

CLASSIC LESSONS

HARVEY PENICK'S
MAGIC MOVE

Harvey Penick's *Little Red Golf Book* was released in 1991, when the legendary coach was 87 years old. Drawn from a lifetime of coaching, this curiously eclectic collection of short stories sees poetry, psychology and advice on greenkeeping rub shoulders with more technical advice... which included what Penick saw as golf's magic move. Let's take a look at how the great man defined it... and learn an easy way to train it into our swings.

Downswing secret
In truth, Penick did not believe in one secret move that would unlock every golf swing. He felt different golfers needed individual keys. But he was willing to share the closest thing he had found to it. "If there is such a thing as a magic move in the golf swing," he wrote, "it is an action that I stress over and over on the practice tee and in this book: To start your downswing, let your weight shift to your left foot while bringing your right elbow back down to your body."

Outside influence
Penick saw this move as the most effective way he had found to cure what he thought was the most common fault in golf: hitting from the top. Over the decades he had watched countless golfers ruin their shots by throwing their hands at the ball from the top of the backswing, sending the club way outside its ideal path; this advice was the antidote. Penick felt it was so important that he gave it pride of place in his favoured Slow Motion Swing Drill. In the *Little Red Golf Book*, he returns to the theme on several occasions.

YOUR COACH



ADRIAN FRYER
solidgolf.co.uk
Fellow of the PGA based
at Liverpool Golf Centre
liverpoolgolfcentre.co.uk

HOW TO USE PENICK'S
TIMELESS TIP

To put Penick's magic move into practice, you'll ideally use a couple of props. Place an alignment stick vertically outside your lead toe, and a sponge or something similar lightly under your trail arm. Move in slow motion and swing to the top, noting the gap between your lead hip and the stick. Note, too, how your trail elbow moves naturally away from your side as the arms swing up and back.

From the top, feel two
moves simultaneously:

1. Move your lead hip across to close the gap and meet the stick. This takes care of the weight shift Penick demanded.
2. As this happens, bring your trail elbow into contact with your trail side or hip and the sponge becomes squeezed between upper arm and body. This move quells any instinct to hit with the hands from the top.

Penick stressed the importance of these two things happening at the same time: This is one move, not two, he wrote. He was aware that for the classic over-the-top slicer, the move needed practice and persistence if it was to be grooved and co-ordinated. But when you learn this left foot-right elbow move, he wrote, you will hit the ball as if it is magic.

WHY IT REMAINS
RELEVANT TODAY

Penick identified starting down with the hands and arms – and the classic slicer's over-the-top swing shape it created – as golf's most common flaw. Thirty years after his famous book was published, little has changed. At the top of the backswing, our coiled shoulders and cocked wrists give us a sensation of stored power that is tough to resist; but Penick's timeless tip helps us delay that hit impulse, allowing us to keep the swing path on track and create speed when it matters – at impact.

