

## Games for Learning

# Learning to Manage the Strike Point on the Clubface

## The Problem

You're mis-hitting too many shots – heel strikes / shanks / toe strikes.



## The Lesson

In my experience, the overwhelming majority of golfers are too preoccupied with controlling body parts and not aware enough of what the club is doing / needs to be doing as they swing, especially when it passes through impact.

Whilst it helps to understand how body parts move, and the feels associated with those movements, don't lose sight of the fact that those movements are supposed to be getting the clubface delivered to the ball in a very specific way. There has to be a point to those movements, and that should be related to impact. It has to be functional.

## The Game

You will need :

- a middle iron (7i or 8i will be fine)
- a flipchart / whiteboard marker (NOT a permanent marker)
- 60 balls (6 sets of 10 balls)
- 45-60 minutes

Write the number “2” in the middle of the clubface, with the bottom part of the digit in the bottom groove. Nice and big, about the size of a 50p coin. Now write a “1” on the toe end, and a “3” on the heel end of the clubface.



Play 10 shots, trying to hit the “1” onto the ball. You’ll know when you do because the impact will remove the ink from the clubface.



The exercise is to help you understand, and adjust, how you bring the club into impact. **You cannot stand closer / further away from the ball or change your starting positions in any way.** Start in neutral positions and then adapt your swing\* so that you hit the “1” onto the ball.

\*of all the things you are going to experiment with, I’d suggest you start with speed and length of swing and then branch out from there.

You had 10 balls to get rid of the “1”. How many did it take?



Next, do the same challenge but hitting to the “3” onto the ball - make the heel strike it.

See how many shots it takes (still max. 10).



Finally, do the same challenge but hitting the “2” onto the ball - make the sweetspot hit it.

See how many shots it takes (still max. 10).

**Reminder :** Swing gently, **the goal is clubface position**, not distance.

Once you start getting rid of the target number within 3 shots, see if you can put a bit more power into it and still achieve the desired outcome ... go up in what feels like 10% increments, **don't try to go from small swings to full power in one step, you won't do it properly, and you almost certainly won't be able to feel what's going on.**

## Things to help your discovery process

I'm not suggesting you do every single step listed below – they are ideas for you to explore / places to put your attention. Use them as you see fit.

Start by making a tiny practice swing (about the length of a putting stroke) against a tee with no golf ball on it, and watch the clubface as it hits the tee :

- Did you feel how the club twists differently in your hands, depending on which part of the face hits the tee?
- What do your arms / hands / wrists need to do to get the different ends of the clubface to meet the tee on the way through?

Have as many rehearsals as you need to move the club correctly at least 3 times in a row, and then do the same thing with a ball there.



Don't worry about "how" you will do this just yet – focus on "what" the clubhead has to do, and learn what the feels are based on that. **Practice the movement and learn the feels, then hit a ball.**

Direct your attention to what happens as you finish the backswing and start the forwardswing movement :

- Did your grip pressure change?
- On a scale of 1-10, what were the tension levels in your shoulders, arms and hands as you did the swing?

Then pay attention to what is happening through impact :

- Did you notice if your hands were closer to your body at impact, or further away?
- Can you quantify it – hands under chin / under chest / under eyes at impact?
- Did one arm have more of an influence as you brought the club forward? How so?
- What did **you** do to keep the clubhead moving parallel to your body alignment but present the "1" to the ball at impact?

Repeat the drill – "1" first, then the "3" and finish up with the "2".

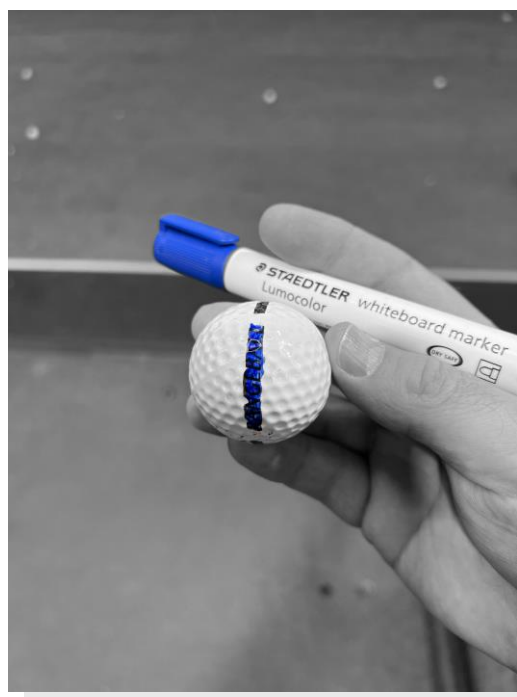
What did you learn?

**Write down your findings, the Notes app on your phone is perfect for this.**

## Alternatives for this game

### Option 1

This is a little more labour intensive but, use that same whiteboard marker and draw a line on the golf ball.



Position the ball on the mat so that the line is vertical and on the back of the ball where you are just about to hit it.



Play the same game – 10 shots trying to hit the toe of the clubface onto the ball, then 10 going for the heel, and then finally 10 shots going for the sweetspot – hit the ball and see where the imprint is left on the clubface.



## Option 2

Spray the clubface with dry shampoo (we started with Dr Scholl's Footspray but it gets a little costly when you're using it so frequently. After plenty of testing we settled on the Batiste range of dry shampoos – they dry quickly, they don't make a mess and as an added bonus they make the area smell nice too!).

*Sorry Dr Scholl ... if anyone from Batiste ever reads this and wants to send us some product or remunerate us for the endorsement, the product placement and the referrals please get in touch ;-)*



Go ahead and play your shots, you'll see exactly where you struck it on the face.



## How is this supposed to help me on the golf course?

If you know what to do when you are deliberately missing the sweetspot then you have a means to rectifying it when it happens by accident;

Also, perhaps counterintuitively, there are occasions when you may want to miss the sweetspot on purpose – a very fast downhill putt for example. Or when your golf ball is sitting next to an embedded stone and you don't want to damage your club but taking a penalty drop is a non-starter too.

