



Welcome to the Summer issue of *GR: Golf Range Magazine*!

Inside this issue, you will find the following features:

- How did Bubba do it!
- Star of the Stage, Screen and the Green: Music and movie star Justin Timberlake is also a talented performer on the golf course.
- How Cool Is This? Rickie Fowler and friends find a fun way to take target practice.
- Teaching Tips from Top PGA Professional Mike Malaska, 2011 PGA Teacher of the Year.
- Practice Tips from the Pros: Ian Poulter Says – It pays to be prepared.

Keep it fun and thanks for supporting the GRAA.

Best Regards,

Rick Summers, CEO
GRAA

rsummers@golfrange.org



TEACHING ■ PRACTICE
FUN ■ EQUIPMENT

VOL. 20, NO. 6

SUMMER 2012

Bubba Watson

From Wiffle
Balls to a
Green Jacket



PLUS:

- Rickie Fowler
- Justin Timberlake
- Range Routines
- Hottest Equipment
- Fitness



PGA

Golf Range Magazine is published in cooperation with The PGA of America

Opening R O U N D





Fowler and Friends

PGA Tour star Rickie Fowler, LPGA Tour standout Lexi Thompson and U.S. Amateur champ Kelly Kraft put on an exhibition for fans at Lake Olmstead in Augusta, Ga., prior to the 2012 Masters. These young guns took aim from 150 yards out while standing on a floating tee box (*see page 18*)!

ROBERT SNOW/RED BULL CONTENT



Opening R O U N D



WORLD'S LARGEST

The annual PGA Show Outdoor Demo Day is the biggest and best of its kind in the world. Held in late January every year during PGA Merchandise Show Week on the practice range at the Orange County National Golf Center and Lodge in Winter Garden, Fla., it attracts thousands of invited PGA Professionals, retailers and golf industry leaders.



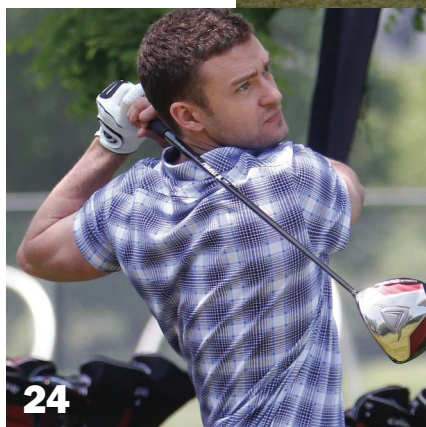


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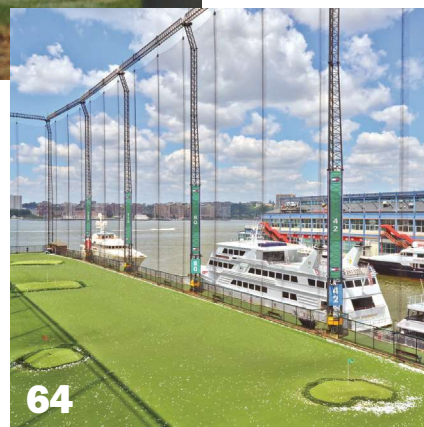
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Letter from the **CEO** & PUBLISHER

Welcome to the Summer Issue of *GR: Golf Range Magazine*

The word “golf” conjures up different images for different people: a leisurely walk in nature, a time with friends or family, a competitive challenge, a game for young and old, a few especially memorable swings during a round, and time away from the pressures of the daily grind. Those are certainly enviable golf scenarios, and there are many more. However, *GR: Golf Range Magazine* is about another side of the game, one that millions of people enjoy without actually stepping onto the course: the golf range side.

We think of golf ranges as the place “where the fun starts.” Where you can experience the same rush from making solid contact as you can on the course, learn how to play the game better, practice and sharpen your short game, share some fun with a friend or family member of any age, or even invent your own games. The range is where you can warm up before a round or learn new shots without ever losing a single golf ball – at least not one of your own.

This digital Summer Issue of *GR* will hopefully open a new window on how you can get even more out of your visits to the range, whether it's at a private club, public course, resort or standalone facility. So join our writers, PGA Professionals and a few other range lovers named Bubba, Rickie, Ian, Justin and Kenny G. for a large range bucket full of great stories.

Hit 'em straight, or hit 'em like Bubba. And enjoy every minute at the range!

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Golf Ranges: Where the Fun Starts

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Warming UP

Tips, trends and topics to get you and
YOUR GAME READY FOR GOLF

BY TONY L. STARKS



Give Your Warm-Up the College Try



While many weekend warriors have never teed it up in a collegiate golf tournament, that doesn't mean that their round of golf is any less important (to them at least). Regardless of what level they compete, golfers do just that: They compete. It doesn't matter if it's against a field of talented NCAA student athletes or three of your closest buddies.

PGA Professional Scooter Clark (pictured left) is the men's and women's head golf coach at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Fla., where he has led one of his programs to victory at the PGA Minority Collegiate Golf Championship each of the last three years (the women in 2010 and '12, the men in 2011). One thing that Clark stresses with his players is having a pre-round range routine. This is something that golfers of any skill level can implement to develop more consistency in their play, says Clark.

The majority of players on Clark's squad have a progression that begins with a 9-iron or PW. They then progress

through the bag in intervals of two. For instance, if they start with a 9-iron, they'll then go to a 7-iron, then 5-iron and so on until they reach driver. After 10 or so swings with the driver, some of the players elect to practice their scoring clubs – wedges through short irons – while others will work backward through their original progression.

"One thing that every golfer strives for is consistency," says Clark. "By having a routine on the range, you can begin to develop that. Routines help build familiarity, which in turn leads to comfort. And the more you can be comfortable on the course, the better you'll play."

Clark adds one more great tip: The last club you hit on the range should be the club you plan to hit on the first tee – whether that's a driver, 3-wood, hybrid or long iron.

"Range routines can be as unique or regimented as you like," says Clark. "I know players who prefer to start out hitting driver. Find something that makes you feel comfortable and stick with it." ■



Range Tips For Women from Suzy Whaley and Cheryl Anderson



Suzy Whaley and **Cheryl Anderson** are two of the foremost female golf instructors in the country. Whaley is a PGA teaching professional at TPC River Highlands in Farmington, Conn., and a member of the PGA Board of Directors. Annually named one of the LPGA's Top 50 instructors, Whaley is a two-time Connecticut PGA Section Teacher of the Year. Anderson is the PGA director of instruction at the Mike Bender Golf Academy at Timacuan Golf & Country Club in Lake Mary, Fla., and was named the 2006 National LPGA Teacher of the Year. Anderson is currently ranked No. 14 on the *Golf Digest* 50 Best Women Teachers in America list.

Whaley (pictured in the main photo, top left) offers five "must do's" for the range:

To make your driving range time purposeful and relevant to the course: set a goal, make technique changes in slow motion, use alignment sticks, always hit toward a target and create pressure situations that simulate the pressure you have on course.

- An example of setting a goal is hitting five balls with each club in your bag, or working on your pre-shot routine every third swing.
- If you recently took a lesson or are working on your game, try to incorporate your new motion over the ball and continue to repeat the process until you begin to see results.
- The range is the perfect place to practice your alignment. Use your clubs or alignment sticks on the ground that simulate railroad tracks.

- While practicing at the range always practice toward a specific target. The more specific and small you make your targets at the range, the more open the first fairway will feel on course.
- Finally, put pressure on your game. Find a range partner to have contests with or set up your own games if practicing alone.

Anderson (pictured left with student) offers her expertise on how women can get more out of their range time.

- Don't Fear the Divot – Most women are afraid to hit the ground for three reasons: They either don't want to hurt themselves, don't want to mess up the ground or don't want to mess up their clubs. The ball will not fly as far or as high if you do not learn to swing your club downward and pinch the ball off the surface. Doing practice swings in a bunker, if you have access, is a good drill for achieving this. Draw three equal-length lines in the sand, each about six to eight feet long. The lines represent your ball position. Set up to the first line and with your left hand only make a three-quarter backswing and drive the club's leading edge into the sand, on the forward side of the line. Repeat this using your right hand only on the second line. Finally, use both hands on the third line. You are trying to hit the ground on the forward side of the lines. ■

Golf: There Are Apps For That

More than half of the cell phones sold today are considered smartphones: high-powered touch-screen models that are essentially pocket-sized computers. And with their ever-present data and GPS connections, smartphones make great golf companions. Here are some of the smartphone apps for golf that can help you improve and enjoy the game:

Get a look inside the legendary practice routines of Tiger Woods with the **Tiger Woods: My Swing app**, which is available in phone (\$4.99) and tablet (\$9.99) versions.... **iPing's** free putting app works with the accelerometers inside the iPhone 4/4S and 4th generation iPod touch models to give you instant feedback on your putting stroke and help you find the ideal putter for your game.... **Nike's** free golf app integrates with the **NG360** website to help track your scores and stats as you play.

If you've ever taken a golf lesson that involved video of your swing, there's a good chance the instructor was using



the **V1 Golf** swing analysis software.... There are a number of apps that turn your smartphone into a GPS range-finder, ranging from basic apps like **SkyDroid Golf GPS** (\$1.99) to full-featured game management apps like **Golfshot Golf GPS** (\$29.99). ■

Powerfully PINK

What's more attention getting than averaging 300-plus yards a drive and winning the Masters? Doing it with a custom pink driver, that's what.

By now, you probably know that Bubba Watson's hot pink Ping driver is a one-of-a-kind model made just for the long-hitting lefty. But you might not know that Bubba plays the driver to raise awareness and funds for cancer research. He kicked off the "Bubba & Friends Drive to a Million" initiative when he put the pink driver in play at Torrey Pines earlier this year, and Ping is donating \$300 for every 300 yard drive Bubba hits this year. For more on the cause or to donate, check out bubbawatsongolf.com.

If you're curious about Bubba's driver, here are the specs. And if you'd like to get that same hot pink look when you tee it up, Ping is selling a limited edition version with specs that work for those of us who aren't quite "Bubba long." ■



Bubba Watson's pink driver:

Model: Ping G20, left-handed
Loft: 8.25 degrees
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Perfect Your Practice By Being Random

Every day, I see players employing “Block” practice. Block practice is hitting the same club to the same target, over and over and over. I guess eventually you may hit the target but that is not how golf is played. In fact, research supports that in order to have sustained, long term skill development, we must use “Random” practice techniques.

Golf is a target-based game; where changing yardages and clubs will occur with every shot. This being the case, why not utilize the driving range to simulate play? Random practice makes your time fun and productive. Research indicates your brain has to be actively engaged in each shot to continually learn.

One of my favorite ways to do this is

by pretending to “play the golf course” on the range. Visualize the first hole on your favorite golf course, and choose two targets as the left and right boundary markers. Tee up the ball as if you were hitting your first shot of the round, make your full pre-shot routine, and try to hit the “fairway.” The next shot you’ll hit will mimic what your next shot would normally be on that hole, and so on. Select your club, aim at a target and fire – how many fairways and greens can you hit in regulation?

Remember, whether you hit the target or not, move on to the next shot (just like you have to do in a round of golf). If you can do this for 20 minutes or so each day, you’ll see a real benefit and measurable improvement.

For more on random practice how to make the most of your practice time on the range, watch my video. And I always recommend taking lessons from a qualified teaching professional.

—Elizabeth Granahan, PGA

Elizabeth Granahan is the 2009 Philadelphia PGA Section Teacher of the Year. She is the director of instruction at G2 – The Granahan Golf Academy at Chester Valley Golf Club in Malvern, Pa. ■



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Behind THE SCENES

Open for Practice

Take a behind-the-scenes look at what the world's best players will experience on the range during the **2012 U.S. Open** at The Olympic Club in San Francisco **BY DON JOZWIAK**

During a normal week, the practice range at The Olympic Club in San Francisco is a pretty busy place. The 60-bay range has a steady stream of golfers getting ready for a round or working on their games, juniors getting a feel for the game and teachers helping their students.

The week of June 11–17, 2012, will be anything but a normal week at The Olympic Club. That's when the world's best players will descend upon the Lake Course with an eye on winning the fifth U.S. Open held at

the club. The tight, tree-lined fairways and small, well-protected greens will demand long drives, crisp iron shots and steady putting. And that means 156 of the world's best players will be spending plenty of

Phil Mickelson warms up on the practice range during the second round at the 2011 U.S. Open at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Md.

ball he plays on the course. So instead of having one large supply of golf balls to keep clean, range attendants must gather, clean and sort thousands of golf balls from companies such as Titleist, Callaway, TaylorMade, Srixon and Bridgestone. Titleist alone is sending 600 dozen golf balls to The Olympic Club for use on the range:

14,000

Golf balls in use on the U.S. Open practice range

60

Volunteers working the range during the U.S. Open

200

Pounds of divot mix used on the range during the U.S. Open

5:30 a.m.

Opening time for the range during the U.S. Open

456 dozen Pro V1x, 144 dozen Pro V1. All told, there will be approximately 14,000 golf balls ready for use on the range – all of which will be donated to junior golf organizations following the U.S. Open.

There will also be plenty of maintenance to keep the 30,000-square-foot hitting area of the practice range in top shape. The rye/poa annua grass will take a beating, and volunteers will fill divots with a mix of rye seed, sand and soil – an estimated 200

pounds of divot mix will be used during the Open. Divots that have flown downrange will also be collected each day.

To give U.S. Open competitors even more room to practice, the 18th green on The Olympic Club's Ocean Course will be converted into a practice area. Players can hit 125-yard shots into the 5,700-square-

foot green, with the grass mown short to simulate the chipping areas around the greens on the Lake Course. The green has the same 007/Tyee bentgrass surface as the Lake Course greens, providing a practice experience that mimics the playing conditions.

The same conditions will be found on the 11,000-square-foot putting green, which was completely rebuilt as part of preparations for the 2012 U.S. Open. And to make sure none of the competitors has trouble making it from their practice session to the golf course, the putting green, range and the 18th hole of the Ocean Course are all adjacent to the first tee on the Lake Course.

When the practice area closes at 7:30 p.m. each night during the U.S. Open Week, a team of 14 maintenance staff workers will work to get the area ready for the next day. And when the 2012 U.S. Open winner has left The Olympic Club with his trophy and a place in golf history, the staff will get to work converting the area back to the daily practice site of Olympic Club members and guests. Once the 5,000 square feet of grandstands around the practice area have been removed and the hitting areas have been aerated, top-dressed and seeded with 1,000 pounds of rye grass, The Olympic Club practice range will convert back from serving the world's best players to serving some of the Bay Area's most avid golfers. ■

time on the practice range making sure they're up for the challenge.

Actually, the practice range at The Olympic Club will shift into U.S. Open mode even before the week of the championship starts. Beginning at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday, June 9, the practice area will be open to competitors who have arrived for early practice rounds. Competitors will be greeted by a staff of 10 range attendants, usually eight volunteers and a pair of Olympic Club staff members. Approximately 60 volunteers will work the range over the course of the U.S. Open, and they'll have plenty of work to keep them busy.

For starters, every player gets to practice with the exact model of golf



How Cool

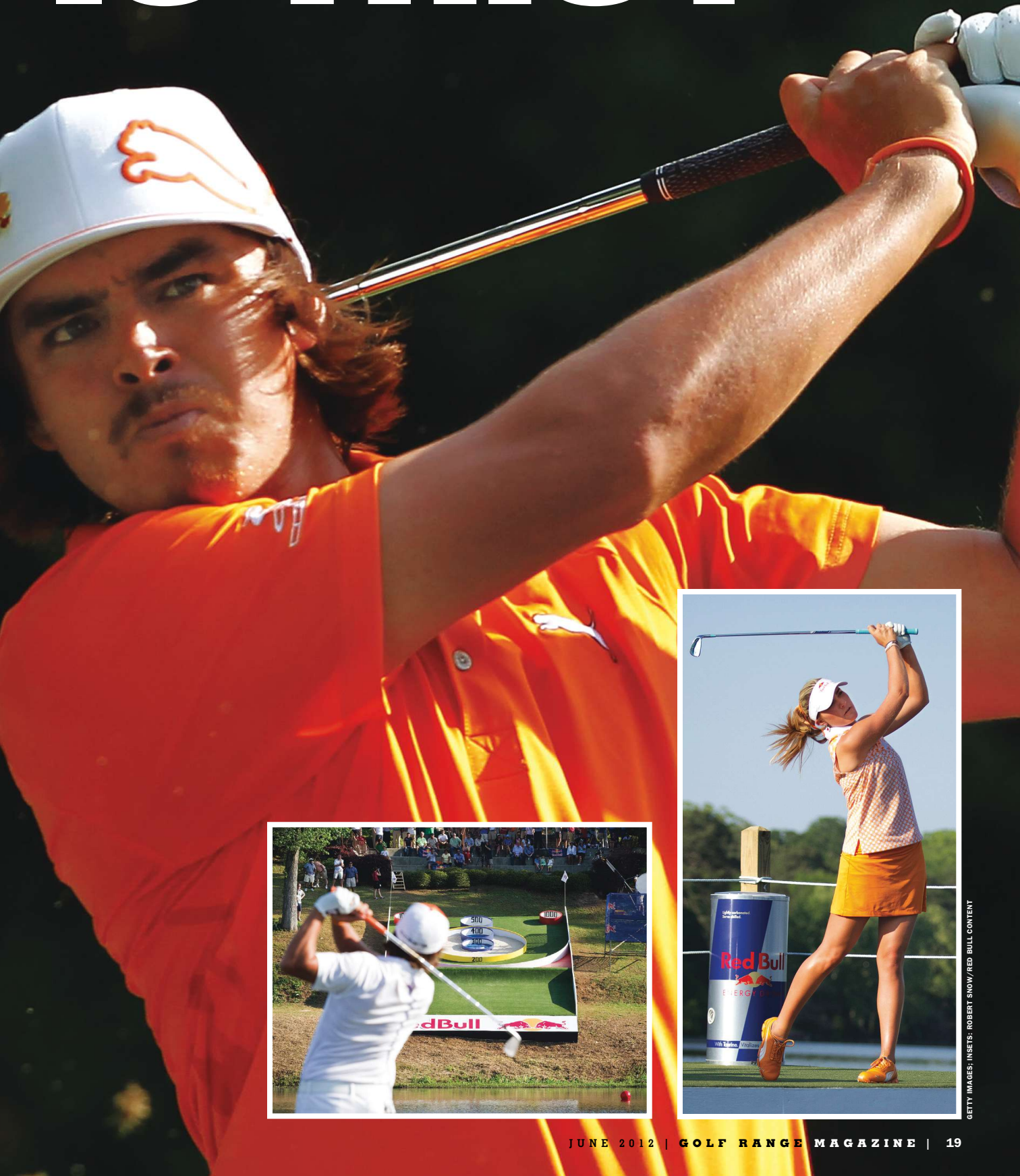
Rickie Fowler and friends find a fun way to take target practice

You've seen golf courses with island greens. But what about hitting shots from a floating island tee? And instead of firing at a green, you were aiming at a giant ramp with Skee-Ball rings for targets? Yeah, that sounds pretty cool.

That's exactly what PGA Tour star Rickie Fowler, LPGA Tour phenom Lexi Thompson and U.S. Amateur champ Kelly Kraft got to do before the Masters Tournament a couple months ago in Augusta, Ga. The trio took a pontoon boat onto Lake Olmstead, where they each hit 18 shots from a floating tee area made by Aqua Greens. Each golfer took 18 shots from 150 yards or so. Kraft was the only golfer to hit one of the small 1,000-point targets, while Thompson scored several hits in the center rings. Fowler thrilled the crowd by skipping a low hybrid shot off the front ramp, and by teeing up one shot on a can of Red Bull.

A draw was called after two rounds of sudden death, but not until Fowler and his friends showed how much fun you can have when you mix golf with a little imagination. ■

Is This?



GETTY IMAGES; INSETS: ROBERT SNOW/RED BULL CONTENT

Jazz Swinger

2011 PGA Teacher of the Year Mike Malaska helps *Kenny G* keep his game in tune
BY DON JOZWIAK

In his decades as a PGA Professional, Mike Malaska has had plenty of well-known students. Want political power? Vice President Dan Quayle and Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor have honed their games under Malaska's watchful eye. How about athletes? Stars such as Danny Ainge (Celtics GM and former player) and Bruce Hurst (ex-MLB pitcher, including nine seasons with the Red Sox) work with Malaska to transfer their athletic skills to the golf course.

Malaska's most successful celebrity student, however, has a more melodic background. Saxophone legend Kenny G – the biggest-selling instrumental musician of the modern era, with more than 75 million albums sold around the world – has worked with Malaska for a number of years. Over that time, Kenny's handicap has gone from a respectable 12 to a

near-scratch 0.6. He was paired with Phil Mickelson to win the Pebble Beach Pro-Am, plus twice he has been named the game's top celebrity golfer by *Golf Digest*.

Malaska gives all the credit to his student for putting in the time and work it takes to show such dramatic improvement.

"Kenny went from a double-digit

handicap to a low single-digit handicap in only a couple of years – that's pretty amazing," says Malaska, the PGA director of instruction at Superstition Mountain Golf Club in Arizona and the worldwide director of instruction for the Jack Nicklaus Golf Academies. "But like music, Kenny knew golf would take a lot of effort and focus to learn. He had the time and the passion, so he went for the whole ball of wax: full swing, short game, playing lessons, improving his fitness. When someone does that, they're going to make a lot of progress."

From the student's perspective, Kenny wanted to make golf feel as natural as playing the saxophone.

"I started realizing that music is the one area where I've always let go. When that saxophone goes into my mouth, I get into a space where I never think about the notes. I've already played or anticipate the notes ahead. I'm the way you're supposed to be in golf: in the moment, letting it go," the 56-year-old Seattle native told *Golf Digest*. "With the sax, I learned technique well enough so that it feels like part of my body, and I just express myself. That's where I want to get in golf."

Golf and music have been lifelong passions of Kenny G (full last name: Gorelick). He took up golf and saxophone as a 10-year-old, and in high school he went out for the jazz band and the golf team as a freshman; he made the golf team, but needed a second try the next year to earn a spot

Teaching Celebrity Students

Mike Malaska, 2011 PGA Teacher of the Year, on working with celebrity students:

"The game doesn't care who you are. The golf ball doesn't care if you're the president of the country or a star athlete or a best-selling musician.

Everyone goes through the learning process, and they all do it their own way. A lot of celebrities and politicians are good at what they do because they're good at delegating, but you can't do that with golf – there are no short cuts. But you can have someone like me help you along the way.

"The best thing about teaching celebrities is they know how to concentrate and focus on the task at hand. They understand what it's



like to have the adrenaline flowing, and how to control it. And they understand the difference between practice and performance.

"I think the thing people with high-pressure jobs really enjoy about golf is how it lets them get away from their regular thought process for four or five hours. I know someone like Dan Quayle or Sandra Day O'Connor is happy to have had

a chance to play golf for a couple hours, then go back to their very important jobs with a fresh look on the challenges they faced. It isn't just that golf is a nice walk in the park, it's that it can allow you to focus on something outside of yourself for a while."



in the jazz band. But his music career took off quickly, including a spot playing in Barry White's Love Unlimited Orchestra at age 17, and golf took a backseat.

By the 1990s, Kenny was the top-selling jazz artist in the world and an iconic saxophone player. His 1986 album *Duotones* sold more than 28 million copies around the world, keyed by the hit instrumental "Songbird." In 1997, he entered the *Guinness Book of World Records* by holding an E-flat for 45 minutes, 47 seconds using a technique called circular breathing. Having reached the top of the music world, Kenny reached for his golf clubs.

"With the sax, I learned technique well enough so that it feels like part of my body, and I just express myself. That's where I want to get in golf."
—Kenny G

A mutual acquaintance introduced Kenny to Malaska, and the two set about revamping the musician's golf game for the era of titanium drivers and maximum distance.

"Kenny always had a great short game, but he had some distance issues," says Malaska. "He would hit it about 220 off the tee, which limits how well you can score. But we worked hard on his fitness and getting him to a point where he could physically go at the golf ball harder and hit it farther. Now he averages 260 off the tee and he can really let it fly."

To improve Kenny's fitness, Malaska prescribed a series of exercises that gave him more range of motion, higher rotational strength and worked to increase the strength in his hands and arms.

On the lesson tee, the pair worked on some non-golf drills to improve Kenny's transition from backswing to downswing. The drill that Malaska suggests to golfers of all skill levels is simple: Throw a ball – a baseball, football, you name it.

"Throwing a ball is a lot like the basics of hitting a golf ball – you swing

your arm back, then transition into throwing the ball forward by stepping into it," Malaska says. "It's the same sequence of events in how your arm works in relation to your shoulder, and releasing the tension in your arms and wrists.

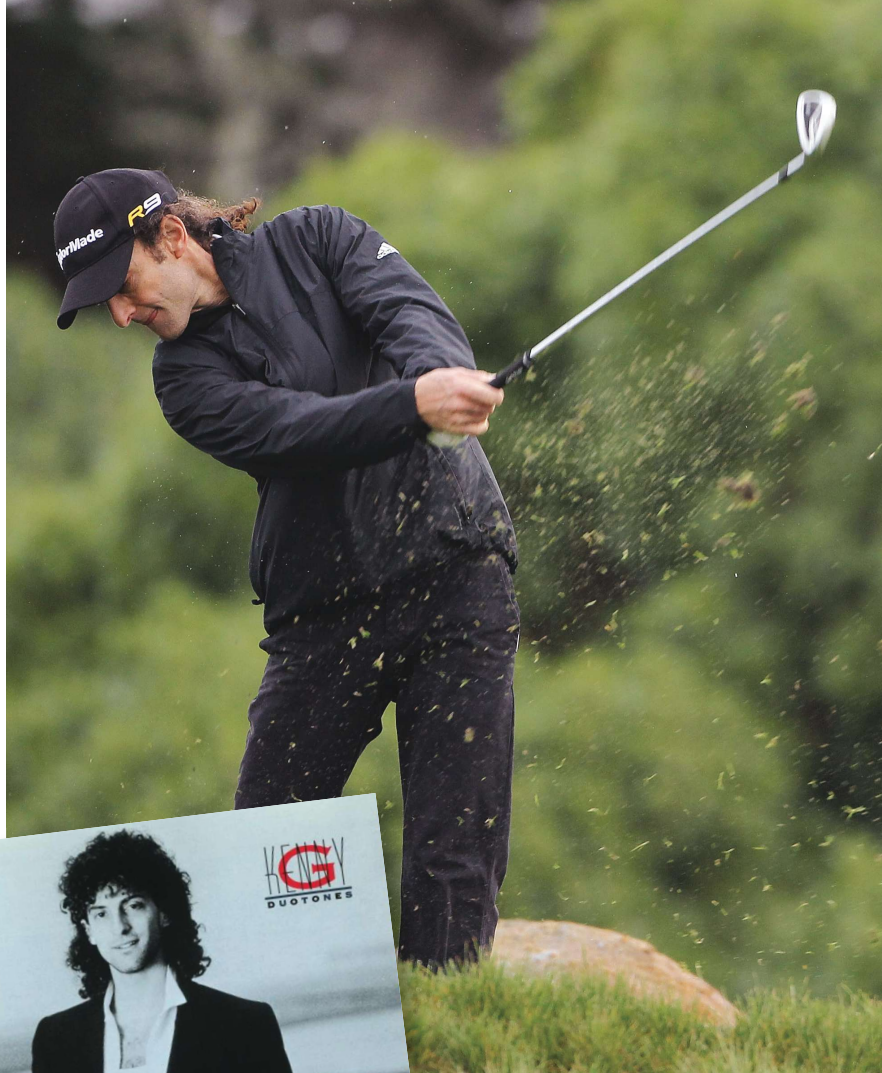
"By throwing the ball, Kenny was able to see how the motor skill of throwing is like swinging the club. Like a lot of musicians, Kenny is mechanically minded, so it helped him to understand what needed to happen in the golf swing and become more aware of his body."

Malaska also worked with Kenny on treating practice like he treated rehearsals for musical performances – instead of just making mindless practice swings, Malaska taught Kenny how to make each practice swing a rehearsal for the next shot.

"A lot of golfers benefit from making a lot of half-swings at half-speed, with no ball in the way," Malaska says. "That made sense to Kenny, because that's how you learn a new song – you play it slower at first, and you play it in pieces; once you pick it up, you move up to full speed all the way through. But until you can do it right, going faster doesn't help you. That made it easier for him to get himself in the right positions throughout the swing, then be able to put it all together.

"Basically, I helped him look at each golf swing as a performance with lots of notes. If you miss one note, you make sure you get the next one right. He's a performer, and that was an idea that was easy for him to embrace."

And you can bet when Kenny G launches another long drive, it sounds as sweet as a Grammy-winning song to his ears. ■

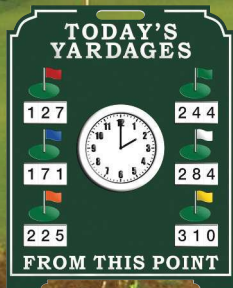


Kenny G has become a near-scratch golfer since working with PGA Professional Mike Malaska. (pictured left) 1986 album *Duotones* sold more than 28 million copies around the world.



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NEXT ON THE
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PGA Professional Greg King (left) says Timberlake (above) possesses a very athletic swing and great focus.



Star of the Stage, Screen and the Green

Music and movie star **Justin Timberlake** is also a talented performer on the golf course **BY DON JOZWIAK**

Justin Timberlake is used to playing a starring role, no matter what he does. As a 12-year-old, he joined the cast of “The Mickey Mouse Club” and started a music career that has stretched from his teen years in *NSYNC to a pair of multi-platinum solo albums as an adult. In recent years, Timberlake has become an eye-catching presence on the silver screen, earning rave reviews for his roles in “The Social Network” and “Friends With Benefits.”

Despite his hectic schedule, Timberlake continues to take the time to enjoy his lifelong love of golf – for both business and pleasure. He grew up playing the game in Millington, Tenn., and in 2008 he bought the public course where he learned the game. That course, which Timberlake renamed Mirimichi (a Native American expression that means “a place of happy retreat”), became the first U.S. course to receive the Audubon Classic Sanctuary certification for being eco-friendly. And when Timberlake isn’t teeing it up at Mirimichi, he’s often spending time at Callaway Golf in Carlsbad, Calif., where he holds the title of Creative Director and works to attract a younger audience to the sport he loves, or working on the PGA Tour event he hosts each October in Las Vegas, the Justin Timberlake Shriners Hospitals for Children Open.

According to Mirimichi’s PGA director of golf, Greg King (*inset, opposite*), the 31-year-old Timberlake sets a great example for golfers of all ages.

“Justin’s a really talented golfer with a very athletic swing – his handicap is between 4 and 6, and I’d take him as a partner eight days out of the week,” King

says. “He likes to have a good time when he’s out on the course, cutting up and having fun. But when he wants to really play or work on practicing, he’s got great focus.”

King says the key to Timberlake’s golf game is his fitness. Daily workouts have helped Timberlake build a strong core and stable base while maintaining upper body flexibility. The result is a swing that includes a big turn with maximum stability – perfect for cranking long drives with his custom Callaway RAZR Fit driver (in Memphis Tigers blue) and tour-trajectory iron shots.

When Timberlake is home in Millington, he spends time on the Mirimichi range working on all parts of his game.

“He spends a fair amount of time on the range, and he follows a set routine,” King says. “He hits every club in the bag, and he really works on his short game. We’ve put him on video so he could study his swing, and he likes to work on all facets of the game.

“Plus, he has that great rhythm that so many musicians have. Justin has a great sense of time and tempo, and that leads to being in tune with the rhythm of the golf swing.” ■

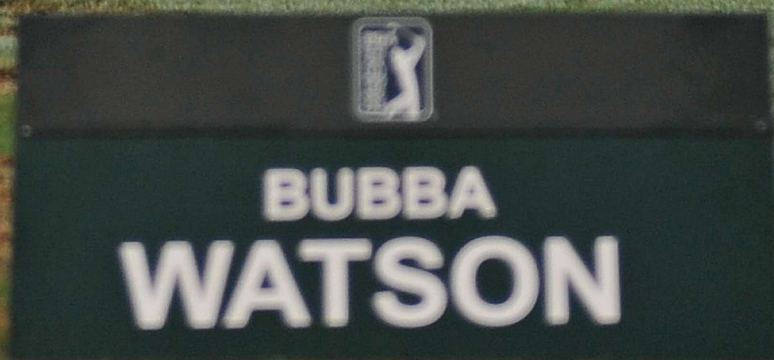


Bubba Says:

Learn to Hit it Hard

The Masters champ likes to keep his practice fun **BY DON JOZWIAK**

A lot of tour professionals were child prodigies, with talent identified and nurtured from a young age with years of swing lessons. And then you have Bubba Watson. You know from the name that he's a little different than most PGA Tour players (by the way, his actual first name is Gerry). That, and the fact that he plays a bright pink driver and hits left-handed shots that are almost too long and too bold to be believed.





THE Bubba FILE

Born: Nov. 5, 1978 in Bagdad, Fla.

Lives: Scottsdale, Ariz.

Family: Bubba and wife Angie recently adopted a boy, Caleb

Off-course hobbies: Started the "Drive to a Million" to raise \$1 million for charities such as Birdies for the Brave, Green Beret Foundation and Ronald McDonald House this year; owns the original General Lee 1969 Dodge Charger used in the TV show "Dukes of Hazzard."

Website: www.bubbawatsongolf.com

Twitter: @BubbaWatson

Bubba earned first-name status with his booming drives: he's leading the PGA Tour in driving distance average at more than 315 yards per drive so far this season. But his signature shot is now the amazing 150-yard wedge out of the trees and pine straw (*pictured above*) – with a whopping 40 yards of hook – and onto the 10th green at Augusta National Golf Club to beat Louis Oosthuizen in a playoff to win a green jacket and his first career major championship.

This type of swashbuckling shot is part of what friends have long called "Bubba Golf." Watson says his on-course credo is simple: "If I have a swing, I have a shot." Like his swing, this philosophy is self-taught, learned during solo practice sessions while growing up in Bagdad, Fla. We talked to Bubba after his Masters victory to find out more about how he learned to play, and how he gets ready to take "Bubba Golf" to the course every round.

Starting With a Smash

Bubba's swing is a rare combination of power and precision: He's able to hit the ball a remarkable distance, but with much more control over each

shot's curvature than many other modern players. What's his secret? Wiffle balls.

As a kid, Bubba caught the golf bug by hitting balls to a five-foot circular target he created in his yard in the panhandle of Florida. To keep from breaking windows or bombing shots out of his block, Bubba used wiffle balls to keep his shots in the yard. But due to the laws of physics, he had to pack plenty of power in his swing to get the light wiffle balls to fly very far or curve around obstacles.

"It is hard to get a wiffle ball to go any distance, or to get it to hook or slice," Bubba says. "So I learned early on how to hit the ball really hard."

Wiffle balls weigh less than two-thirds of an ounce, compared with the 1.62-ounce weight of a golf ball. By the time young Bubba was ready for the range, he'd already grooved a swing that was long, powerful and suited for driving the ball a country mile.

What you can learn: A lot of beginning golfers are tentative when they swing, as if they're afraid they might break the ball. Bubba's approach of learning power first and finesse later can help you get over the fear of swinging hard. Just be sure to be safe. Wiffle balls and other limited-flight training balls are a great way for kids and adults to get a feel for the golf swing at home.

Make Practice Fun

It may look like professional golfers

are in a grim, serious mood as they practice, precisely firing shot after shot at targets to fine-tune their swings. As you might expect, Bubba takes the opposite approach during his time on the range.

Just as he did in his yard as a kid, Bubba makes up games to keep himself interested and make practice time less like a chore and more like fun.

"When I was on the range, I would always try to come up with fun games or hit to different targets so I won't get bored," Watson says. "I still prefer to practice that way; it makes practice fun and not boring."

What you can learn: Like baseball players with pepper or basketball players with "H-O-R-S-E," playing games can give your skills the practice they need without becoming monotonous. Among the games Bubba and other tour players enjoy is challenging each other to hit shots at various targets with specific clubs – like trying to hit a target green 75 yards away by bumping a 3-wood, or curving an 8-iron around one target to get to another. This will prepare you for the unusual shots you'll find yourself facing on the course.

Don't Forget to Warm Up

Sometimes Bubba looks like he's about to swing right out of his shoes – in fact, his feet often leave the ground during some of his harder swings. It's important to note that he's not doing this from a cold start. Before every round, whether it's a tournament day or just practice, Bubba spends time warming up on the range. By easing into that powerful swing, he keeps his muscles loose and lessens the chance of injury.

"I use the range for warm-up, and save most of my practicing for the course," Watson says. "My best practice is when I play, so that's what I do."

What you can learn: Bubba doesn't go from the clubhouse to the first tee, and neither should you. Try to leave time for at least five or 10 minutes of easy warm-up on the range before you tee off, gradually increasing your intensity along the way. That's the best way to get ready for a round, whether you play "Bubba Golf" or swing with both feet on the ground. ■



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Poulter Says: It Pays to Be Prepared

Following a **regular routine** helps this
PGA Tour star get ready for his rounds

BY SCOTT KRAMER

Ian Poulter has embraced life as a globe-trotting modern tour player. Born in England and now based in Orlando, Fla., Poulter's dual memberships on the PGA Tour and PGA European Tour take him all around the world. His playing schedule regularly takes him to Dubai, Hong Kong, Qatar and Abu Dhabi – along with several stops in the U.S. and the U.K.

How does Poulter manage to keep his game sharp and consistent despite all the travel? He sat down and gave us some great advice on how to prepare for a round of golf, and what he thinks average players can do to get ready the next time they tee it up.

Don't Rush Your Warmup

Wherever he's playing and whatever time he's starting, Poulter follows the same routine. Even if he has an early tee time, he makes sure he's awake three hours before his round is set to start. If he's going off at 7 a.m., that means a 4 a.m. wake-up call. If he's already awake for a later tee time, the three-hour mark before the start of a round is time for him to have a meal

so his food can settle before he starts warming up.

Two hours before his tee time, he adds some exercise to the routine to loosen his muscles and get the blood flowing. "I'll usually do a 20-minute warm-up, whether it be five minutes on an exercise bike, then some time with stretching bands, and that ties me up until an hour before tee-off," Poulter says.

That last hour before teeing off is spent on the range getting his game ready to go. "When that hour kicks in, I just go through my regular routine of what's in the bag, from lob wedge to driver."

What you can learn: Poulter puts himself in the proper frame of mind

When Ian Poulter heads to the first tee, he's already hit every club in his bag – and practiced chipping and putting – on the range.



THE Poulter FILE

Born: Jan. 10, 1976 in Hitchin, England

Lives: Orlando, Fla.

Family: Married with four children

Off-course hobbies: An avid car collector; also runs his own apparel company, IJP Design

Website: www.ianpoulter.com

Twitter: @IanJamesPoulter

by allowing time for the same warm-up routine before each round he plays. That way, he knows his body and mind will be ready when he hits the first tee. You probably don't have three hours to do the same routine as Poulter, but follow his lead and make sure you leave yourself enough time to have a decent warm-up before a round – instead of running frazzled to the first tee.

Hit Every Club in the Bag

Like many professional golfers, Poulter likes to swing every club in the bag on the range before a round – but not necessarily in the same sequence every time. “I go lob wedge, sand iron, 9-iron, 7-iron, 5-iron, utility, 3-iron, and then the other clubs in the bag,” he says. “Then if the chipping green is close, I try to get in some chipping. Or I go to the putting green and do a tiny bit of chipping and then some putting, and then I'm ready to go.”

And there's no pre-set amount of time with each club, either. “How much

time I spend with each club varies on how I'm hitting it,” says Poulter. “If I'm flushing it, I get through it pretty quick.”

Poulter sees a lot of his pro-am partners practicing bad warm-up habits before they reach the course. He sees amateurs reach for their driver and a favorite club or two, rather than getting the feel for every club in the bag. “They go for the driver, hit a few, then go to the irons and off they go,” Poulter says. “If there was a way to shorten the practice routine down – even if it was just a 15-minute window – I would still go through the bag, even if it were one shot with every club or two shots. Just to get the feeling that they've hit with every club in the bag.

What you can learn: Don't just reach for a few of your favorite clubs on the practice tee. If you only warm up with your comfort clubs, you'll find yourself in trouble on the course when you need to reach for one of your other clubs.

Keep Putting Practice Simple

The last thing Poulter does before heading to the first tee is practice his putting. Once he's on the practice green before a round, Poulter keeps things simple. In fact, he says his putting practice before a round is far different than when he's working on his game during a non-tournament week.

“When I'm putting before a round of golf, I generally do not do different drills,” he says. “I only really get to do about 10 minutes of putting before I tee off, so there's not enough time to do drills. If you're going to work on your putting, you need a half-hour to an hour. You need to leave yourself enough time for that.”

What you can learn: Don't overdo your putting before you play a round. Five or 10 minutes of practice should give you a feel for the speed of the greens and how your stroke is working that day. If you're planning on making a change to your grip or stance, or want to practice with some in-depth drills, save those for a day you're not playing. Focus your warm-up on finding feel and confidence. ■

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Range
ROUTINES

Get Into





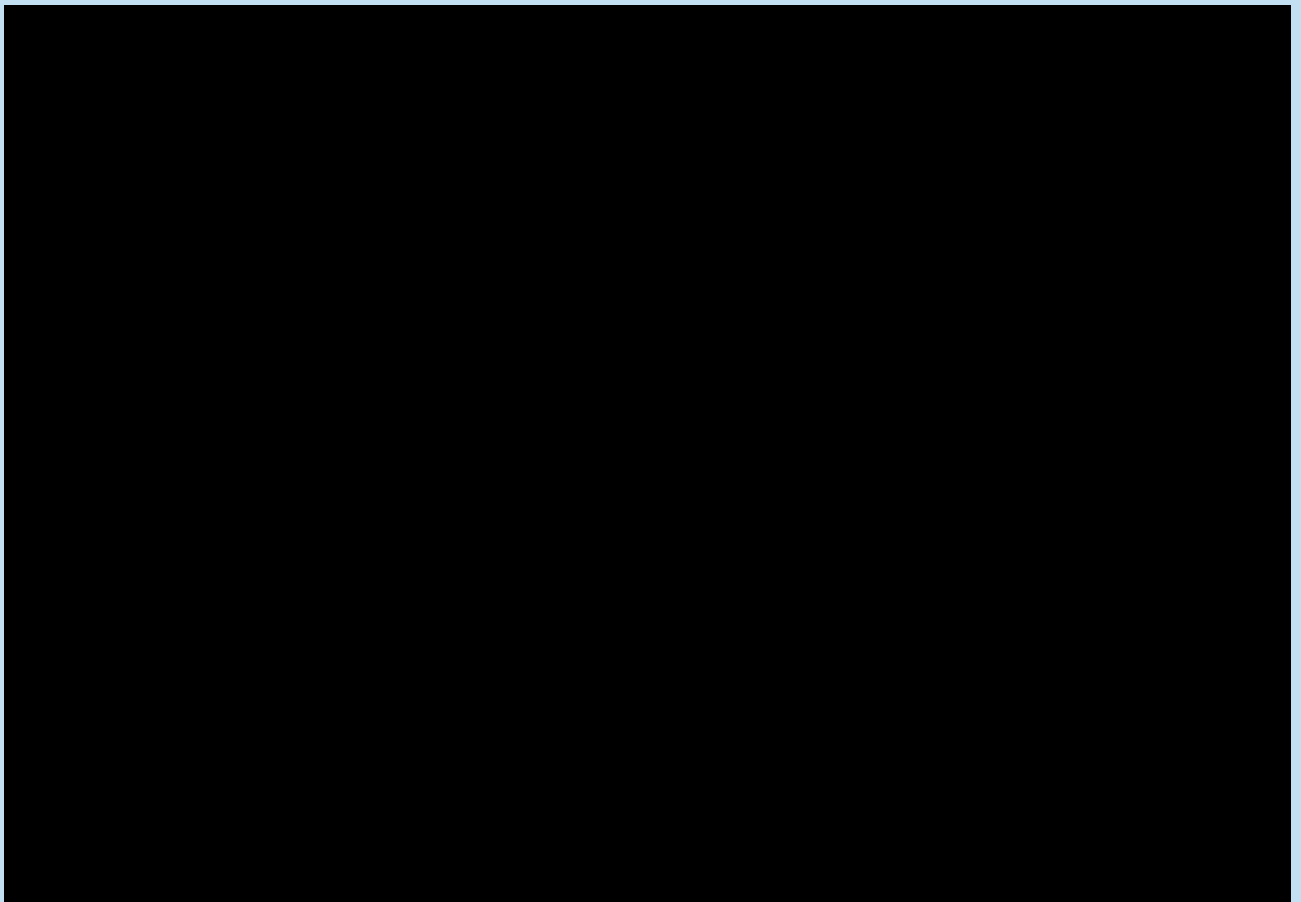
the Groove

Make your practice time count with these range routines you can follow on your own

BY NICOLE WELLER, PGA AND LPGA PROFESSIONAL

If the phrase “You are what you eat” is accurate, it could also apply to golf in that “Your golf game is what you practice.” While golf is an extremely challenging game with no guarantees, there are research-proven ways to make your practice time more valuable and effective on the course. That’s why the hottest buzz words in performance improvement are repetitive (blocked, traditional) practice and transfer (random, scrimmaging) practice. Most people are used to doing repetitive practice – the traditional method of hitting a bunch of similar shots over and over. But research suggests that transfer practice, which is more random and like a scrimmage in other sports, leads to better performance on the golf course.

One Club/Three Targets



To get more out of practice, work on developing good range routines. If you're trying to incorporate a new swing thought or feel, use repetitive motions – repeated shots, putts, rehearsal swings – 70 percent of the time, and random practice – working on the same idea but changing targets, lies, clubs, and creating pressure situations – 30 percent of the time. As the skill is acquired and can hold up more consistently, start changing the percentages the other way toward 30 percent blocked practice and 70 random practice. I often give students a breakdown of how to spend their time when they practice by themselves. I also run “Practice with a Purpose” sessions, where I supervise their time management with challenges, drills and open practice.

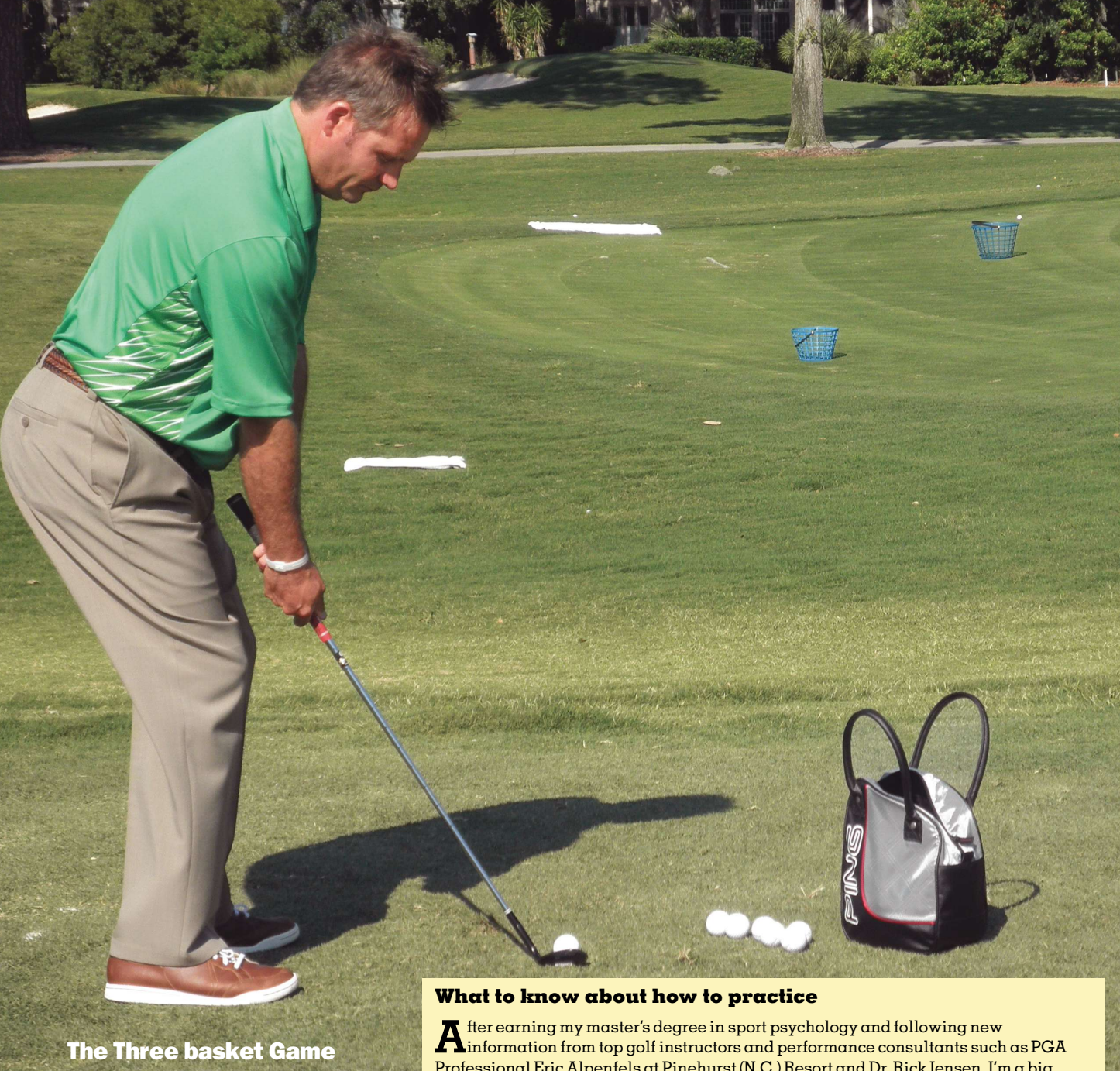
If you only have 30 minutes to practice, I suggest a five-minute warm-up with light cardio activity, stretching and hitting shots with the sole purpose of warming up your swing. Then spend roughly 10 minutes of attention on your shot-



Three Clubs/One Target







The Three basket Game

making and 15 minutes on applying the goal during a specific, measurable drill – I’ve outlined some of the best practice drills on the next page.

If you have a full hour to practice, I suggest a different strategy. Start with a minimum of 10 minutes warming up, then spend 25 minutes on one skill and 25 minutes on another skill. For example, you might spend 25 minutes working on your ball flight, and 25 minutes working on your short game. Within each 25 minutes, alternate between repetitive practice and transfer practice by level of motor skill development – if you’re just learning something, spend more time on repetitive practice.

What to know about how to practice

After earning my master’s degree in sport psychology and following new information from top golf instructors and performance consultants such as PGA Professional Eric Alpenfels at Pinehurst (N.C.) Resort and Dr. Rick Jensen, I’m a big believer in not just what one practices but how one practices. Here are some examples:

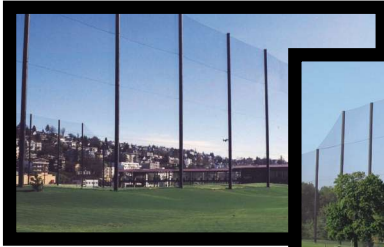
1. Golf is played on a course but practiced most often in a completely different place, unlike most sports such as tennis, basketball and baseball. Therefore, golfers tend to practice differently than they play. They don’t “scrimmage” enough to simulate real play and test their skill in play situations with pressure, boundaries, variability and other real-life situations.
2. Most sports have a coach present to help a participant flow through various learning and transfer stages. Most amateur golfers are left to their own devices, advice from other amateurs, media tips and commonly used lines such as “I lifted my head, I took my eye off the ball, I bent my arm.”
3. Warm-up and practice are two different situations. One is designed to get the body and mind ready to play, while the other is designed for specific work and focus. Before play, sticking to a warm-up routine can drastically reduce your frustration – instead of trying new ideas right before you play. Warm-up is also the time to loosen up the first tool of everyone’s game, the body. Your clubs will only move as well as the body moving them!
4. According to research, golfers who “block practice” (repetitive hitting) do better during practice but worse during play, especially when compared to golfers who “transfer practice” with random, scrimmage-like practice routines – those golfers sometimes perform worse in practice, but play better.

—Nicole Weller, PGA

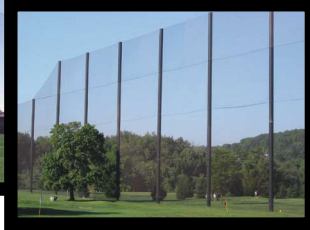
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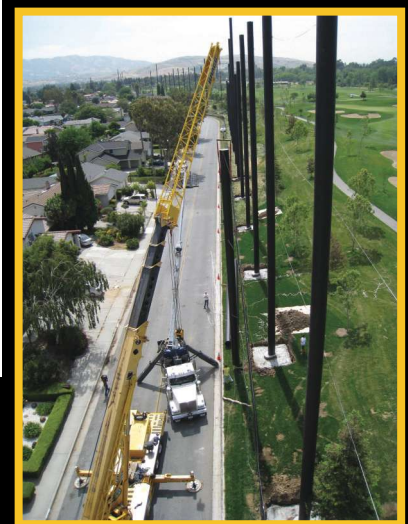
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If you ever get the chance to practice at a range or course that has practice holes, take the opportunity to spend 30 minutes practicing in on-course situations. Play the holes as you normally would, but focus mainly on allowing the skill to transfer in play conditions – on the course where the game is actually played!

Here are some ideas for some great range routines that emphasize more transfer or play practice. Try them for yourself next time you're at the range:

Leapfrog: This is a great short game warm-up drill. Count out five golf balls. Start with a small chip and make the next four shots "leapfrog" over each other until the fifth shot is a full-swing shot or full pitch shot. This allows you to slowly stretch and warm up your swing.

The Three Basket Game: This is great for practicing your pitching. Count out 10 golf balls. Place three baskets within 20–70 yards of you, or identify three targets in that distance area on your range. The goal is to hit as many targets as possible, giving yourself 10 points for each one you hit

(if you're using baskets, getting a ball to stay in a basket is worth 25 points). The only rule is you must change baskets or targets for each shot or the points don't count. Walk into each shot using your full pre-shot routine, just as you would during play.

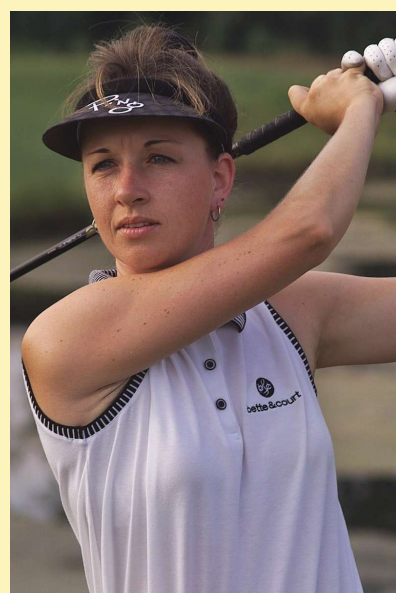
Up and Down Challenge: Work on your short game and putting by trying to chip onto a practice green and make the putt. How many times in a row can you get up and down?

Three Clubs/One Target: Find a short game spot and chip or pitch golf balls with three different clubs to the same target. Which one works best?

One Club/Three Targets: Turn the scenario around and chip or pitch golf balls with the same club to three different targets. This will give you a feel for which club works best in different scenarios.

G-O-L-F: This is just like playing H-O-R-S-E in basketball, where two people challenge each other on a shot. The person with the closest shot wins and the person with the farthest ball away earns a letter in the word G-O-L-F. The person who spells the word first is

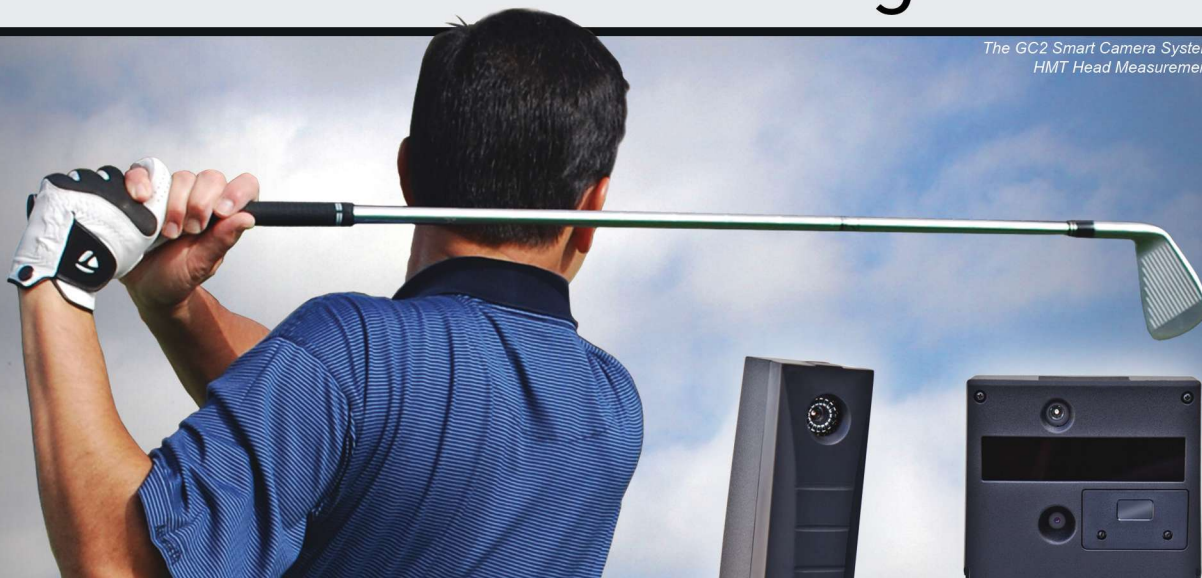
the loser. You can call a shot to land at a target on the fly (first bounce) or when it finishes its roll. ■



Nicole Weller is a PGA and LPGA teaching professional at The Landings Club on Skidaway Island in Savannah, Ga. Named the 2011 LPGA Southeast Regional Teacher of the Year, she also received *Golf Digest's* 2010 Best Young Teacher Award – Top 40 Under 40.

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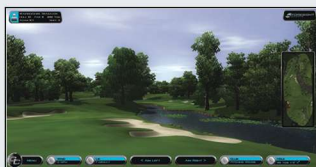


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Wish List

PGA Professionals endorse some of 2012's **hottest** golf equipment

According to PGA Professionals across the country, this has been a great year for new golf equipment. Many of the industry's leading manufacturers have introduced lots of technology to help golfers get more out of their games. We polled some of the PGA Section Merchandisers of the Year – those golf professionals who have been recognized by The PGA of America for their superior skills as merchandisers – to get their feedback. Here's a quick overview:

SHAFTS

It has been said that the shaft is like the engine of a golf club. It's the main power source in the golf club, and it's also the most complex component. Shaft companies have made great advancements in recent years in terms of weight, kick points and torque. Check out some of the latest options from leading manufactures such as Aldila, UST Mamiya, Graphite Design and Fujikura. Consult with a local PGA Professional to find which option best fits your swing.

Aldila NVS 65-S

USTVTS Black

Graphite Design TourAD DI-6s

Aldila NV MLTI Pro-S

Fujikura Motore Speeder



PUTTERS

Belly putters have been all the rage during the past year. Their tour success of late has kept them in the spotlight with companies such as Ping, Odyssey and Scotty Cameron all releasing belly models recently. Some models you may want to try out are the Ping Nome, Scotty Cameron GoLo MID and the Odyssey Metal-X. These putters are also available in standard lengths.

Ping Nome



Odyssey Metal-X



Scotty Cameron GoLo





Cleveland 588



Titleist Vokey SM4



TaylorMade ATV

WEDGES

The new ATV (All-Terrain Versatility) wedge from TaylorMade features an all-milled groove design and micro-texture across the face to generate more spin within USGA rules. Cleveland's 588 wedge uses the company's patented Tour Zip Grooves and Laser Milled technology to maximize spin, while the Titleist Vokey SM4 utilizes fourth generation technology from master wedge maker Bob Vokey.





TaylorMade R11S



Titleist 910D3



Titleist 910D2



Cleveland Classic Tour



Ping G20 driver

DRIVERS

Equipment companies have continued to create new tools for helping you find the fairway off the tee. Adjustability has been a growing theme with products such as the TaylorMade R11S, Titleist 910D3 and Callaway RAZR Fit among the most popular choices. Ping's G20 and i20 drivers have also received strong reviews and even stronger results. Meanwhile, Cleveland has turned back the hands of time with the Classic Tour driver that features all the modern technology with a look inspired by persimmon drivers.



FootJoy Contour Casuals



adidas Samba



Ashworth Cardiff

FAIRWAY WOODS/HYBRIDS

There has been an emphasis on fairway woods this year. In particular, long and strong 3-woods with lower lofts, larger heads and longer shafts. This equates to greater distance, higher trajectory and more playability than comparably lofted drivers. Two prime examples are TaylorMade's RocketBallz 3-wood and Ping's i20 3-wood. Essentially, manufacturers have continued downsizing driver technology into the smaller clubheads to make them more powerful in terms of distance and forgiveness. If you're still without a hybrid, you may want to check out the Mashie from Cleveland Golf.



Ping i20



Cleveland Mashie



TaylorMade RBZ

FOOTWEAR

Spikeless golf shoes have taken the industry by storm. It seems like almost everyone – from the biggest tour stars like Ernie Els, Fred Couples and Justin Rose to your average weekend warrior – has gone spikeless. Leading the market here is ECCO, adidas, Ashworth and FootJoy.



ECCO BIOM



adidas Street



ECCO Golf Street

TaylorMade RBZ



Callaway RAZR-X-HL



Ping G20 iron



IRONS

If it has been a while since you've bought a new set of irons, this might be a good year to consider it. There are tremendous benefits in distance, accuracy and playability available in some of the latest models. You may consider demoing any of the following popular selections: TaylorMade RBZ irons, Callaway RAZR-X-HL irons, Ping G20 irons and the 712 AP2 irons from Titleist.



Titleist 712 AP2

For more information about the latest golf equipment, seek out a PGA Professional in your area by logging onto PGA.com.



Next ON THE TEE



SIMON DALE/THE PGA OF AMERICA

Game Time

Fun ways to encourage junior golfers to practice include tic-tac-toe, chipping and bowling putting **BY WILL REILLY, PGA**

As any parent will tell you, getting a child to sit still for 10 minutes to finish his or her dinner is asking a lot. And if that's the case, getting them to spend an hour on the practice range may seem almost impossible. When my mom wanted me to do something, she used to bribe me with chocolate sundaes or super hero action figures – like any good parent would. But if there's one thing that kids like more than ice cream and toys, it's games.



If you're looking to get your junior golfer to stay focused while practicing on the range, or you're just looking to spend time with your son or daughter, The PGA of America offers some fun game ideas through its PGA Sports Academy program. Here are a few you may want to try with your junior golfer:

Bowling Putting

First, set up 10 tees upside down like bowling pins (*see photo, right*). Then, like bowling, you have two shots to knock down as many pins as you can. Choose a starting point and move back one foot after each round. For more experienced juniors, make sure it's a challenging putt with some twists and turns! There's no way you can "strike" out with this one!

Go Low Chipping

Gia Fanelli, a PGA Professional and the junior golf development coordinator for The PGA of America, gives you the scoop on how Go Low Chipping works.



Tic-Tac-Toe Chipping

Create a tic-tac-toe grid on the putting/chipping green using tape. Make sure the hole is located in the middle square. Before you begin, have the juniors uniquely mark their golf balls. Then they putt or chip into the grid to try and line up three balls in row. It's easy to set up and a blast for kids!

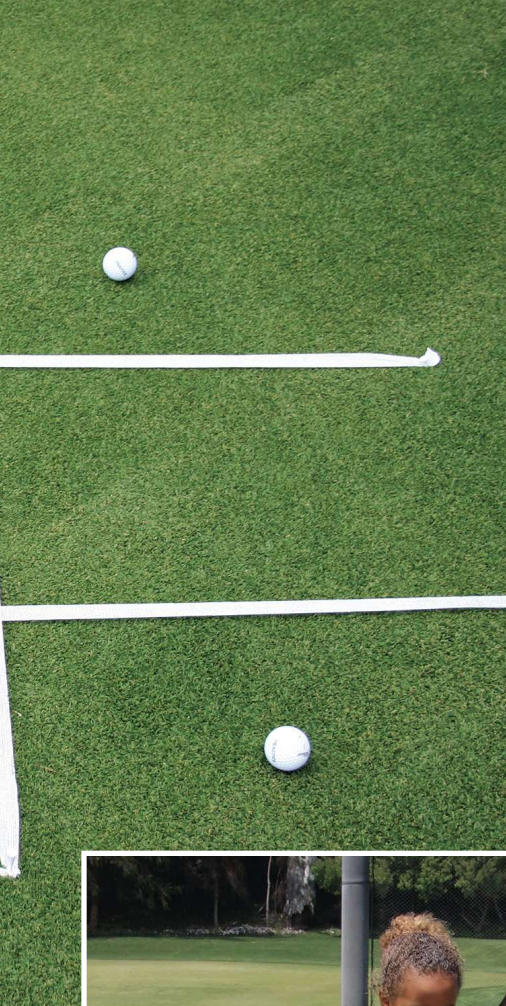
Golf Video Games

If you can't beat them, join them. Golf video games are a great way to keep golf on your junior's minds. By playing video games they will get an understanding of how to create different ball flights and shots around the course. This is another alternative during inclement weather.

Pitch, Pass, Putt!

Pitch, Pass and Putt is a fun Near Golf Experience game that relates to other sporting skills challenges and also helps transition the throwing motion to the chipping motion.





Pool Putting

The objective of the game is to make putts by using your putter as a pool stick – strike the ball with the grip end of the putter (*right*). Count the number of strokes it takes the junior to get the ball in the hole, subtract one stroke from their score each time they bounce their ball off a competitor's. As always, the player with the lowest number of strokes wins!

Practice Playing on the Range

Kids have great imaginations, so use that to your advantage when you're on the range with them. Have them pretend that they're playing a hole on the course. Pick a target, have them hit and then set up another scenario where they have to pitch it – or hit a shorter shot – into the flag. Make it fun for them by pretending they're in the final round of the Masters and

Pool Putting



competing against Phil Mickelson or Rickie Fowler (or whoever their favorite golfer is).

Balance Beam

Balance is a huge component of successfully swinging the golf club. You may not have access to a type of balance beam pictured here, but the next time you're at the park with your junior golfer, challenge them to see who can walk the farthest and fastest around the edge of the sand box. ■



Balance Beam



PGA Professional **Will Reilly** is The PGA of America's Junior Golf Development Manager. For more on the PGA Sports Academy, log onto www.PlayGolfAmerica.com (and click on Junior Golf) or go to Facebook.com/pgasportsacademy.

Fit to Play

Fitness
FOR YOU

Stretch your golf abilities by improving your flexibility and overall fitness

BY ADAM C. SMITH, PGA

A lot of golfers spend serious time practicing the game: full swings with drivers and irons, scoring shots with wedges, putts from every distance. But how much time do you spend preparing your body to make all those swings?

My job is to teach the golf swing, but I often have students that neglect their fitness – which means they either can't unlock their full potential, or they practice and play in danger of suffering injuries.

As a result, I've made it part of my job to help my students improve some of their physical limitations. If you look at today's top players, you see that most of them have embraced fitness as a part of their golf routine. You can follow a similar path and see improvement on the scorecard and in your everyday activities.

I created a manual called "Golf Fitness From the Ground Up," and I give a copy to my students. It spells out the reasons why I think it's important to be in good shape for golf, and it illustrates how to do several golf-related stretches. It takes about 30 minutes to run through all the

stretches, and it's something you can do in the morning before heading out to the links. I'd like to share a few stretches with you that I think could benefit you as well. You can do these year-round, even if you're not playing golf, to keep your muscles in shape for the next time you do tee it up.

Hold each stretch for approximately 10 seconds, relax for 30 seconds, then repeat at least two more times. This will help you to be more flexible and ready to swing the golf club. ■

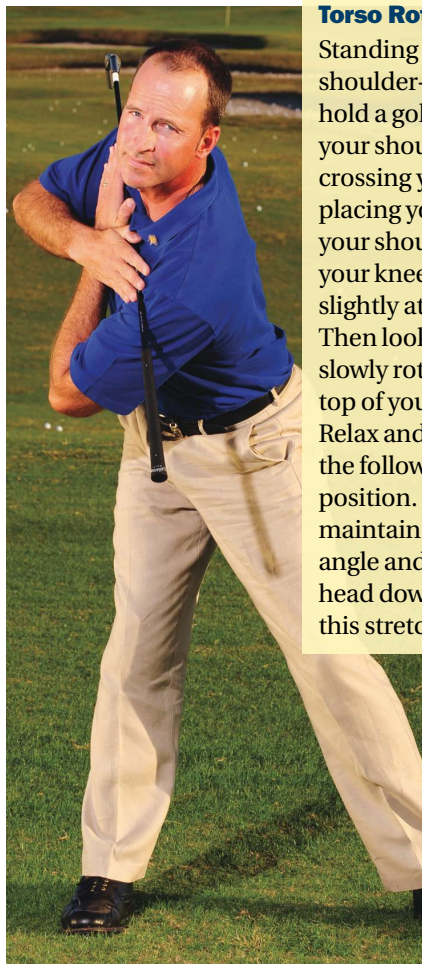
Groin Stretch

Sitting on the floor or ground, bring the soles of your feet together and hold your toes with both hands. Pull your heels toward your groin and slowly press your knees downward with your elbows. It's OK to have a curve in your spine during this stretch.

Adam C. Smith, the PGA director of instruction at Salisbury Country Club in Midlothian, Va., is the 2008 Middle Atlantic PGA Section Teacher of the Year.

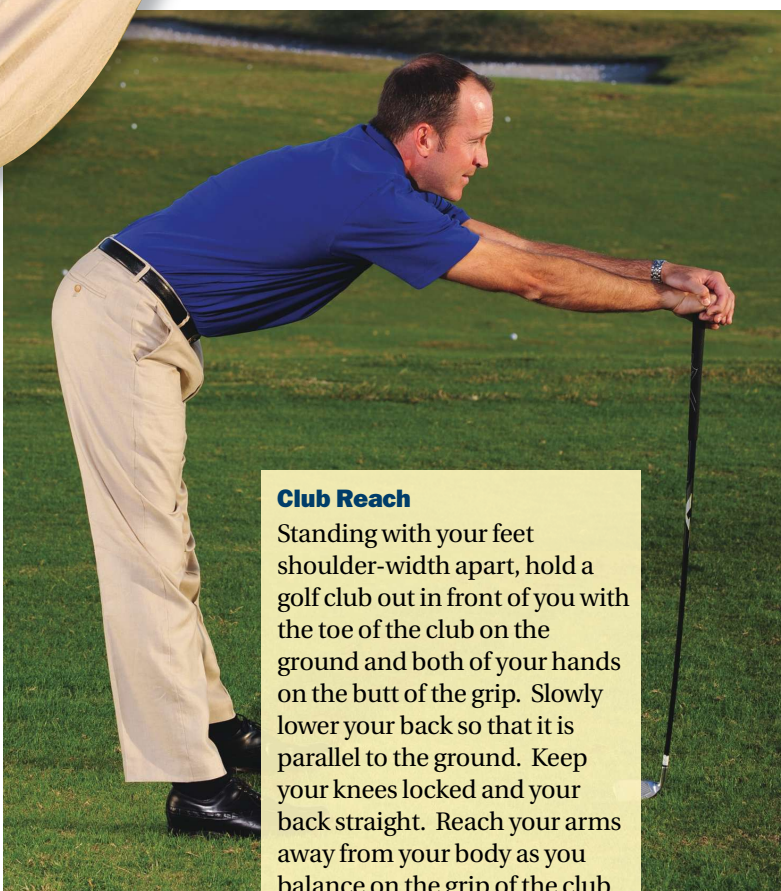
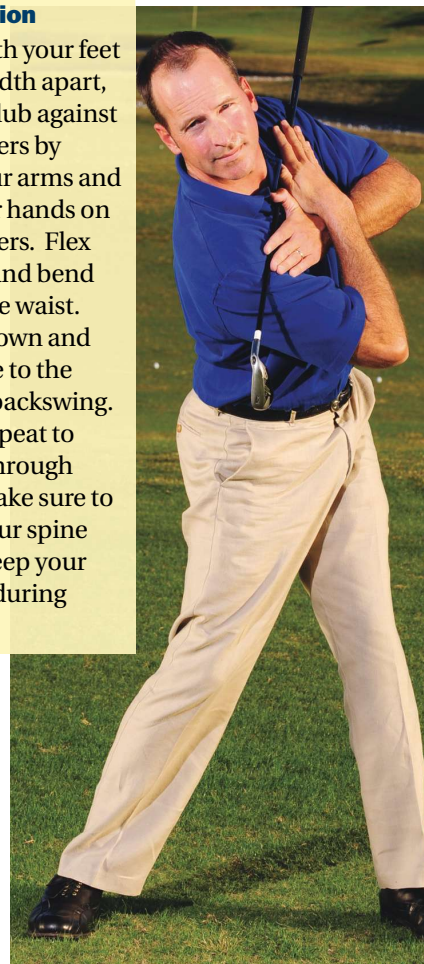


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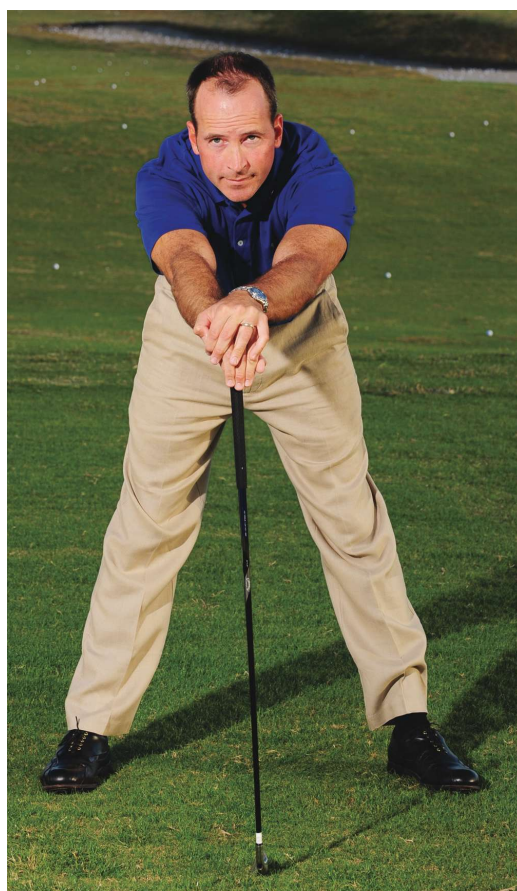
Torso Rotation

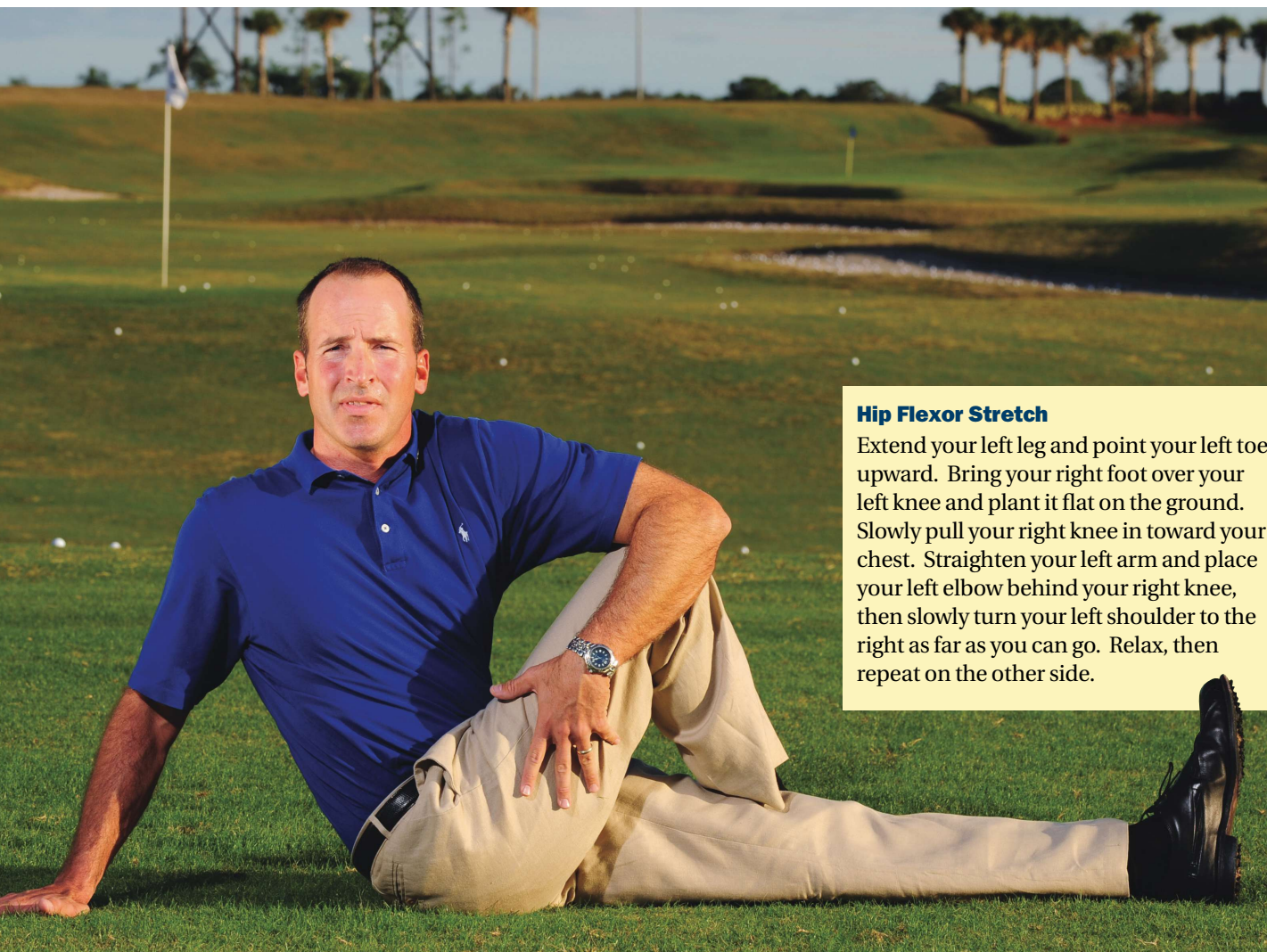
Standing with your feet shoulder-width apart, hold a golf club against your shoulders by crossing your arms and placing your hands on your shoulders. Flex your knees and bend slightly at the waist. Then look down and slowly rotate to the top of your backswing. Relax and repeat to the follow-through position. Make sure to maintain your spine angle and keep your head down during this stretch.



Club Reach

Standing with your feet shoulder-width apart, hold a golf club out in front of you with the toe of the club on the ground and both of your hands on the butt of the grip. Slowly lower your back so that it is parallel to the ground. Keep your knees locked and your back straight. Reach your arms away from your body as you balance on the grip of the club.





Hip Flexor Stretch

Extend your left leg and point your left toe upward. Bring your right foot over your left knee and plant it flat on the ground. Slowly pull your right knee in toward your chest. Straighten your left arm and place your left elbow behind your right knee, then slowly turn your left shoulder to the right as far as you can go. Relax, then repeat on the other side.

Fitness Tips From the Titleist Performance Institute

PGA Professional **Dave Phillips** (back left) and **Dr. Greg Rose** (right) are co-founders of the Titleist Performance Institute (TPI) in Oceanside, Calif., and hosts of "Golf Fitness Academy," which is currently in its eighth season on Golf Channel. They work with golfers of every skill level, from amateurs to top touring professionals. Since starting TPI in 2003, they've seen fitness become a major factor in enjoying the game of golf.

Here are some of the most common swing problems the TPI staff sees from average golfers, and how you can improve them through fitness. Log on to www.mytpi.com for specific exercises that can help specific muscle areas.

Coming Over the Top: Perhaps the most common swing fault among high-handicappers, coming over the top refers to your swing path when your upper body is too active on the downswing. The result of this upper-body motion is having the club approach the ball from outside your intended swing plane – and either a weak slice or a dead pull. The key to correcting this is developing a proper weight shift from your back foot to front foot, which requires good balance and strong core muscles.

Chicken Winging: A very common fault with many golfers is the chicken wing – a loss of extension through the impact area due to a breakdown of the lead elbow in the downswing. This swing fault makes it very hard to develop speed or power, and also places a lot of stress on the outside of your lead elbow, which can cause tennis elbow. The result of a chicken wing swing is often a weak slice. Lose the chicken wing by building the strength of your lead arm and the flexibility of your lead side shoulder – your right arm and shoulder, if you play right-handed.

Reverse Spine Angle: The top cause of back pain in golf, the reverse spine angle is any



excessive upper body backward bend during the backswing. This makes it very difficult to start the downswing in the proper sequence and leads to the upper body dominating the swing, which causes a loss of power. The reverse spine angle also places excessive tension on the lower back because the abdominal muscles are inhibited during the backswing. The ability to stabilize your spine angle during the backswing is directly related to the strength and stability provided by your core muscles – your abdominals and your glutes. These muscles help keep the trunk of your body flexed forward throughout the golf swing.

80%

tour professionals who say fitness is important to golf

98.8%

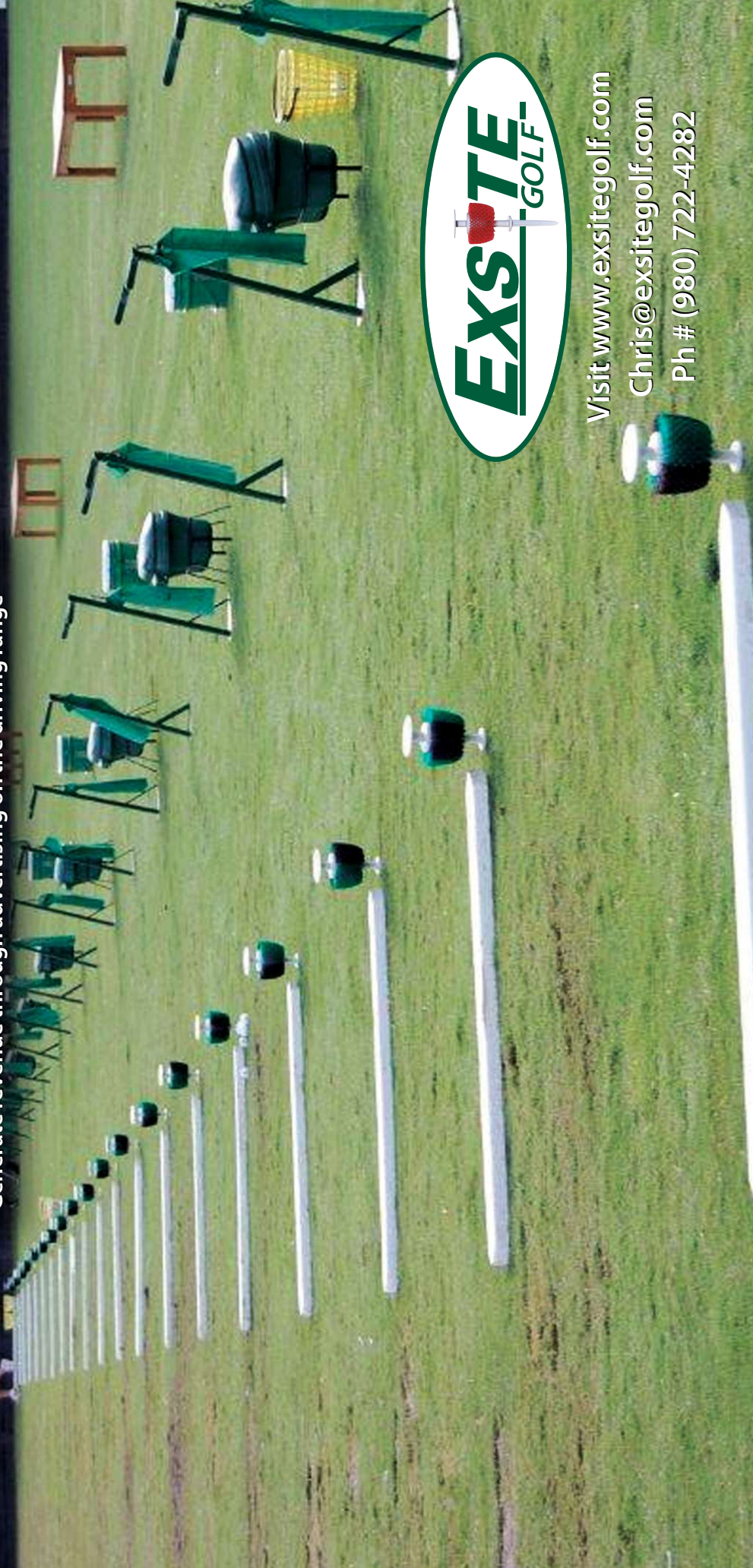
tour professionals who make fitness part of their routine

Source: MyTPI.com

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Mastering Bunker Shots



Working them into your practice routine can pay dividends on the course; **the PGA Center for Golf Learning and Performance** offers nine different practice bunkers!

BY ERIC HOGGE, PGA
WITH TONY L. STARKS

Melted Edge Bunker:
Clay Mixed with Fine Sand



What do you envision when someone asks: “Do you want to go to the driving range?” If you’re like most, you think about getting a large bucket of balls and swinging away. But that’s not the best method for actually improving your skills and getting the most out of your practice session. You need to include variety: Short shots, long shots, high shots, low shots, putting and, yes, even the dreaded bunker shots.

**Back Bunker:
Fine Sand**



While it can be tough to find a practice facility that offers vast short game areas that include practice bunkers, they're out there if you search. A prime example is the PGA Center for Golf Learning and Performance in Port St. Lucie, Fla., which has nine separate practice bunkers that simulate bunker play worldwide with five different types of sand. Yes, nine! The innovative, 35-acre golf mecca also includes more than 100 full-swing practice stations, a golf fitness and performance center, vast pitching and chipping areas, and 7,000 square feet of putting greens.

Eric Hogge, the facility's PGA head professional and director of clubfitting (*pictured*), is going to take us on a personal guided tour of the nine different bunkers at the PGA Center for Golf Learning and Performance, while providing practice tips for how to get up and down from these sandy situations. In Hogge's words:



Pot Bunker: Fine Sand

The demands of getting the ball up quickly and out of a pot bunker, with its steep sides, would suggest a lob wedge with at least 58–60 degrees of loft, if not higher. But be careful with the lower bounce of these wedges – (bounce is the angle from the leading edge of the club to the back of the sole). With the fine sand it is easy to dig down because the sand is so soft, causing a shot that does not travel the desired distance. Opening the face of the sand wedge (usually about 56 degrees of loft) or moving the ball more forward in the stance (closer to

the front foot) will achieve the higher loft and trajectory of the lob wedge and will maximize the standard bounce of the sand wedge, allowing the club to move through sand rather than continue downward.

Back Bunker: Fine Sand

This bunker (*opposite*) simulates a shot that has gone over the green. Shots are played uphill to a green that slopes away for the player.

The fine sand demands a greater bounce angle. As I mentioned, the sand wedge typically has more bounce than the lob wedge, but also has less loft. To achieve the best result, open the clubface of the sand wedge or move the ball forward in your stance to increase both the loft of the clubface and the bounce of the sole. On a shot where a very high trajectory coupled with a soft landing is required, the lob wedge is appropriate. But make sure there is enough bounce to get through the fine sand by, again, opening the clubface or moving the ball more forward in the stance. Make sure to swing bigger than you think you need.

Grass Bunker

We have a healthy strand of Bermuda grass in our only practice bunker without sand. Sharp attack angles, hitting the ball with a descending blow, and keeping your weight on the forward foot is the way to go here. Don't be shy: Get in the habit of being long rather than short of the hole. At times, the ball will sit high in the long

Fairway Bunker



THE PGA OF AMERICA/BRIAN OAR

grass, which makes it easy to go under the ball and hit a shot that is well short of the mark. This can be made worse with a very high-lofted lob wedge. Gripping down on the sand wedge, making the club shorter, can alleviate this problem.

Melted Edge: Clay Mixed with Fine Sand

With the clay base of this bunker (*pages 56-57*), be careful of creating too much bounce, which can happen when you hit an open-faced sand wedge. If this occurs at impact, a thin or bladed shot is highly probable. A lob wedge or a squared sand wedge can produce the desired, more digging impact. In general, a smaller swing is needed for the desired distance.

Championship Bunker: Moderately Coarse Sand

Because coarse sand is a bit firmer than fine sand, typically less bounce is needed. Feeling with your feet as you get set for the shot is always a good way to assess bunker conditions. Here, a lob wedge or a squared sand wedge can be appropriate. Through impact, splash the sand forward to clear the high lip of the bunker.

Flat Bottom Bunker: Concrete Sand

This bunker showcases the most densely packed sand at the PGA Center for Golf Learning and Performance. A square or even slightly closed faced sand wedge, or a lob wedge with less bounce, are the best methods to approach this shot. The ball will leave the bunker quickly,

Experience all nine bunkers yourself

For more information on what the PGA Center for Golf Learning and Performance has to offer, log onto PGAVillage.com.



so limit the swing speed to not go too far. Moving the ball back in the stance with a sharper angle of attack can help as well.

Fairway Bunker

The fairway bunker (*left*), with a very small lip at the front edge, can be played with any iron in the bag, but more loft is usually a good idea. More advanced players can even use a hybrid in these situations. Someone once said that, "Hitting wood in the bunker equals wood in the head." A good rule of thumb is to take the club you think will fly over the lip of the bunker and then one less: if you think 6-iron is good, use your 7. It is better to come up short of the green with one less club than to hit the lip of the bunker and not change your geography at all. Rely on firm feet in the bunker and no more than a three-quarter swing to ensure no slipping. Keeping a solid foundation with the ball slightly farther back in your stance than normal is the way to go.

Sod Wall: Washed River Rock

The sod wall bunker demands quick elevation to clear the steep wall from this flat bottom bunker. This bunker is usually found on seaside links style courses, as well as at the Dye Course here in PGA Village. The extra loft of the lob wedge can be a huge benefit in these bunkers. Move the ball forward, open the face of the lob wedge slightly, maintain knee bend throughout the swing and don't be shy. It takes speed to get the ball up quickly, and a shot that goes too far is much better than being faced with a second shot from the same spot after the ball hits the sod wall and rolls back to your feet.

The next time you're out on the golf course, take a few seconds to examine what type of bunkers lie in wait. I hope some of the tips I've provided will help you conquer the bunker and get up and down. ■

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