

**THE
ULTIMATE
MASTERS
ISSUE**

GOLF

Close like a champ

Drive It Long & Pitch
It Tight Under Pressure

By Masters Champion
Danny Willett

P. 96

Plus:

Jason Day

3 Ways to Launch
Your Irons Like the
World No. 1

P. 52

**CLUB
TEST
2017**

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**NEW IRONS
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P. 103

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GOLF LINEUP

April 2017 Volume 59, Issue 4

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COVER STORY

DANNY WILLETT

The gritty Englishman reveals how he closed out the 2016 Masters—his first major win—using a series of deft swings and smart choices.



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THIS PAGE AND COVER PHOTOGRAPHS: BEN VAN HOOK

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DAVE PELZ

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Masters traditions are abundant: the Champions dinner, the Par 3 Contest, the Opening tee shots, Amen Corner, Rae's Creek, and the green jacket.

Another annual rite of springtime: **GOLF.com** offering wall-to-wall (or, more aptly, pine-to-pine) coverage that's unequalled anywhere.



This year, our newly redesigned website will bring you the Masters like never before. From original photography to daily stories on the ground to nightly videos that recap the action, **GOLF.com** will help you experience the year's first major in a whole new way.



Come Masters week, our preview coverage will be so in-depth that you'll crave a pimento-and-cheese sandwich (and yes, we'll be including a recipe for the famous Augusta snack). And to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Tiger's historic 1997 victory, **GOLF.com** will feature an extended oral history of the event, as told by the players, the fans—and Woods himself. It's a candid look at the week that truly launched the Tiger Era. Can we get an "Amen!"?

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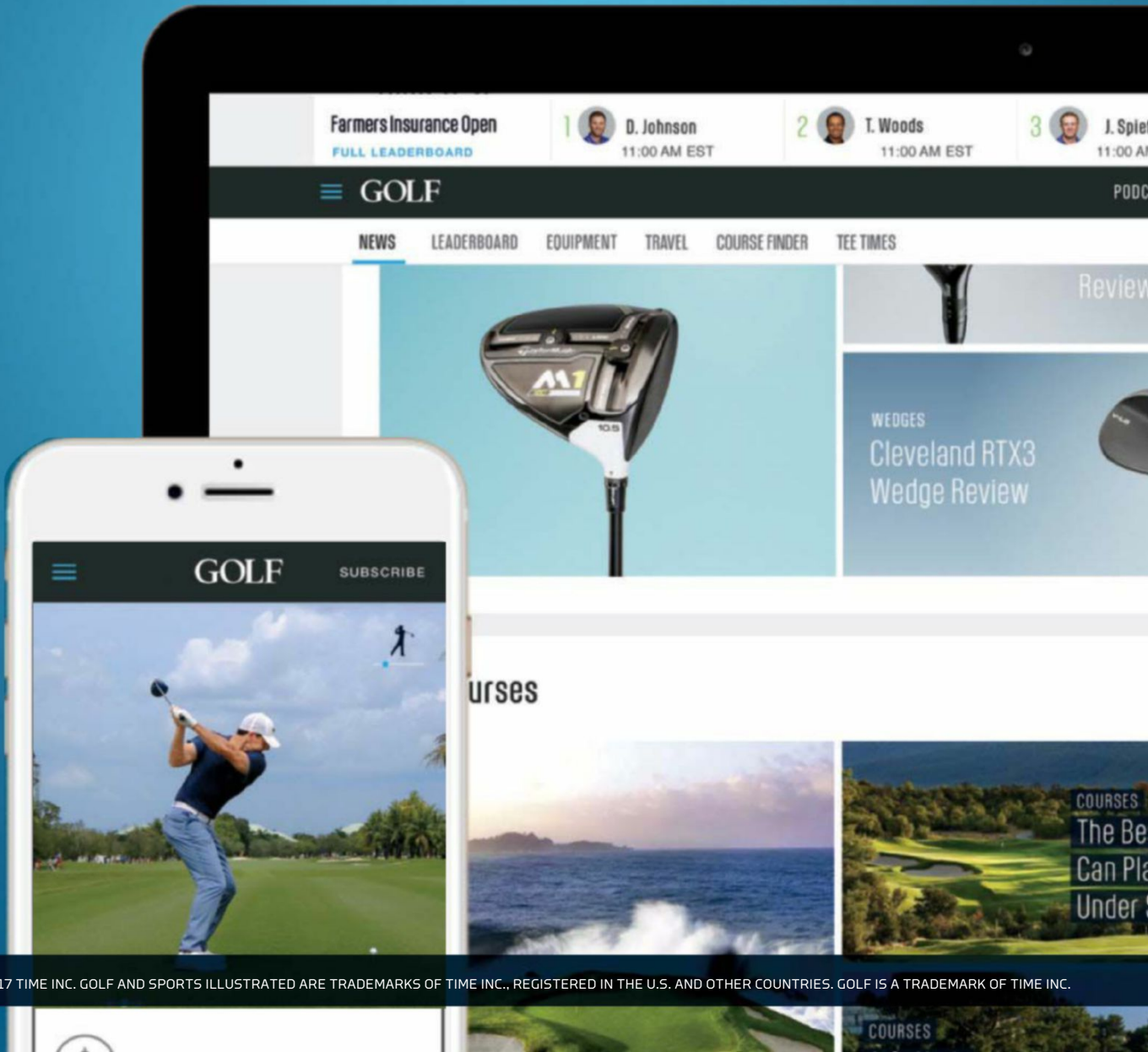


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David M. Clarke, Editor

DANNY GETS HIS DUE

» **AFTER LAST YEAR'S** Masters, it seemed all anyone could talk about was Jordan Spieth's collapse on the par-3 12th hole: the first water ball, the chunk, the *second* water ball, and that look of shock frozen on his face. Sure, Danny Willett got the green jacket, but Spieth got the ink. This month, the jocular English champ gets his due, gracing GOLF's cover.

"The Masters doesn't begin until the back nine on Sunday," the old saying goes. There's truth to that. Many have wilted like a dying azalea under the white-hot spotlight of Masters pressure. Not Willett. He was absolutely unruffled on his inward nine last year.

Willett gave a big thumbs up last year to his upgraded wardrobe.

ON SUNDAY AT AUGUSTA LAST YEAR, WILLETT BIRDIED THREE OF HIS FINAL SIX HOLES. WOW! TALK ABOUT CLOSING STRONG.

He shot a bogey-free 33, with birdies on three of the last six holes and the weight of the green jacket on his shoulders. Wow! Talk about closing strong. To win back-to-back at Augusta, Willett will have to draw on what he calls his "inner confidence." Such intestinal steel is key to his ability to stay calm and focused, the 29-year-old tells us. "That only comes from working hard and from trusting your own abilities," he says. If you'd like to close out a round like a Masters winner, turn to p. 96—Willett shares four shots that will help you play your best when it matters most. Use his tips to make some Masters magic on your course.

Another green jacket winner is on our minds this year, and not just because he's healthy and heading to Augusta. Twenty years ago, Tiger Woods won his first major—the Masters—by a staggering 12 shots. His competitors were stunned. "The bigger the event, the higher he'll raise the bar," Paul Azinger said in 1997. How right he was. Woods, then 21, stole the spotlight and kept it, grabbing 13 more majors. Can he *finally* win No. 15? Perhaps. But even if he just makes a good run, and gives us some new Tiger moments to savor, it would be a very happy anniversary.

David M. Clarke

David M. Clarke, Editor

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TOP: ANDY MURRAY; LEFT: DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES

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Now on the Tee: Your Raves, Rants and Reactions



WHICH FEBRUARY STORIES DREW THE MOST LETTERS?

Bryson DeChambeau	25%
Instruction	13%
Courses	5%
Other	57%

IN PLANE SIGHT

» I've been playing golf for over 50 years. I'm an 82-year-old female, and I have taken lessons and chased after many tips and instructions. But not one has ever helped as much as Bryson DeChambeau's fine article in your last issue ("Plane and Simple," February).

At my age, I have faced several physical setbacks over the last few years. I've always fought my way back to the golf course, but laying off for months is hard to overcome in this game. I was struggling to even break 100 until I read Mr. DeChambeau's article. I took his advice to the driving range and then to the course. It was amazing! After two weeks with it, I shot an 85. I never thought I would do that again.

Thank you, young man. And thank you, GOLF, for injecting new life into an old game.

Golf is fun again!

— JANETTE GREGG

FT. WALTON BEACH, FLA.



» After reading the article about Bryson DeChambeau's grip and swing, I couldn't help but think of Moe Norman's grip and swing. Moe was one of the best ballstrickers ever, and Bryson seems to be pretty good, too. Maybe there is something to this. I'll have to give it a try next spring.

— DONALD TUCKER
BURNSVILLE, MINN.

PEBBLE BEACH POSTSCRIPT

» I always love an article on Pebble Beach ("Pebble Beach: The Golfer's Ultimate Guide," February), but I can't believe you didn't mention Pacific Grove as a hidden gem. This course is probably one of the all-time great deals for a muni, with views on the back nine that are just as stunning as the other courses mentioned in the article. I played it a few years ago, and I couldn't believe that the place wasn't jam-packed.

— STEVE JEPSEN,
BEDFORD, MASS.

SETUP SUCCESS

» Your lesson, "How to Flush Your Fairway Woods" (January), was simple and very effective. I was setting up for my fairway wood just like an iron shot. By opening my stance and (uncomfortably) pointing my toes out, I was able to hit beautiful, long, straight shots. I will be putting my previously ignored woods to work at the course tomorrow.

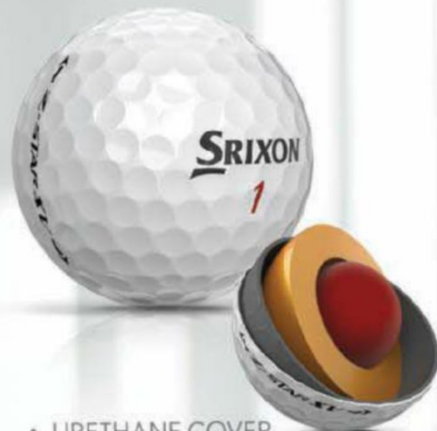
— BILL JORDAN SURPRISE, ARIZ.

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Letters are edited for clarity and brevity.

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WE ASKED GOLF INSIDERS...

What's the best way for a player to get an advantage on the field at the Masters?



Alan Bastable

Scott Hoch, who finished second in 1989, told me that he liked to play a late practice round on Wednesday. By then, the grounds crew has begun prepping the layout—shaving banks, rolling greens—for round one. This “sneak preview” provides valuable info the rest of the field doesn’t have.



Connell Barrett

Winning the Masters is about preparation. Take six-time champion Jack Nicklaus. In his day, Jack would play several practice rounds at Augusta many weeks in advance to iron out issues with his game or with the way the course was playing. By Masters week, his worry-free mind could completely focus on golf.



Jessica Marksbury

While length helps, I agree with Peter Kostis, who’s stressed the importance of distance control. Players who can accurately fire at pins and minimize their number of treacherous lags have an edge. You don’t have to bomb it to win, but you won’t don the jacket without a superb week of iron play.



Jeff Ritter

First, a player should knock a ball or two into the pond in the Par 3 Contest, since no winner of that Wednesday exhibition has taken that year’s Masters. Next, he should birdie No. 13 on Sunday. The last five champs have each birdied that iconic par 5 in the final round.



Joe Passov

Success means bringing your lag-putting “A” game to the National. Ben Crenshaw told me that there are many pins you can’t aim at and many holes where you’re not even trying to make the putt—you’re just looking for the best place to leave it for your second putt. “It can be so difficult finding the correct combination of speed and line,” the two-time Masters winner said. “The mentality is all about saving a stroke.”

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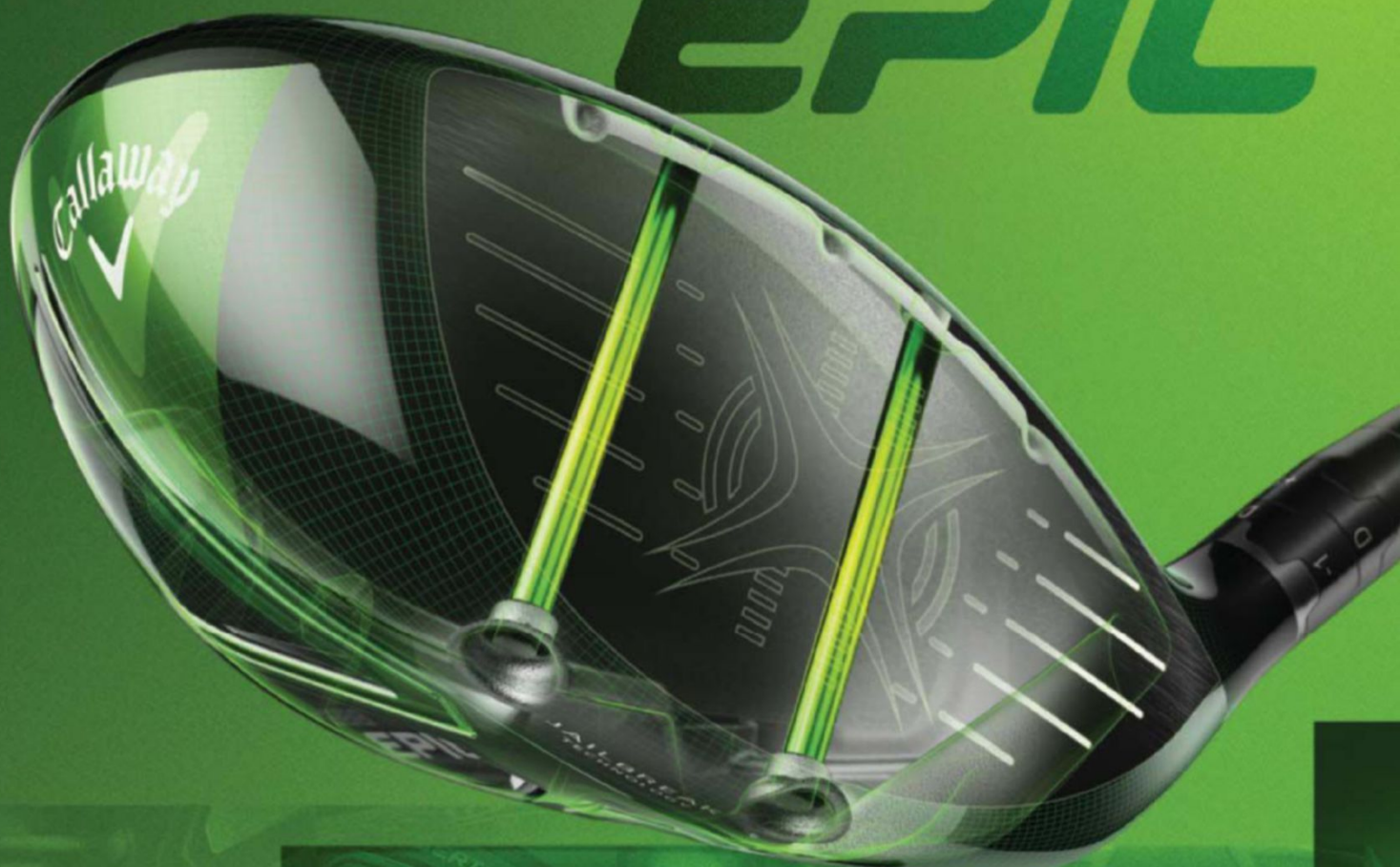


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Opening Statement

» On Thursday, Tiger bogeyed the first hole (right) en route to a front-nine 40. It didn't look like he'd make the cut, let alone make history. But by the time he'd reached 18 (below), he'd rocketed up the leaderboard.



TEEING OFF

1 of 3

HISTORY MAJOR

Twenty years ago, a young master named Tiger Woods thrilled the sports world when he broke records—and barriers—on his way to his first major win, at Augusta National

BY JOSH SENS

The arc of history may be long, but sometimes one moment has the weight to bend it. Twenty years ago, Tiger Woods, 21, walked off the 18th green at Augusta National having shattered more than the event's scoring record. With his victory at the 1997 Masters, he broke a racial barrier, becoming golf's first major champion of African-American descent. And he did it at a private club whose co-founder, Clifford Roberts, once said, "As long as I'm alive, golfers will be white, and caddies will be black."

Woods's four-day score of 270 (18-under par, 12 shots clear of the field) led to a Butler Cabin ceremony rich in symbolism. "Green »

photos: **MAIN:** STEPHEN MUNDAY/ALLSPORT; **IN-SET:** PHIL SHELDON/POP-PERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES





TEEING OFF

2 of 3



"There's No Chance"

» With his caddie Mike "Fluff" Cowan (top left) at his side, Woods displayed both short-game touch and prodigious power, dominating the par 5s. Although Greg Norman had collapsed the year before, an awestruck Colin Montgomerie said, "There's no chance [that] Tiger Woods is going to lose this tournament."



and black go good together, don't they?"

Woods's father, Earl, remarked, as Tiger slipped on the green jacket—and 44 million Americans watched on TV.

Never afraid of hyperbole, Earl had predicted that Tiger would "do more than any other man in history to change humanity." Yet in the first round, Woods played more like a lost child than the Chosen One. In his opening nine, he found pine straw more than fairway and made the turn with a 4-over 40. On the 10th tee, he shortened his backswing a bit and fired a 30. Tiger flipped a switch—and the lights went out on the field.

After a Friday 66, the weekend was a two-day victory march. Driving it 323 yards on average for the week—an astounding 25 yards farther than the next longest bomber—Woods turned Augusta National into the world's most exquisitely groomed »

photos: **MAIN:** PHIL SHELDON/POPPERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES; **LEFT INSET:** DAVID CANNON/ALLSPORT; **RIGHT INSET:** TIMOTHY CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES




High of the Tiger

» The moment became instantly iconic: A euphoric Woods punctuates his record-breaking 12-shot Masters victory with a fist pump. Moments later, the golf world watched Tiger share a tender moment with his father, Earl, and his mother, Kultida.

pitch-and-putt. Twice that week he reached the par-5 15th hitting driver-wedge. And he never once three-putted Augusta's quicksilver greens.

The golf world watched with a mix of awe and resignation. "There's no chance," said Tiger's third-round playing partner Colin Montgomerie, after Woods waxed him by nine strokes on the day. "We're all human beings here."

On Sunday, Tiger wore red, then donned a layer of green—a wardrobe change that marked a new era. (He would add three more green jackets.)

His victory inspired today's generation. To again win the Masters, Woods, now 41, would have to overcome both his demons and a field of stars—Jason Day, Rory McIlroy, Dustin Johnson, Jordan Spieth—who grew up idolizing him but who don't fear him. To defeat their likes at his age for a fifth green jacket—well, that might be even more wondrous than the way he captured his first. 

photos: **MAIN:** AUGUSTA NATIONAL/GETTY IMAGES;
INSET: BOB MARTIN/SI





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The Most Important Things in Golf



EYE TO EYE

"I Need to Win"

» **What would success look like to you in 2017?**

I definitely need to win. Last year, I underachieved big time.

» **Really? You earned more than \$3 million in official money, had two runner-up finishes, and helped the U.S. win the Ryder Cup. That's not good enough in your book?**

I didn't win, and it pissed me off quite a bit, to be honest. My mind always works five steps ahead of where I am, so I think I need to win a major or two in the next two years. If I don't, I feel like I'd be underachieving and not playing to my abilities.

» **The Masters is coming up. It's the only major in which you haven't notched a top 10. What's the key to making a real run at the green jacket?**

Being healthy. I've never played Augusta healthy. Two years ago, I dislocated a rib. Last year—I didn't tell anybody this—but I had a herniated disk in my neck. So I hadn't played much going in and had to go out and find my »

In 2016, **Brooks Koepka** earned more than \$3 million on Tour and had a red-hot Ryder Cup. But that's not good enough for the 26-year-old.

He wants to win now—and to win big. Next stop: Augusta.

INTERVIEW BY PETE MADDEN
PORTRAIT BY ROBERT BECK/SI



EYE TO EYE Brooks Koepka

game. I caught the injury bug last year, so when I went and sat on the beach and wrote down my goals for this year, one of them was to do a better job staying fit so that I can play healthy.

» **You have one Tour win under your belt—the 2015 Waste Management Phoenix Open. What stands out from that victory?**

A couple of days before the tournament, I was with my coach, Claude Harmon. I said, “Man, I don’t know if I’m ready. I don’t think my game is in good enough shape.” And he said, “Come on, keep grinding, and it’ll come together.” Then I went out and won. So it’s a big joke between us now.

» **To back up a bit, you blazed an unusual route to the Tour. After you fell short at Q School, you took your talents across the pond. What was Europe like as a pro?**

After I missed out at Q School, I was disappointed but determined. I had Challenge Tour status, so I went over to Europe, and it was one of the best times of my life. I had so much fun bouncing around the world, cramming five guys and their golf clubs into a car that probably should have only held two, and listening to all the different stories.

» **Was it also intimidating?** I knew it would work out. I felt it was only a matter of time. I loved it, but I wanted to move on and start playing against the best players in the world.



» **Did you have a mentor in Europe who looked out for you?**

I felt like I knew what I was doing. It was the same game I grew up playing. I come from a golf family. My dad was pretty good, and my brother, Chase, is also a pro. Growing up, I wanted to beat my dad so bad, and my brother wanted to beat me—we were always competitive, always battling, always grinding to beat each other. I don’t think there’s much more to it. Guys put too much pressure on themselves and make a big deal about each shot. It’s just golf.

» **Who have you turned to for advice out on Tour?**

I enjoy playing with certain guys, picking their brains, like Graeme McDowell. Our caddies are close, so we played a few practice rounds together. He’s one of the grittiest guys on Tour, so he’s offered some advice on how to handle life as a professional.

» **You had a very strong Ryder Cup at Hazeltine, going 3-1-0 and soundly defeating the**

Koepka battled a neck injury at Augusta in 2016 and was still able to tie for 21st.

ONE THING I KNOW FOR SURE

» **GOLF IS NOT MY LIFE. IT’S MY JOB.**

When I’m playing, I take the game very seriously, but I enjoy my time away from golf. I don’t watch it in my spare time. I don’t keep up with it on social media. When I’m away from the golf course, I like to just chill. Golf is mentally grinding enough without having to think about it all day.

reigning Masters champ, Danny Willett, in singles. What was the highlight from that week?

Just being around the best players in the world. You look around the team room and realize how many majors have been won by the guys in there—Tiger, Phil, Davis, Furyk, Jordan. I used to watch some of these guys when I was growing up. That’s pretty cool.

» **It must be surreal to find yourself in the locker room with someone you idolized, like Tiger or Phil.**

Everyone knows how serious Tiger is on the course, but in the team room, he’s fun. He loves to laugh and joke around. It’s funny—the first time I ever played with Tiger, it was really hard. I’d grown up watching him on TV. I’d go to tournaments just for a glimpse. Then I was paired with him, and I spent the first nine holes just watching him walk around, hit balls, do his routine. I lost focus on what I was doing and just watched him—like I’d been doing my whole life.

» **One more Masters question: Most fans are thinking about Augusta long before April. Are players the same way?**

I just got the invitation! Even when you know you’re going to the Masters, it’s so cool to get it. [Laughs] I was talking with Adam Scott—he was my absolute favorite golfer growing up, along with Tiger. [Adam] said you should spend your entire offseason prepping for April. So for me, the No. 1 priority is to stay healthy. And No. 2? Everything is looking forward to Augusta. 📸







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What A Girl Wants

The checklist for UCLA's talented, fun-loving Alison Lee: Buy books, hang with her girlfriends in the "Babe Cave," become World No. 1

» **AS SHE SAT** in the back row of her Methodologies in Communications Research class—in a subterranean classroom beneath UCLA's public-affairs building, during a lecture that touched on reverse causality versus exogenous confounders—Alison Lee put down her pen and blurted out a profound realization: "Oh my gawd, I need to book my flights for Asia!"

This is the dual reality of a talented 22-year-old who's both a budding LPGA star and a fun-loving undergrad immersed in college life. In two years on tour, Lee has already played in a Solheim Cup and made more than \$1 million between the ropes, to say nothing of a healthy endorsement portfolio.

Yet she shares a bedroom with a friend in a modest Westwood apartment that's crammed with three other young women. They call it the "Babe Cave." There are no golf mementos, but the apartment boasts two trophy cases of a different sort: floor-to-ceiling bookcases filled with empty bottles of a wide variety of alcoholic beverages. "That's just since the start of the fall quarter," Lee says of the decoration. "It is literally beautiful."

While her LPGA colleagues live out of lonely hotel rooms, Lee spends many of her evenings among the madding crowds at the Delta Gamma house. When she went through Rush Week, she didn't tell any of the sororities she was a golfer. "I just wanted to be treated like a normal person," she says with a laugh.

Lee will skip an LPGA event to attend her UCLA graduation. "I'm honestly scared for school to end because then it will be all golf all the time."



But after pledging DG, the secret got out: "Every girl was like, 'My dad totally knows who you are!'" I recently dined with Lee at a crowded table in the Delta Gamma house, and the topics of conversation were quintessential: spring-break plans, boys, movies, midterms. In June, Lee will skip the Meijer LPGA Classic to walk in UCLA's graduation ceremonies, and in a quiet moment during dinner she said, "I'm going to miss this so much. I'm honestly scared for school to end because then it will be all golf all the time."

A native of Valencia, Calif., Lee enjoyed a stellar junior career. She was aware that Michelle Wie had attended

Stanford while playing on the LPGA Tour, but turning pro early was never the plan. That is, not until Lee was the 2013-14 NCAA national player of the year as a freshman and had a series of strong cameos on the LPGA that summer. She competed for the Bruins during the fall of her sophomore year, in 2014, then tried her hand at LPGA Q school. She tied for first to earn full playing privileges, then decided to take the plunge.

The balancing act has not been easy. At the 2015 Women's British Open, she had to take her atmospheric-and-oceanic-sciences final in the

MY BAG


middle of the night in a hotel lobby in Scotland because it was the only place with decent WiFi, and her professor had insisted that she be given the exam simultaneously with her classmates back in L.A.

"It's impressive how she juggles it all," says P.J. Lamberson, her Comm. 150 professor. "She's a very dedicated student."

Lee has enjoyed the support of the Bruin community, as she holds an unofficial emeritus position with the women's golf team. She still practices with the squad and benefits from UCLA tutors and athletic trainers. "We love having her around," says coach Carrie Forsyth. "She's a great role model for our girls. One time we had an optional workout, and Alison was the only one who showed up—and, oh boy, did she send out some mean texts. And for her it's the best of both worlds, because she still gets to feel the camaraderie of a team."

Team-building is certainly not a problem for this live wire. On Mondays, the Babe Cave is the gathering spot for *The Bachelor* and glasses of red wine. Every Tuesday, Lee and her squad post up at Cabo Cantina. There's usually a fraternity party to check out on Thursdays, and Friday and Saturday nights are reserved for bar crawls. But for all the hijinks (which she gleefully chronicles on Snapchat, much to the consternation of her management team), she remains deeply ambitious about her golf career. Lee's goal for 2017 is to win her first LPGA tournament. Long-term? "I want to win majors, and I want to get to No. 1 in the world," she says.

But first things first: Scrolling through her thick notebook calendar, in which she hand-writes her many commitments, Lee stopped to linger on one upcoming item: Raid with Lambda.

"Oh boy," cooed this unique student-athlete. "That's going to be fun. Probably too much fun." 



Justin Thomas

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DRIVER

1) Titleist 917D3, 9.5°, Mitsubishi Diamana BF60 shaft, Tour X-Stiff (TX) flex, 310 yards; \$500

FAIRWAY WOOD

2) Titleist 917F3, 15°, Mitsubishi Diamana Blue S+ 80 shaft, Tour X-Stiff (TX) flex, 290 yards; \$320

UTILITY IRON

3) Titleist 712U, 2 (18°), True Temper Dynamic Gold X100 shaft, 265 yards; price n/a

IRONS

4) Titleist 716 MB, 4-9, True Temper Dynamic Gold X100 shafts; \$1,100 (for 8)
4-iron: 235 yards
5-iron: 218 yards
6-iron: 205 yards
7-iron: 192 yards
8-iron: 176 yards
9-iron: 165 yards

PUTTER

5) Titleist by Scotty Cameron Futura X5 (Tour Only); price n/a

BALL

Titleist Pro V1x;
\$48/dozen

WEDGES

6) Titleist Vokey Design SM6, 46° (F Grind, bent to 47°), 148 yards with True Temper Dynamic Gold X100 shaft, \$150. **Vokey Design SM5**,* 52° (F Grind, bent to 52.5°), 132 yards and 56° (F Grind, bent to 57°), 115 yards; \$110; **Vokey Design SM6**, 60° (K Grind, bent to 60.5°), 105 yards; \$150. All with True Temper Dynamic Gold S400 shafts.

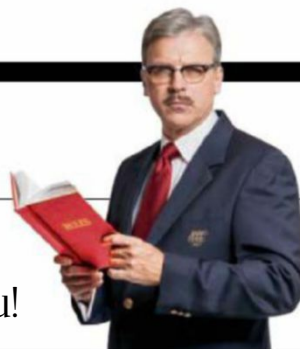


*Thomas switched to the Vokey Design SM6 (52° and 56°) following our photo shoot.

"One of my newer clubs is the 917 3-wood. It's great. It's very hot, so I had to go up in loft from 14.25° to 15°. Has a great feel to it, too."

ASK THE RULES GUY

Got a question about the Rules? Ask the Rules Guy—he won't throw the book at you!



You can watch video rulings featuring Rules Guy himself! Go to GOLF.com/rules-guy



Rules Guy:
On the 17th hole at Royal Lytham & St. Annes, my drive found a deep fairway bunker. I should have pitched out sideways but didn't. Instead, my shot struck the bunker's face and bounced back at me, and I hit the ball again on my follow-through, knocking it OB. How many penalty strokes do I face?

—KEVIN BRADY, WILMINGTON, N.C.

I hope you saw the plaque on Lytham's 17th fairway commemorating a famous mashie-niblick shot that Bobby Jones hit from a sandy area en route to his 1926 Open win. His heroics aside, Jones knew something that's easy to forget: In golf,

you sometimes have to take your medicine. First, your ambitious swipe should have cost you a one-stroke penalty for striking the ball twice. Under most circumstances, you could have then just played the ball from where it came to rest, but since it went OB, you had to proceed under stroke-and-distance. This means that in sum, you incurred two one-stroke penalties and were required to play again from the bunker. Now, sometimes the Rules limit the number of penalty strokes that can be incurred from a single act, but no such help comes here because two actions unfolded: your double-hit, and your ball ending up OB. Still, there's good news: You

may have a bright future as a trick-shot artist.

Rules Man:
What happens if your match-play opponent mistakenly hits from a more forward tee than the ones you've both been using, assuming he's called on it?

—FERREL HARPER, ST. SIMONS, GA.

It depends. Under Rule 11-4a, the witness to this crime has the option to immediately—i.e., before anyone else makes another swing—cancel his match-play opponent's stroke and order it replayed from the correct

teeing ground. But if the drive, say, sails into a hazard, he may let that errant shot stand. (In stroke play, under Rule 11-4b, the offending player incurs a two-stroke penalty and must correct his mistake.) Some might call that mean. I call it playing by the book.

Hey, Rules Guy:
I was in a senior men's tournament at my club, which has three different nines. My group accidentally played the wrong inward nine. Instead of being DQ'd, we were told to go play the correct nine, and all was forgiven. Was this the proper move?

—JEFF FLOOD, BARRIE, ONT.

Yes, your group screwed up, but so did the tournament committee. Under Rule 11-4b, you and your fellow Lost Boys needed to correct your mistake before playing from the 11th hole teeing ground or be disqualified. (You get one hole to realize the error of your ways.) But once the committee decided to let you finish on the correct nine, its ruling stands. It turns out, two wrongs *can* make a right.

Dear Ruler:
Recently, I made a few practice swings in the fairway, took my stance over the ball—and whiffed. It turns out I'd swung at the wrong ball. What's the call?

—WILLIAM LORENZ, OCALA, FLA.

A whiff is embarrassing enough, and by trying to hit another player's ball, things only got worse. You're indeed penalized under Decision 15/1, for intending to hit the wrong ball. That's a loss of the hole in match play, or a two-stroke penalty in stroke play. And in stroke play, you must correct the error, which means playing your own golf ball. If you can't find it, you would take a stroke-and-distance penalty in addition to the aforementioned two-stroke penalty. So, please keep your eye on the ball. Your ball.

GOT A RULES QUESTION?

» Of course you do! Whatever it may be, send yours to rulesguy@golf.com and the question may be answered in an upcoming issue of GOLF. Until then, play by the Rules!

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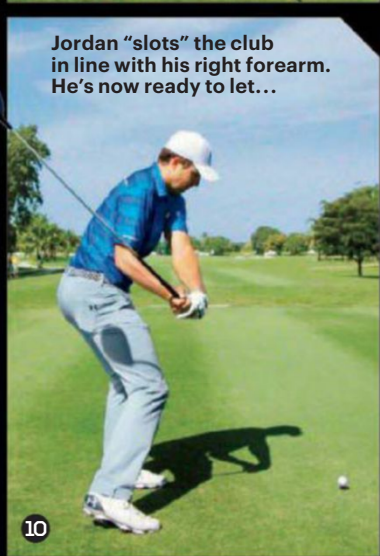
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Analysis by Top 100 Teacher **Jim Murphy**, Sugar Creek C.C., Sugar Land, Texas



Jordan Spieth had a quiet 2016 season: no major victories, "only" two Tour wins. High standards are the new norm for Spieth, who amassed nine wins, including two majors, before turning 23. (Tiger Woods had eight wins and one major by his 23rd birthday). Oh, and were it not for one very bad hole at last year's Masters, the youngster would be going this month for a third straight green jacket.

Spieth has motored out of the blocks in 2017, with four top 10s—including a victory at Pebble Beach—in his first four events. He and



STATISTICS

The Line on Spieth

THROUGH 2017 AT&T PEBBLE BEACH PRO-AM

84.7%

Greens in Regulation (1st)

69.2

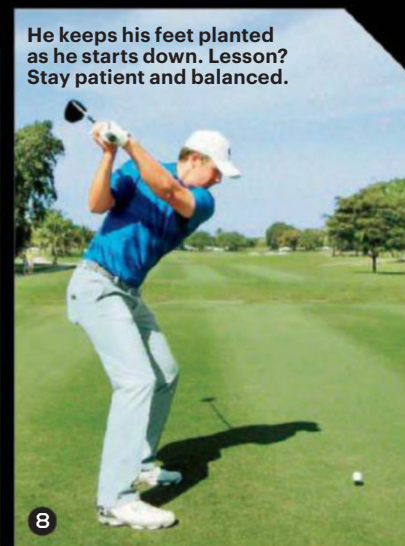
Scoring Average (1st)

6.25

Birdie Average (1st)

5th

Official World Golf Ranking



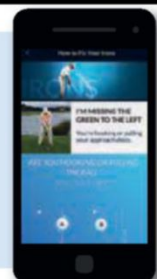
his coach, Top 100 Teacher Cameron McCormick, have built a swing that avoids trouble. The secret is balance. Throughout his motion, Spieth maintains his connection to the ground, letting the club's momentum do the work. If you miss a lot of fairways, copy his setup (frame 1) and the way he stays "over his feet" in his backswing (frames 2-8). Also, try to move your lower body, torso and club in unison through impact (frame 13). Good balance is a fundamental that pays off. Just ask Jordan. Not yet 24, he's already piled up more than \$28 million in Tour winnings.

SHAZAM
This Page

to get the
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See page 9.

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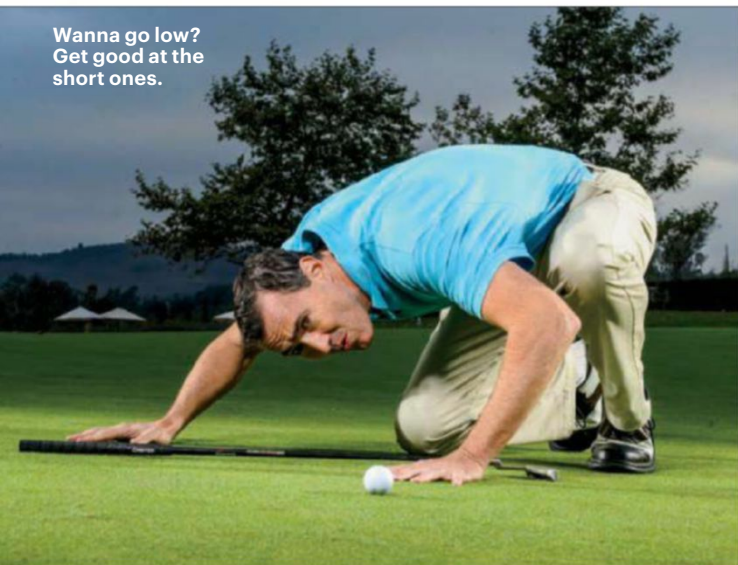
BY MARK BROADIE

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One for the Money

Stop worrying so much about your three-putts and start staring down those one-putts. They're game-changers.

Wanna go low?
Get good at the
short ones.



» **IT'S COMMONLY SAID** that a key to better scoring is to reduce three-putts. That's not precisely true. Certainly, avoiding three-putts is important, but the game's best putters gain more strokes by upping their number of one-putts than by reducing their three-putts.

The goal is to get the ball into the hole in the fewest strokes, not to avoid three-putts. Taking 28 putts in a round with two three-putts is preferable to piling up 30 putts without a three-putt. On Tour in 2016, Rod Pampling was better than Brooks Koepka at avoiding three-putts (rank 41 versus 167), yet Koepka had the superior putting season (20th in Strokes Gained putting, compared with Pampling's 175 ranking).

That's an extreme example. In most cases, better-than-average putters one-putt more often and three-putt less often. When measured against the field, the top 10 Tour putters in 2016 had 1.0 more one-putts per round (7.6 versus 6.6) and 0.3 fewer three-putts (0.4 versus 0.7). These players gained 1.3 strokes per round over the Tour's worst putters, with one-putts contributing more than *three times* the gain derived from their reduced three-putts.

Three-putts are what stick in our mind. Why? Because they're painful and embarrassing, which makes them easier to remember.

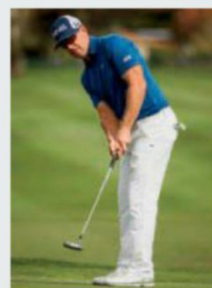
Still, three-putts are what stick in our mind. Why? Because they're painful and embarrassing, which makes them easier to remember. In his fascinating new book, *The Undoing Project*, Michael Lewis (*Moneyball*) explores the work of psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, whose insights into the "availability heuristic"—the simplistic way in which the mind processes complex and challenging problems—apply here. Ease of recall is a heuristic, and it can lead us to overestimate the importance or likelihood of an event. It explains, for example, our irrational fear of being attacked by a shark. Statistically, the chances are minute, yet we overestimate an attack's likelihood because of the indelible nature of news accounts.

A similar anxiety, though obviously not as pronounced, holds for weekend golfers. We dread the three-putt so much that it becomes our fixation. Don't fall into the availability heuristic trap. Weekend golfers average 2.3 fewer one-putts per round and 1.8 more three-putts per round than Tour pros. That's not too discouraging, is it? The focus of all golfers—including you—should be on the importance of and fearlessness in sinking one-putts. It's the ticket to success with the flatstick and to taking a bite out of your handicap.

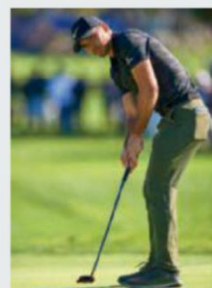


NUMBERS GAME

The key distance for one-putts is five feet. On the PGA Tour, half of all one-putts occur inside of five feet from the hole. The implication? To increase your one-putt greens, it's critical to improve your putting from short distances.



In the 2016 season, **HUNTER MAHAN** had the most one-putts in a round: 15, in round three of the Frys.com, en route to a score of 67.



In that same season, **JASON DAY** was the most improved among better-than-average putters. How'd he do it? He increased his one-putts by 0.3 per round, more than four times his decrease in three-putts.

MAIN: ERIC SANSON; MAHAN: EZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES; DAY: ROBERT BECK/ISI

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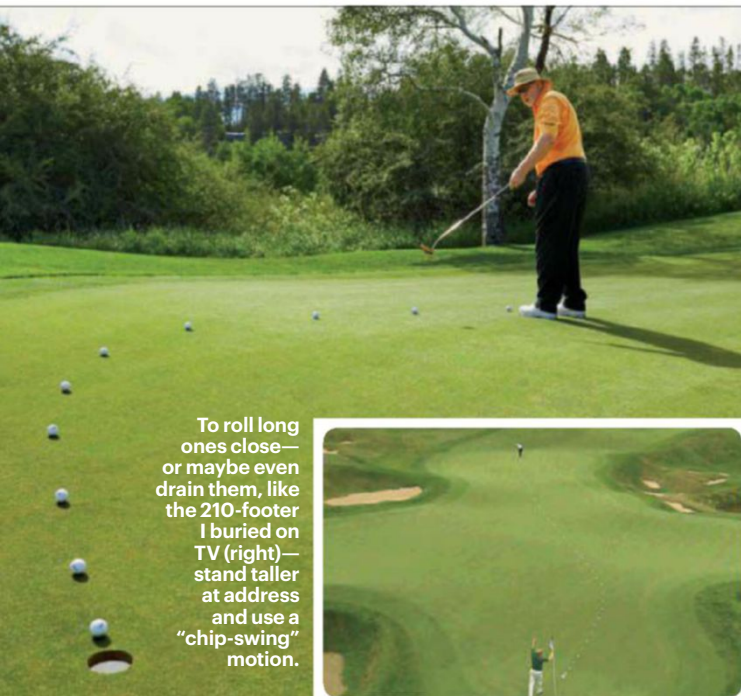
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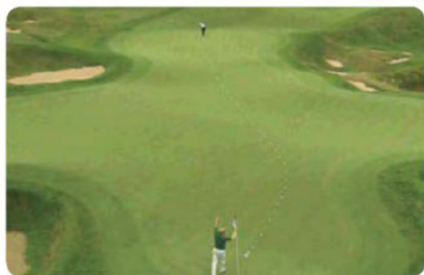
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Long-Distance Service

Use my “chip-swing” putting motion to get down in two—or less!—on lengthy lags



To roll long ones close—or maybe even drain them, like the 210-footer I buried on TV (right)—stand taller at address and use a “chip-swing” motion.



According to studies I've done using PGA Tour ShotLink data, you're six times more likely than the pros to three-putt on long lags. That number should scare you.

» IN THE SUMMER

of 2011, while filming an instruction segment for Golf Channel, I drained a 210-foot putt (inset photo, above). Some say it's the longest holed putt ever captured on video. (You can find the clip on YouTube.) Was I lucky? No doubt. Truth is, I would have been happy with a two-putt, which is my goal on anything beyond 30 feet. While the Tour average for three-putting from beyond 30 feet is a mere 3 percent, it's more like 18 percent among recreational golfers—six times as likely!

That stat, which comes from putting studies I've done using PGA Tour ShotLink data, should scare you. Say you face 12 putts of 30 or more feet per round (which is about right for a mid-handicapper). According to three-putt figures in my study, you're coughing up, on average, about two strokes each round on lag putts alone.

I want you to make a lot more putts, so here's my stroke-saving method to get you down in two rolls (or less) from long range, in five simple steps.

HOW TO LAG IT CLOSE

1 Don't try to “make” 30-plus footers. Instead, imagine that the hole is in the center of a circle that's six feet in diameter, and leave your lag inside that circle. This removes the pressure to make it, so you'll putt with more feel and less tension in your hands.

2 Lose your bent-over putting stance. Stand taller and closer to the ball (photo, above left). It's hard to give longer putts the needed oomph when you're in a crouched position.

3 Don't “stroke” it. Hit a “chip-putt.” From longer range, a chipping-type motion gives the shot enough gas. It's easy: Let your arms swing down from your taller stance. (Save your “stroke” for shorter putts.)

4 Spend 15 minutes on the practice green once a week, rolling putts from 40, 50 and 60 feet (common first-putt distances among mid-handicappers). Hit three balls from each length, getting a feel for how big each chip-putt motion should be in order to lag all nine putts within that imaginary circle.

5 Finish your session by attempting the toughest putt you can find on the green—and I mean *tough*. Look for a double- or even triple-breaker stretching from one end of the green to the other. And putt it six times using three balls.

With a little practice, you'll vastly improve your feel on testy lags while also building the confidence to handle any putt the course throws at you.

Oh, and keep the cameras rolling. If you bury one longer than my 210-footer, good on you—but I'll want to see proof.



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» See a list of upcoming 3- and 2-day schools and 1-day clinics at pelzgolf.com.

GLIDE 2.0™

PING
PLAY YOUR BEST™

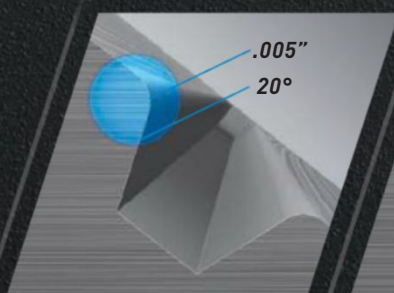
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Our extremely precise wheel-cut milling process creates our sharpest grooves ever. The result: significantly higher spin rates and precise trajectory control so you can play with greater accuracy and confidence. With four sole grinds, there's a Glide 2.0 wedge to fit every golfer.

NEW GROOVES SPIN BALL MORE THAN EVER.

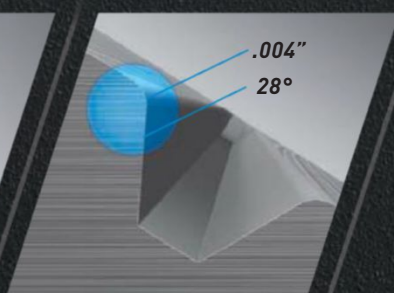


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46°, 50° & 52°

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CUP O' JOE

HARBOR MASTER

April means the RBC Heritage returns to Harbour Town, in Hilton Head. Past champion and noted architect **Greg Norman** told me what he most admired about the revered **Pete Dye** design. "Pete did a phenomenal job of applying the geometry to the architecture," Norman said. "He had these tight corridors and fit in so many great shotmaking opportunities. I learned a lot from Harbour Town."

NICKLAUS IN NAPLES

Last November saw the soft opening of the redesigned course at Florida's historic Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club. **Jack Nicklaus** and **John Sanford** transformed the 88-year-old track into a firmer, faster, longer layout, with more palms and open vistas. Jack said it was a "very special" homecoming. Why? In 1951, the young Bear was 11 when he broke 40 here for nine holes for the first time (he shot a 1-over 37) while playing with his dad, Charlie.

HAPPY TRAIL

The **Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail** celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2017. This Alabama destination is America's original golf trail and its best—with 26 courses at 11 sites. I'm partial to Grand National in Opelika, where **Aaron Baddeley** defends his Barbasol Championship in July. Go all in with the RTJ Trail's Spring Unlimited Special. Rates start at \$132 per person for unlimited golf, cart and range balls, from March 21-May 8. rtjgolf.com

Small Wonder

Scottsdale's renowned Mountain Shadows par-3 course makes a king-sized comeback



The Short Course's dazzling greens will test your short game.

HOT TRACKS

The Short Course at Mountain Shadows Paradise Valley, Ariz.

2,310 yards, par 54
Architect: Jack Snyder (1961); Forrest Richardson (2016)
mountainshadow.com

In its late 1970s heyday, Mountain Shadows Resort was a Phoenix-area icon. Nestled into the base of Camelback Mountain in tony Paradise Valley, on the edge of Scottsdale, Mountain Shadows was one of only 11 resort hotels in the U.S. to earn a Mobil 5-star rating in 1979. Its guestbook featured high-wattage names such as Bob Hope, John Wayne and Sammy Davis, Jr. The

property's par-56 executive course hosted a fun silly-season event that drew PGA Tour winners like Tom Weiskopf, Tom Purtzer and Howard Twitty. In 2004, though, the good times ended, and the hotel was shuttered, with the course closing a few years later.

Fast-forward to today: Mountain Shadows is back.

In February, a brand-new, 183-room boutique resort opened, complete with luxury condos and event space. The best amenity of all? The Short Course, a 2,310-yard, par-54 layout comprised of 18 par-3 holes each measuring 86 to 195 yards from the back tees. Originally a 1961 Jack Snyder creation, it was redesigned by his protégé, Forrest Richardson, who, as an homage to his mentor,

kept most of the routing intact. Yet Richardson made sure to give the layout his own design flourishes in the form of a dazzling array of green complexes. Some mimic classic holes, notably the "Biarritz" fourth hole, the "Punchbowl" 10th, and the "Dell" 14th. Others are Richardson originals.

When you pair the inspired green complexes with views of Camelback Mountain and Mummy Mountain, you're left with two enjoyable hours of desert golf. What's more, the course is walkable and friendly to all skill sets.

The Short Course has already won over new fans, including Tour winner Tony Finau and Arizona Cardinals star Larry Fitzgerald. At history-rich Mountain Shadows, these are the good old days.



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TheCard

Jason Connery

The director of the new golf movie *Tommy's Honour* talks Old Tom, Young Tom—and 007, his dad!

» **We're drinking coffee today—the cups give us away. It's a bit too early for Scotch.**

I like to have a shot of Nespresso in the morning. Boom! And I'm off.

» **You're a Brit. I'm a little surprised you didn't choose tea.**

I like tea in the afternoon. Coffee in the morning, tea in the afternoon and a nice red wine in the evening.

» **Let's talk *Tommy's Honour*, in theaters on April 14. The historical drama centers on the relationship between Old Tom Morris and his son, Young Tom. What made you want to direct it?**

I read *Tommy's Honour*, by Kevin Cook. It's an extraordinary story of young Tommy Morris. But it's not only about golf. Golf is certainly the passion that drives these two men, but it's ostensibly a family drama and a love story.

» **You not only filmed onsite in Scotland, but you also re-created the R&A building and parts of the Old Course, correct?**

We managed to find one of the only bits of land in Fife that hadn't been changed into a golf course. So we built half the R&A from the original plans, real size, and digitally created the other half. And we also created the 18th green and first tee and dug a ditch for the Swilcan Burn at the end.

» **What did you think of your actors' golf swings?**

It was a very, very different time, and a different swing [was required]. Hickory-shafted clubs are really heavy, so they had very

narrow swings. Peter Mullan, who plays Old Tom, and Jack Lowden, who plays Young Tommy, really practiced the authentic swing. Old Tom's swing was very tick-tock, straight-back, straight-through. And Tommy was sort of like a clock spring, coiled up and then unwinding. And [the actors] practiced over and over and over and created their own swings.

» **Did your golf-loving dad, Sean Connery, get you into the game?**

He did, yeah. He gave me a 7-iron with the shaft cut down when I was quite young, and I used to smack that around.

» **Do you still get a chance to tee it up with him occasionally?**

Dad lives on a golf course in the Bahamas, and I still play with him. About six weeks ago, he got a hole-in-one. I've never had a hole-in-one. This was his *fifth*! I mean, *what*? He still loves the game. And I think it's beautiful to see him out there still plugging away.

» **An ace at age 86? That's amazing. Any other memories stand out about your famous father?**
He used to do an annual

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NOW AT GOLF.com



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WITH JASON

Watch a video of Jessica's full, exclusive interview with Jason in GOLF.com's New York City studio, available only at GOLF.com/roundwith



TOUR
CONFIDENTIAL

Jessica leads GOLF and *Sports Illustrated* writers in a lively discussion of the game's biggest stories, every Monday at GOLF.com/tourconfidential

pro-celebrity event in Scotland, alternating between Turnberry and Gleneagles. It was magical just to walk the course with friends, family. It's something that I hopefully brought to the movie. The film has this wonderful relationship between the father and son, and that had a deep emotional impact for me because I feel as though [the golf course] is a place where I've learned to know my dad.





A NEW WAY TO ROLL



THE MICROHINGE INSERT IS OUR GREATEST PUTTER INNOVATION.

The world's best players try to put topspin on their putts to reduce skidding and bounce. The new Microhinge Insert dynamically generates topspin and immediate forward roll regardless of stroke, to help you make more putts.



FORWARD ROLL WITH IMMEDIATE TOPSPIN

A portrait of Tom Hanks, a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, wearing a dark cord jacket over a light blue button-down shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera.

HEROES HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

**Military Caregivers serve
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The Elizabeth Dole Foundation's *Hidden Heroes*
initiative increases support for America's
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Tom Hanks, Hidden Heroes Chair

Performance

CENTER

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CLEAN CONTACT!

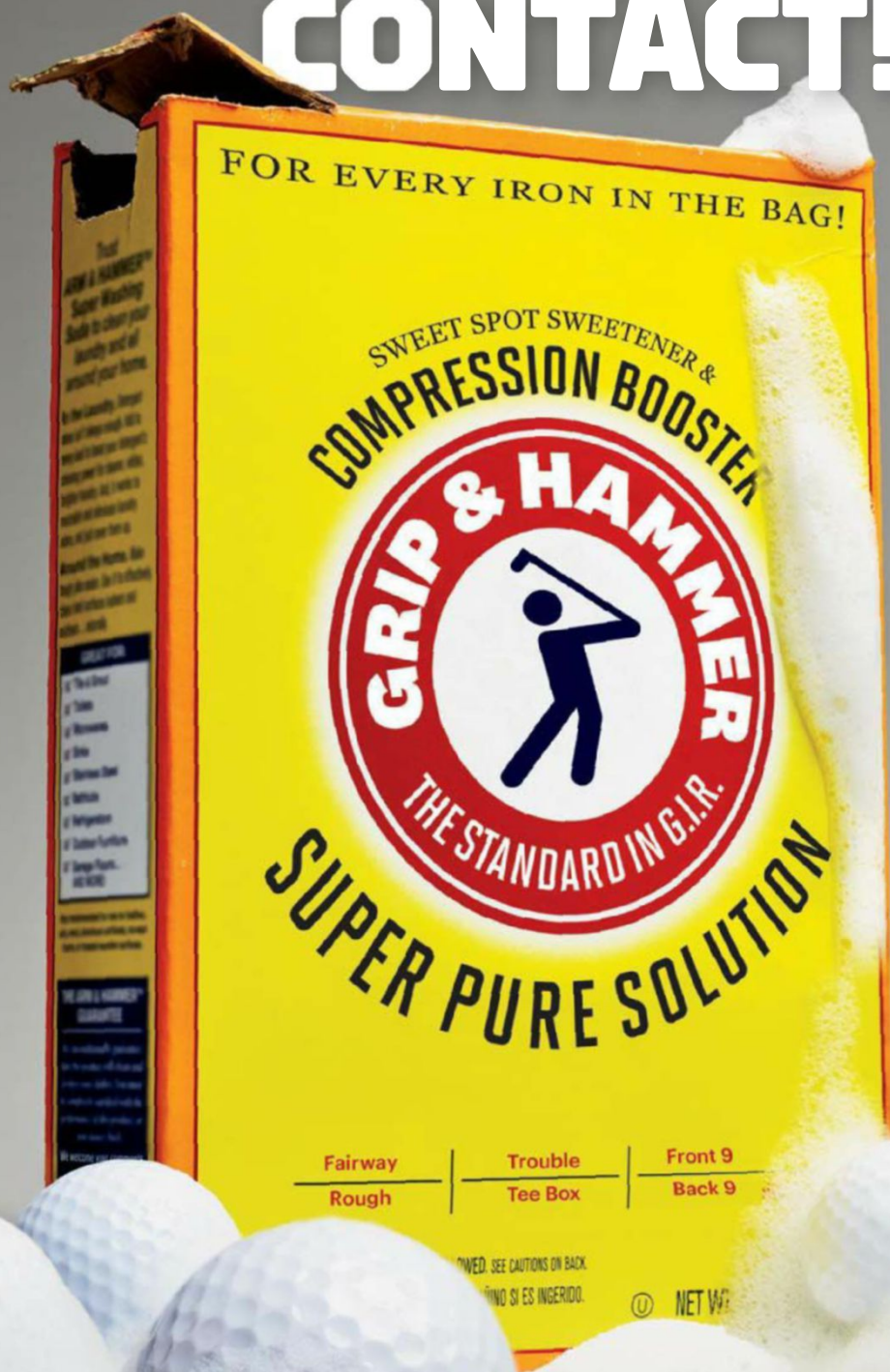
» Catching iron shots off the heel or toe makes it hard to reach greens. So does hitting more turf than Titleist. Messy shots of all kinds cause bogeys (or worse) that stain your scorecard. It may be time to clean up your iron play.

Solid strikes happen when you blend correct ball position with the ideal attack angle. And you don't just see it in your results—you feel the purity of the strike with a crisp, clean *click*.

If pure iron shots are few and far between for you, it's time to scrub your old swing. On the following pages, new **Top 100 Teacher Martin Chuck** shows you how to dial in your posture and attack angle so you can make sweet-spot contact with all your irons. And soon, with some practice, you'll be taking your opponents to the cleaners.

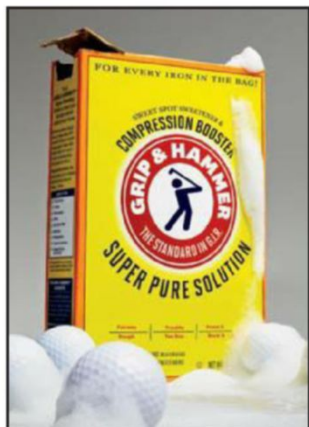
Photo by
DAVID ARKY

Instruction photos by
BEN VAN HOOK



27

Proven Ways to
Shoot Your Best
Scores Ever!



THIS SUD'S FOR YOU!

Your new and improved solution for launching crisp, clean irons—and knocking down the flag

» With today's driver technology, you can miss a little—even a lot—and still find the fairway. Irons aren't as forgiving. Missing the sweet spot usually means missing the green and often finding those pesky bunkers and creeks. At my schools and clinics, catching shots flush is the top priority. It makes the game easier and a whole lot more fun. The trick? It comes down to learning not just how impact takes place in the swing but where and when it occurs. Start with the moves at right. Mastering these simple adjustments will turn messy, imperfect contact into good clean fun.

1

MAKE A DOWNWARD STRIKE ON THE BALL

Most weekend players think the low point of the swing occurs at impact. Not true. This incorrect notion is what often causes thin shots. To really pure it, the club needs to descend into impact—and then keep descending, bottoming out a few inches on the target side of the ball. Use the visual at right to groove the proper feel.

TRY THIS!

At address, picture a clock beneath your feet, with 12 o'clock under your left shoulder, as shown. The curved edges of the clock give you a good visual for the arc that the club continues to travel on through impact. (Yep, your swing traces a circle!) The bigger picture? Position the ball at 12:30 and make sure your swing bottoms out at high noon. It's this "down, through and around" movement of the clubhead through impact that "squeezes" the ball for Tour-caliber contact.



NEVER

2

AIM LOW

To further encourage a downward strike, picture the western hemisphere overlaid on the ball. On mid- and long irons, try at contact to press the sweet spot against a location even with Brazil. On shorter irons, aim even farther south (Chile is lovely this time of year). Just avoid contact above the equator. The top of the world leads to topped shots!

BRAZIL

CHILE

LONG IRONS

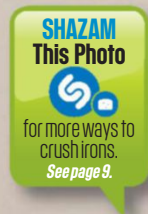
SHORT IRONS & WEDGES

3

HOVER THE CLUB

Correctly swinging down and through the ball requires your arms to fully extend at impact—tough to do if you're hunched over at address (left, top). Stand more erect with your arms hanging loose (left, bottom), and get tall enough so that the sole of the club hovers slightly above the turf. Imagine that the sole rests on the back of a ladybug that's crawled up behind the ball. This easy setup change hammers home a big key: Though the club has reached the ball, it still has to keep moving downward.

Squash the ball, not the bug.



NO!

YES!

Jason Day

1

YOUR NOSE KNOWS

The clubhead has fully released, the ball is on its way and Day's chest is almost facing the target—but his nose still points toward the ground. Great ballstrikers keep their head down and in the same place through impact. A steady head creates a powerful rotation—and shots that rocket off the clubface.



2

GET YOUR RIGHTS UNDER YOUR LEFTS

The key to consistency is delivering the club on the ideal plane—and staying on that plane after the strike. Jason does this beautifully. Notice how his right shoulder and right arm are lower than their left-side counterparts, and how his left biceps is pinned tight against his chest. Nail these positions and the ball can't help but find the target.

3

GET A GRIP AND LET 'ER RIP

If you seek accuracy, copy Day's neutral grip (with the Vs pointing at the chin) and simply return it to neutral at impact. Use your right index finger as a guide—point it in the same direction both at setup and as you strike the ball. Want more power? Be like Jason and "lead" your downswing with your lower body, opening your hips more than your shoulders.

ATTACK THE FLAG

Despite nagging injuries, Jason Day has held the No. 1 ranking for a year, thanks in part to an unparalleled iron game. Steal his three easy moves—and launch pin-seeking approach shots!

By Top 100 Teacher **Mike Perpich**,
RiverPines Golf, Johns Creek, Ga.

Photograph by **MATT YORK/AP PHOTO**

16.6

The number of birdies Day averaged per event in 2016 (second only to Dustin Johnson)

30-SECOND FIX

MORE POP, LESS POP-UP

Tee it higher and turn your weak, ballooning drives into fairway-seeking missiles

1



CHECK YOUR TEE

Tee it up normally. If a mere sliver of the ball sits above the driver's crown, you're inviting a downward strike (photo, top right). That's good for irons, but it causes pop-ups with driver.



Teeing the ball too low invites a downward strike. With driver, hitting down is the fast track to hitting a pop-up.

2



SHOW SOME PEG

Now tee the ball higher, with about three-quarters of it above the crown. When the ball is elevated, you're compelled to swing up on it through impact. This ascending blow eliminates pop-ups and creates a much-improved launch angle.



It may feel strange at first, but teeing the ball extra-high will force you to correctly hit up on the ball and banish pop-ups for good.

3

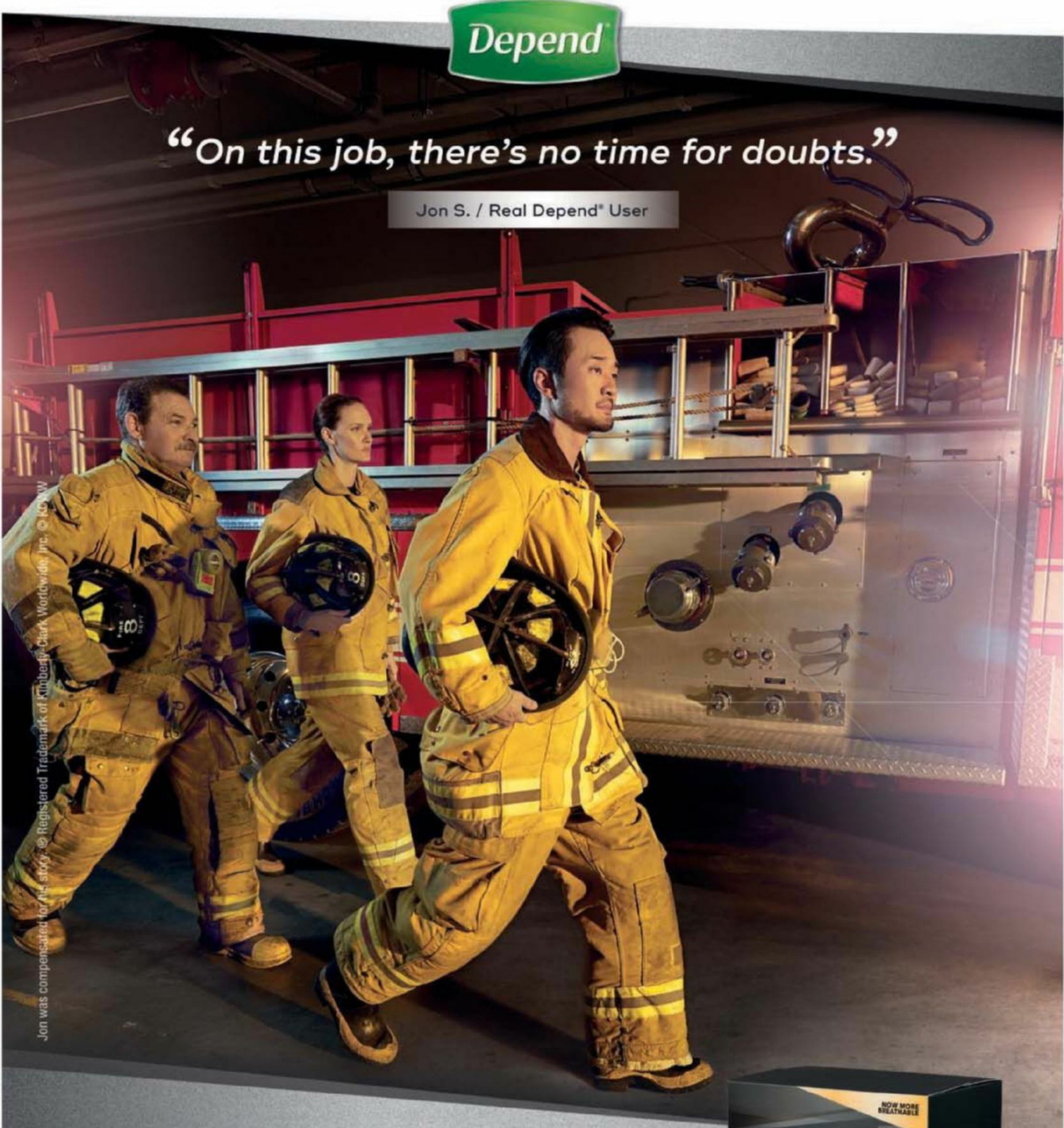


SWING FOR THE SKY

Hit a few drives with the ball teed up high. Let the clubhead ascend into impact. Do it right, and you'll feel as though the club is high over your left shoulder in your finish. Pair this move with a full turn, back and through, and it's bombs away!

Ascend through impact into a high finish to nix pop-ups for good.





Depend

“On this job, there’s no time for doubts.”

Jon S. / Real Depend® User

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EXCLUSIVE TEST!

TIP THE SCALES

Add 10 yards to every iron by switching to a heavier or lighter shaft. Too good to be true? Nope—we proved it!

» Odds are, you've tinkered with your driver shafts to help squeeze every last yard out of your swing, while paying little attention to your iron shafts. Big mistake. You hit more iron shots than drives in a typical round—that alone should motivate you to soup-up your sticks. And get this: In some cases, nailing your iron-shaft specs can make you a full club longer, from your wedge on up. But don't just take our word for it—to determine your ideal shaft weight, listen to 10 golfers who went to fitting expert Club Champion for a test. Is lighter mightier, or is heavier steadier? Find the answer below.

TEST SHAFT WEIGHT

HOW WE DID IT Ten golfers, with handicaps ranging from 2 to 18, took five swings each with 6-irons built to three shaft weights (85, 95 and 105 grams) in two flexes (regular and stiff). Test subjects used the same iron-head model and the same shaft model throughout the test.

THE RESULTS Check the chart below. All shots hit with each of the 6-irons counted in the final averages.

Shaft Weight (grams)	Head Speed (mph)	Ball Speed (mph)	Launch Angle (deg.)	Spin Rate (rpm)	Carry Distance (yards)	Total Distance (yards)	Dispersion Std. Dev. (feet)
85grams	84.5	116.3	16.3	5,229	166.8	179.0	27.0
95grams	84.2	115.7	16.3	5,182	165.5	177.9	22.2
105grams	84.1	117.1	16.1	5,094	168.3	180.9	18.4

Find a Club Champion fitting center near you at clubchampiongolf.com.

Shaft weight is a critical but overlooked characteristic in irons.

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU

1. Lighter shaft weight doesn't equal faster speeds.

The average swing speed, ball speed and distance numbers are pretty similar, regardless of weight (or flex).

2. The right weight can mean an extra club in distance.

There's an average of 9.2 yards in total distance (not shown) between the "best" and "worst" shafts. Test subjects in the 15- to 18-handicap range saw a bigger difference (11.4 yards), compared with 7.0 yards for players with 2- to 5-handicaps.

3. Shaft weight has a big impact on consistency.

No surprise—players are more accurate with shafts that suit them. The standard deviation (how far off line shots go) between the "best" and "worst" shafts is 20.2 feet. Higher-handicappers had a higher spread (20.8 feet) than single-digit guys (19.6 feet).

4. No one weight fits all. Three of our 10 testers saw their best combination of distance and dispersion with the 85-gram shaft; three guys had optimal results swinging the 95-gram shaft; and four testers benefited the most from the 105-gram shaft.

—Rob Sauerhaft

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Performance

GET UP AND DOWN

CHIP WITH YOUR 3-WOOD

How to turn this big-hitting club into a big-time weapon around the greens

» The ball is sitting in greenside rough, and you need a short stroke that produces enough loft to pop the ball out of the junk and onto the green. A lob wedge would have to be hit perfectly—you could easily skull it over the green or “fluff” it and leave your ball in the spinach. My advice? Use your 3-wood. At anywhere from 11 to 15 degrees of loft, a standard 3-wood provides enough launch to safely get the ball out of deep grass. And with about a foot more shaft length than a lob wedge, a wood lets you generate the force you need with a simple flick of the wrists. Here’s how.

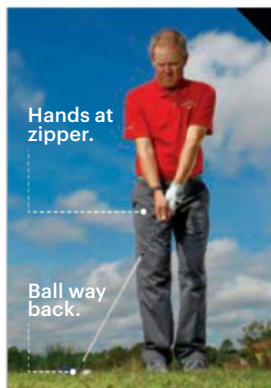


SHAZAM
This Photo



for another easy way to chip it close. See page 9.

ANGUS MURRAY (3)



Hands at zipper.

Ball way back.

Set the ball 18 inches behind your right foot. Keep your feet together and your hands in front of your zipper. Choke down as needed.

Simply hinge the club up with your wrists (right), then return the club to the ball (top). That’s it! Now grab your putter.



Hinge, then drop. Done.

Scott Munroe, Boca Raton Resort & Club, Boca Raton, Fla.



GET CLOSER*

We Moved the Weight to Help You

to the Hole <<<



Introducing the New RTX-3

*The new Cleveland Golf RTX-3 wedge features patent-pending Feel Balancing Technology. Our research showed a traditional wedge's center of gravity was too close to the heel. Feel Balancing Technology redistributes 9 grams of mass from the hosel to shift the CG location closer to the impact zone. Not only does this technology improve feel, but it also has been proven to help get you closer to the hole than any wedge we have ever made. See our proof at clevelandgolf.com/RTX3.

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FINISH IN STYLE

Save your best for Harbour Town's iconic 18th

» Great finishing holes, such as the 472-yard par 4 at Harbour Town, site of this month's RBC Heritage, are designed to create lasting memories. They're also meant to mess up your scorecard. Typically, iconic holes are *hard*. This one surrendered birdie at a 6 percent clip last year, making it the Tour's 10th-toughest par 4 in 2016. That's no surprise, what with a 200-yard-plus approach to a mattress-sized green with nothing but Calibogue Sound to the left. Here's how to tame tough closers and walk to the clubhouse a winner.

2

MIND YOUR MISS

Because the approach on No. 18 demands a full carry over the sound, missing short and left means hitting your next shot from basically the same spot after the penalty drop. So unless your swing is dialed in, move your target a good 10 yards away from the trouble. Here, aiming toward the bail-out area short and right of the green still gives you a shot at par.

1

PICK A POINT

Pete Dye designed a nice, wide fairway on 18—so try to find it. How? Select a precise landing spot. Weekend golfers typically target the “middle” on wide holes, but it's better to be specific with your aim, just as you are on narrow holes. This way, if you “miss” your spot, you might still find the short grass. Here, the lighthouse is your line.

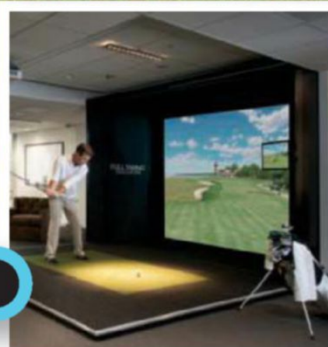
PLAY THIS HOLE—AND HUNDREDS OF OTHERS—WHenever you want! VISIT FULLSWINGGOLF.COM/GOLFMAG

3

ROLL IT ON

The mounded area right of the green will test your wedge play—uneven lies abound. Solution? Putt with your hybrid. It's even easier here because you don't have to putt to an elevated green. Treat the fairway grass like it's part of the green and apply the same stroke you'd use for a regular putt from the same distance. Tough hole—easy par.

HARBOUR TOWN #18



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FULL SWING™
SIMULATORS

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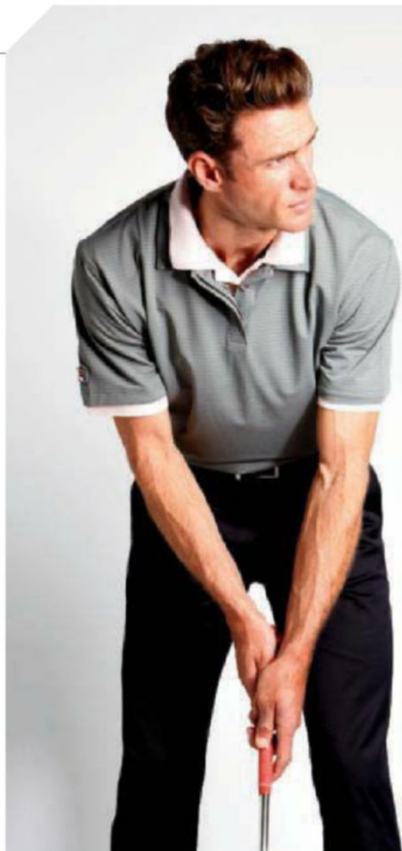
S2 SERIES
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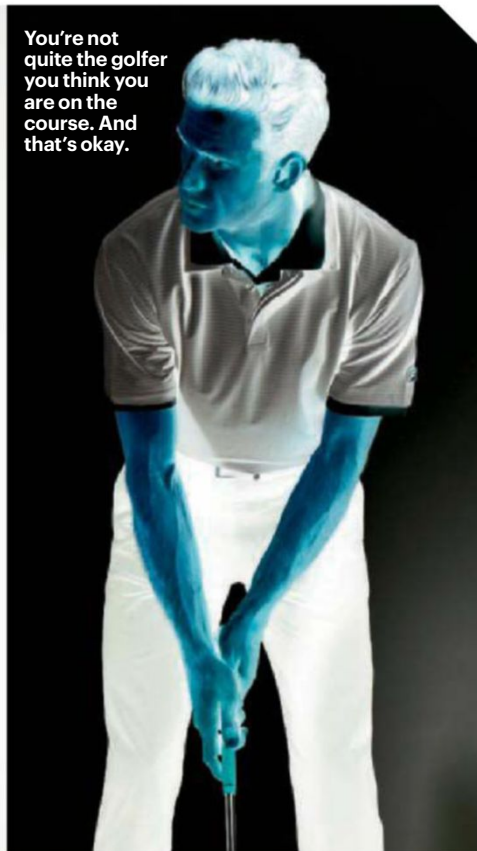


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You're not quite the golfer you think you are on the course. And that's okay.



REALITY BITES

You can hit good shots—even great ones, at times. But you may not have the *capacity* to pull them off in competition. Here's how to go low with the swing you bring to the course.

» They're often used synonymously, but **capability** and **capacity** are two very different things. Jason Day, for example, has the *capability* to hit 330-yard drives. His *capacity* to unleash a bomb on a given tee box, however, is limited, given external factors that affect on-course performance—an aching back, wind, a swing that's just “off” that day. Elite golfers understand that it's rare to be firing on all cylinders. Usually, they

operate at about 80 percent of max capability (if Day has 40 shots in his short-game arsenal, he realistically can pull off about 32 in tourney conditions). What makes it look like they're humming along is their focus on

what they have, not on what's missing. You? Weekend players tend to fight this discrepancy, attempting shots and swings that live in the gap between what's possible and what's possible *right now*. You attempt Mickelson-style flops because you pulled one off two seasons ago. You try to carry a fairway bunker because you *used to* drive it 250 yards. Playing “capable golf” instead of “capacity golf” is costing you strokes.

My advice: Compete with the swing you brought to the course, not the swing you dream about. If you're catching shots off the toe, so be it—adjust your aim to accommodate the toe strike, and pull an extra club to cover the loss in distance. Save the swing fixes for your next practice session. It's the rare golfer who can tinker and win at the same time.



Sports psychologist **Bhrett McCabe, Ph.D.** is based in Birmingham, Ala. His new book, *The Mindside Manifesto*, is available at amazon.com and themindside.com.

DRINK UP!

SMOOTHIE MOVE

The lure of a big breakfast is strong, but try swinging your best with a belly full of biscuits. Instead, opt for a pre-round smoothie. With the right ingredients, these chilly pick-me-ups provide the energy and nutrients to help you go low. Here's one of our favorites, courtesy of University of Alabama dietitian Amy Bragg.



2 frozen bananas

3 tbsp. PB2
(peanut flour)

1/2 - 2/3 cup vanilla
Greek yogurt

2 tsp. honey

Pinch of
cocoa powder

1/2 cup water
(add ice if needed)



ROUGH CUTS

How to get out of jail—and salvage par—from the thick stuff

» Playing bomb-and-gouge golf is a lot of fun when you're hitting fairways. It's less enjoyable when your drives keep finding heavy rough. A rule of thumb from the thick stuff: If about 30 percent or more of the ball is hidden, don't go for the green—just get it back into play. The odds of muscling a ball from deep rough all the way to the green are as slim as a blade of grass. So don't gouge it. Splash it, much as you would from a greenside bunker. Here's how, in three easy steps.

1. Any wedge will do, but avoid going longer than an 8-iron.
2. Set up square to your target, open the face a few degrees, and make a three-quarter backswing.
3. Slam the club into the rough an inch or two behind the ball. Really pound that grass! With enough swing speed, there's no patch of cabbage thick enough to stop you from getting the ball back in play. You made the smart move. Now, go save your par.

Make a bunker-type swing to liberate your ball from deep rough.

Kevin Kirk, The Woodlands C.C., The Woodlands, Texas

Why Do My Putts Jump Off Line?

Find out with this self-test—and be your own guru!

1 Is it my impact?

If the putterface comes into the ball too steeply or with too much upswing, the putt will "jump." The problem could be your stance or your ball position.



HOW TO CHECK

Drop a quarter on the practice green. (You can also use your kitchen floor). Now putt the coin. Did you miss it or gouge the green (or floor) behind it?



FIX NO. 1

Your weight isn't centered. Take your putting stance, with the shaft straight up and down and your weight spread evenly over both feet. Position the ball directly under your nose. This is your new setup!

2 Is it my putterface?

Striking the ball with the face rotated open usually causes the putt to hop off line. You're either "blocking" the putt or failing to release the putterhead.



HOW TO CHECK

Set two balls next to each other on the green. Take a stroke, putting both balls at once. Did the ball nearest the heel travel farther than the one near the toe?



FIX NO. 2

The putterface is open. Keep at the above drill, exaggerating the feel of "closing" the face. Your goal: Get the ball that's closer to the toe to travel farther than the one off the heel.

3 Is it my stroke path?

Cutting across the ball is a big no-no. The culprit? Open shoulders at address. If you can't set up square, you'll never get the ball to roll smoothly end-over-end.

HOW TO CHECK

Address a straight putt, then lay your putter across your shoulders. Look where the shaft is aimed. Is it pointing way left of the cup?



FIX NO. 3

Your stance is open. To fix it, tuck your right elbow against your side and move your right hand slightly under the grip. Now you're square—and ready to jump all over the competition.

FOUR EASY PIECES

POINT AND SHOOT

This simple drill gives you perfect ball position for pure strikes with every club

START

Crisp strikes are easy when you play the ball in the right spot and tilt your upper body the correct amount. It all starts with a "golf clap."



1

CLAP YOUR HANDS

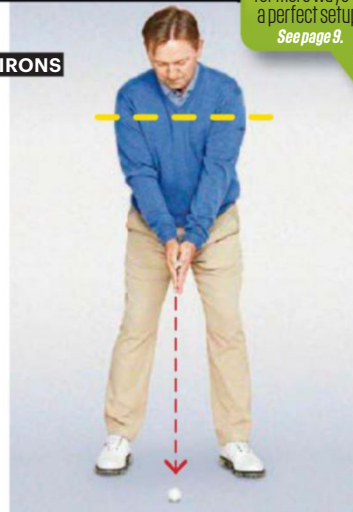
Get into your regular, full-swing address position, but without a club. Let your arms dangle at your sides, then bring your hands together in a clapping motion, with your palms facing each other and your fingers pointing toward the ground.

2

IRONS

GET TO THE POINT

Notice where on the ground your fingers are pointing. This is the spot on which you should position the ball on most iron shots. With your hands properly centered, your shoulders will be even. Perfect.



SHAZAM
This Photo



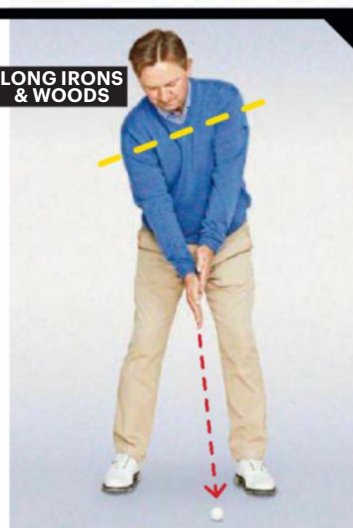
for more ways to a perfect setup.
See page 9.

3

LONG IRONS & WOODS

ADD TILT

Slide your right hand down your left hand a few inches. As you do, let your right shoulder drop to create some upper-body tilt to the right. Position the ball wherever your right-hand fingers point on the ground. You're now set to rip long irons and woods.



4

DRIVER

ADD MORE

Drop your right shoulder until the base of your right thumb is even with your left-hand fingertips. Play the ball where your right-hand fingers point when hitting driver. Swing (maintaining that tilt), and prepare for more clapping—from your buddies.





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4 Nelson children. Good

thing we started doing

the math long before

2017.

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Studies show that your subconscious mind can make smart swing decisions. In fact, the less you think, the better your results will be.

SUB HERO

Harness your subconscious mind and launch thought-free shots

» Ben Hogan once said, “The downswing is no place to give yourself a lesson.” Coming from the game’s ultimate perfectionist, the sentiment speaks volumes about the perils of overthinking your motion.

The scientific community concurs: When you swing, you don’t need to think much at all. Researchers at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig, Germany, conducted a series of studies that examined brain activity before and at the point of physical responses. The research team proved that many actions—sweeping the floor,

perhaps, or swinging a club—happen automatically as a result of subconscious brain activity. The conscious mind is not involved or needed. What’s more, according to research-team leader John-Dylan Thomas, Ph.D., the mind *subconsciously* commits to a plan of action as early as seven seconds before executing it. “By the time consciousness kicks in,” Thomas writes, “most of the decision-making has already been done.”

Jedi mind tricks? Hardly. Your conscious mind is like a hard drive that contains your thoughts, memories and

impressions, and your subconscious is like the cloud. The cloud is much more expansive, containing all the instincts and muscle memory required to assess a shot and make a good swing. You need only tap into it. Unfortunately, your conscious mind often interferes—that’s the downswing danger Hogan warned about. This happens when you lose the commitment you made in your subconscious.

To access the shotmaking power of your subconscious, try the technique at right. Because fewer thoughts leads to fewer strokes.

GO BLANK, GO LOW

» Stand behind the ball in your preshot routine and gather intel about the upcoming shot. As you do, use your club to draw an imaginary line on the ground between you and the ball. This is the C-line, for the commitment you’ll make to the shot.

Once fully committed (“baby cut to the center of the green,” for example), step over the C-line and address the ball. If a conscious thought arises (“open the face”), retreat behind the C-line, start over and recommit. It should take two crossings max to swing freely, without a single, distracting thought.

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THE 2017 MASTERS

APRIL 6-9, 2017



As golfers, our relationship to the Masters is like a great, long-term romance—at once familiar and filled with passion. This year marks the 81st go-round at Augusta. We all know every mound, every blade of grass by heart, yet the place still quickens the pulse. (That it keeps itself in perfect shape sure doesn't hurt.) The freshness, of course, comes from never knowing how it will play out. No wonder we're still crazy about the Masters after all these years.

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100 2037 VISION

You won't believe who'll be hitting the honorary Masters tee shots 20 years from now



:: THE MASTERS 2017 ::



DEAD AT AUGUSTA

Abandon all hope, ye who hit it here...or here...or there! Tom Weiskopf reveals the spots where green-jacket dreams die.

As told to Joe Passov

He never donned the iconic blazer. But with four runner-up finishes—including one at the 1975 shootout with Jack Nicklaus and Johnny Miller—Tom Weiskopf knows where to hit it (and *not* to hit it) at Augusta National. Considering his success as an architect and his decade in the Masters broadcast booth, who better to explain the National's most dangerous, card-killing realms? "There's trouble everywhere at Augusta," Weiskopf says, "and I've found myself in most of these situations over the years." Excluding the obvious hazards (water, O.B., Butler Cabin), here are six no-go spots. Be afraid, players. Be very afraid.

MILLER/DOWN (3) WEISKOPF: KOJIRO KINOSHITA



Spot No. 1

NO. 8, PAR 5 LEFT TREES

TOM'S TAKE: "Now *there* is a major no-no. If you've overcooked your second shot going for the green, you'll face a 10- to 25-yard shot from the trees, with tall mounds between you and the target. You can't see the flagstick, and you might be hitting off pine straw, with a restricted backswing, and you'll have to play a bump-and-run. You have to hit it pretty hard to get it up and over the mounds, but it's so *hard* to control the ball coming down those severe slopes. You're better off in the ninth fairway than you are anywhere to the left."

DEAD MAN WALKING: In 1999, Brandel Chamblee reached the eighth hole on Saturday just two shots off the lead. After what he called a "smoked" tee shot, his second shot, from 250 yards, "darted left into the Georgia pines," leaving him stymied. He was still in jail after another swipe. Eventually, he penciled in a double-bogey 7. As Chamblee put it, "From Masters champ to Masters chump in 550 yards."

Degree of Difficulty:





SPOT NO. 2

NO. 9, PAR 4 **SHORT OF THE GREEN**

TOM'S TAKE: "The target sits well above you, so it's tough to judge the chip or pitch. The challenge, particularly to a front pin placement, is to keep it beneath the hole, otherwise you'll face a downhill putt with a lot of break. If you don't pull it off, your next shot could roll off and be right back in the same situation. If the course is dry and fast, I've seen it roll 50 yards back, almost to the fairway's crosswalk."

DEAD MAN WALKING: Greg Norman started the final round of the 1996 Masters with a six-shot lead over Nick Faldo. He tried to muscle a wedge onto the ninth green, but it spun off the putting surface and rolled some 30 yards back toward him in the fairway. Norman failed to get up and down, and his third bogey of the day cut his advantage to two. By the 12th hole, his lead was gone for good.

Degree of Difficulty:    



Spot #3

NO. 10, PAR 4, **RIGHT SIDE OF THE FAIRWAY**

TOM'S TAKE: "These days, a drive will only stay up there in wet conditions. You're confronted with a 175- to 225-yard shot with a downhill, sidehill, right-to-left lie, playing to one of the smallest greens on the course. It's an awkward lie, one that you don't ever practice. It's just a terrible situation. You're going to wind up left of the green or in the bunker on the right. You don't see many great shots from the right half of the fairway."

DEAD MAN WALKING: On the first shot of his 1989 playoff with Scott Hoch, and in damp conditions, Nick Faldo popped up a drive that hung up on the hill, leaving him 205 yards to the green. His approach found the right bunker and led to a bogey 5. He handed his putter and card to his caddie, assuming he'd lost—and he should have. But Hoch blew a two-footer to win, and Faldo was back from the dead. His 25-foot birdie putt on the next hole gave him the first of his three Masters triumphs.

Degree of Difficulty:    



:: THE MASTERS 2017 ::



SPOT NO. 4

NO. 13, PAR 5 BACK PORTION OF THE GREEN

TOM'S TAKE: "Putting down to a front hole location from the back of 13 is one of the scariest strokes at Augusta, because there's so much slope and break—and there's always that pressure that you might putt it into the water. You really have to look at the read and just think about where you need to leave the first putt to give yourself the best chance of making the next putt. If you miss your line, just by a little, *oh my gosh*."

DEAD MAN WALKING: Tiger Woods reached his fourth hole of the 2005 Masters at 1-over par, after starting on the back nine in the weather-ravaged first round. His approach found the back of the 13th green, leaving Woods a 70-foot eagle try. Seconds later, Tiger was begging for his ball to stop as the putt neared the hole. It didn't. Amid gasps from the fans, the ball trickled down the slope and into Rae's Creek. He replaced the ball, added a penalty stroke and two-putted from the same spot for a 6—but eventually rallied to win his fourth green jacket.

Degree of Difficulty:



SPOT NO. 6

NO. 17, PAR 4 LEFT OF THE FAIRWAY



SPOT NO. 5

NO. 14, PAR 4 SHORT-RIGHT OF THE GREEN

TOM'S TAKE: "It's the course's largest false-fronted green: four feet up from the front of the green to the top of the slope. You have to hit it hard enough to make that transition, but once the ball reaches the crown, it won't stop quickly. To certain pin placements, such as front-right and back-left, you can't get closer than five feet—unless you hit the pin."

DEAD MAN WALKING: Reaching 4-under on the day, Rory Sabbatini had taken the lead Sunday in 2007 when he pulled his drive on No. 14 into the left trees. His recovery shot stopped short and right of the green. Sabbatini was short-sided. He pitched it too far and made a mojo-killing bogey. (Zach Johnson birdied the 14th on his way to victory.)

Degree of Difficulty:



TOM'S TAKE: "Not a good situation. Nine times out of 10, you won't have a clear shot. You'll have to play something very low underneath tree limbs. There's only a narrow opening to try to roll your ball onto that green. I've seen more bogeys from the left trees at 17 than I have from way right."

DEAD MAN WALKING: In 2007's third round, Stuart Appleby was leading by four strokes when he yanked his tee shot on No. 17 way left, into a bunker on No. 7. He thinned his 9-iron recovery and found a collection of pine cones on No. 17's left side. After two more shots and a three-putt, a triple-bogey brought him back to the pack.

Degree of Difficulty:





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Feels Like the **First Time**

The nine most likely to make a major breakthrough By Sean Zak

The last five major events all crowned first-time major champs, a trend that could continue this month. A lot of talented pros are poised (or overdue) for a big breakthrough. Here are nine guys to watch.

Rickie Fowler

Outside of an ugly Thursday back nine last year (44), Fowler has always played well at Augusta. The 28-year-old had made the cut in his prior five Masters, with top-15 finishes in 2014 and '15. Let's call last year an aberration. Rickie's calm disposition and solid all-around game should once again bode well.



Matt Kuchar

Kooch's plodding style isn't flashy, but it keeps him out of trouble, and Augusta is famous for turning bogeys into triples. At 38, the Florida native knows his way around the National, finishing in the top 8 from 2012 through '14, and making the cut seven straight years (although he hasn't won on Tour since 2014).



Thomas Pieters

Though the new Belgian Bomber (Nicolas Colsaerts, anyone?) is a Masters rookie, he's also a proven performer in new settings. A three-time winner in Europe, Pieters, 25, finished just one spot off the podium at the Rio Olympics, and he went on to win four points as a Ryder Cup rookie at Hazeltine National.



Sergio Garcia

The Spaniard has spent eons among the "best players never to win a major." Now 37, he refuses to fade away. Serge missed just two cuts worldwide in 2016 and showed he still has title-winning chops by going wire-to-wire to capture the '17 Dubai Desert Classic.



Hideki Matsuyama

The Japanese star has found another gear. A torrid early-season stretch saw Matsuyama, 25, win four times (and finish second twice) in six starts, before winning his second straight Waste Management Phoenix Open. A merely above-average putting week might win the jacket.



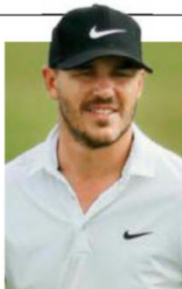
Justin Thomas

In January, moments after breaking the Tour's 72-hole scoring record at the Sony Open, Thomas, 23, let the world know where his mind was: "I'm so excited for the Masters." Can you blame him? He'd just swept the two Hawaii events, and in hugely impressive fashion.



Brooks Koepka

Koepka's length vaulted him into the world's top-15. Like his fellow young bombers, the 26-year-old can reach every Augusta par 5 in two, which helped him make the cut in his first two Masters starts. That power should put him in the mix—if he can also summon the finesse the course demands.



Alex Norén

The Masters should reveal if Norén belongs among the game's elite. The 34-year-old Swede won four times on the Euro Tour in 2016, doubling his career total, vaulting him into the top 10 in the world and earning him his first Masters invite. Still, he failed to crack the top 40 in his two major starts in 2016.



Lee Westwood

One forgets that amid Jordan Spieth's collapse and Danny Willett's charge, Lee Westwood tied for second in 2016. The 43-year-old still has plenty of game for Augusta, as evidenced by top-10s in five of the last seven Masters—not to mention his dramatic eagle on 15 in last year's final round.



FOWLER: GARCIA: NORÉN: WESTWOOD: ANDREW REDINGTON/GETTY IMAGES; KUCHAR: KOHJIRO KINNO/ISI; PIETERS: STUART FRANKLIN/GETTY IMAGES; MATSUYAMA: SAM GREENWOOD/GETTY IMAGES; THOMAS: SEANNI HAFVEY/GETTY IMAGES; KOEPKA: CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES

PREMIUM CLUB FITTING = INSTANT SUCCESS.

Golf Digest finds 8 out of 9 golfers added as much as 21 yards off the tee.

By Leonard Finkel

With advances in club technology, most golfers could easily hit the ball farther and more accurately, yet a *Golf Magazine* study found that 90% of U.S. golfers may be playing with improperly fit clubs. Says world-renowned instructor David Leadbetter, “It never ceases to amaze me that golfers buy clubs off the shelf and assume they’re right for them. Whether you’re a great golfer or a casual one, getting a custom club fitting is one of the quickest ways to improve your game.”

Club Champion delivers a Tour-quality fitting that produces longer, more accurate shots with a nearly 100% satisfaction rate. Their approach is unbiased; no specific vendor is promoted. The only goal – find the best combination of components to lower your scores. Leadbetter adds, “Club Champion is the #1 premium club fitter, builder and retailer of the best brands in golf. Their master fitters and builders are unrivaled experts. With over 35,000 combinations, Club Champion will build the perfect clubs for you.” A *Golf Digest* study found that 8 out of 9 Club Champion custom fit golfers lowered their scores by as much as six strokes per round and added as many as 21 yards off the tee.

Ranked by *Golf Digest* among the 100 best club fitters four times in a row, Club Champion’s unique coupling system allows them to combine any head and shaft together. Golfers hit the precise combination to be custom-built for them. Most stores use fitting carts provided by club manufacturers. While they offer options, golfers are unable to mix-and-match across carts to determine their ideal combinations. Club Champion offers hundreds of

Whether you’re a great golfer or a casual one, getting a custom club fitting is one of the quickest ways to improve your game.

– David Leadbetter, World-Renowned Instructor

shafts, many not available through most other fitters and retailers.

Frank D’Angelo (Malvern, PA) reveals, “I was a 12 index before I went to Club Champion and I’ve shaved about six shots off my handicap. It’s a premium store and you get premium service.”

Numerous PGA Tour players have been fit at Club Champion. Because of their unparalleled expertise, PXG Golf sends many of their Tour players into Club Champion studios to fit their premium clubs.

Club Champion stands out because they build clubs in-house to exacting, unrivaled tolerances. Variables such as swing weight, length, lie and flex DO alter performance. PGA Tour veteran Jay Williamson says, “I had access to every brand of shaft and head, but never understood what they did for me. I couldn’t experiment like I do at Club Champion. They bring the same level of service players receive on Tour; the newest components and most advanced fitting technology. If you’re committed to golf on any level, I highly recommend it.” Incidentally, Club Champion added an average of 15 yards to Jay’s driving statistics.

The experience and know-how combining these intricate parts together is what separates Club Champion from its competition. Chuck

Thiry (VP Strategic Partnerships – Cleveland Golf) says, “In our experience, Club Champion represents the finest in the art of club fitting and building. We are confident that Club Champion will fit, service and support the most discerning golfers at the highest possible levels.”

While anyone will benefit from premium club fitting, it’s for the golfer who wants to optimize performance. When Club Champion says you’ll add 20 yards off the tee, they mean it. Using a TaylorMade driver and Callaway irons, Gary Lichenstien said, “My distance off the tees has increased by 20 yards consistently, on occasion even more. My average score has dropped about 4-5 strokes on average. I feel, over time, I can still pick up a few more strokes.”

Whether you’re looking to buy new clubs or just fix your current set, premium club fitting is the answer. Fittings range from \$80 for wedges to \$350 for an entire bag and they have 20 studios across the country. At Club Champion, you don’t just buy clubs, you buy guaranteed improvement! For more information, visit clubchampiongolf.com/golf or call 888-337-6038.





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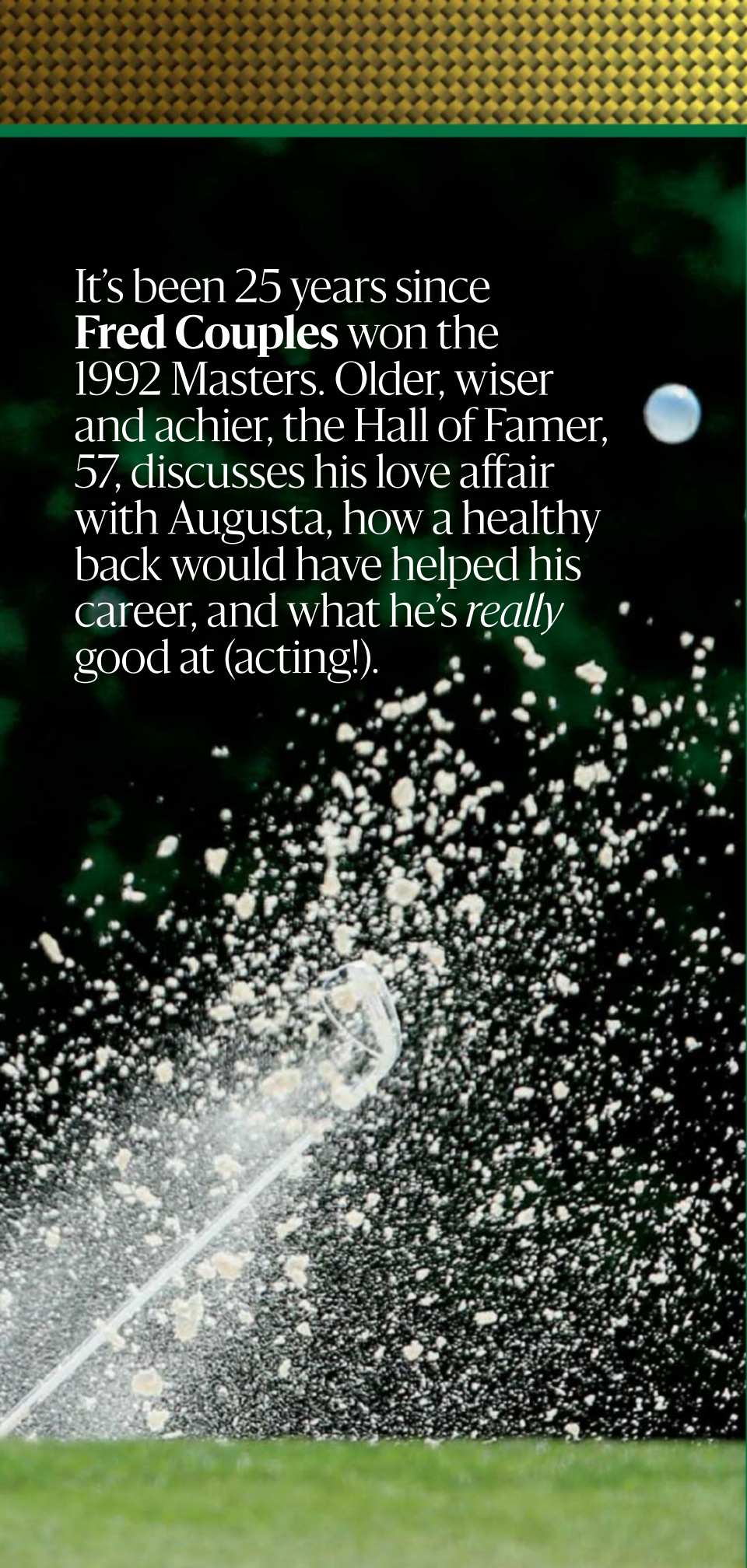
Freddie Digs Deep

Interview by Jessica Marksby

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES

Couples,
at the 2015
Masters. He
made the cut
at Augusta an
amazing 23
years in a
row, from
1985-2007.





It's been 25 years since **Fred Couples** won the 1992 Masters. Older, wiser and achier, the Hall of Famer, 57, discusses his love affair with Augusta, how a healthy back would have helped his career, and what he's *really* good at (acting!).

LET'S START WITH THE 1992 Masters. You led by three at the par-3 12th on Sunday. Your tee shot landed short of the green, halfway up the bank, started rolling toward Rae's Creek—then stopped.

You saved par and went on to win. Was that the biggest break of your career?

Yeah, pretty much. It was just huge. Because in my mind, all I had to do was hit the green, two-putt and get out of there. And when you're playing really well, you assume you'll hit a good shot. You can miss on a lot of holes [at Augusta], but not on the 12th. Anything can happen because it's such a touchy shot.

How did you celebrate that night?

I went to a dinner at the club, put on a member's green jacket, and then went home to the house where I was staying. My teacher and his wife were there, and some friends. My caddie came over with a couple of people, and my manager was there with his wife. So we probably had 10 or 12 people. We stayed up till 3:00 in the morning. It was a lot of, "Can you believe this? Can you believe you won?"

Of the four majors, was the green jacket the one you wanted most?

Because I won, that's the right thing to say. But I always wanted to win [the Masters] or the U.S. Open. As a player, you know your limits. I felt Augusta was the course I'd really get to know over time and could win, whereas the U.S. Open would take a great, great Sunday of hitting fairways, of keeping out of that big, thick rough. Augusta seemed easier for me. I always felt I should win there.

You came close again in 2006, at age 46, before finishing three behind Phil Mickelson. Was that year even more nerve-wracking than 1992?

That Sunday in '06 is about the best I ever played—I just didn't putt very well. But tee to green, I played



phenomenal. And as we know, it's a great course for Phil. And we battled and battled and battled, but he got the better end of it. But I think I was *more* nervous [the year I finished a stroke behind Mark O'Meara] in 1998. In those two years, I hit some really good shots. A couple of [loose] shots kept me from beating Mark and Phil. But that's life. You do your best. If someone says, "Should you have won at Augusta again?" My answer is, "Yeah, but I didn't."

You're 57. How have you played so well at the Masters long into your 50s?



Couples holes out from the bunker at Augusta (top). In 1992, (right) the jacket looked sharp. "I always thought I should win there," he says of Augusta National.



The excitement is still there. And I can play Augusta really well because I know it so well and I feel very comfortable on it.

Looking back at 30-plus years going to Augusta, which one or two memories endure above all others?

That's a great, great question. One was my first year there [1983]. I made the cut and got paired with Tom Watson on Saturday. I had played with Tom a couple of times but never at Augusta. I was just overwhelmed. It was two things—he was the king at Augusta at the time, and he played so fast and hit it so good. I shot 73-68 [in the first two rounds], and we were both in the top 10. We were in great shape, but I was so overmatched by the pairing and by being around the top 10. It was a huge learning experience. And playing against Phil in 2006 was incredible. That Sunday, I couldn't have played a lot better. Yeah, I three-putted a couple of times, but you're gonna do that at Augusta. I hit a lot of great shots.

You're a Hall of Famer with 63 professional wins, including a green jacket and two Players Championship titles. Has your career met your expectations? Do you ever think, "What if...?"

There are always nagging "What ifs." I've had a great teacher in Paul Marchand since 1986, 1987, and I worked with Butch [Harmon]. They both taught the same thing, and they were both spot-on. They wanted me to practice more. In retrospect, if I'd had a teacher who I lived closer to, I may have been better off. But also, with my back, I just couldn't do it. I couldn't.

Because of the back pain you've battled for more than 20 years?

Since around 1993, I haven't practiced putting for more than 10 minutes. That's almost 25 years. It's just physically impossible, and I know that. Yeah, there were some tournaments that I gave away. Maybe another major or two would make my [record] better. But I didn't get 'em.

Which major near-miss stings the most?

The one that was really, really rough was the [1990] PGA. I was 30 years old. I hadn't won at Augusta yet. That would've been my first major. I bogeyed three of the last five holes [on Sunday]. [Winner Wayne Grady] earned it. I'm not saying I completely gave it to him—I gave it away *and* he earned it. That was a rough one.

Do you ever think what your career would have looked like had your back been healthy?

"THAT MASTERS SUNDAY IN 2006 IS ABOUT THE BEST I EVER PLAYED. PHIL AND I BATTLED AND BATTLED, BUT HE JUST GOT THE BETTER END OF IT."

I don't talk about it much, but when you're not healthy, there's really only one person who knows. I didn't have back surgeries, but I can promise you that I had my back worked on way too many times, and I missed way too many golf tournaments. I was able to play, and I enjoyed it, but what I missed were chances to work harder on my game. My body couldn't take it. It still can't.

Are you in constant pain?

Yeah, I don't sleep much. And in the last year, I didn't play for almost eight months. As I got better, my body started to feel really, really good. But once I swing a club, it all goes haywire. I can play. I can go hit the ball. But I might wake up tomorrow and not be able to move [for two days]. I [adjust], and with a little practice try to figure it out. But I twitch all the time.

You must love the game a lot to keep playing through the pain.

For me, the Champions Tour is all about the pairings. If I didn't like the pairings and the enjoyment [of the players], I would never come out here. But if you're a good player, and you play really good rounds, you get the best players out here every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. To me, that's the challenge. When that stops and I'm in 50th place, there's no way I'll put my body through it. But I really, really love to play.

Considering all your back problems, perhaps you're an overachiever.

Tiger gave me one of the greatest compliments a couple of years ago. He said, "Dude, how do you do this?"

You can relate to what Tiger's gone through with his back injuries. Do you think he can get better and win?

I love the guy. And I honestly believe he can, yeah. It's hard for Tiger, because not only has he been the best player for 18, 20 years, but he works really hard on his game. So he's going to have to find his way of playing. When I'd have to withdraw, I used to tell my old caddie, Joey [LaCava], "Joe, it is what it is." I can't make my back feel better when I swing. It's

impossible. And so now [Joe] caddies for Tiger, and I think he's a perfect caddie because he knows. He can tell Tiger, "Just get through this round." But yes, I think that if Tiger didn't think he could come back and win, there would be no reason for him to play.

Ray Floyd was a mentor of yours. What advice did he give you?

He helped me play par 5s better. Ray once said to me, "You're trying to eagle every par 5. You need to make birdies, and you don't want to make a par." He helped me a lot. Every time I teed off at par 72, I felt like I was at 69.

What advice do you give some of today's young guys?

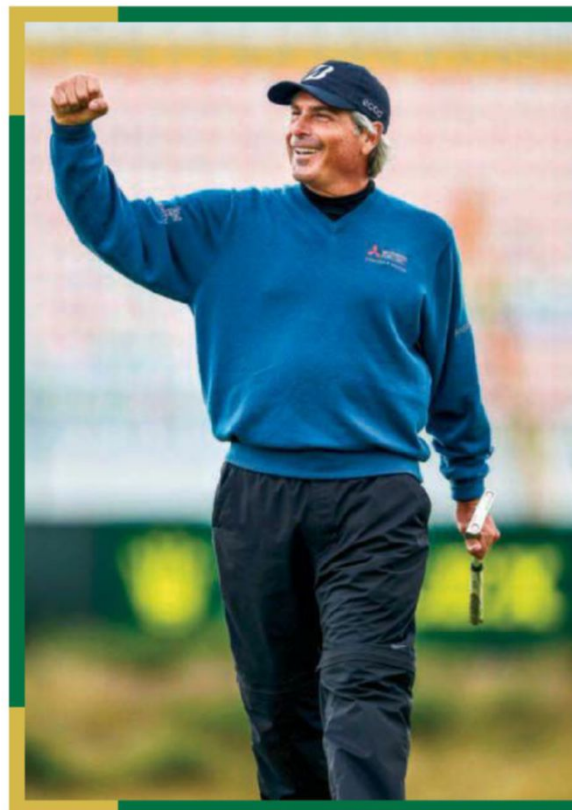
I love Rickie Fowler and Brendan Steele. With Rickie, I say, "Go get them, and pay attention to what you're doing. This isn't a sprint. Don't worry about two bad weeks. Don't get down on yourself." And with Brendan, I'd say, "Hey, it's a Presidents Cup year. It's about time you make one of these teams."

Which player today reminds you of yourself?

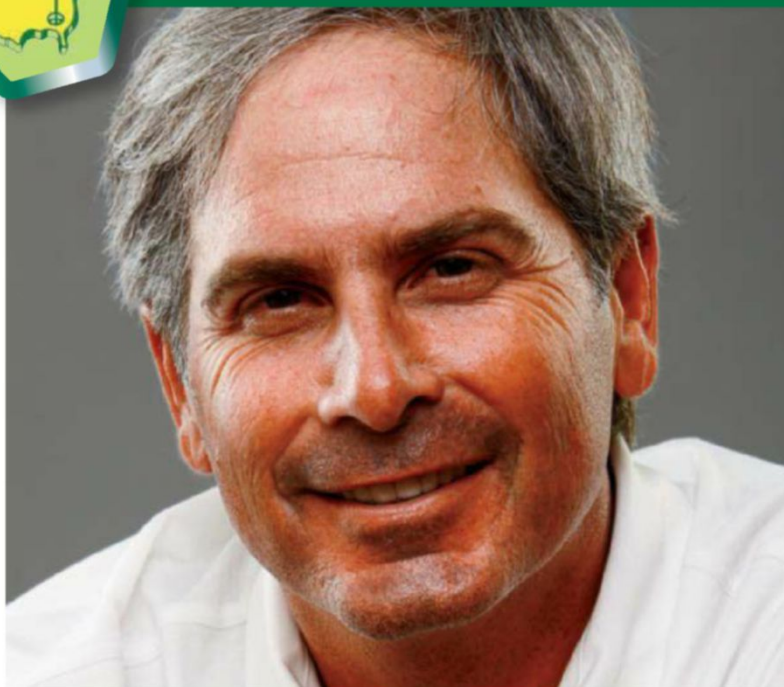
Scott Piercy. I really like his game and the way he plays. He bombs it. Beautiful swing. It took him a while to get on Tour, but his game is phenomenal. He almost won [the U.S. Open] at Oakmont. Maybe when he gets that next win it will propel him.

You're old friends with Davis Love III and Phil Mickelson. What are they like to hang out with?

They're not too into themselves, and I'm certainly not, so we hit it off. They're easy, you know? Phil will say, "You wanna eat now or in an hour?" "You wanna watch the Lakers play, or go play cards?" I love simplicity. No drama. I don't want three-hour dinners, sitting around



Freddie's love for the game keeps him swinging, despite constant back pain.



"MY BACK CAN'T TAKE IT. I DON'T SLEEP MUCH. AFTER I SWING A CLUB, I MIGHT WAKE UP THE NEXT DAY AND NOT BE ABLE TO MOVE."

a table and telling stories over glasses of wine. I don't have the body or the patience for that. I want to play golf.

You've skippered three winning Presidents Cup teams. Does a Ryder Cup captaincy interest you?

Of course, but I'll probably never be picked. There comes a time when you get passed by. At one time, people thought I should be a Ryder Cup captain because I did well in the Presidents Cup. But it's the *players* who play. I was there in Chicago [at the 2012 Ryder Cup, at Medinah]. I thought we had it won. Davis did an unbelievable job. But Sunday, we just didn't get enough points. That doesn't come back to Davis—it was the players and maybe a pairing here or there. But Davis was a great captain then, and he was a great captain last year. And Jim Furyk will be a great captain [in 2018].

For several years, you've been appearing in TV spots as part of Mitsubishi's "Don't get caught out of your comfort zone" campaign. You're very good in them.

It's like anything—the more you do it, the easier it gets. Before [shooting], I'd think, "My God, what am I doing? Why am I saying these silly lines?" But they let you do them over and over.

So you really were out of your comfort zone as a thespian?

Shooting any commercial is uncomfortable, because you've got a crew staring at you. They usually deal with actors. And now some chump is here because he hits a golf ball [laughs]. I felt like they were thinking, "One screwup, one tongue-twister, and we'll be here all day." It took me a while to get that out of my mind.


You've never loved the spotlight. You once said that you didn't answer your phone because "there might be someone on the other end." Has it gotten easier to deal with the attention that comes with being famous?

There were a few years when Davis and I would have to stop [and do media] after every round. I understand it if you shoot 66, but if you didn't play great, you'd still have to talk. I do appreciate it, but time is really important. Back in the '80s and '90s, I would come out of the media room [after a press conference] and a guy would say, "Can I ask a couple quick questions?" And sure, you'd stop and it'd take two or three minutes. Then you'd go another 10 feet, and another guy would say, "Hey, you gave him two minutes—can I get two minutes?" I didn't handle that well. There were a couple of times I was a jerk, and I said, "Jesus, didn't you see me? I was right there—I talked for 35 minutes. I don't have time for you." I was just trying to politely say, "I already did it." But it didn't always come out that way.



Couples (with Tiger Woods) captained three straight victorious Presidents Cup teams.

Last question, speaking of your younger self: If you went out today and battled 1992 Freddie in match play—and he used his old equipment—who would win?

[Exhales] Hooooo. I would say in my 50s, I'm a better golfer. And [modern] equipment makes me feel like I'm a better golfer, because the clubs are made for less curve. So even though there's no way I'm physically better right now than when I was 32, Fred of today would win. But it would go extra holes. 





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:: THE MASTERS 2017 ::

THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF TIGER WOODS'S RECORD-BREAKING 1997 MASTERS WIN BY THE NUMBERS

BY COLEMAN MCDOWELL



-18

Lowest
72-Hole
Score,
270^[1]

16

MOST STROKES
UNDER PAR
FOR TOURNAMENT
ON BACK
NINE

38

Most strokes
under par
for Amen
Corner
(HOLES 11-13)

40

HIGHEST
9-HOLE START
BY EVENTUAL
WINNER

9 STROKES

Largest 54-hole lead

YOUNGEST CHAMPION

[1] Tied by Jordan Spieth in 2015.

LEFT: DAVID CANNON/ALL SPORT

12 STROKES

WIDEST MAJOR-CHAMPIONSHIP
VICTORY MARGIN^[2]

44
Million

ESTIMATED
U.S. TELEVISION
AUDIENCE
FOR SUNDAY'S
FINAL ROUND

26

Most 3s
made by
the winner

7-Iron

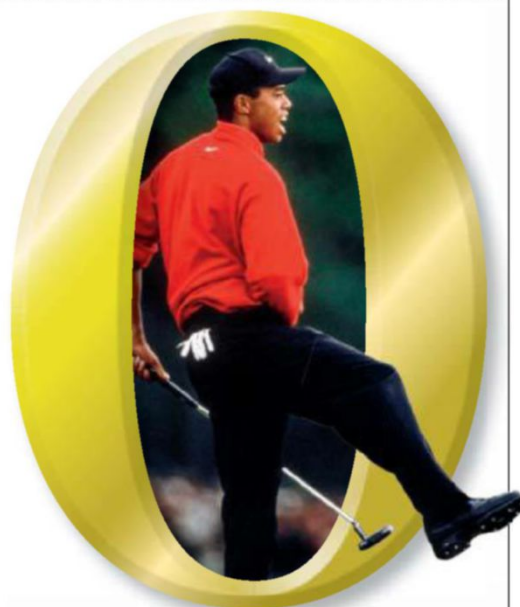
Longest club
into any par 4
all week

65

YOUNGEST
PLAYER TO SHOOT
THAT SCORE AT
THE MASTERS
(third round)

25 YARDS

Difference in average driving
distance between Woods and the
week's second-longest hitter



Three-putts for
the tournament

33

CONSECUTIVE HOLES WITHOUT A BOGEY

3 Things You Didn't Know About Tiger's Win

In his new book, *The 1997 Masters: My Story*, Woods reveals some never-before-heard details about his historic victory



Earl Woods fixed Tiger's balky putting stroke the night before round one, telling his son, "Your hands are too low. Lift them up. Get that little arch in your hands like you always do." As Tiger writes, "I had to adjust my left-hand position and my posture... This meant my forward press on the putter was different, but I knew Pop was right."



Woods got fired up before his third-round pairing with **Colin Montgomerie** after Monty told the media that "experience might be a key factor." Butch Harmon, Woods explains, "could see it in my eyes... I was itching to play and to take on the course, Monty and the rest of the field. But Monty especially." Tiger shot a 65 to the Scot's 74.



What's a post-win party without tunes, a fast car and fast food? "We had a CD by the hip-hop group Quad City DJ's, and we put the song 'C'mon N' Ride It (The Train)' on at full blast as we drove down Magnolia Lane... the windows rolled down in the big Cadillac courtesy car... We stopped at **Arby's** again and continued to the house."

^[2] Broken by Woods himself with his 15-shot win at the 2000 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links.



THE B THAT C THE

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In 2016, Spieth went from leader to lost in minutes.

DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES

MASTERS Meltdown

What you can learn from Jordan Spieth's epic 12th-hole collapse

By Michael Chwasky

On Masters Sunday last year, Jordan Spieth reached the par-3 12th hole—named “Golden Bell”—with a one-shot lead over Danny Willett. The young Texan left with his bell rung, dunking two balls into Rae’s Creek en route to a quadruple-bogey 7. In just a few calamitous minutes, the 2015 champion had gone from a cakewalk to the walking dead. Other than reminding us how fast fortunes can change at Amen Corner, what can everyday players take away from this shocking debacle?

Give Up Your “Rights”

On the 12th tee, Spieth and his caddie, Michael Greller, decided to play safe and hit a draw to the fat of the green, rather than go after the tantalizing right-cut pin; this would take the water and the front bunkers out of play. But once over the ball, Spieth got greedy and tried to fade it toward the pin. His shot flew short and right, landed on the front bank and rolled into the drink.

Spieth’s trouble actually began long before he got to 12, says Top 100 Teacher Brady Riggs. The Masters champ had struggled all year with flared iron shots.

“When the ball shoots out to the right, it travels a shorter distance because the clubface is open at impact,” Riggs says. “This creates more spin, more loft, and

a loss of distance and direction. Never try to hit a fade with an iron when you’re struggling with this shot, especially when there’s trouble short and right.”

The 12th hole was designed to punish shots that miss right, and Spieth made matters worse by attempting to pull off the wrong shot shape at the wrong target. How should weekend players handle a similar situation? The key, Riggs says, is to hone a reliable anti-right swing. Just strengthen your grip, move the ball up in your stance to promote a shot that goes left. And fully commit to a smart strategy.

“Pick a target that takes the trouble out of play and stick with it,” Riggs adds. “Even if you aim directly into a bunker, you’re still better off than in the water.”

Conquer the Chunk

After taking his penalty drop about 80 yards from the flag, Spieth compounded his problems by dunking his next shot into Rae’s Creek. The enormous divot was evidence of a chunked wedge.

“Follow a tried-and-true technique that Nick Faldo used,” Riggs says. “On the follow-through, get your belt buckle all the way to the target. If you stop turning, the club buries behind the ball, producing a chunk. Keep turning, and you’ll catch the ball first.”

Relax in a “Riptide”

Spieth’s 7 on “Golden Bell” made the headlines, but it followed bogeys at Nos. 10 and 11. Mental-game expert Bhrett McCabe suggests that on the 12th hole, Spieth got caught in a psychological riptide, referring to the dangerous ocean current that can make swimmers panic.

In a real riptide, McCabe says, “The simple solution is to swim parallel to the shore until you find a place where the current eases and you can get back to the beach. But people panic and try to fight the tide, making the situation worse.” In other words, battling the bad mojo only caused more problems for Spieth.

To free yourself from a riptide, McCabe offers a three-step approach to steady the most nerve-jangled golfer. “Take a deep breath to slow your heart rate, defer to your reliable go-to shot and pick a very specific, safe target. Get out of your mind and ‘get external,’ and you’re more likely to succeed.”

Indeed, after his round last year, Spieth admitted, “I didn’t take that extra deep breath and really focus on my line on No. 12. Instead I went up and just put a quick swing on it.”

To his credit, he bounced back after the 12th hole disaster with birdies on two of the next three holes. Which leads to one last lesson: Be a quick study.

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:: THE MASTERS 2017 ::

PENCIL WRECK

Destined
to be
remembered
for his Masters
scorecard
blunder,
Roberto
De Vincenzo
deserves so
much more

By John Garrity
PHOTOGRAPH BY AP





De Vincenzo failed to notice that playing partner Tommy Aaron had mistakenly given him a 4 instead of a 3 on No. 17, turning the Argentine's brilliant 65 into a fateful 66.



“All that I lose at the Masters is the green jacket,” Roberto De Vincenzo once said. “The prestige, no. My name is in the Masters forever.”

Which is not to say that the hurt ever went away. Almost a half-century later, at his home outside Buenos Aires, De Vincenzo’s thoughts still stray to that Sunday in 1968 when he absentmindedly

signed for a final-round score a stroke higher than he had actually shot, handing the title to Bob Goalby.

All my life, if I make a mistake on the golf course, the next day I forget. I have a chance to recover. This mistake, no chance to recover.

He knows that no other golfer—no other athlete—ever signed away a hunk of his legacy as easily as you’d endorse a check. And with a pencil! Where, outside the ancient game, is such a signature binding?

The ending is legal, but there is something missing. The winner hasn’t yet emerged.

De Vincenzo is 93. It was his birthday on that Masters Sunday in 1968. His 45th.

When he holed a 9-iron for a deuce on Augusta National’s par-4 first hole, the gallery sang “Happy Birthday.” They sang it again at the end of his round, a stunning 65 that ranks among the greatest finishes in the history of major championships. But Roberto wasn’t happy. He had hooked his 4-iron left of the green on No. 18 and then missed a six-footer for par. There might have to be an 18-hole Monday playoff.

When Bob Goalby and I meet in heaven, we are going to end this duel left unfinished on Earth.

The scorer’s table was just behind the green. De Vincenzo plopped down on a patio chair. Surrounded by club members and seated spectators, he distractedly scanned his card, failing to notice that playing partner Tommy Aaron had given him a 4 instead of a 3 on the 17th hole. De Vincenzo didn’t even total the card. He just signed it. Signed his way into sports infamy.

“Under the Rules of Golf, he will be charged with a 66,” Masters rules chairman Hord Hardin said that day. “Which does not leave him in a tie with Bob Goalby, who is 11-under-par. He is second, 10-under-par.” To which De Vincenzo, South America’s greatest golfer, said, “I play golf all over the world for 30 years, and now all I can think of is what a stupid I am to be wrong in this wonderful tournament. Never have I ever done such a thing.”

Such a thing. Five decades later, people who weren’t even born when it hap-

OFFICIAL SCORE CARD

ROUND 479 1 4 1968

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out
Yardage	400	555	355	220	450	190	365	530	420	3485
Par	4	5	4	3	4	3	4	5	4	36
Player	2	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	31

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Totals
470	445	155	475	420	520	190	400	420	3495	6980
4	4	3	5	4	5	3	4	4	36	72
4	4	2	5	4	4	3	4	5	35	66

I HAVE CHECKED MY SCORE HOLE BY HOLE.

PLAYER SIGNATURE

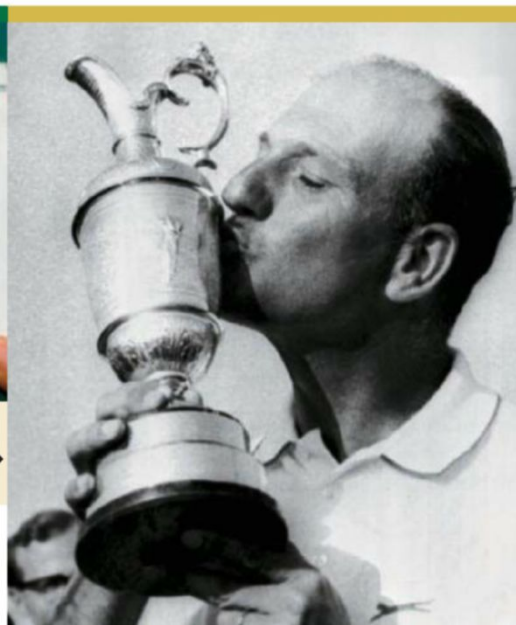
ROBERTO DE VICENZO

ATTEST

Tommy Aaron

Once De Vincenzo signed for the incorrect score, his playoff spot was gone, his fate sealed.

In 1967 at Royal Liverpool, De Vincenzo, at 44, became the oldest British Open champion since Old Tom Morris.



pened remember “what a stupid I am.” And though De Vincenzo long ago came to terms with his mistake, the old man can never, ever forget.

All these years have passed, and we are still talking about that Masters.

S O LET’S NOT. Let’s talk, instead, about the achievements that put De Vincenzo in the World Golf Hall of Fame. Beginning with the Litoral Open in 1942, he won 231 tournaments, including 48 national championships in 17 countries. That’s Argentina (9), Belgium, Brazil (6), Chile (3), Columbia (3), France (3), Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Jamaica (3), Mexico (3), Panama (5), Peru (3), Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay (2) and Venezuela (2). “Bear in mind,” says David Mackintosh, longtime golf correspondent for the *Buenos Aires Herald*, “that when Roberto played those Caribbean events, the fields were mostly PGA Tour players, and that was the PGA Tour’s unofficial winter circuit.”

Bear in mind, too, that when De Vincenzo won the 1967 Open Championship at Royal Liverpool, he was 44—making him the oldest Open winner since Old Tom Morris. When he won the first-ever U.S. Senior Open (at Winged Foot in 1980), Roberto was 57; he remains the second-oldest winner of that event. “I won so many tournaments, even I can’t believe it,” De Vincenzo said. “How was it possible to have done all that?”

How indeed? The son of a Buenos Aires house painter, Roberto was the fifth of seven children. He caddied at the nine-hole Club Mitre-Migueletes from the age of 10 or so, sometimes combining looping with babysitting. (“When my player hit a shot, I would pick up the bag and pick up my brother. He was 2 years old.”) His own game evolved from childhood experiments with a tree branch and a cork ball, an origin story similar to that of his idol, Sam Snead, who used a hickory limb to whack rocks around his family’s farm. In time, De Vincenzo’s swing would come to resemble that of Slammin’ Sam. Roberto was 19 when he got to see Snead, along with Jimmy Demaret, in an exhibition at Ranelagh Golf Club, where Roberto was working as an assistant pro. “Snead left me with my mouth open,” De Vincenzo recalled. “He had a harmony in his swing that no one else had. No one from that era was better. Not even Ben Hogan or Byron Nelson.” He added, “Possibly I was longer than Snead. But I hit, and he controlled.”

De Vincenzo first won as a pro at the Rosario Golf Club in central Argentina, returning there to serve as head pro for two years. The club’s walls are decorated with framed photos of a young De Vincenzo with pleated pants, a Roman nose and slicked-back hair. But the notion that he was some sort of high-plains gaucho followed him for years. “He looks like he should have

a spotted pony under him,” famed sportswriter Jim Murray wrote, “or he should be doing a tango with a whip in one hand and a señorita in the other.”

Like South Africa’s Gary Player, who claims to have flown more than 15 million miles in his career, De Vincenzo played with an operational handicap. The postwar voyage to a shattered Europe took 10 days, and De Vincenzo’s first flight to the U.S. involved eight stops, with overnight stays in Peru and Panama. Once on the golfing ground, the man they called “El Maestro” anticipated the likes of Vijay Singh, with a daunting practice regimen (“Normally I hit 800 balls a day”) and a ravenous appetite for practice rounds. “That all goes back to good health,” he said. “I never left a tournament because I got sick. Never did my back hurt me. Never had headaches. I never came out in a bad mood.”

Moods? De Vincenzo had no time for them. He was unfailingly genial, flashing a bright smile and cracking people up with his fractured English. Said Jack Nicklaus, “Anyone who knew Roberto knew he was a very modest man, and that’s one of the reasons people liked him so much.” A classic De Vincenzo story has him winning the 1968 Houston Open, just three weeks after the Augusta scorecard fiasco, and then being confronted in the parking lot by a woman who told him a wrenching tale about her daughter’s battle with leukemia. After giving her a few

“AFTER THE MASTERS, I SHOULD BE SHOT. BUT PEOPLE, THE FANS, THEY SEEM TO LOVE ME.”

De Vincenzo talks with countryman Angel Cabrera, who in 2009 became Argentina’s first green jacket winner.





hundred dollars, Roberto was told that he'd been suckered, that the woman was a scammer. "Her daughter is not dying?" De Vincenzo is said to have replied. "My friend, that is the best news I ever heard!"

The story may be apocryphal, but it goes a long way toward explaining De Vincenzo's enduring appeal. "He's the most honest soul I've ever met," says the *Herald's* Mackintosh. "He's goodness all the way through." But De Vincenzo never saw it that way. Puzzled by the ovations he received at every Tour stop, he said, "After the Masters, I should be shot. But people, the fans, they seem to love me. I lose, I do a stupid thing, and I am a hero!"

He certainly hit some heroic shots. One of his gutsiest swings came at Hoylelake, in 1967, where he clung to a final-round lead over Nicklaus, who was fresh off a U.S. Open-record 275 at Baltusrol. Having driven far to the right on the par-5 16th hole, De Vincenzo elected to play his second over a stretch marked out-of-bounds. When his ball landed cleanly and rolled to the middle of the green, the Liverpool gallery roared. "I play for it. I make it," he said afterwards, hugging the Claret Jug. "It was my greatest shot."

It was a shot, it must be conceded, that history may little note nor long remember. All because of that Sunday afternoon in Georgia when, as Roberto put it at the time, "I lose my brains."

To be sure, De Vincenzo has suffered other, more tangible losses. Most of his savings reportedly went missing in the 2008 financial meltdown, forcing him to sell his memorabilia. And he's no longer strong enough to play, although he still drops by his beloved Ranelagh GC to chat with friends and pose for photos by the sign reading CAMPO DE GOLF ROBERTO DE VICENZO.

"My life is good," he told Mackintosh by phone early in 2017. "I live here quietly with my dear wife, mostly spending time at home. Of course, I'm now 93, so one can't expect to go on forever. There comes a time when we all have to go."

When that time comes, he didn't have to add, he'll be remembered for—well, you know. 📷

VINTAGE FORD

A chat with Doug Ford, 94, the oldest living Masters champion

Interview by Sean Zak

This year marks the 60th anniversary of your 1957 Masters win. Does it feel like 60 years have gone by?
Oh, yes. [Laughs]

What do you remember most about that week?

The shot that I hit [on Sunday] at 18, when I holed it out of the trap. I was plugged, oh, 10 feet from the hole. If I exploded out at the hole, the ball would have run off the green. That green slants pretty good, so I exploded it into the bank and it came back and into the hole.

How did you react?

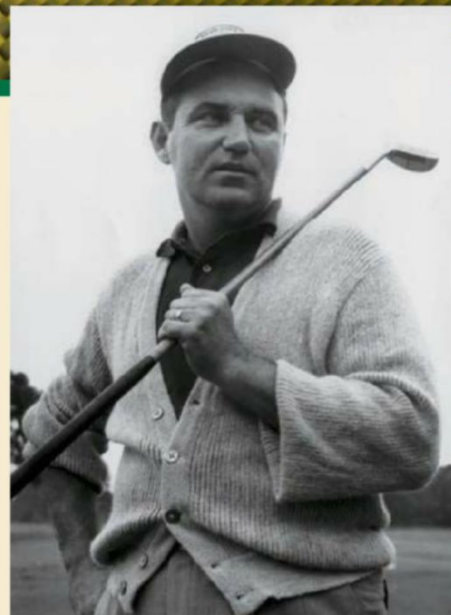
I lost my hat! I couldn't find my hat. I had thrown it up in the air, I guess. Anyhow, it was a shot I'll always remember.

You played very aggressively on the back nine. Why?

The year before, I was leading going into the back nine and shot a bad nine. It was a tough playing day, and I shot a 42 or something. I shot a 32 the year I won.

Sam Snead was the runner-up. Was it extra special to win over such a decorated player?

It was always great to beat him, because I've always said he was the greatest player I ever saw. In fact, I was one group in front of him in the last round, and I had a two-shot lead going to the 18th hole. He still had to play 17 and 18, which he could have birdied. So once my



Ford's 1957 Masters triumph was punctuated by a Sunday hole-out on the 18th to edge Sam Snead.

ball went into the hole [for birdie] on 18, he was finished. I most likely played more rounds for money against Sam Snead at the Masters than anyone. We gambled all the time.

Did Snead pay you right away when he lost?

When you beat him, you got paid off in the locker room. But if he beat you, he wanted to get paid on the green.

In 1958, you finished tied for second, a shot behind Arnold Palmer, after a controversial rules decision saved Palmer two strokes. You came very close to back-to-back Masters titles.

Going into the 13th hole, when they changed [Palmer's] score from a 5 to a 3 on the 12th hole, it changed my thinking. But what happened, happened.

Do you remember what you served for your Masters Champions dinner in '58?

You had two or three things on the menu, but I went for the steak.

How do you spend your time at Augusta these days?

I go every year and watch it on the big board on 18. I listen to the radio in the locker room. They shoot some scores there nowadays that are unreal. And as much as I can move around, I move around.

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:: THE MASTERS 2017 ::

CLOSE LIKE A CHAMP

Heading to Amen Corner on Sunday at last year's Masters, **Danny Willett** trailed leader Jordan Spieth by five shots. After Willett birdied 13 and 14—and Spieth imploded on the par-3 12th—the gritty Englishman suddenly had a two-stroke lead. He then clinically closed out his first major win with a series of deft swings and smart choices. In his own words, here's how he played his best on the crucial finishing holes. Sure, that jacket is sharp, but it's *closing* that makes the man.

with David DeNunzio

Photograph by BEN VAN HOOK

SOMETHING TERRIBLE was happening to Jordan Spieth as he played through Amen Corner. That much I *did* know. That I had taken the lead in the final round of the Masters? I didn't learn that until I stepped onto the 16th tee. I had won four times on the European Tour but never on American soil, let alone in a major. And the adrenaline was pumping. It was too late to make a strategy shift. "Keep making good swings," I told myself. I played the final three holes in 1-under, which proved to be more than enough. It boiled down to basics: solid iron contact, smart short-game decisions and hitting fairways. Here's how I did it, and how you can beat nerves—and avoid mistakes—when gunning for your own major.

After 16th Hole

WILLETT	-5
WESTWOOD	-2
SPIETH (14)	-2



I hit a draw with an 8-iron on the par-3 16th that ended up six feet from the hole. I could have clubbed up to a 7- and made a smoother swing, but under pressure it's easier to hit irons harder, not softer.

BELOW: EPA/ANDREW COMBET; HOLE ILLUSTRATIONS: GRAHAM GACHES



» Par-3 16th: An Epic Approach

THE SITUATION

My caddie, Jon Smart, gave me 181 yards. For me, that's smack dab between a 7- and an 8-iron.

MASTERFUL MOVE

I went with the 8-iron. As I said, my adrenaline was pumping—I knew I could easily squeeze 10 more yards out of that club. And to me, adding distance to an iron is much easier than taking it off. I played a draw off the right tower. It was perfect. The plan was to leave a 15-footer. I ended up with a six-footer and one of the best birdies of my life.

MISTAKE TO AVOID

When stepping on the gas with an iron, make the "step" at the bottom of your swing, not the top. The pace of your backswing and transition shouldn't change, but as you near impact—that's when you add the juice. Try this: Hit balls with a left-hand-low grip. If you add speed too soon using this hold, you'll shank it! When you're able to hit solid shots, it means you're correctly saving clubhead speed until the strike. Better yet, you're avoiding the "casting" move that causes slices.



After 17th Hole

WILLETT	-5
SPIETH (15)	-3
WESTWOOD	-2

“Hit your landing spot—
that’s the key to pitching.”

My pitch from back-left on No. 17 was perfect, rolling to three feet from the pin. On these shots, the flag is never the target. Focus on where the ball needs to land.

» Par-4 17th: A Smart Pitch

THE SITUATION

My approach sailed long and left—not the worst place to miss on 17, but it did leave me with a 20-yard pitch up a slope and over the crown running through the center of the green.

MASTERFUL MOVE

Like I always do, I look for a spot on the green where I need to land the ball in order for it to roll close. It’s a visual cue: Seeing the spot in relation to the lie and the cup automatically tells me what wedge to pull. Here, it was lob wedge—and a soft pitch that rolled to three feet of the pin.

MISTAKE TO AVOID

I see amateurs in this same position, and they all do the same thing—they putt the ball. Problem is, you need speed to cover the slope, and you can’t “check” a putt, so it often rolls too far. Pitching creates backspin, and enough hold to settle the ball near the cup. It’s simple: Keep your flatstick in the bag.

When I hit the fairway on No. 18, I knew the green jacket was mine. The trick? Treat pressure shots like any other.

After 18th Hole

WILLETT -5

SPIETH (16) -3

WESTWOOD -2

“On the tee on the final hole of the Masters with a two-stroke lead. It doesn’t get any better than that!”

Your preshot routine on a “pressure” shot should last as long as on any other swing.

» Par-4 18th: Piped 3-Wood

THE SITUATION

To be on the tee on the final hole of the Masters with a two-stroke lead: It doesn’t get any better than that! Nerves? You bet. But I knew that if I found the fairway, the green jacket was mine.

MASTERFUL MOVE

A solid 3-wood. Why not driver? My 3-wood can’t reach the bunkers on the left side of the fairway. Once I pulled the club, I kept to my normal routine. The last thing you want is to psych yourself out.

MISTAKE TO AVOID

Weekend players overemphasize “must-make” swings while treating others too casually. Your preshot routine should be identical, and last as long, on *all* swings. By focusing on routine, you can ignore the pressure and negative thoughts. You’ll soon feel very comfortable on “pressure” swings—and that’s when you can close like a champ.

This is **Danny Willett’s** ninth season on the European Tour. He has five wins and \$13 million in earnings.



:: THE MASTERS 2017 ::

THE KNIGHT IS STILL YOUNG

We've traveled 20 years into the past to remember Tiger's first win at Augusta. Now, let's look ahead 20 years to glimpse the honorary starters likely to kick off the 2037 Masters.



Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the 2037 Masters," the chairman says. "We have two newcomers joining us as honorary starters! First on the tee is a true legend, a four-time Masters champion celebrating the 40th anniversary of his historic 1997 triumph: Mr. Tiger Woods!" Woods, 61, acknowledges the applause, gingerly bends down to tee his ball, and steers his drive into the first cut, stifling an F-bomb. "Now please welcome one of

the game's most beloved competitors, three-time Masters winner Mr. Phil Mickelson!" Still boyish at 66, Lefty tips his cap, swings as hard as he can, hooks one into the trees—and flashes a smile. "Finally, let's introduce another three-time winner, the Black Knight himself, Mr. Gary Player!" Now 101, Player pipes his drive 250 yards down the middle, drops and does 10 push-ups, then sprints down the fairway after his ball, as Woods and Mickelson try to keep up. 📺

ILLUSTRATION BY GARY LOCKE



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Larry Summers, Former Secretary of the Treasury
CEO DAILY READER

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I didn't talk for a very long time

Jacob Sanchez
Diagnosed with autism



Lack of speech is a sign of autism. Learn the others at autismspeaks.org/signs.



AUTISM SPEAKS®

ClubTest 2017

EDITED BY ROB SAUERHAFT

REVIEWS BY MICHAEL CHWASKY, MARK DEE AND ALANA JOHNSON

New Gear Tested and Rated

THIS MONTH:

Irons!

29 NEW MODELS
TESTED AND RATED

» Is any shot more satisfying than a well-struck iron? It feels pure. True. Visceral. This month, our four-part ClubTest series spotlights the weapons that provide that sublime sensation. Our 40-man panel analyzed 29 iron models during two weeks at the World Golf Village Resort in St. Augustine, Fla. These golf-obsessed guys worked with Hot Stix Golf, who provided fitting expertise and recorded valuable data using TrackMan launch monitors. (We highly recommend you get custom-fit for your next set, whether you're scratch or trying to break 100. Playing fitted clubs shaves major strokes!)

This year's new gear has great features: fast, flexible faces to boost ball speed; updated CG locations to improve head stability; refined sole designs to help your contact; and shock-absorbing materials for better feel. To help you find your new sticks, we grouped irons by category: Better Player (most maneuverable), Game Improvement, and Max Game Improvement (most forgiving). Oh, and check out the all-new GOLF.com for 360-degree club views and bonus videos.

So keep reading. Your new irons—and that pure, perfect feeling—await.

GAME IMPROVEMENT IRONS

p.104



BETTER PLAYER IRONS

p.112



MAX GAME IMPROVEMENT IRONS

p.117



CALLAWAY APEX CF 16

\$1,200, steel; \$1,400, graphite; GOLF.com/callaway

WE TESTED: 3-PW with True Temper XP 95 steel shafts

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY:

Confidence breeds creativity—guys can summon any shot they want; a penetrating, mid-high flight can be turned into a soft cut or draw at will; head thunders through most lies.

\\ ACCURACY/

FORGIVENESS:

The Apex looks fierce but acts gentle, and that forgiveness translates to accuracy—shots all over the face zero in like darts; well-designed sole elevates thin shots; card-killing misses are rare.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL:

Fires the ball off the face—for most testers, a half-club beyond what they're used to; incredibly consistent for such a hot club—misses get enough hang time to hit the green, and short irons are hungry for birdies.

\\ FEEL: A chart topper—soft, energetic and possibly the best Callaway ever;

great balance and stability help boost confidence; informative on misses.

\\ LOOK: It's classic, comforting and compact enough to appeal to established players; not your granddad's bulbous Big Bertha—it's a modern masterpiece.

CONS

Not as forgiving as those older Berthas, and low-lofted clubs can be demanding; serious players might want more precision, while higher-handicappers may need more help.

BOTTOM LINE

Best in show. Whether you're a skilled ballstriker in search of a little more margin for error or an 80-something shooter trying to reach the next level, this Apex iron will make you look good—maybe great.

"THEY'LL MAKE YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT REAL TALENT!"

—Tom Jennings, Index 9.3, Age 63

Forged carbon steel 3- to 7-irons use face cups to boost ball speed.



The updated "bore-thru" hosel design repositions mass toward the toe to increase MOI.

CALLAWAY STEELHEAD XR

\$800, steel; \$900, graphite; GOLF.com/callaway

WE TESTED: 3-PW with True Temper XP 95 steel shafts

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: Trouble lies are no trouble at all—a sure thing out of fairway bunkers and light rough; higher-than-average flight; pretty straight shooter, with a natural baby draw in its back pocket.

\\ ACCURACY/

FORGIVENESS:

Helps you when you need it most—with a slightly bigger sweet spot than in last year's XR iron, the entire face is in play; offset neutralizes slices without turning them into hooks; misses still have oomph off the face.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL:

Carry distances are super, up to a half-club longer than what testers are used to; even mis-hits soar as far as some guys' gamers; wonderfully repeatable for a powerful iron—no hot spots or jittery surprises; great for slower swingers—there's no need to spin out of your spikes to hit high, soft-landing shots.

\\ FEEL: Like a dynamite blast at impact; won't be mistaken for a forged

blade—or, for that matter, Callaway's Apex—but the Steelhead is fiery and plenty of fun; revamped club provides lots of support, especially low on the face.

\\ LOOK: Classic Callaway, faithful to the original design; a great take on a larger-headed game-improvement iron: offset but not excessively, beefy yet not obese; frames the ball beautifully at address.

CONS

Too clunky for greenside work; muffled feedback—you won't know where you hit it until you look up (but it's usually pretty straight); not made for old-school shotmaking; some testers would still swap the long irons for hybrids.

BOTTOM LINE

A big hit: excellent distance, good altitude and a mild temper. The newest Steelhead is a great all-around iron for weekend warriors looking to have more fun on the course—and win a buck or two off their buddies.



COBRA KING F7

\$700, steel; \$800, graphite (for 7); GOLF.com/cobra

WE TESTED: 4-GW with True Temper King F7 steel and 4-GW with Fujikura Pro 63i graphite shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: One of the highest-flying irons in the group—you'll launch it like the ball is teed up, even off bare ground; straight shots to soft draws are the norm; long irons fly higher than their single-length counterparts.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: Sends the ball where you need it to go—a point-and-shoot club with generous glide through the turf and lots of help on the toe; hollow-bodied long irons have training wheels—almost as easy to hit as hybrids.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Similar numbers to what most guys expect, though it seems to trade some length for lift; reasonable gaps for a strong-lofted set; respectable distance from trouble spots; blade gap wedge has a killer instinct geared toward better players.

FEEL: Almost no effort to swing with speed—super light yet fearlessly stable at impact; feedback packs

The King F7 is composed of hollow (3-5), half-hollow (6-7), cavity-back (8-PW) and blade (GW, SW) heads.

more refinement than many guys expect from such a robust clubhead.

LOOK: Natural next to the ball—a large, confidence-building head with fluid features and proportional lines; no sleight of hand: The King F7 looks built for forgiveness, and that's how it plays.

CONS

Many testers are at the mercy of the club—it's a smooth ride, but you're in the passenger seat; some guys want bigger power numbers; several find the single-length set more forgiving.

BOTTOM LINE

Higher-handicappers, take note: the King F7 is a true game-improvement weapon, delivering lots of forgiveness with minimal maneuverability and rare extreme results. This well-made, multi-construction set should suit moderate and slower swingers who seek an altitude adjustment.



Every shaft measures 37.25"—identical to the length of a regular King F7 7-iron.

COBRA KING F7 ONE LENGTH

\$700, steel; \$800, graphite (for 7); GOLF.com/cobra

WE TESTED: 4-GW with True Temper King F7 steel and 4-GW with Fujikura Pro 63i graphite shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: Every club is the length of a 7-iron, so short irons fly higher and are more workable; because they're shorter than in conventional sets, the 4-, 5- and 6-irons launch lower than some testers expect, though they still fly plenty high.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: There's a lot to say for setting up the same way every time—the clubs are almost automatic, with a tighter dispersion than the standard F7; some guys instantly hit the long irons better; King F7 One will do all it can to keep you on the straight and narrow.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Raw distances are not far off its counterpart, with super-consistent gaps in a tighter overall range; many testers choke down on touchy, in-between shots.

FEEL: The whole experience is a bit radical on your first swing, but it's fairly easy to get used to; consistent weighting throughout the set—otherwise, impact feels identical to the regular F7.

LOOK: For most testers, single-length clubs take some getting used to, especially with higher-lofted clubs—guys look down to see a pitching wedge that seems attached to a fishing rod; but once their eyes adjust, setup and ball position become very simple; the head appeals to higher-handicappers.

CONS

Many can't get used to the short irons—they're unwieldy for finesse shots, and make normal stand-alone wedges feel like twigs; long irons are easy to hit, but they fly lower and shorter than traditional-length sticks; some testers report a major adjustment period.

BOTTOM LINE

Our panelists are thrilled to see Cobra make a game-changing gamble that has merit for lots of players. It takes commitment and an open mind, but for beginners—or anyone flat-out fed up with his or her iron game—it makes perfect sense to start right here.

Prices listed are for a set of eight irons.

MIZUNO JPX 900 FORGED

\$1,200, steel; GOLF.com/mizuno

WE TESTED: 4-GW with Project XLZ steel shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: Top-tier, with a full menu of shots; malleable, medium trajectory lets mid-handicappers get creative; precise through the turf—yields crisp contact from dicey lies; impressive greenside manner, and the gap wedge is a keeper.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: More helpful than many guys expect—rewards good swings with great results; shots hug the target line, and short irons are deadly; defuses hooks and slices.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Serious chops—you can totally lock in with punches, pitches and other partial shots; admirable consistency for a small-headed iron; length stands up to others tested.

FEEL: Pure heaven—beautifully responsive;

first-rate stability—weighty but not overbearing, and efficient through the ground; communicates misses, even if the shot doesn't show it.

LOOK: Testers don't know whether to hit it or hang it on a wall; its blade qualities are evident, with plenty of high-tech help as well; looks like a pro's club, and motivates you to give it your best swing.

CONS

Less forgiving than previous JPX's—not for players who need maximum forgiveness; lower launch than some guys prefer.

BOTTOM LINE

One of the top two models in its class. It looks as good as it plays, with chart-topping feedback that makes you want to practice. If you love MP's but need a boost, meet your next gamer.



"TOP-SHELF LOOK AND DESIGN. I'D PUT THESE IN MY BAG TOMORROW."

—Hoai Hoang, Index 11.5, Age 42

The multi-thickness face amplifies velocity on misses while increasing COR.



The head is made of Chromoly 4140M, which is 15 percent stronger than traditional stainless steel.

MIZUNO JPX 900 HOT METAL

\$900, steel; GOLF.com/mizuno

WE TESTED: 4-GW with Nippon N.S. Pro Modus³ 105 steel and 4-GW with Project XLZ graphite shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: The Hot Metal propels the ball very high and basically straight from almost everywhere; a very agreeable club—you don't need to press to get out of sticky situations; heavyish head and wide sole blast through rough.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: One of the best point-and-shoot irons, noticeably easier to play than its sibling, the JPX 900 Forged; extreme results are rare; tons of help low on the face and on the toe; guys have a fighting chance to hit the 4-iron well.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Above-average top-end power, perhaps a few yards past the JPX 900 Forged and a half-club beyond what most testers play; consistent distances across the entire face.

FEEL: For a club this forgiving, admirable feel and feedback; maintains a modicum of its buttery Mizuno roots in a more uniform, supercharged package; smooth,

rhythmic momentum keeps you in the golf shot.

LOOK: Strong, angular physique strikes a balance between low-handicap appeal (minimal offset) and game-improvement necessities (ample mass); bulk never seems to get in the way; striking leading edge lines up in a snap.

CONS

Not as maneuverable as many other irons in its class; feel doesn't quite live up to the Mizuno benchmark but is still better than a lot of its peers; less comfortable around the greens than some guys expect.

BOTTOM LINE

Longer and higher launching, the JPX 900 Hot Metal is a nice complement to the much-lauded JPX 900 Forged. If you like the sports car, here's the hatchback: roomier, more comfortable, and a bit more practical for higher-handicaps. It's a great choice for someone whose old MP's are gathering dust.

PING i200

\$1,000, steel; \$1,100, graphite; GOLF.com/ping

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: The G's quicker, more athletic little brother affords all the workability a mid-handicapper needs; it's easy to flight-down shots; excavates balls from bunkers, rough, and all kinds of trouble lies; bump-and-runs are instinctive.

\\ ACCURACY/ FORGIVENESS: Locked in—defaults to dead straight, with enough help to get you through your off days; short irons scalp the flagstick—more demanding than the G, but the rewards are clear.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL: Consistent carry, right around what guys expect; you know what you're getting, even from tricky yardages; ample backspin—shots land softly and stick to the green.



"BEST PINGS I'VE HIT. MID-HANDICAPS COULD BECOME LOW SINGLE DIGITS WITH THESE." —Jack Record, Index 8.5, Age 41

A thinner face than its predecessor adds flex and length.

WE TESTED: 4-PW with Ping AWT 2.0 steel and 4-PW with Ping CFS 70 graphite shafts

\\ FEEL: Great feel and feedback; warm metallic crack with a broad, welcoming sweet spot; well-sculpted sole surfs through turf, and plays well around the greens.

\\ LOOK: Top shelf—clean, modern and muscular; neutral, no-nonsense setup with softer lines and less offset than the older "i" iron; satin finish grabs you.

CONS

Not as easy to hit as some guys expect from a Ping set; longer irons require good swings, or else an investment in hybrids; built-in help can limit creativity.

BOTTOM LINE

One of our panel's favorite irons. More refined than the G and more accessible than the iBlade, the i200's balanced attributes should please mid-handicappers to serious better players.



The G iron is constructed from an alloy that's 40 percent stronger than 17-4 stainless steel.

PING G

\$800, steel; \$900, graphite; GOLF.com/ping

WE TESTED: 4-PW with Ping AWT 2.0 steel shafts

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: Surprisingly nimble—a step behind the i200, but more maneuverable than past G series irons; wide, rounded sole clears rough and rockets the ball high in the air; it's easier to turn over than to fade.

\\ ACCURACY/ FORGIVENESS: Ping's G series sets the standard for forgiveness, and this model is no different—it works hard so you don't have to; misses are measured in feet from the pin, not yards from the green.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL: Repeatable yardages, at least on par with the rest of the pack and maybe a tick longer than past G's; towering shots stick to the green; most testers can make these long irons work.

\\ FEEL: As expected, smooth, stable and wonderfully muted—the big face consumes the ball and launches it on its way; slightly more resonant than past iterations; friendly feedback deftly masks your misses.

\\ LOOK: Substantial but not overwhelming—the G's are getting more streamlined and picking up more fans; muted, utilitarian setup that wears its support on its face; less offset than its sibling, the max game-improvement GMax iron.

CONS

Loads of forgiveness costs some accuracy—even with improved workability, the G remains more point-and-shoot than other options; as other game-improvement irons are getting sharper and sleeker, the G can look a little bulbous and bland.

BOTTOM LINE

With its formidable face, this sturdy iron earns your trust from the very first swing. It's the quintessential game-improvement club: simple to swing, reasonably versatile, with plenty of length—and help—to boot. Bottom line? The Ping G, which debuted in early 2016, will make you look better than you are.

Prices listed are for a set of eight irons.

SRIXON Z 565

\$1,100, steel; \$1,200, graphite; GOLF.com/srixon

PROS

PLAYABILITY: Powerful, beveled sole is the real deal—it virtually eliminates digging, slides through sand and scythes thick rough; perfectly maneuverable, on par with many better-player irons.

ACCURACY/

FORGIVENESS: Spares direction over distance—little straying side-to-side; enough support on thin shots; stronger ballstrikers make the long irons work.

DISTANCE CONTROL:

Long without feeling souped-up or out of control, comparable to what guys are playing and often longer; dead-on short irons, with ideal spin into greens; doesn't lose much distance from tough lies.

FEEL: One of the top clubs—focused, soft feel of a blade with a bit of added zip; feedback is instructive,



"I KNOW THIS MAKES ME SOUND RIDICULOUSLY OVERCONFIDENT, BUT THERE'S NOTHING I COULDN'T DO WITH THESE IRONS."—Rich Bernstein, Index 12.3, Age 67

A high-strength faceplate is welded onto a soft, carbon-steel body to boost distance and feel.

WE TESTED: 5-PW with Nippon N.S. Pro 980GH DST steel and 5-PW with Miyazaki Kaula 8 graphite shafts

not abusive; standout balance puts you in control, especially from close range.

LOOK: The look, fit and finish are virtually unmatched; elegant lines, moderate size and minimal offset make it a huge hit—traditional blade look with extra strength built in.

CONS

One of the most demanding irons in the group; heel and toe strikes fall out of the sky; higher-handicappers want to love it, but some testers just can't find a way to make it work.

BOTTOM LINE

One of the sharpest, strongest contenders in its class. Srixon did a masterful job creating a game-improvement iron that behaves like a genuine blade, with great feel and workability.



TAYLORMADE M1

\$1,000, steel; \$1,200, graphite; GOLF.com/taylormade

A 15-gram tungsten toe weight (in 3- to 7-irons) shifts the CG lower and closer to the center of the face for forgiveness and feel.

WE TESTED: 4- and 7-iron with True Temper XP 95 steel shafts. (Full set was not available at test time.)

PROS

PLAYABILITY:

These clubs will make high, straight shots your bread and butter; heavy, rounded sole moves smoothly through uneven lies as well as rough; the hot face fires the ball out more than up—tends to fly a bit lower than the M2.

ACCURACY/

FORGIVENESS: Misses with both the 4- and 7-irons still chase toward the target—aim true and they'll get you around the green; count on the M1 to leave its share of makeable putts.

DISTANCE CONTROL:

A touch longer than average, though some guys pick up as much as 10 yards; the 4-iron packs a wallop—with these babies in your bag, some used hybrids will be on eBay soon.

FEEL: A deep, loud clap at impact applauds your best shots—and earns quite a few fans; nothing traditional about the M1's weighty snap through the ball, but an improvement over last year's M2 iron.

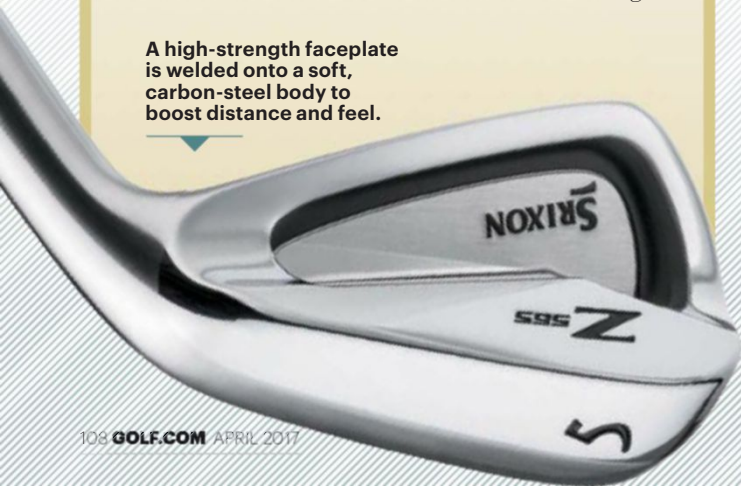
LOOK: TaylorMade did a great job of masking its game-improvement features—at address, this could pass for a player's club, with a lot of engineering to back it up; minimal offset appeals to lower-handicappers; slots on the clubface effectively frame the ball.

CONS

Hot face and one-note feedback make it difficult to dial in; several testers just can't get comfortable with the mechanical feel; perhaps a bit overbuilt—the M1 trades workability for straight-ahead distance; only two clubs were made available, so test results are not complete.

BOTTOM LINE

This unique, nontraditional design packs impressive distance into an intriguing amalgam—part better-player and part game-improvement iron. Tech heads will surely stand up and take notice of the M1.



TAYLORMADE M2

\$800, steel; \$900, graphite;
GOLF.com/taylormade

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: Up, up and away—fast, easy-launching shots climb high...and stay there; a straight-shooting, low-stress club that can curl the occasional draw; doesn't take much to manhandle the rough.

\\ ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: Probably the new M2's greatest strength, one of the best in its class; keeps the lid on misses and works well even when your swing doesn't; most testers can manage the long irons; swing with impunity—round-killing foul balls are happily quite rare.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL: Obliterates the ball—many testers are a half-club longer across most of the face than with their current sets; even-tempered, keeping fliers to a minimum; produces steeply descending shots that hit and hold the greens.

\\ FEEL: At impact, a flat, mellow sensation makes your hands happy; heavy

sole feels ready for liftoff; doesn't flinch in gnarly situations—rock-steady through the turf.

\\ LOOK: Muscular, tech-heavy look; the big, rounded head features all kinds of space-age touches—a nonconformist that wears its engineering well; the vertical slots on the clubface and painted bottom groove can help with aiming.

CONS

Not everyone cares for the overall styling—the club looks fine in the address position, but there's a lot going on in the back cavity; all the component parts drain feel from impact; lots of muscle, but there are limits to touch and creativity.

BOTTOM LINE

Mild-mannered, high-hitting and long as hell—this model borders on a max game-improvement iron. If you want big distance with little effort, give the retooled M2 a try—it's a notable upgrade over last year's version.

Support bars behind the face and extra adhesive in the cavity help the new M2 sound and feel better than last year's version.

WE TESTED:
4-AW with FST
Reax 88 HL
steel shaft



TITLEIST 716 AP1

\$900, steel; \$1,100, graphite;
GOLF.com/titleist

The 360-degree undercut channel creates a large, unsupported face to increase ball speed and launch angle.

WE TESTED: 4-W2 (52°) with True Temper XP 90 steel and 4-W2 with Mitsubishi Rayon Kuro Kage TiNi graphite shafts

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: A nimble, swashbuckling iron that's not afraid to get dirty; high or low, left or right, it's all in play if you provide accurate instructions; versatility is closer to a better-player iron than it was in previous versions of the AP1.

\\ ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: The 716 AP1 is a smooth-handling iron that really takes flight in the hands of a more skilled, creative pilot; fairly repeatable, and thin shots get all the help they need; stronger ballstrikers looking to scare more flagsticks find a willing partner.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL: Plenty long when hit on the sweet spot, with standard, reliable gaps between clubs; simple to duplicate partial shots; chips and pitches check up reliably; the wedges (P, W, and W2) are valuable additions to the set.

\\ FEEL: Leaves testers asking the same question: "Are you sure these aren't forged?" Well, no, but they feel pretty darn

close—specific feedback and sweet, solid *thwack* sends the ball on its way; moderate weighting helps the head glide smoothly through impact.

\\ LOOK: Attractive, athletic build conveys control; thicker topline doesn't obscure the AP1's clean setup, which tucks in nicely behind the ball; there's plenty of help built in, but you might not notice it standing over the ball.

CONS

A better fit for consistent, stronger swingers—in terms of forgiveness, the AP1 skews closer to a better-player club than some other models in the test; its squat, chubby look doesn't please every panelist.

BOTTOM LINE

A holdover from last year's test, the 716 AP1 drifts toward a better-player iron; it strikes a balance between helping you improve and expecting you to put a good move on the ball. If you can hit it near the middle of the face, the club's feel, versatility and fine-grain control are easy to appreciate.

Prices listed are for a set of eight irons.

WILSON STAFF C200

\$800, steel; \$900, graphite; GOLF.com/wilson

WE TESTED: 4-GW with KBS Tour 90 steel and 4-GW with Aldila Rogue Pro graphite shafts

PROS

|| PLAYABILITY:

Exceptional cruising altitude; round, sure-footed sole works well from fairway bunkers; generous leading edge manhandles most intimidating lies and plays better from thick stuff than from thin; easier to work left than right.

|| ACCURACY/

FORGIVENESS: This club's biggest strength; the whole face plays like a springboard—every miss gets a little boost, and most end up arrow-straight; directional misses tend to hold their heads where they start and don't get worse.

|| DISTANCE CONTROL:

Added elevation helps slower swingers; the high flight seems unfazed by most headwinds; poor contact yields almost as much distance as a center strike.

|| FEEL:

Easy on the hands—and the joints; urethane inserts eat up painful vibrations, and the

rich, well-tuned acoustics sound excellent; the KBS shaft loads well and pops through the impact zone.

|| LOOK: Clean silhouette for a large, tech-laden head; showcases its floating "FLXFace" with dashed, urethane-filled gaps around the perimeter, which lends confidence to a few guys.

CONS

Many panelists don't care for the bulk and busy setup; the combination of the broad frame, damp feel and hearty punch makes partial and greenside shots tricky; distance falls a few ticks behind modern power irons; impact is often heard more than felt.

BOTTOM LINE

The borderline max game-improvement C200 provides great height, decent versatility and rare-to-nonexistent misses. It's a meat-and-potatoes iron, ideal for slower swingers and guys who play only occasionally but want to hit more greens.

The holes surrounding the springy face are filled with urethane to spiff up sound and feel.

The Testers

It's not easy hitting thousands of shots, but our testers love a challenge. These golf-addicted amateurs dove in cleats-first, all to help you find your next set of irons. They're ordinary guys (teachers, accountants, engineers) with extraordinary insight into golf gear. Now, get to know our merry band a little better.

CHRIS KLAMKIN

HDCP INDEX 1.7 AGE 32
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 210 LBS.
OCCUPATION ENTREPRENEUR
RESIDENCE DETROIT, MICH.



DORSEY GRAY

HDCP INDEX 7.8 AGE 61
HEIGHT 5'11" WEIGHT 180 LBS.
OCCUPATION MORTGAGE BANKER
RESIDENCE ATLANTA, GA.



GARY WILSON

HDCP INDEX 11.0 AGE 68
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 230 LBS.
OCCUPATION ARCHITECT
RESIDENCE SPRING, TEXAS



RANDY ROCHEFORT

HDCP INDEX 1.8 AGE 42
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 210 LBS.
OCCUPATION UTILITY MAPPING
RESIDENCE BIRMINGHAM, ALA.



JACK RECORD

HDCP INDEX 8.5 AGE 41
HEIGHT 5'11" WEIGHT 260 LBS.
OCCUPATION CEO, SOFTWARE CO.
RESIDENCE ATLANTA, GA.



HOAI HOANG

HDCP INDEX 11.5 AGE 42
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 160 LBS.
OCCUPATION ATTORNEY
RESIDENCE CARENCRIO, LA.



JOE JACK

HDCP INDEX 2.0 AGE 25
HEIGHT 6'2" WEIGHT 225 LBS.
OCCUPATION SALES
RESIDENCE SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH



MIKE GORSKI

HDCP INDEX 8.6 AGE 55
HEIGHT 5'9" WEIGHT 155 LBS.
OCCUPATION HIGH SCHOOL GOLF COACH
RESIDENCE GLENORA, CALIF.



BUD ADLER

HDCP INDEX 12.3 AGE 75
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 215 LBS.
OCCUPATION REAL ESTATE CONSULTANT, RETIRED
RESIDENCE GOLD CANYON, ARIZ.



KEN MELTZER

HDCP INDEX 2.0 AGE 59
HEIGHT 6'2" WEIGHT 185 LBS.
OCCUPATION TEACHER/WRITER
RESIDENCE ATLANTA, GA.



PATRICK KENNEDY

HDCP INDEX 8.9 AGE 48
HEIGHT 5'7" WEIGHT 150 LBS.
OCCUPATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGER
RESIDENCE SAN JOSE, CALIF.



RICH BERNSTEIN

HDCP INDEX 12.3 AGE 67
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 195 LBS.
OCCUPATION RETIRED ADMIN. DIRECTOR
RESIDENCE WARETOWN, N.J.



DREW ISAACMAN

HDCP INDEX 3.0 AGE 50
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 170 LBS.
OCCUPATION BUSINESS OWNER
RESIDENCE SAN DIEGO, CALIF.



JON KOTRABA

HDCP INDEX 9.0 AGE 51
HEIGHT 5'11" WEIGHT 185 LBS.
OCCUPATION I.T. DIRECTOR
RESIDENCE MONTVALE, N.J.



ERIC JACK

HDCP INDEX 12.5 AGE 58
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 250 LBS.
OCCUPATION CPA
RESIDENCE DRAPER, UTAH



GARY SEAL

HDCP INDEX 3.0 AGE 52
HEIGHT 6' WEIGHT 230 LBS.
OCCUPATION MILITARY INSTRUCTOR
RESIDENCE HUNTSVILLE, ALA.



JEFF DELFS

HDCP INDEX 9.1 AGE 37
HEIGHT 6'2" WEIGHT 215 LBS.
OCCUPATION PRODUCT MANAGER
RESIDENCE MARIETTA, GA.



DON WILSON

HDCP INDEX 14.1 AGE 72
HEIGHT 5'6" WEIGHT 162 LBS.
OCCUPATION RETIRED ZOOLOGIST
RESIDENCE GAINESVILLE, VA.



JON DOBBERSTEIN

HDCP INDEX 3.8 AGE 48
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 240 LBS.
OCCUPATION PROJECT MANAGER
RESIDENCE PRIOR LAKE, MINN.



TOM JENNINGS

HDCP INDEX 9.3 AGE 63
HEIGHT 5'11" WEIGHT 215 LBS.
OCCUPATION CEO, CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
RESIDENCE WINDER, GA.



JOHN DOTTORE

HDCP INDEX 15.0 AGE 52
HEIGHT 5'7" WEIGHT 175 LBS.
OCCUPATION COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE
RESIDENCE LONGWOOD, FLA.



MARK HABERSTROH

HDCP INDEX 4.8 AGE 63
HEIGHT 5'9" WEIGHT 160 LBS.
OCCUPATION ACCOUNTANT (RET.)
RESIDENCE DAYTON, OHIO



ED INDERBITZEN

HDCP INDEX 9.5 AGE 49
HEIGHT 5'7" WEIGHT 170 LBS.
OCCUPATION DAIRY DISTRIBUTOR
RESIDENCE TACOMA, WASH.



KEVIN KEHOE

HDCP INDEX 15.0 AGE 54
HEIGHT 5'8" WEIGHT 172 LBS.
OCCUPATION FINE ARTIST/PAINTER
RESIDENCE HEBER VALLEY, UTAH



DAN ZEGURA

HDCP INDEX 4.8 AGE 52
HEIGHT 6'4" WEIGHT 215 LBS.
OCCUPATION ATTORNEY
RESIDENCE DECATUR, GA.



CJ BUSH

HDCP INDEX 10.1 AGE 35
HEIGHT 6'1" WEIGHT 240 LBS.
OCCUPATION MORTGAGE BANKER
RESIDENCE GLASGOW, KY.



JUSTIN DRESCHLER

HDCP INDEX 16.0 AGE 32
HEIGHT 6' WEIGHT 260 LBS.
OCCUPATION SOFTWARE SALES
RESIDENCE ATLANTA, GA.



ALEX HSI

HDCP INDEX 5.2 AGE 40
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 215 LBS.
OCCUPATION DIRECTOR OF SALES
RESIDENCE PINOLE, CALIF.



OWEN DAHL

HDCP INDEX 10.3 AGE 46
HEIGHT 5'8" WEIGHT 165 LBS.
OCCUPATION FINANCIAL ANALYST
RESIDENCE TACOMA, WASH.



DAVE LUCARELLI

HDCP INDEX 16.0 AGE 46
HEIGHT 5'11" WEIGHT 178 LBS.
OCCUPATION BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, HEALTHCARE
RESIDENCE ATLANTA, GA.



SCOTT LAMPKE

HDCP INDEX 5.3 AGE 29
HEIGHT 6'1" WEIGHT 207 LBS.
OCCUPATION CABLE ENGINEER
RESIDENCE JACKSONVILLE, FLA.



CHARLES BROWN

HDCP INDEX 10.7 AGE 34
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 210 LBS.
OCCUPATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
RESIDENCE WASHINGTON, D.C.



JIM ESTHER

HDCP INDEX 17.7 AGE 64
HEIGHT 5'11" WEIGHT 180 LBS.
OCCUPATION PHYSICIAN
RESIDENCE ST. LOUIS, MO.



MICHAEL KAYE

HDCP INDEX 5.4 AGE 59
HEIGHT 6'1" WEIGHT 180 LBS.
OCCUPATION ENGINEER
RESIDENCE SOUTH ORANGE, N.J.



MIKE ROYMAN

HDCP INDEX 10.9 AGE 46
HEIGHT 5'10" WEIGHT 175 LBS.
OCCUPATION ATTORNEY
RESIDENCE SKIPPAK, PA.



DAVID SULLIVAN

HDCP INDEX 19.0 AGE 49
HEIGHT 5'9" WEIGHT 170 LBS.
OCCUPATION ACCOUNTANT
RESIDENCE AMHERST, N.H.



JEFF MCKINNEY

HDCP INDEX 6.6 AGE 56
HEIGHT 6'2" WEIGHT 225 LBS.
OCCUPATION POLICE LIEUTENANT
RESIDENCE AYLETT, VA.



KRIS MADSEN

HDCP INDEX 11.0 AGE 54
HEIGHT 5'9" WEIGHT 210 LBS.
OCCUPATION FLIGHT ATTENDANT
RESIDENCE HAINES CITY, FLA.



PETER KRAUS

HDCP INDEX 20.5 AGE 51
HEIGHT 6'1" WEIGHT 185 LBS.
OCCUPATION ATTORNEY
RESIDENCE SEATTLE, WA.



COURTESY WILSON STAFF

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BRIDGESTONE TOUR B X-CB

\$1,200, steel (for 7); GOLF.com/bridgestone

WE TESTED: 4-PW with Nippon N.S. Pro Modus³ Tour 105 steel shafts

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: One of the top-rated clubs; works well from all lies, including the rough; mid-trajectory flight can be altered at will; allows you to create whatever shape you want.

\\ ACCURACY/ FORGIVENESS:

Surprisingly forgiving on slight miscues; start shots on line and watch them fly arrow-straight; the sole absorbs steeper strikes without much digging.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL:

One of the X-CB's real strengths; altering distance when needed is a snap; as much as a half-club longer than normal for some guys.

\\ FEEL: A tester favorite; excellent weighting—not too heavy or light; the sole

shoots through turf like a hot knife through butter; solid contact is sweet, with little vibration on misses.

\\ LOOK: Top marks—beautiful at address, clean and confidence-inspiring; compact head and understated satin finish are right-on.

CONS

Small head may be unsettling if you have any doubts about your ballstriking ability; long irons can be a challenge; like any blade design, misses will suffer a bit.

BOTTOM LINE

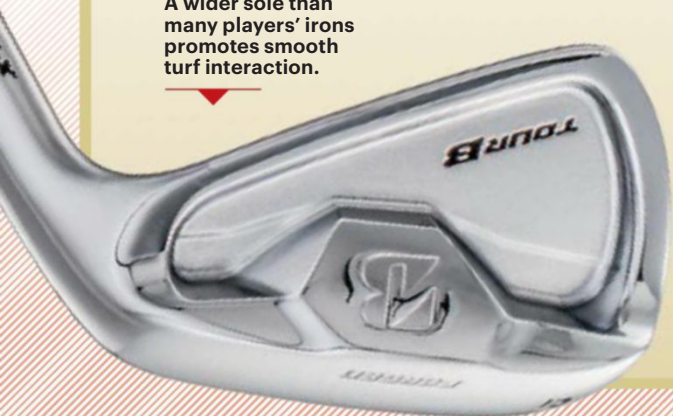
The highest-ranked better-player iron in our test. The Tour B X-CB excels in every performance category and looks great doing it.



"SPLENDID IRONS THAT CAN BE PLAYED BY GOLFERS FROM SCRATCH UP TO 12-HANDICAPPERS."

—Jeff McKinney, Index 6.6, Age 56

A wider sole than many players' irons promotes smooth turf interaction.



Tungsten inserts behind the hitting area help the long irons fly higher.

CALLAWAY APEX PRO

\$1,200, steel; \$1,400, graphite; GOLF.com/callaway

WE TESTED: 3-PW with Project X steel shafts

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: One of the best irons in this category; these let you get creative with your shaping and trajectory; easy to hit from just about any lie; they rip through the rough with ease.

\\ ACCURACY/ FORGIVENESS: Covers up directional misses much better than expected; shots want to go straight, which makes finding the target a cinch; deadly accurate short irons.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL: Highly predictable results all day long; very solid overall length through the set, including the longer irons; wedge hones in just the way you want on "green-lighters."

\\ FEEL: Best in class—the Apex Pro lets you know how you hit it, with plenty of feedback; super smooth and soft on solid contact without punishing your

misses; stable throughout the set, from the wedge up to the 3-iron.

\\ LOOK: The Apex Pro's elegant head shape is nearly perfect in every way; testers love how it looks at address, especially the welcoming, rounded leading edge.

CONS

Heel and toe hits don't deliver quite as much help as some guys want; a few testers say that shots actually go too straight; one or two panelists find the soft feel more muted than they prefer.

BOTTOM LINE

The Callaway Apex Pro is in the upper tier of better-player irons. This carryover model from 2016 provides all the feel, workability and even forgiveness that anyone can expect from a player's club.



"A CAVITY BACK WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF A TOUR IRON. I LIKE IT!"

—Gary Seal, Index 3.0, Age 52

COBRA KING FORGED TOUR

\$1,000, steel; \$1,100, graphite (for 7); GOLF.com/cobra

WE TESTED: 4-GW with KBS Tour FLT steel shafts

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: Handles most shot shapes with relative ease; defaults to a fairly high trajectory, but no problem with flighting down shots; more than adequate from testy lies and rough.

\\ ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: Hooks and slices are minimized—acceptable correction when you don't catch it quite right; toe hits often turn out better than those struck near the heel; solid strikes hold the line as well as expected.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL: Predictable carry yardages make it easy to start nailing targets; length is in line with their current clubs; consistent, repeatable shots; fairly simple to add or subtract distance as needed.

\\ FEEL: One of the best-feeling sweet spots you'll find; very soft throughout

the set, without the harshness on mis-hits that you get in some blades; delivers tremendous feedback to the hands, with an especially smooth sensation at impact.

\\ LOOK: Great shape and finish—a winner for Cobra; striking at address, with moderately thin topline that isn't intimidating; very little to complain about if you like the classics.

CONS

Not quite as maneuverable as some others; a few testers find a bit of a built-in draw bias; heavy-ish feel can be too much.

BOTTOM LINE

King Forged Tour is a handsome stick that feels sweet and does a very good job of handling your misses. It gives players a real opportunity to hit more greens.

A TPU insert behind the face dampens vibration for improved feel.



Each club is built to 7-iron length for a more consistent setup and swing.

COBRA KING FORGED ONE LENGTH

\$1,000, steel; \$1,100, graphite (for 7); GOLF.com/cobra

WE TESTED: 4-GW with KBS Tour FLT steel shafts

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: Testers love the height of the long irons, which are easier than expected to get airborne; effective through the rough and good from trouble lies; easy to shape shots, particularly from right to left.

\\ ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS:

Slight misses stay in play reasonably well and don't lose huge amounts of distance; straight ball flight is more the norm than not.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL:

Longer-than-standard shafts in the short irons and wedges contribute to bigger gaps (players can hit these irons farther than normal); once the testers get accustomed to the yardages, the single-length shafts make dialing in distance simple; adequate carry in the long irons for some guys.

\\ FEEL: Constant weight throughout the set leads to confident swings; smooth, forged impact feel without much harsh vibration; longer short irons provide a sense of power.

\\ LOOK: They appear comfortable and easy to hit at address; clean lines and somewhat thin topline look solid and make the club simple to align; lovely finish and medallion appear traditional and modern at the same time.

CONS

The longer irons don't produce the overall carry distance that some testers are used to; short irons can be challenging to control due to the longer shaft length; the value of the single-length iron approach seems lost on a few testers.

BOTTOM LINE

This high-quality forged set delivers respectable forgiveness and workability. Of course, the real headline? The unconventional, same-length shafts. While there's a learning curve for better players (who can be set in their ways), many testers can see the advantages, including club-to-club ballstriking consistency, of playing single-length irons.

Prices listed are for a set of eight irons.

BEN HOGAN PTx

\$1,352, steel; \$1,472, graphite; GOLF.com/equipment

WE TESTED: 21°, 25°, 29°, 33°, 37°, 41°, 45° with KBS Tour-V 110 steel and UST Mamiya Recoil 660 F3 graphite shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: Time to open up your shotmaking repertoire—testers can shape shots on par with a muscleback blade; beveled sole cuts through tough lies and rough.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: The PTx short irons are a pleasure to play—dial-a-distance and stick it close; a bit more forgiveness than expected given the shallow cavity—misses are manageable directionally—but definitely bladelike.

DISTANCE CONTROL: The same overall lengths that guys get from their gamers; low to mid trajectory makes it easy to judge short and mid-iron distances, and PTx is good around the greens.

FEEL: Nicely weighted and stable throughout the swing; shorter shots are very good—no unexpected “pop” off the face;

cottony soft, but still lively through impact.

LOOK: Just what you want at address; compact and clean, Hoganesque look; attractive brushed finish, and the medallion in the cavity is inspiring.

CONS

Not a standout in any performance category; feel doesn't rival the top clubs; good move adding standard numbering on the hosel to complement lofts on the sole, but the numbers look like an afterthought.

BOTTOM LINE

Solid, dependable sticks for guys who still value the Hogan name. Better players will certainly get enjoyment from them. (Note: In January, the Ben Hogan Co. filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The PTx irons are still being sold, but don't expect custom orders to be fulfilled at this time.)

A carbon steel frame with co-forged titanium face increases perimeter weighting.



The forging process stiffens the upper portion of the face for better results on misses.

HONMA TW737 V

\$1,200, steel; GOLF.com/equipment

WE TESTED: 5-10 with Nippon N.S. Pro Modus³ steel and 3-10 with True Temper Dynamic Gold AMT steel shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: Shaping fades and draws is simple enough, while altering trajectory is moderately easy, too; performs well from most fairway lies and cuts through the rough admirably; smooth swings tend to create a higher ball flight than many blade-style irons.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: They cover up directional mistakes about as well as the testers' normal irons; only the worst swings are punished severely.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Average length for the category but consistent throughout the set; three-quarter swings yield predictable results; make a good move in the scoring zone and you'll be looking at a very short putt.

FEEL: Plenty of weight through the swing; produces a powerful

sensation at contact; strong, satisfying feel lets you know how you hit it; firmer than many other forged bladelike irons.

LOOK: Attractive blade with a thin topline and slight offset, which looks great next to the ball; testers like the smart cavity design and high-quality finish.

CONS

More distance loss on mis-hits than other models in the better-player iron category; impact feels a bit harder than many testers prefer in a forged blade; doesn't quite live up to the high price tag, some testers say.

BOTTOM LINE

Though the feel at contact might take a little time to resonate with you, the Honma TW737 V is an overall respectable performer that produces good results on solid strikes.

MIZUNO JPX 900 TOUR

\$1,200, steel; GOLF.com/mizuno

WE TESTED: 3-PW with True Temper Dynamic Gold AMT steel shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: They produce a beautiful, repeating ball flight; it's so easy to shape shots that you almost don't have to try—clubs like this can only help a player's shotmaking prowess.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: Pinpoint accuracy—if you have a repeatable swing, these things will send the ball to the target; maintains distance on toe shots; surprisingly good at mitigating misses and keeping the ball on line.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Spot-on control for scoring shots, with plenty of touch; they carry about the same distance as what guys typically play; fantastic at altering distances with three-quarter swings on in-between yardages.

FEEL: Players pick Mizuno forged irons for the feel, and these don't

disappoint; delivers a soft, responsive feel on center strikes so you know when you hit it just right; misses tell you what went wrong but without the sting.

LOOK: Sleek shape and thin topline are ideal at address; understated, blasted finish isn't what you expect from Mizuno, but it works; testers would be proud to carry this one in their bag.

CONS

Thin sole can dig more than you want on less-than-perfect swings; feel isn't quite up to what some testers expect from a Mizuno forging; some prefer the traditional Mizuno chrome finish to the dull gray.

BOTTOM LINE

Another quality Mizuno forged blade that's workable and controllable, even if it's not quite up to the MP standard in terms of look and feel.

A deep milled pocket behind the face creates a lower CG for higher-launching shots.



Tungsten toe weighting helps increase MOI for added head stability.

PING iBLADE

\$1,200, steel; GOLF.com/ping

WE TESTED: 3-PW with True Temper Dynamic Gold steel shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: The leading edge makes short work of trouble and hilly lies; easy to manufacture shots without having to sacrifice distance or accuracy; natural trajectory progression through the set.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: Players strike these well, swing after swing—it's hard to miss; dead-on accuracy you expect from blades with the bonus of Ping forgiveness; you can hit these all over the face and not pay a price.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Predictable lengths make scoring easy; the entire face seems to produce the same distance, which is longer than the typical blade; a few testers get a lot more yardage than with their current set of better-player irons.

FEEL: The muted crack at impact feels powerful and pleasing; short shots

around the green produce a crisp, satisfying click that helps hone distances; plenty of weight tells you exactly where the clubhead is—it makes you feel like you can always find the sweet spot.

LOOK: Probably the cleanest lines of any Ping iron ever; thin topline, minimal offset and few graphics should appeal to all low-handicappers; head shape instills confidence at address and looks good over the ball.

CONS

Shot-shapers say these irons aren't quite as maneuverable as traditional blades; standard trajectory tends to be a little lower than some testers prefer; a few panelists opt for the impact feel of a forged model over the iBlade.

BOTTOM LINE

The iBlade is rock-solid across the board, with a clean look, plenty of forgiveness and traditional Ping reliability.

Prices listed are for a set of eight irons.

SRIXON Z 765

\$1,100, steel; GOLF.com/srixon

WE TESTED: 5-PW with True Temper Dynamic Gold steel and 5-PW with Nippon N.S. Pro Modus³ steel shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: Ball flight tends to be on the higher side but is easy to alter; testers can shape shots from good lies and blast the ball from bad ones.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: Reduces sidespin well enough to control directional misses; off-center strikes don't stray too far off line; crisp contact produces flag-hunting lasers.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Impressive length, longer than average for a blade-style head; once you're locked in, expect to knock down a few targets; provides the flexibility to subtract a few yards, when needed, with the shorter irons.

FEEL: The sole slices through the turf like a machete; solid forged feel that's fairly crisp at impact; unwanted vibrations are

minimized regardless of where on the face you strike it.

LOOK: Gorgeous combination of shiny and brushed chrome finish; clean, sharp and sexy at address; just what you want from a blade, given its slim topline and minimal offset.

CONS

Not quite as workable as some pure muscle-backs; feel isn't as soft as a few other models on center hits and can be harsh on misses; a couple of guys don't see huge improvements over the previous Z 745 irons.

BOTTOM LINE

One of the higher-rated models in the test, with impressive overall marks. The Srixon Z 765 iron offers a nice dose of shot-shaping and control, as well as a desirable look and feel.



"A SWEET FORGING THAT CAN GO TOE-TO-TOE WITH ANYTHING IN THE CATEGORY."

—Randy Rochefort, Index 1.8, Age 42

Larger milled grooves than the previous model improve control.



High-density weights in the low toe and heel increase inertia.

TITLEIST 716 AP2

\$1,200, steel; \$1,400, graphite; GOLF.com/titleist

WE TESTED: 3-W with True Temper XP 90 steel and 3-W with True Temper AMT steel shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: One of the best irons in the category; the long and mid-irons are amazingly easy to hit; draws and fades are a breeze, while straight shots are dead simple; with the short irons, you can execute just about any shot you can dream up.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: Tops in its class; surprisingly good on heel and toe contact; there's also lots of help on shots that hit high or low on the face; more relief than you deserve from a better-player iron—only the worst shots miss the green.

DISTANCE CONTROL: One of the top models in this category; testers get more carry than they typically expect; very versatile—the 716 AP2 iron handles any type of in-between shot length you might require.

FEEL: Among the best of the bunch; feel is so soft that shots come off with no vibration; as smooth as just about any forged irons; gratifying, addictive sensation at impact.

LOOK: High-tech yet classic; a real standout—you'll be proud when your playing partners peek into your bag and see these babies; at address, they set up pretty much perfectly.

CONS

For some faster swingers, shots go a little higher and spin more than they'd like; a few guys believe it's not quite as responsive as a traditional, one-piece forged blade; can be kind of clunky on mis-hits.

BOTTOM LINE

For the second year in a row, the AP2 is one of the top irons tested. It provides stellar precision and workability, with a feel and look that draw rave reviews.



"THE BEST COMBINATION OF BETTER-PLAYER FEATURES AND GAME-IMPROVEMENT FORGIVENESS OUT THERE."

—Patrick Kennedy, Index 8.9, Age 48

WILSON STAFF FG TOUR V6\$1,000, steel; GOLF.com/wilson**WE TESTED:** 4-GW with True Temper Dynamic Gold AMT steel shafts**PROS**

PLAYABILITY: The sole works from a variety of lies, and holds its own around the greens; easy to get in the air quickly, and hit knockdowns, too; can turn the ball over with the best of them.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: One of the category's top-rated clubs; repeatable and dependable—guys can shoot at the target with confidence; strikes away from the center of the face do little damage—even toe shots fly fairly straight.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Adept at both sawing off shots and giving you full distance; testers are pleased with overall length, which meets their expectations for the category; good on touch shots near the green.

FEEL: Sweet, soft sensation across a large area of the face; panelists can really sense the ball

shooting off at impact; outstanding stability from both good and bad lies.

LOOK: With a strong, classy appearance, this forged iron makes some testers nostalgic for their old Wilson blades; the medium topline and small cavity look great at address and give guys the boldness to pull off the shot they need to hit.

CONS

The club's leading edge can be a little "diggy" through impact; the FG Tour V6's corrective qualities inhibit shotmaking for a handful of better players; scoring irons tend to fly higher than some testers want.

BOTTOM LINE

The Wilson Staff FG Tour V6 delivers a good deal of accuracy and forgiveness for a better-player iron. Plus, its feel and attractive looks harken back to classic Wilson forgings.

Twenty grams of tungsten lowers the CG for added forgiveness.



The light, cagelike structure allows mass to be placed low in the long irons to boost launch.

CALLAWAY BIG BERTHA OS\$1,100, steel; \$1,300, graphite; GOLF.com/callaway**WE TESTED:** 4-PW with True Temper Speed Step 80 steel and 4-PW with UST Mamiya Recoil ES 460 graphite shafts**PROS**

PLAYABILITY: Flies higher than others, which makes the long irons easier to handle; brawny head rips through the rough with ease, and is adept at picking balls out of fairway bunkers.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: Might be its best feature; makes you look like half your handicap, with an oversize sweet spot to keep misses online; surprising accuracy is great for playing target golf.

DISTANCE CONTROL: This one packs a punch; a few testers hit it up to a full club longer than their own sticks; several other guys notice significant gains on mis-hits.

FEEL: Weighting makes you aware of the head during the swing, improving timing and clubface control; feels

powerful at impact; balls seem to compress and jump off the face quickly and crisply; strong as oak on all but the worst misses.

LOOK: A standout—design suggests high MOI and gives testers confidence that they'll hit straight, soaring shots; most guys go for the gunmetal finish and technology neatly sealed away in the cavity.

CONS

Several guys struggle with finesse shots, and would swap out the wedge; some wish for more feedback, while others like a softer feel; can look a little clunky and too much like a hybrid.

BOTTOM LINE

The Big Bertha OS is one of the better irons tested. This mean-looking stick serves up a big dose of forgiveness and length.



"TREMENDOUSLY FORGIVING-AND NO SLOUCH WHEN IT COMES TO DISTANCE."

—Justin Dreschler, Index 16.0, Age 32

Prices listed are for a set of eight irons.

COBRA KING OVERSIZE

\$1,000, steel; \$1,100, graphite;
GOLF.com/cobra

WE TESTED: 4-GW with True Temper XP 85 steel and 4-GW with UST Mamiya Recoil 460 ES graphite shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: About as good as it gets in this category—nice, high flight from almost any lie; tears through rough with minimal effort; testers are as confident with the long irons as with the scoring ones.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: A fine blend of precision and help; straight shots come standard, while the enlarged sweet zone keeps misses close to the target line.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Solid strikes are on par with several testers' own clubs, and one or two guys get a boost on misses; for the most part, regular gaps and predictable outcomes make it easy to lock in and trust.

FEEL: Light, lively and stable; guys like the shaft pairing and feel in control of the head; well-struck

shots are rewarded with a sweet cushioned sensation, while misses aren't overly hard or jarring.

LOOK: Best in show; large, traditional head shape looks impossible to miss; well-delineated sweet spot helps with ball position and increases focus at address; closed cavity with nickel chrome finish is clean and classy.

CONS

A few guys want more power on center and off-center hits, and one or two struggle to hit repeatable distances; some testers find the wedges a bit unwieldy, and lack touch around the greens.

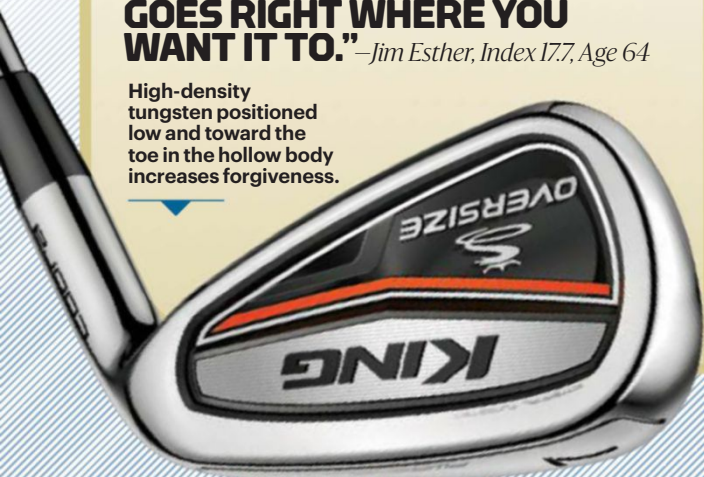
BOTTOM LINE

Cobra's King Oversize is one of the best models in its class. Higher-handicappers will enjoy top-notch feel and looks, as well as impressive playability and ample forgiveness.



"A CLASSIC SHAPE WITH LOTS OF STEALTH TECHNOLOGY. THE BALL GOES RIGHT WHERE YOU WANT IT TO."—Jim Esther, Index 17.7, Age 64

High-density tungsten positioned low and toward the toe in the hollow body increases forgiveness.



PING GMAX

\$800, steel; \$900, graphite;
GOLF.com/ping

The wide sole helps shift the CG low and back for higher shots.

WE TESTED: 4-PW with Ping CFS Distance steel and 4-PW with Ping CFS graphite shafts

PROS

PLAYABILITY: Head of its class—for guys who want a high, soft flight that holds the green; straight shots or slight draws are the norm, even for guys who lose it to the right with their own sticks; easily launches balls from the rough and other trouble spots.

ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: The most forgiving iron in the category—it's not even close; solid shots fly at the target, while misses never stray too far; thin shots get a pardon with good elevation and length.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Responds well to easy swings; high launch gives slower swingers a nice boost in carry distance, especially with the longer irons; hits the target consistently when you're on your game and can carry the trouble when you're not.

FEEL: A tad heavier than most, which helps with rhythm; easy to track during the swing and square up at impact; the large head stays firm and stable no matter where you strike it.

LOOK: Pleasing to the eye—long face, wide sole, thick topline, visible cavity and encouraging offset; the glare-free finish disguises some of its size and adds a touch of refinement; white scoring line can be a useful alignment aid.

CONS

The head size turns off a few testers; some wish for a softer feel on solid shots and greater feedback on misses; stronger swingers have trouble keeping the flight down, and those with active hands can struggle with the offset.

BOTTOM LINE

A carryover model, the GMax is the top performer in this year's max game-improvement test. Higher-handicappers looking for an easy-launching iron loaded with forgiveness would do well to give these a try.



"WITH THE GMAX, YOUR SCORE WILL BE THREE TO FOUR SHOTS BETTER THAN YOU THINK YOU DESERVE."

—Peter Kraus, Index 20.5, Age 51

TOUR EDGE HOT LAUNCH 2

\$400, steel; \$500, graphite; GOLF.com/touredge

WE TESTED: 4-AW with KBS Tour 90 steel and 4-AW with UST Mamiya for Tour Edge graphite shafts

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: Great clubs for hitting straight shot after straight shot; mid-high flight works better in the wind than others; makes it surprisingly easy to tame trouble lies.

\\ ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: This iron's best asset; the Hot Launch 2 is reliable on center shots, flying where you expect on decent contact; minimizes the ill effects of the most dreaded misses.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL: Generates enough length to get the job done; short irons boast serious stopping power—sets you up to score; makes up in consistent distance what it might lack in power; predictable yardages yield results you can count on.

\\ FEEL: On the heavier side, so it's simple to track the head through the swing; plenty stable, even

in thick rough; transmits useful feedback to the hands to let you know just what went wrong when you miss it.

\\ LOOK: Large cavity, elongated clubface and fairly thick topline give testers the confidence that they'll hit it well; smart finish blocks glare on bright, sunny days.

CONS

Doesn't produce big distance numbers like some irons; not quite as much help covering up mis-hits as a few testers would like, especially with the longer irons; the bright accent colors aren't for everyone; impact can feel hard with unpleasant vibrations.

BOTTOM LINE

The Hot Launch 2 is a user-friendly set for players interested in a dependable, fairly forgiving model at a significantly lower price than others in the test.

A notched hosel in the 3- to 7-irons allows mass to be moved to the toe for added forgiveness.



Urethane-filled "power holes" keep three-quarters of the face free from the body for greater flex at impact.

WILSON STAFF D300

\$800, steel; \$900, graphite; GOLF.com/wilson

WE TESTED: 4-GW with KBS Tour 80 steel and 4-GW with Matrix Speed Rulz A-type graphite shafts

PROS

\\ PLAYABILITY: Predominantly straight, though a few testers get slight draws and fades out of the perimeter-weighted head; mid-high flight can easily be kept down to fight the wind; versatile sole works well on thin and thick lies, and wedges offer touch around the greens.

\\ ACCURACY/FORGIVENESS: These sticks lend plenty of assistance on mis-hits; just point and shoot—where you aim is where the ball tends to go; minimizes spin on shots off the toe and heel.

\\ DISTANCE CONTROL: One of its better features; comparable carry to what most testers are used to, and sometimes a bit longer; similar yardages on solid and slight off-center hits; consistent carry gives guys peace of mind when gunning at well-guarded pins.

\\ FEEL: Best in class; catch it dead-center and the ball springs off the face

with a crisp, rewarding feel; built-in technology dampens unwanted vibrations, but there's still plenty of usable feedback on off-center hits; easy to track during the swing, and solid at impact.

\\ LOOK: Generously sized but not clumsy; more traditional profile than others in the category; shiny finish and slots slim the look, while the contrasting matte face aids with alignment.

CONS

Longer irons aren't as easy to get airborne as others, leaving a few guys reaching for hybrids; some higher-handicappers may need more help; chrome clubhead reflects light on sunny days.

BOTTOM LINE

With the D300, you get a complete package: lots of length, excellent control and superb feel. Ample forgiveness makes it a good option for higher-handicappers, as well.

Prices listed are for a set of eight irons.

GOLD

Where The Game Meets The Good Life

National Treasures

Beyond the gates of
Augusta National
are a handful of
masterful tracks
blazed by Jones,
Palmer, Nicklaus—
and ready to be
played by *you*
By Joe Passov



AUGUSTA GOLF GUIDE

So you didn't *quite* qualify for this month's little gathering in Augusta, but come Masters Week, you still hope to tee it up nearby. Options await within a short drive of Magnolia Lane. Whether you're a Masters fan, a student of golf history, an architecture buff—or all three—consider exploring one of these handful of layouts linked to Masters royalty: the Emperor (Bobby Jones) and the King (Arnold Palmer). Their legendary footsteps start here.



Expect a swell time if you go over the green on Palmetto's opening hole.

Palmetto Golf Club Aiken, S.C.

» Of the nearby private clubs that welcome the masses during Masters Week, the ultimate time-warp trip is to Palmetto Golf Club, a layout dating to 1892 and located 40 minutes from Augusta, just across the South Carolina border. Alister MacKenzie, Augusta National's co-designer, substantially reworked Palmetto in 1932. Thanks to some sensitive restoration work, most recently by Gil Hanse, the place looks unchanged from MacKenzie's day. The course's cleverly contoured greens, gently tumbling terrain and historic 1902 clubhouse (designed by illustrious architect Stanford White) are guaranteed to impress. Memorabilia adorns the clubhouse walls, including a letter from Masters and Augusta National founder Bobby Jones, who played

Palmetto many times. Jones called the seventh hole the best medal-play par 3 he'd ever encountered. Now, as then, the course mixes Old World scruffiness with superb strategy. "It's just pure golf," said two-time Masters champ Ben Crenshaw. "The holes fit the land beautifully."

The deal: \$250 per player, which includes cart, range balls and lunch.
palmettogolfclub.net

Augusta Country Club Augusta, Ga.

» If it weren't for a certain prominent golf course 2.5 miles away, the design virtues of Augusta Country Club would be far better known. The two private clubs actually abut each other, the ninth hole at Augusta C.C. separated only by a fence from Augusta National's 13th. The feel of each, however, is worlds apart. Augusta

Take the right approach on Augusta C.C.'s par-5 fifth and it's reachable in two.

LEFT: JOHN AND JEANNINE HEILBR; RIGHT: FRED VUICH/SI



Parring Forest Hills' sandy, 601-yard, par-5 11th will take grit.

Country Club is a place for locals, with family tradition stretching back to 1899. The current course displays the 1927 handiwork of Donald Ross. Bobby Jones competed here, and on January 13, 1932, while taking a break from Augusta National construction, he recorded only the second ace of his career, on the uphill, par-3 14th. A plaque at the tee box commemorates the feat. "We are the only course you can play in the Augusta area," the club's promo copy promises, "where you get to hit shots over Rae's Creek and hear the roars from the Masters Tournament." When weighing where to tee it up Masters Week, it's hard to argue with that.

The deal: Limited tee times are available on a private club-introduced, reciprocal basis. If you're a private club member, give Augusta C.C. a ring. augcc.com

Champions Retreat Evans, Ga.

» The only existing golf design collection from the Big Three—Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player—is this 27-hole private club in suburban Augusta, which opens its doors to all players during Masters Week. Each legend crafted nine holes. To be sure, Jack's Bluff nine and Gary's Creek nine are special, but Arnold's Island nine is the most distinctive. With roomier landing



Arnie knew the ins and outs of Augusta.

areas and more identifiable targets, the Island is a driver's delight. That doesn't mean it lacks bite, of course. The track strikes back with elevated green complexes and some seriously undulating short grass, which puts a premium on accurate approaches and short-game prowess. Most noteworthy are holes 4, 5 and 6, which merge woods, wetlands and close encounters with the Savannah River. Arnie always enjoyed a good soiree, and after golf, the fun at Champions Retreat kicks into another gear. For Masters Week, the club's casual Grille House is transformed into a fine-dining facility, featuring a gourmet five-course feast. Also available is a Tour of the South dining experience for \$125, with stations serving up cuisine from different Southern locales, a lighted driving range, evening cocktails, live music and flat-screens to catch replays of the day's action. In short, for a week in April,

Champions Retreat becomes an upscale, one-stop-shopping experience.

The deal: Sunday-Tuesday, \$2,200 per foursome; Wednesday-Saturday, \$2,500 per foursome. A caddie, and food and beverages until 5 p.m., are included in the price. championsretreat.net

Forest Hills Augusta, Ga.

» Outside their Masters impact, Jones and Palmer intersect most closely in the heart of Augusta, at purely public Forest Hills, four miles from Amen Corner. Jones played two rounds here as part of his runaway victory in the 1930 Southeastern Open, and Palmer's company did a redesign in 1984 to rework Donald Ross's original 1926 layout. In 2004, Arnie himself returned to restore it, and he appeared again two years later to fix a few greens he deemed to be deficient. These days, Forest Hills is home to dogwoods, azaleas, topsy-turvy terrain and the Augusta University Jaguar golf team, which, led by Patrick Reed, captured the 2010 and 2011 NCAA Championships.

The deal: Monday-Sunday, \$160 per player, including cart, range balls and Southern-style boxed lunch. Replay: \$50; twilight special after 3:00 pm: \$80, including cart and range balls. foresthillsgolfcourse.com


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Going Once, Going Twice

Your best bid for getting the most from a golf memorabilia auction

By Joe Passov

IN 2007, the Jeffrey Ellis Antique Golf Club Collection sold at auction for \$2,166,210. In 2013, the green jacket of inaugural Masters champion Horton Smith fetched a tidy \$682,229. Although collecting and selling golf memorabilia isn't quite as lucrative as it once was, golf auctions are still big business. So, have you checked your garage lately? Longtime collector Tom Stewart, of Pure Golf Auctions and Old Sport & Gallery, tells prospective buyers and sellers just what they'll need to know to get started.

Case study: a signed Bobby Jones ball from the 1930s.



Stewart is bullish on buying golf memorabilia. Could you swing the first Masters program?



» Put your trust in a reputable auctioneer.

"Don't drop a lot of money on eBay," Stewart cautions. "Besides ours (puregolfproductions.com), recommended golf auctions are Green Jacket (greenjacketauctions.com) and The Golf Auction (thegolfauction.com). Others include Heritage and Mullock's."

» Selling? Get your items properly appraised and authenticated.

Says Stewart, "I don't touch it if I don't know where it came from. Signatures make items more valuable, but they should be legible and fairly well-known so they can be verified. Arnold Palmer took great care to sign. Rory McIlroy signs with almost a series of circles. It's tough to authenticate those."

» Get to know auction terminology and terms.

"Seller's and buyer's 'premiums' are usually 15 percent (although some auctions charge 20). That means 15 percent of the sale price goes to the auction from both the buyer and the seller. A listed 'reserve price' is one specified in advance by the seller and represents the minimum bid for an item. If the reserve isn't met, the item is removed from consideration. In some cases, it stays up until the next online auction; in others, it's returned to the seller."

» Understand that asking price is determined by an item's condition, authenticity and scarcity.

"For \$35, you can find a first edition, in good condition, of Ben Hogan's book *Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals*. Find one signed, in excellent condition, and it could go for 20 times that."

» Walter Hagen's signature is worth more than Arnold Palmer's, Sam Snead's or Jack Nicklaus's.

"He had the best signature of them all—the John Hancock of golf signatures."

» Antique and classic clubs are in less demand these days.

"The old square-toe irons, feathery balls and long-nose woods are still valuable, but much less so than they once were. On the rise are historical paper items—old press photos, programs, letters, travel brochures and art deco posters for golf travel destinations."

» Yes, green jackets are out there, but...

"They don't come up for auction often. Five or so years ago, Bobby Jones' green jacket sold for more than \$300,000, and Horton Smith's did double that. I came across one that belonged to Ed Carter, who'd been the tournament manager. After he passed away, we opened a dry-cleaning bag in his apartment and there it was. These are really rare, though."

» The holy grail of collectibles?

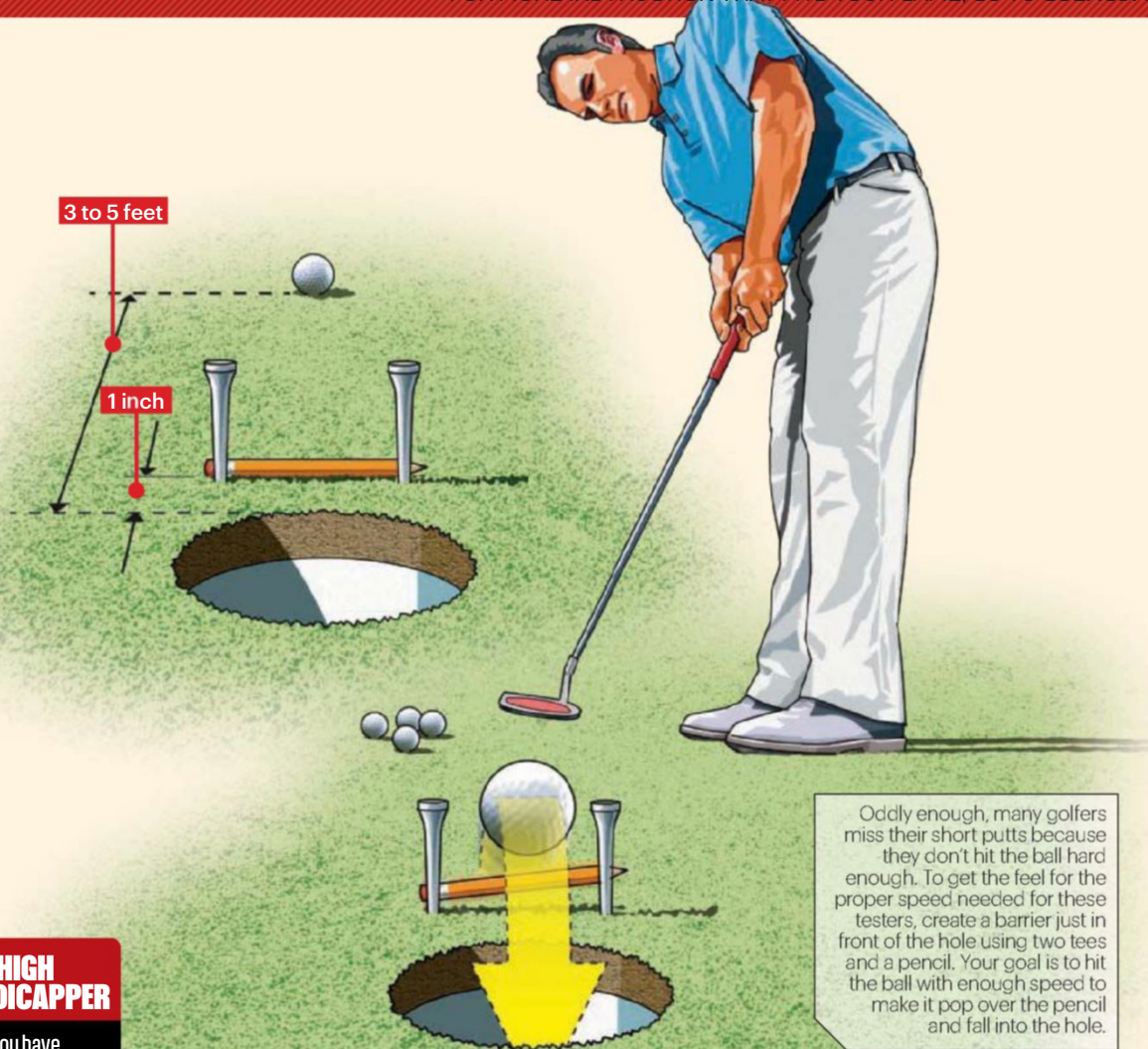
"A green jacket? A U.S. Open medal? It's up to the buyer. I like one-of-a-kind items, such as a model of the R&A clubhouse I have, built brick by brick to scale using 37,000 pieces. How do you even put a price on that?"

private

APRIL 2017

LESSONS

FOR MORE INSTRUCTION THAT FITS YOUR GAME, GO TO GOLF.COM



HIGH HANDICAPPER

You have potential but must fix some fundamental swing flaws.

PENCIL IT IN FROM SHORT RANGE

Many weekend golfers make the mistake of trying to finesse the ball into the hole from short range. Unfortunately, this often causes the ball to lose its line and miss the hole entirely. While it may seem counterintuitive, you'll make more of these putts if you hit them with increased pace—in other words, with enough velocity to hit the back of the cup.

To get the feel for the proper speed, create a barrier with a pencil and two sets of tees about an inch in front of the hole.

Now roll a few putts from three to five feet and try to get the ball to barely pop over the pencil and fall into the cup. This is the perfect speed for short putts. If you baby the putt, it won't have enough speed to get the ball past the pencil or the tees. Hit it too hard, however, and the ball will jump over both the pencil and the hole. Once you get good at this drill, remove the tees and pencil. Your newfound pace should have those short putts rattling off the back of the cup every time.

POWER HITTER

You hit the ball a long way, but your game needs control and consistency.

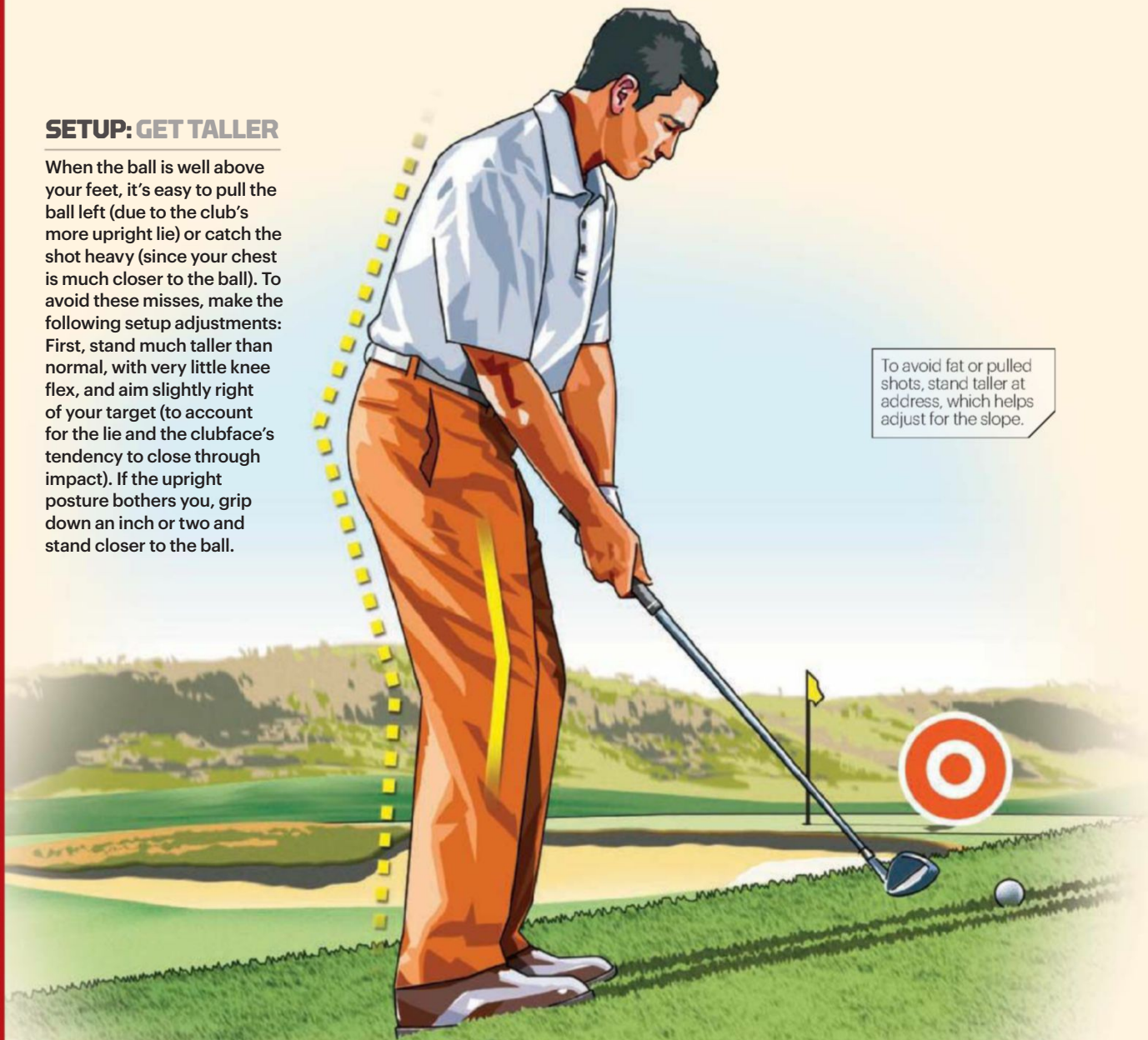
BALL ABOVE YOUR FEET? CHIP IT LIKE A PRO!

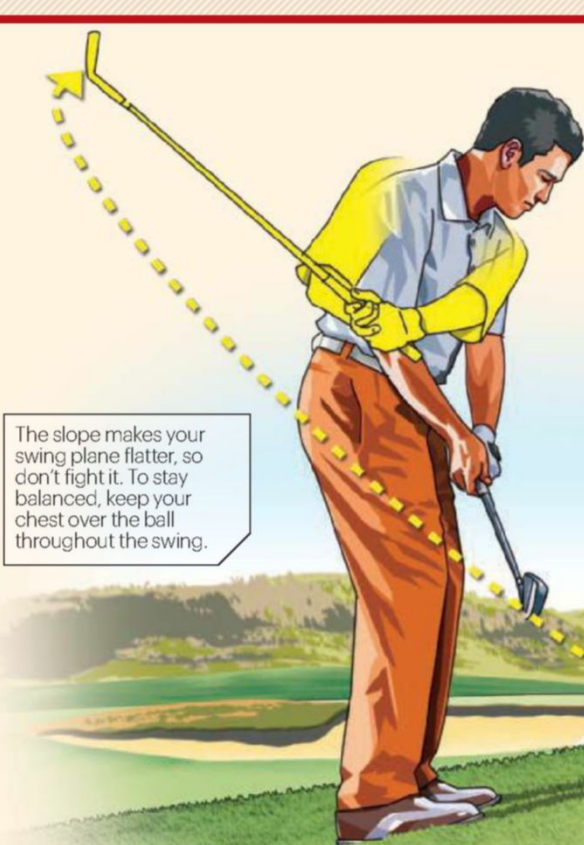
When you watch the Masters on TV, it's hard to appreciate the huge amounts of slope and undulation at Augusta National Golf Club. If a player misses the green, he can expect to find himself facing an array of uneven lies, including a ball above his feet. Here's how to chip it close from this tricky position.

SETUP: GET TALLER

When the ball is well above your feet, it's easy to pull the ball left (due to the club's more upright lie) or catch the shot heavy (since your chest is much closer to the ball). To avoid these misses, make the following setup adjustments: First, stand much taller than normal, with very little knee flex, and aim slightly right of your target (to account for the lie and the clubface's tendency to close through impact). If the upright posture bothers you, grip down an inch or two and stand closer to the ball.

To avoid fat or pulled shots, stand taller at address, which helps adjust for the slope.






The slope makes your swing plane flatter, so don't fight it. To stay balanced, keep your chest over the ball throughout the swing.

SWING: GO FLATTER

The nature of the slope will promote a flatter swing plane (much like a baseball swing or a forehand in tennis), so when you take the club back, swing it less vertically and more around your body. As you swing forward, maintain your balance by keeping your chest over the ball, and swing to the left of your target (not at the target). You should make the same crisp contact you would from a flat lie, which will help you maintain distance control.



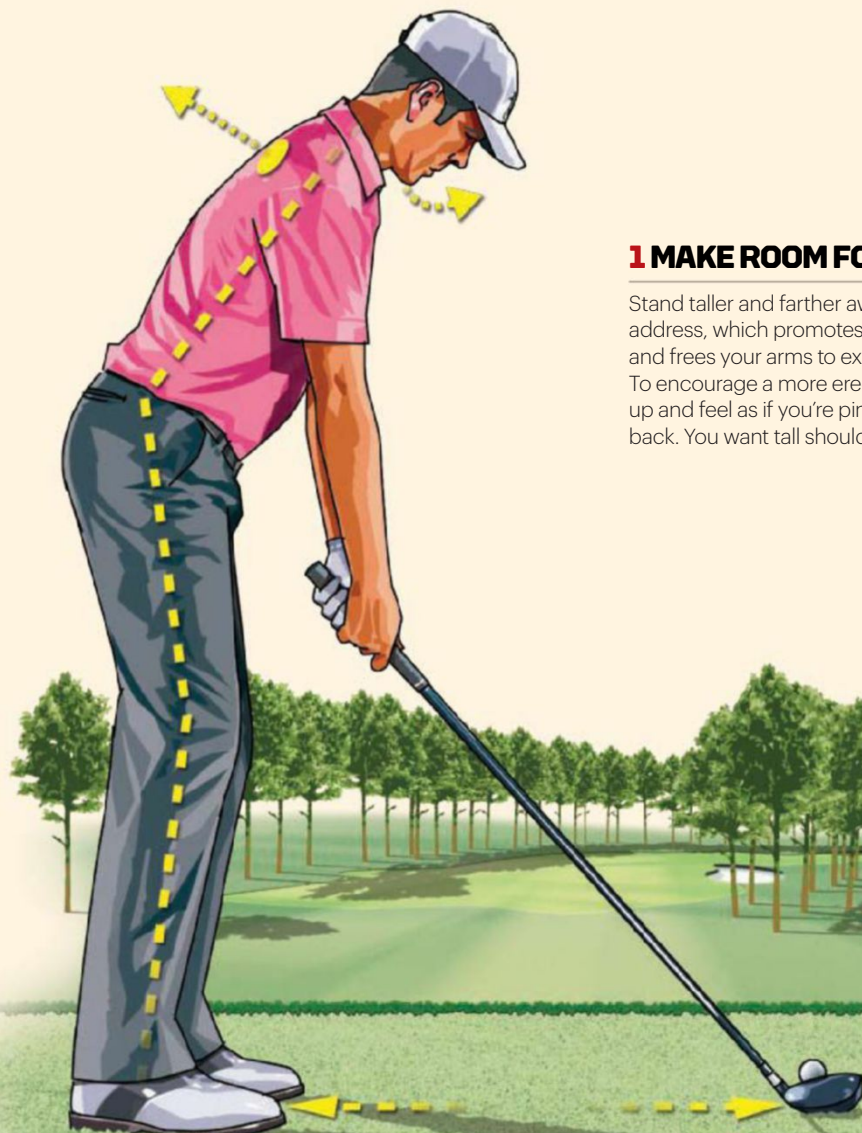
In your downswing, swing to the left of the target—this brings the club's sole into impact as though you were hitting from a flat lie.

**STRAIGHT
HITTER**

You keep the ball in play, but a lack of distance puts pressure on your game.

4 MOVES TO INCREASE YOUR POWER OUTPUT

Accuracy is vital to scoring, but if you really want to make a dent on the par 5s and card a few extra birdies per round, it helps to be able to reach them in two. Here are four distance keys to help you stretch out your drives and putt for eagle a lot more often.

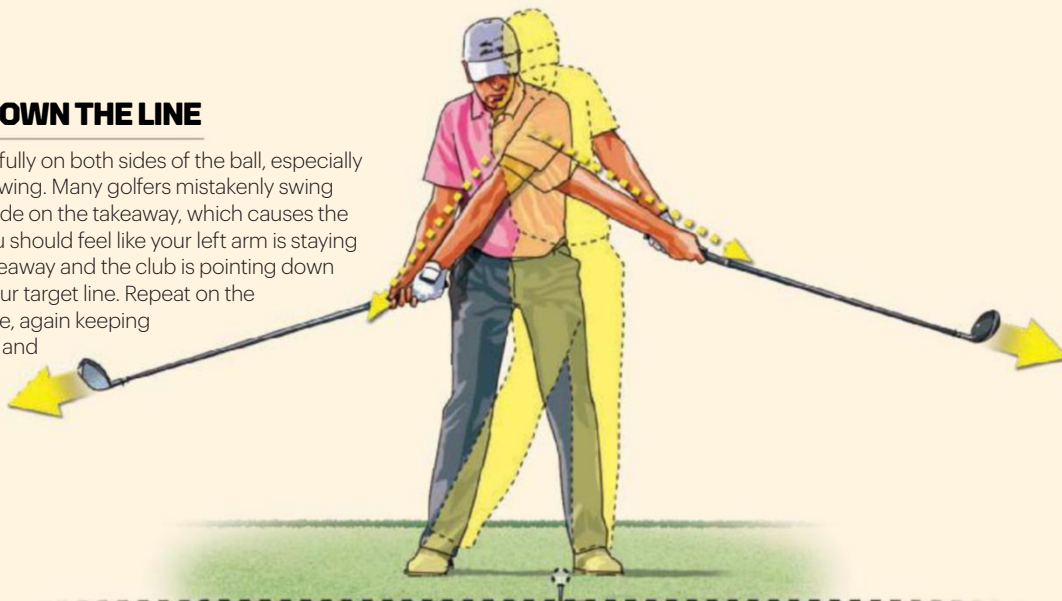


1 MAKE ROOM FOR THE ARMS

Stand taller and farther away from the ball at address, which promotes a bigger shoulder turn and frees your arms to explode through impact. To encourage a more erect posture, keep your chin up and feel as if you're pinning your shoulder blades back. You want tall shoulders, not rounded shoulders.

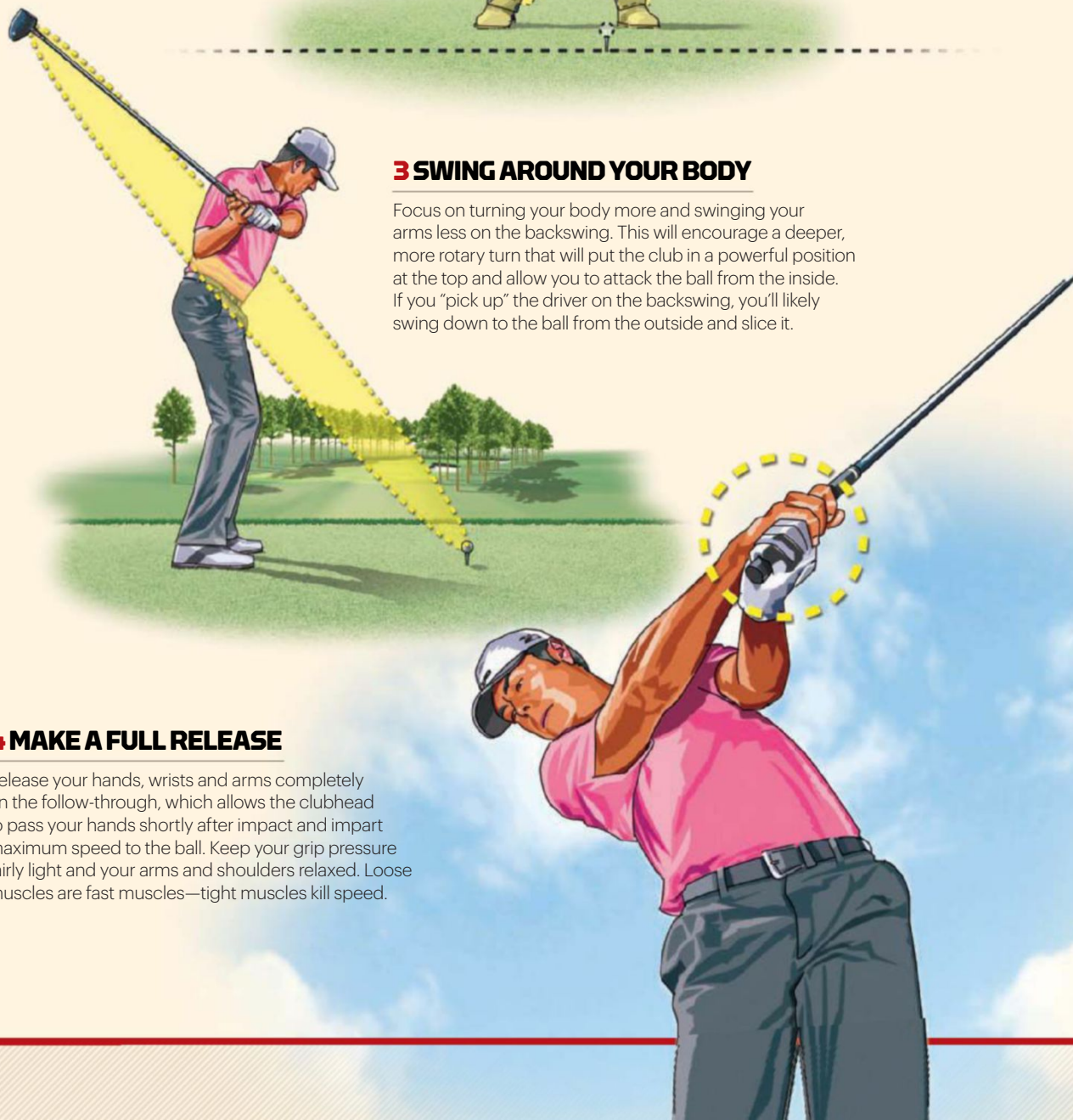
2 EXTEND DOWN THE LINE

Extend your arms fully on both sides of the ball, especially during your backswing. Many golfers mistakenly swing the club to the inside on the takeaway, which causes the elbows to fold. You should feel like your left arm is staying straight on the takeaway and the club is pointing down an extension of your target line. Repeat on the follow-through side, again keeping your arms straight and the club extended down the line.



3 SWING AROUND YOUR BODY

Focus on turning your body more and swinging your arms less on the backswing. This will encourage a deeper, more rotary turn that will put the club in a powerful position at the top and allow you to attack the ball from the inside. If you “pick up” the driver on the backswing, you’ll likely swing down to the ball from the outside and slice it.



4 MAKE A FULL RELEASE

Release your hands, wrists and arms completely on the follow-through, which allows the clubhead to pass your hands shortly after impact and impart maximum speed to the ball. Keep your grip pressure fairly light and your arms and shoulders relaxed. Loose muscles are fast muscles—tight muscles kill speed.

LOW HANDICAPPER

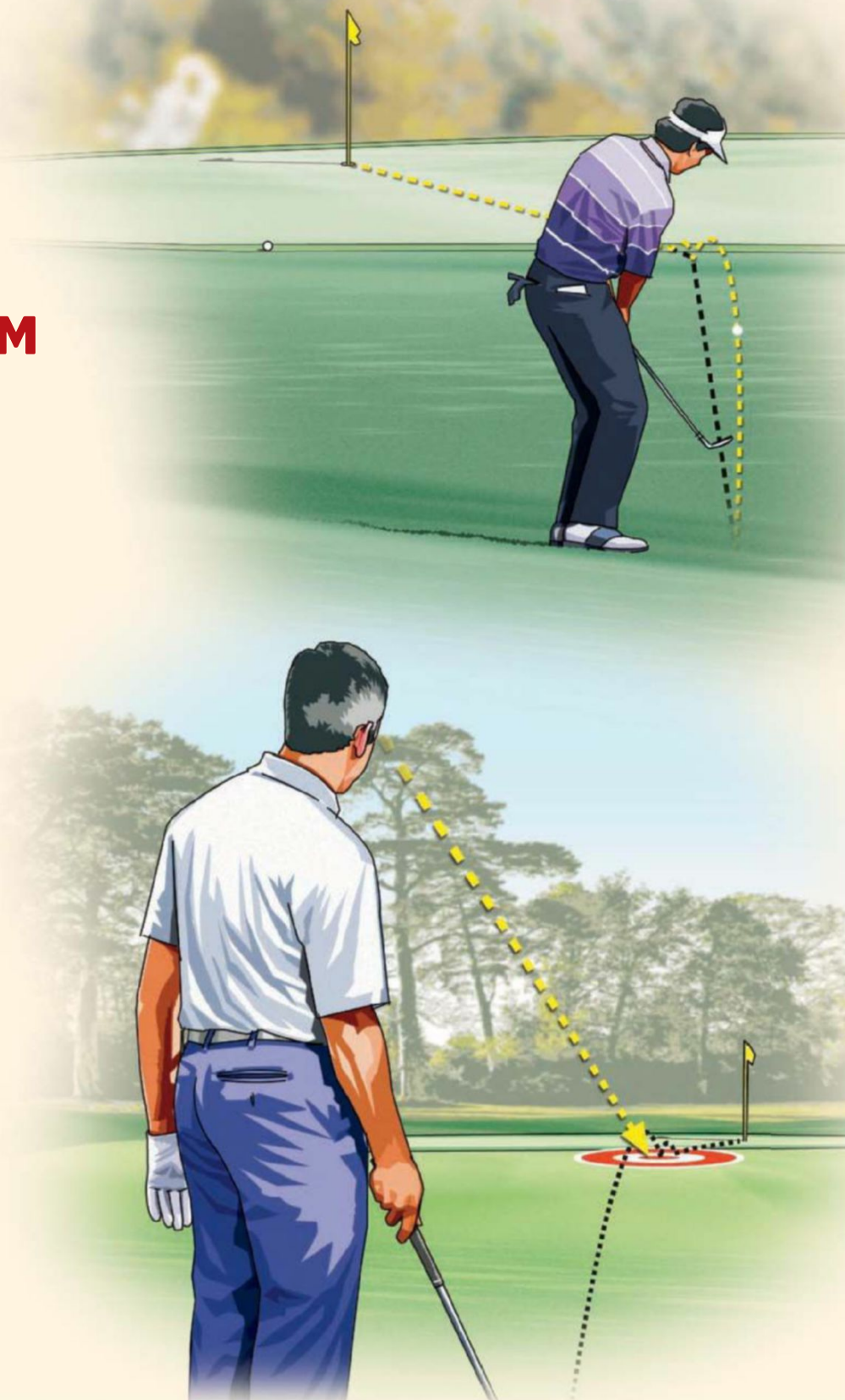
You play well but want to shave those last few strokes off your handicap.

TAKE A CHIPPING LESSON FROM LARRY MIZE

This year marks the 30th anniversary of one of the greatest shots in Masters history—Larry Mize's sudden-death chip-in to defeat Greg Norman at the 1987 Masters. Norman seemed to have the advantage when he found the fringe on the par-4 11th with his second shot, while Mize's approach found a collection area of tightly mown grass some 100 feet right of the pin. But Mize played the perfect bump-and-run shot: He bounced his chip twice through the fringe and fed it down the slope and into the hole for the miracle birdie—and the green jacket. Here's how to knock this shot close, or maybe even in!

STEP 1: VISUALIZE THE SHOT

To execute a bump-and-run shot, you must first have the right conditions: firm turf or tight fairway grass. Take time to visualize your landing spot to get a feel for how the ball will release and run out. Make a few practice strokes with your sand wedge as you look at your landing spot, then step in.



STEP 2: SET UP TO PINCH IT

Position the ball back in your stance—just inside your back heel is ideal—with your hands slightly ahead of the ball, your lead wrist flat, and your weight favoring your front side. This should help you “pinch” the ball against the turf and create additional spin and stopping power.



STEP 3: HIT DOWN SHARPLY

Hinge the club up until the shaft is about parallel to the ground, then hit down on the ball sharply. It should feel like you're squeezing it between the clubface and the turf with little follow-through. The goal? Chip it to within 10 feet of the hole, just like a lag putt. But if you knock it in, go ahead and celebrate like Larry—you deserve it.



SENIOR
PLAYER

You've lost some flexibility and power but still know how to score.

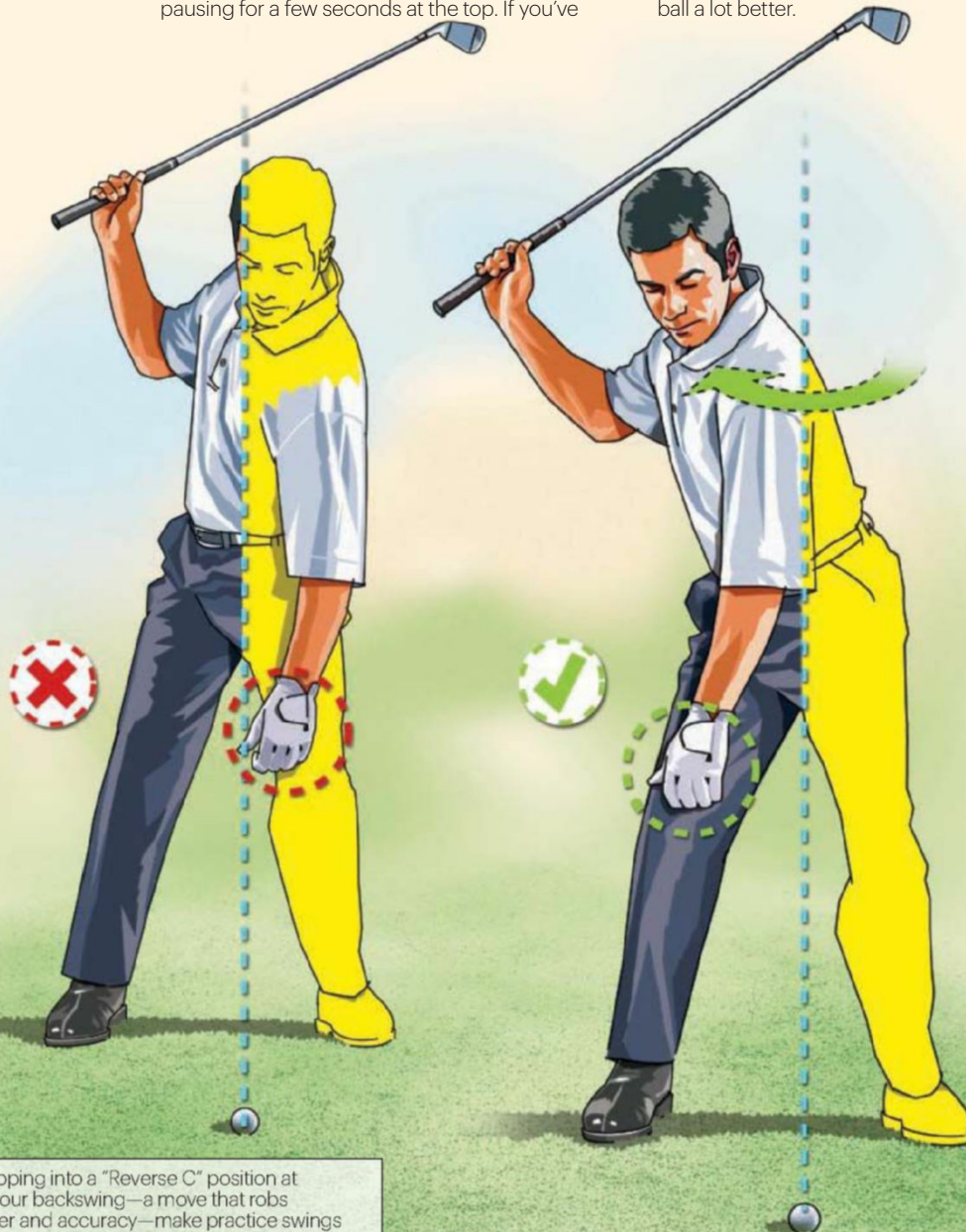
REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

As you get older and start to lose some of your flexibility, it gets harder to pivot behind the ball on the backswing—and much easier to just “lift” the club. When you do this, your upper-body weight tends to shift forward toward the target at the top, leading to the dreaded “Reverse C” position and all kinds of poor shots.

One way to self-check for this killer fault is to make some swings using only your right arm, pausing for a few seconds at the top. If you’ve

shifted your weight correctly—that is, if you’ve rotated your left shoulder under your chin and gotten your upper body behind the ball—your left arm will hang directly over your right thigh.

If your left arm is hanging over your *left* thigh, however, you’ve moved your weight too far forward. Work on this drill until you can consistently get your left arm moving deeper on the backswing, and you’ll start to hit the ball a lot better.



To avoid slipping into a “Reverse C” position at the top of your backswing—a move that robs you of power and accuracy—make practice swings with your right arm only. At the top, check to see that your left arm hangs down over your right thigh.



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FeedingAmerica.org/Pledge

School's Out for...the Masters?!

» **IN 2013**, when LaSherrica Christian made a cross-Georgia move from Macon to Augusta to start her freshman year at Augusta University, she was surprised to learn of the late date for spring break. Then she found out why: In Augusta, in surrounding Richmond County and in neighboring Columbia County, nearly every school follows the same calendar. When the Masters is on, schools are off.

You can follow the money. Within 20 or so miles of Augusta National, there are hundreds, possibly thousands, of homeowners who rent their houses for the week of the tournament. They pack up, lock the liquor cabinets and split the scene, kids-on-vacation in tow. There are also hundreds of people, 16 and older, who use their week off from school to work the tournament. Last year, as a junior, LaSherrica worked as a merchandisecashier. This year, she's doing it again. LaSherrica, a psychology major, says she earns \$9 an hour for the first 40 hours and \$13 an hour after that. Last year, over the course of eight long days, she made \$1,001, before taxes. She also bought \$75 worth of merchandise for her golf-crazy father.

In keeping with unspoken club tradition for tournament employees, she doesn't wear bright colors to work and makes sure her tattoos are covered. The marching orders, she says, could not be more straightforward: "Be polite, make sure the payment is processed."

I interviewed a half dozen Masters-week employees. They all said they enjoyed the week. Some sample comments: *I served Nick Jonas! It's sooo quiet. I saw Bubba Watson in a concession tent. I can't imagine a more perfect place. I almost met Condoleezza Rice.*

Another Augusta University student, Hydea Collins, calls her father daily during the tournament. "I'll say to him, 'Dad, were you watching? I was standing by the 18th green!'" Child envy. An elemental part of the American dream.

The school-closing custom goes back to at least the 1970s. Before that, kids

When the Masters descends on Augusta, local students stop pushing pencils and start pushing pimentos



just played hooky. In the 1960s, golf-team members from Boys Catholic in Augusta often got to work the big manual scoreboard by the 18th hole. In the 1950s, local kids helped the Herndon family of Augusta prepare thousands of pimento-and-cheese sandwiches, a staple of the Masters then and now (though they're no longer made by the Herndon family and their student helpers). In the late 1940s, when Fleming Norvell was new to golf and a student at Augusta's oldest public high school, the Academy of Richmond County, he helped in the pro shop while the head pro, Ed Dudley, played in the tournament. "It didn't register with me as a big deal," says Fleming, who has been a club member for decades. "Now I wish I'd written everything down." Bobby Jones, Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, coming and going.

For years, the Augusta schools were closed Monday through Friday during Masters week, but now they are closed on the Monday after the tournament

The club's marching orders are simple: "Be polite, make sure the payment is processed."

as well. "Everybody needs a day to recover after the tournament," says John Loebl, Richmond Academy's golf coach. He doesn't work the event. He caddies that week, next door at the Augusta Country Club.

A math teacher at Richmond Academy, Jamie Baxley is a manager of a concession stand near Amen Corner. Each April, several of her students work under her. It's enlightening, she says, seeing them in another capacity. Monday through Saturday, beer sales start at 8 a.m., but not, she noted, until early afternoon on Masters Sunday, after the club gets a call from a nearby church to report that the last parishioner has cleared out of the church parking lot. Another employee, at a different concession stand, said the same thing. It might sound like an unusual custom, but Augusta—the club and the city—is a world unto itself. "We're in the heart of the Bible Belt," Jamie explains.

Jamie's Masters money helps pay for an annual vacation. Brianna Cooper, an Augusta University student who works as a housekeeper during the tournament, puts her Masters paycheck toward her off-campus house rental. One week of hard work and long hours pays for three months' lodging. She's majoring in kinesiology and wants to become a dental hygienist. Her work at the Masters is playing a role in getting there.

David Ardrey, an 18-year-old senior at Richmond Academy, hopes to someday play Augusta. "That would be a dream come true," he says. In the meantime, he's seen glimpses of the event. He says that in his first year working the tournament, on a break, he "saw Luke Donald wearing a white shirt and pink pants, talking to his caddie about his tee shot on 10." No tournament in golf is more intimate than the Masters. There's player-spectator intimacy. There's spectator-employee intimacy, too.

"It's a great week," David says. "The people are kind, the place is neat—there's nothing like it. It's the Masters!"

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