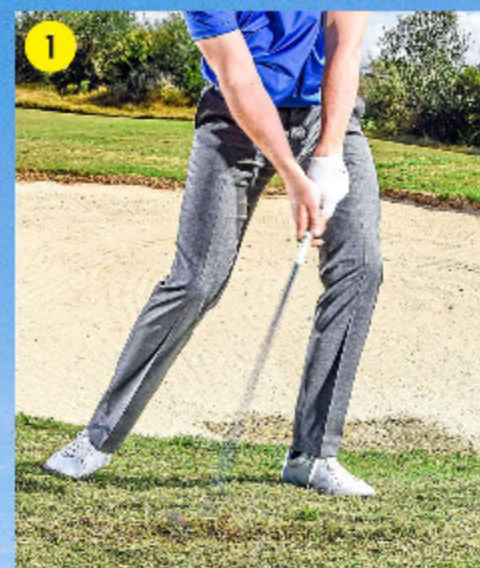
With your grip in place, practise rotating your forearms and clubface through impact. Work on getting the clubface to look down at the ground as the clubshaft swings through horizontal. As the move becomes more comfortable, experiment with blending this closing face with the in-to-out path... and see that expensive slice disappear.

#2 BUNKERS

JUST GET THE BALL BACK INTO PLAY

By Gareth Johnston

One of the fastest ways to rack up a big number is to leave your ball in greenside sand; according to Shot Scope, 22% of golfers make this mistake. Your bunker technique need not be fancy but it does need to be effective... and one of the simplest approaches is to play the shot as a deliberate duff.



Practise your duff

We all know the feeling of catching the ground before the ball. While such contact is, of course, unhelpful on dry land, it is basically what we are looking to do in sand, where we take the sand from under the ball. When you think of a bunker shot as a deliberate duff, it feels a lot easier. So before you step down into the sand, find some long grass beside the bunker. Rehearse a full, slow swing that gets down to the roots. Try to make the ruffled grass area as long as possible; it encourages a shallow base to the arc, which helps you get the club through to a full finish.



Go square

When it comes to bunkers, simpler is better. On anything but the shortest bunker shots, there is no need to mess with alignment and swing shape. Simply stand square and play the ball just inside your lead heel.

3

Duff it out

As you prepare to play the shot, channel that 'duff' stroke you practised in the long grass. Keep your eyes on the sand entry point, a couple of inches behind the ball. Now just repeat that long, slow, flat-bottomed stroke, swinging along your toe line to the flag.

Need for speed

Sand is heavy, and will slow the club down. This is why making a long swing either side of the ball is so important; the full backswing gives you the ability to create the speed needed to get through the sand, while the full followthrough ensures you deliver it. Make sure your hands reach shoulder height either side of the ball.

#3 PUTTING

IMPROVE YOUR PERFORMANCE FROM RANGE

By Adrian Fryer

A careless three-putt is all it takes to turn an acceptable bogey into a card-scarring double... and this tends to be the result of not getting the first putt close enough. Shot Scope tell us a 14-handicapper makes 77% of four-footers but just 38% of six-footers. The aim should be to get the first putt inside 4ft, particularly for any double digit handicapper. Clearly, there are two elements to getting your first putt close enough to avoid a three-putt: direction and distance.

DIRECTION: Widen the gates

For this drill you are going to create three sets of 'gates' with six balls. The first set should be about 5-6ft ahead of the ball, and just 6-8in apart; the second set should be around halfway between the ball and the hole up your line, and perhaps 18in apart. The third set should flank the hole, 2ft either side of it. On breaking putts, set these gates to frame your curving line.

Find the gaps

From here, strike a group of balls with the obvious goal of feeding each through all three sets of gates. You'll get:

- Great feedback on your ability to hit your starting line.
- A target zone that is both achievable but exacting enough to get the putt within two-putt range.
- A greater awareness of how to factor in green contours to your starting line.

DISTANCE: Work on strike quality

Inconsistent striking ruins distance judgement because it creates different amounts of energy transfer, leaving you unsure whether to strike the next putt harder or softer. So to work on distance control, work on developing a consistently solid strike. Here is a drill that helps...



Chalk it up

To keep track of the quality of your striking on long putts, all you need is a piece of chalk. Rub the chalk against the ball on the point where you intend to strike it – perhaps on one of the linear decals.



Face check

Now strike a series of putts from range. After each putt, check the mark on the putter face, and rechalk the ball. In time you will build up an accurate picture of your striking pattern, and develop a new focus for contacting the ball off the sweet spot.

#4 PERFORMANCE

WRITE YOURSELF A NEW STORY FOR 2023

By Karl Morris

↙ If you're tempted to set yourself some new year's resolutions for 2023 that might improve your game, let me save you some time. Don't bother. As gyms across Britain will testify, a new 'commitment' based solely on an arbitrary square on the calendar is no basis for long-term progress.

Yet at this time of year our thoughts inevitably turn to the golf we've played in 2022 and how we might improve on it in 2023. So instead, let me introduce to you a far more effective and durable concept: story-editing.

Every one of you reading this will carry around with you a story of yourself as a golfer. Yours might be that you would be a darned sight better if you just had a bit more time to practise; it might be that you are a good striker let down by a twitchy short game. Perhaps you consider yourself stuck at your handicap level, or great at matchplay but iffy with the scorecard.

In terms of performance, your story is significant because it has the power to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. That's because our brains are constantly working to confirm our thoughts.

Inside our heads we have what I call a 'Thinker' and a 'Prover'. The Thinker is the part of your brain that decides you are a poor putter; the Prover then seeks evidence to support the Thinker.

The notion you are a poor putter might have come from only one bad round, but from then onwards the Prover will treat every bad putt as confirmation of that conclusion; it will also interpret a good putt as a surprise, an exception. Before you know it you are expecting to deliver a shoddy performance on the greens... with predictably poor results.

However, story editing – a concept created by American social psychologist



Timothy Wilson – gives you a chance to redress this stealthy self-sabotage. The process is a simple one: make yourself aware of your story, decide if it is helping or hindering you and, if it's the latter, take appropriate steps to rewrite it.

1. What's your story?

Make 20 minutes for yourself some time this week to sit down and think through the stories you tell yourself about yourself as a golfer. For some of you this might be a fairly easy exercise; others will find it a little harder. But dig deep to get to the bottom of how you portray yourself.

2. Help or hindrance?

Ultimately, stories are just made-up versions of reality that can either serve you or work against you. Not every golfer's story is a negative one; yours might be that you are a strong, competitive player, or that you perform close to your optimum most times. But, in my experience, most club players will have developed a narrative that accounts for poor performance or scores – lack of time to practise, lessons that never work, missing short putts, succumbing to nerves and limited

talent are just a few of the most common stories I hear.

3. Rewrite the story

Once you've identified your story and grasped how it might be limiting you, your next step is to write down how you might rework it in a way that will get you closer to the golfer you want to be in 2023.

As with any story editing, for it to be effective it has to be credible; bad putters can't, of course, simply relabel themselves good ones. But what you can do is create the story that you are learning or discovering how to become a better putter.

With that as your new story, the Prover in your brain will start to suggest ways of confirming it – perhaps a new putter fitting, a session with a putting expert, some extra time spent on the practice green. And suddenly, that holed 20-footer is no longer a fluke but evidence of your growing competence.

I have observed story-editing to be one of the most powerful and effective ways of improving performance. We are after all culturally conditioned to respond to stories as children, and as we progress into adulthood stories continue to play a key role in shaping our perceptions of ourselves and the world.

The changing golf season is the perfect time for you to work on this... and make sure that when spring rolls around, you are telling yourself a much healthier and far more useful story about yourself and your golf.

'OUR HEADS CONTAIN A THINKER AND A PROVER. IF THE THINKER DECIDES YOU ARE A POOR PUTTER, THE PROVER THEN FINDS EVIDENCE'

#5 FITNESS

IF YOU WORK ON JUST ONE THING IN 2023...

By Natalie Lowe

↙ I've chosen this essential exercise because it directly addresses the two things golfers most often complain to me about... not hitting the ball far enough and battling a slice. Often, we can trace the technical causes of these issues to a physical limitation. Working on that limitation needs no special equipment, and you can do it anywhere there is a wall. Get into the habit of working on it every day for five minutes or so; it will bring you longer, straighter shots. **Always consult your GP before adopting any new fitness regimen.**

1. Double whammy

Here is the downswing golf coaches see every day... golfers trying to rotate and clear their hips, but in doing so, unwinding their upper body too. A stiff back denies the hips and shoulders the mobility to work separately from each other... and the result is an over-the-top, powerless and slice-inducing attack.

2. Back reacher

To work on this, stand side-on to a wall, 18 inches or so away from it, in golfing posture. Reach back to place both your palms flat on the wall, as shown. Allow your hips to rotate and your lead knee to move inward with the motion. This should feel relatively comfortable to you; you should feel no strain through your body.

3. Hips turn, shoulders don't

From here, things get a little harder! Rotate your hips smoothly as close as possible back to square while keeping both palms flush on the wall. Be careful as you do this, and if you feel any pain stop immediately. This is a gentle introduction to so-called dissociation, the pelvis rotating without taking the torso with it.

4. Triple win

This single move is the key to three massive golfing benefits:

- It allows you to develop a more powerful unloading sequence – lower body first, upper body second.
- It improves your delivery path by delaying the uncoiling of the shoulders.
- It shallows out the over-steep attack angle that tends to accompany the over-the-top path.

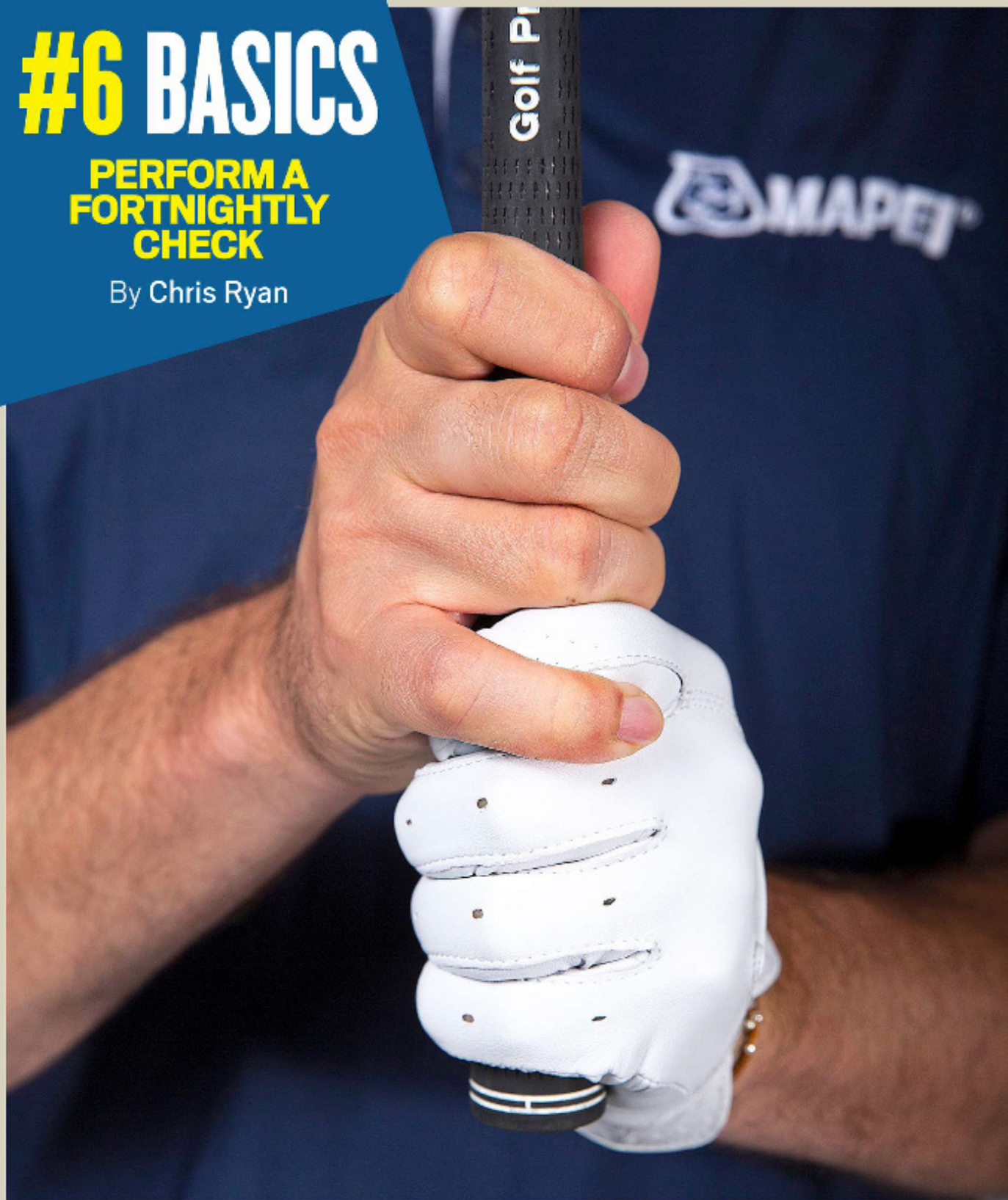
If weak slices are the bane of your life, make this stretch a part of your day.



#6 BASICS

PERFORM A FORTNIGHTLY CHECK

By Chris Ryan



Grip, aim, posture, ball position.

They are the foundation of every good golf swing... and if you want to play your best golf in 2023, you can't afford to take your eye off them. Here are some simple checks you can perform regularly throughout the year; I'd advise at least once every couple of weeks, because no matter how good your intentions, it is easy to slip into bad and costly habits.

GRIP

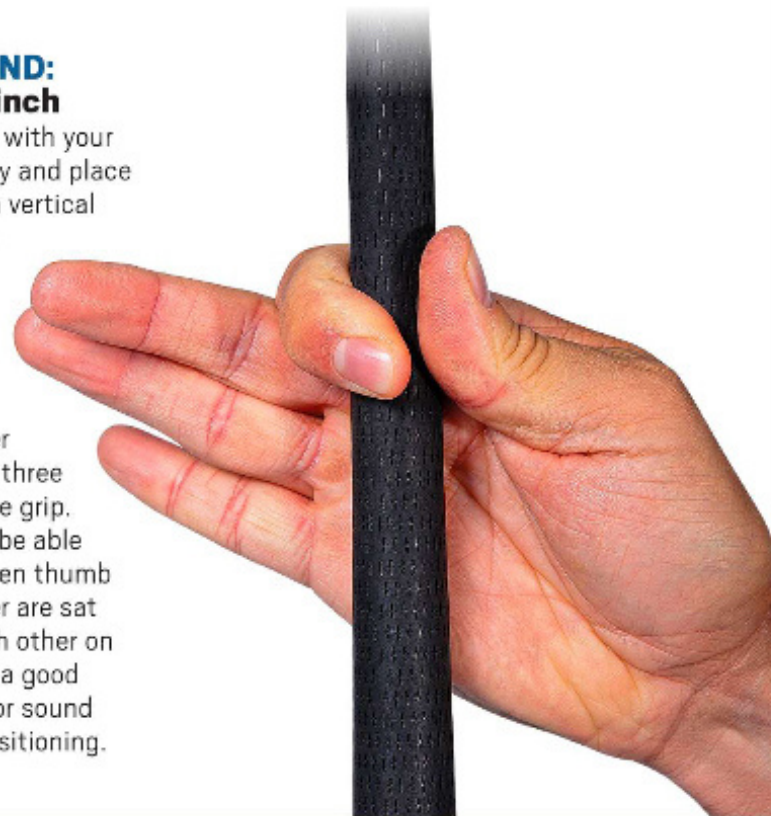
The quality of your grip defines the quality of your golf. A sound hold not only helps you deliver the face square to the back of the ball; it also allows power to flow from your body into the club. Make these two checks a habit.

LEAD HAND: Club support

In a good lead-hand grip you should be able to take the thumb and last three fingers off the club and support it just with the index finger and the heel of the hand. This shows you have routed the handle through the correct part of the hand. You will be able to cock and hinge the wrists effectively from here.

TRAIL HAND: Upright pinch

Grip the club with your trail hand only and place the shaft in a vertical position. You should be able to support the club with the thumb and forefinger only, the last three fingers off the grip. You will only be able to do this when thumb and forefinger are sat opposite each other on the handle – a good checkpoint for sound trail-hand positioning.



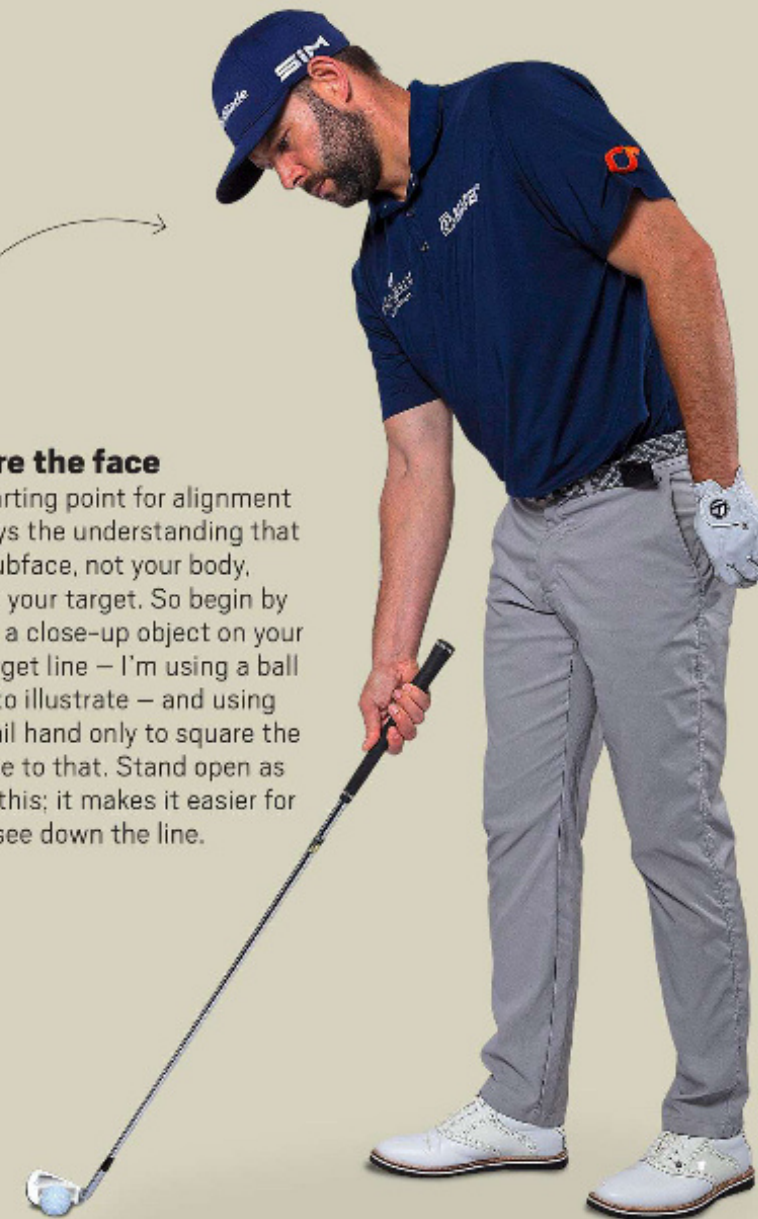
ALIGNMENT

When it comes to aiming well, your best maintenance comes through a routine: if you can follow a simple set of rules each time, your chances of good alignment will massively increase. Use this three-step process to check your aim is true.

1

Square the face

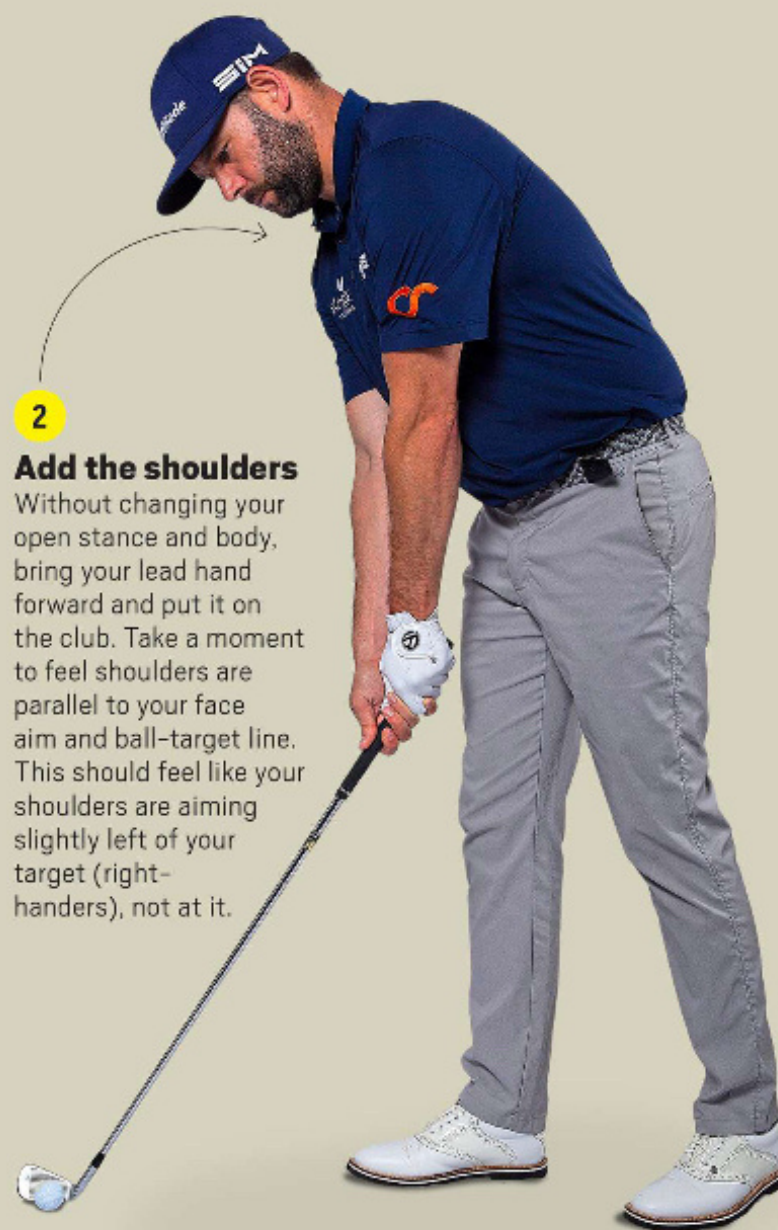
The starting point for alignment is always the understanding that your clubface, not your body, aims at your target. So begin by picking a close-up object on your ball-target line – I'm using a ball sleeve to illustrate – and using your trail hand only to square the clubface to that. Stand open as you do this; it makes it easier for you to see down the line.



2

Add the shoulders

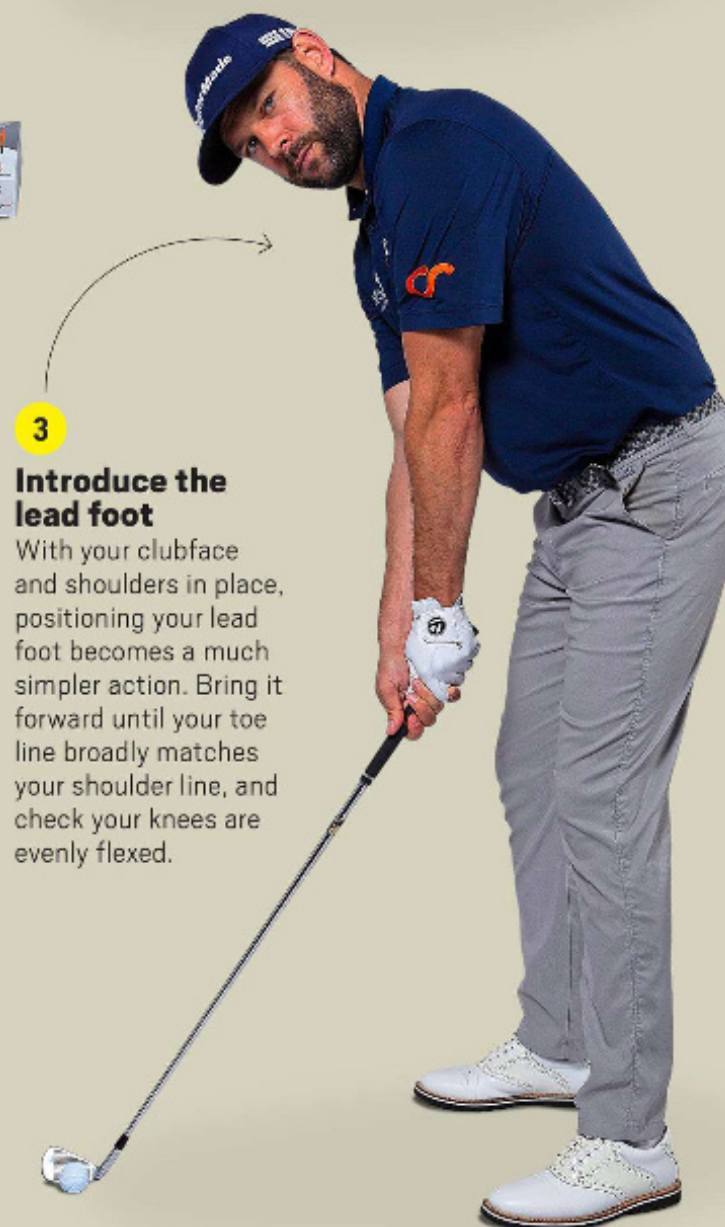
Without changing your open stance and body, bring your lead hand forward and put it on the club. Take a moment to feel shoulders are parallel to your face aim and ball-target line. This should feel like your shoulders are aiming slightly left of your target (right-handers), not at it.



3

Introduce the lead foot

With your clubface and shoulders in place, positioning your lead foot becomes a much simpler action. Bring it forward until your toe line broadly matches your shoulder line, and check your knees are evenly flexed.



POSTURE

Good posture means balance and mobility, and sets the right plane or angle for your swing. It gives you the ability to move efficiently at speed, and helps you avoid the many damaging swing moves that come through sensing a loss of balance. Make these two checks routinely...



1

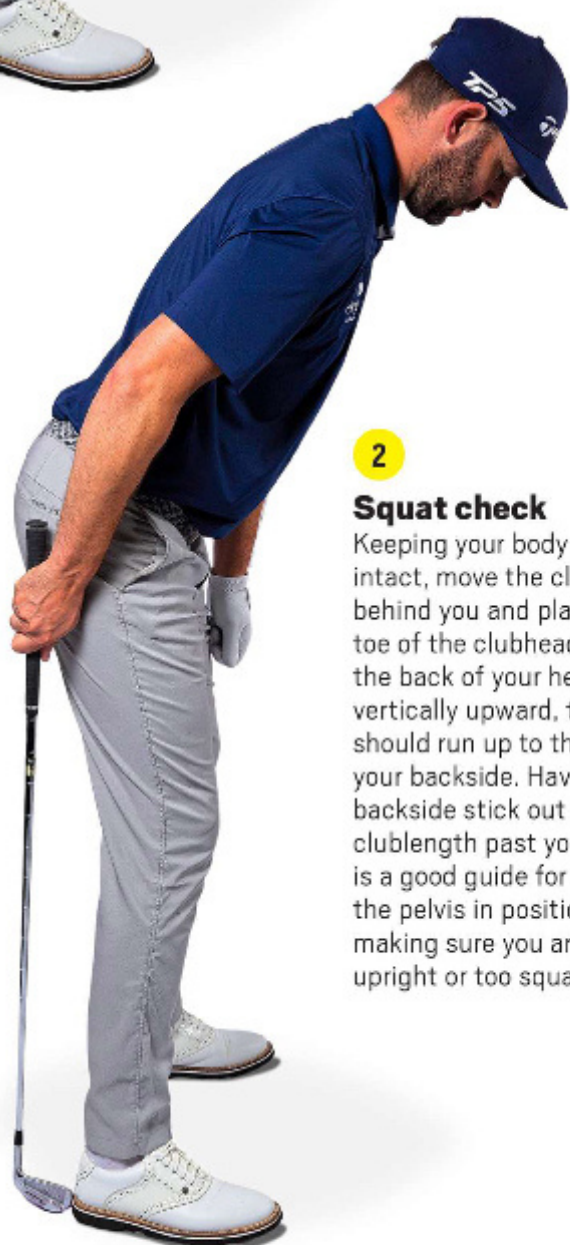
Forward bend check

Use either an alignment stick or clubshaft to drop a plumb line down from the back of your trail shoulder. With good posture, the line should fall just forward of your knees and run down to the toe caps of both shoes. This shows you have created enough forward bend in the upper body to swing the club freely on a good plane.

2

Squat check

Keeping your body angles intact, move the club behind you and place the toe of the clubhead against the back of your heel. Set vertically upward, the shaft should run up to the back of your backside. Having your backside stick out around a clublength past your heels is a good guide for setting the pelvis in position, and making sure you are not too upright or too squatted.



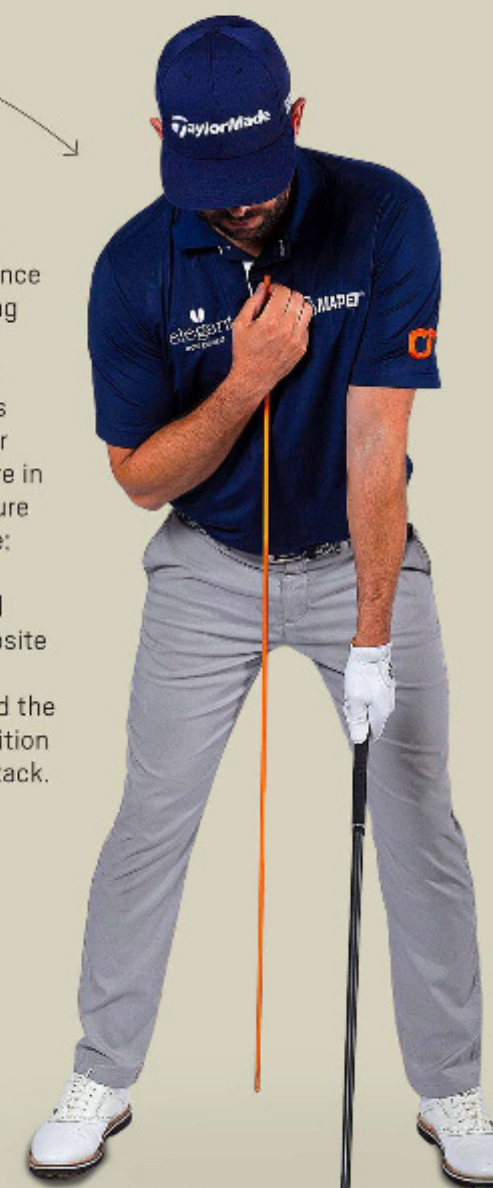
BALL POSITION

Ball position influences angle of attack, and as such it needs to change through the bag to accommodate the straight-faced driver sweep and the lofted wedge squeeze. Use an alignment stick to check yours.

1

Driver: Forward of centre

Use your shirt buttons as a reference for ball position. Let the stick hang vertically from the buttons; trail shoulder dropped and spine leant slightly away from the target, this puts the stick slightly behind your belt buckle and just back of centre in a shoulder-width stance. Make sure the ball is well forward of this line; even the back edge of the driver should be ahead of it. This should position the ball somewhere opposite your lead instep. At the point of maximum arm-club extension and the bottom of the swing arc, this position is ideal for a level-to-up driver attack.



2

Wedge: Get centred to squeeze

Use the same stick trick with the wedge, but this time avoid any spinal lean – look to feel more stacked over the ball. This time the stick drops down through the belt buckle to the middle of a narrower stance. Position the ball opposite the stick. This is before the low point of the swing and so encourages a crisp, slightly descending blow ideal for loft.

#7 START KEEPING SOME STATS

By Gavin Dear

OK, we understand some of you switch off at the mere mention of the word: you don't play this game to crunch numbers, right? Fair enough. But with users of data capture systems such as Shot Scope reporting an average of just under three shots cut from their handicap, the value of keeping some figures cannot be ignored. Whether you use our system or not, make 2023 the year you track these three elements. They will give you the biggest benefit for the time spent.

1. Track your three-putt percentage

Minimising how often you three-putt is one of the easiest ways to improve your score. This can, of course, be done through Shot Scope but you can also just asterisk three-jab holes on the scorecard to build a record.

2. Learn how far you hit your clubs on the course

The harsh reality is that amateurs don't hit the ball anywhere near as far as they think; when greens are missed, 80% of shots come up short! With Shot Scope, you can learn how far you actually hit all your clubs on average – not how far you *think* you hit them. Our V3 GPS watch is the easiest way to do this as every shot you hit is recorded automatically.

3. Know your left/right tee shot miss

Understanding where you miss most often can really help you plan on the course. Once you know your pattern, you can adjust your targeting accordingly and recognise holes where you need to employ a more cautious strategy. Again, Shot Scope does this for you... or you can write 'L' or 'R' on the scorecard, building the numbers into a long-term record.

#8 PRACTICE

HOW TO MAKE YOUR TIME WORK FOR YOU

By Steve Astle



Whether we are working on long or short games, we can split practice into two categories:

■ Training a new movement pattern or technique.

■ Testing ourselves through some score/pressure-related challenge.

If you want to become a better practiser, you need to find the discipline to keep the two apart. If you

are worried about shot quality while training a new move, you will fall back into your old patterns. Similarly, if you are thinking technically while trying to score, your performance will suffer.

So in 2023, make sure every ball you hit falls into one of the following three categories: you can even split your balls into groups to mark when you switch from one mode to another:

1

TECHNICAL MODE

In technical mode you are working repetitively, to train new mechanics and movement patterns. Your focus can only be on one thing at a time, and here it should be on the new move you're working on. Contact with the ball and the shot's result should take a back seat. Don't worry where the ball goes... or what the guy in the next booth thinks of you.

2

TOURNAMENT MODE

At the other end of the scale, practice in tournament mode is all about scoring. Games such as 'Par 18' – nine shots around the green, how low can you score? – or creating a 25-yard 'fairway' on the range and seeing how many drives out of 10 find it, are the order of the day. This time you should ban technical thoughts, focus on the shot and result, and use the score to discover how well a new move is holding up.

3

TRANSITIONAL MODE

While you'll ideally stick to one or the other modes, there is room to blend them on occasion. Consider these two options:

1. Three Technical practice swings before one Tournament-based shot.

2. Alternating between Technical and Tournament shots.

Just make sure that, before you hit each ball, you know what your purpose is – technical improvement, or performance. Keep the two apart and your practice will become far more effective... and enjoyable.



#9 STRATEGY

TWO EASY WAYS TO SHOOT LOWER SCORES

By Adrian Fryer

LONG GAME

Adjust your targeting

Shot Scope data reveals that 72% of danger is at the front of the green – usually sand or water – with just 28% lurking behind. So missing long is typically significantly less of a problem than missing short.

However, the data also shows how 80% of misses inside 150 yards are short... with 60% of those misses ending up right of the pin (right-handers).

Over the course of the year, adjusting your strategy by playing for the back of the green yardage, and aiming slightly left, would increase your greens-hit percentage and reduce that common short-right miss.



PUT IT TO THE TEST

On your next practice round, when the course is quiet, hit two shots into every green. On the first shot, hit your normal shot; for the second shot take a club more – for example a 5-iron instead of a 6 – and play to the back left of the green. Hole out with both balls. Then, by the 18th, tot up your totals and compare the two scores. If you've done much better with the longer iron, that's all the proof you need to adjust your sights.



SHORT GAME

Get more club flexible

Generally there are two types of amateur golfers – those who reach for their lob wedge all the time

around the green, and those who reach for their 7-iron. Neither approach delivers the flexibility demanded by the short game. In contrast, a good short game player demonstrates a much more even distribution of club usage. This allows them to keep their technique the same while letting the changing club take care of the varying challenges. Switching clubs more often makes the short game simpler... and it will save you shots.

#10 SIX GREAT HABITS TO GET INTO

By Simon Payne

Practise what you're bad at

We all gravitate to what we're good at, what we enjoy. But if you're serious about improving, make 2023 the year you work on your weaknesses rather than indulging your strengths.

Use a pre-shot routine on every shot

Most club golfers have some form of routine, but typically flit in and out of it. Adopt this simple discipline on every shot and you will improve your aim, focus and score.

Work on your flexibility

Tight hamstrings and hip flexors are the hallmark of today's sedentary golfer. It makes it hard for you to maintain posture as you swing and also makes you more prone to injury. Make regular, professionally advised stretching a part of your game in 2023.

Drink more

A 5% loss of hydration causes a 20% drop in concentration. If you feel thirsty, it's too late. Sip a bottle of water throughout the round and your focus and scores will improve.

Don't say 'don't'

Adopt the mentality of the white-water canoeist who focuses on the space, not the rocks. Look where you want to go – not where you don't – and your play will become more confident and effective.

Pick the tees relevant to your power

Take your average 7-iron yardage and times it by 18. Then take your average driver and times it by 14. Add the two together. The result is the ideal length of course for you, the one that will give you more pleasure and enjoyment. Play off the tees that most closely match it in 2023. And leave your ego in 2022.