

TAKING AIM

In previous articles, I have written about many different aspects of the game. There are articles about putting, chipping, pitching, sand shots and basic swing fundamentals. Each one of these articles includes the fundamentals that are essential to properly executing these specific shots. Practicing these techniques and making them a part of your swing is critical to lowering your overall scores and increasing your enjoyment of the game.

I spend my entire day at the driving range teaching lessons. In my spare time I will walk the line asking the individuals how they are hitting the ball. Some are quite happy with the results they are getting on that day but the majority of golfers are not hitting the ball as well as they would like too!

As a result, many of these players will ask me to take a look and give them a tip or two. As I watch them hit a few shots, one of the first questions that come out of my mouth is, what are you aiming at? The overwhelming response is I was not aiming at anything!

This is not that uncommon on the driving range yet on the golf course every shot we hit is target oriented. Therefore, when you practice you need to have a specific target to shoot at and as a result, you can determine how well you are practicing.

When working on your alignment, there are a number of factors that we must consider. Some of these factors include the body lines, flight of your ball, your target and intermediate target.

First of all, we need to discuss your body lines. There is what we refer to as the target line and then the parallel line. The target line is the line that your ball and club sits on and the parallel line is your body lines. These include your feet, knees, hips, shoulders, arms and eyes. It is important that you're target line and parallel lines are pointing in the same direction.

The best way to envision this is if you can imagine a railroad track. For right handed golfers, the target line goes straight to where you want your ball to go. In other words aim your club straight at your intended target. As a result, your body lines will be aimed slightly left of your target. This is of course if you hit the ball perfectly straight.

I find that too many golfers have a tendency to aim their body directly at their target, and as a result their ball will travel to the right of their target. Therefore, understanding this concept will assist you in hitting the ball towards your target.

Before you can properly align yourself, you need to understand the flight of your ball. Very few golfers hit the ball perfectly straight. Most golfers ball flight will have a fade or a slice (movement to the right for right handed golfers) and a draw or hook for others.

Understanding this and allowing for the movement of the ball is an essential part of aligning properly.

If you typically play a 10 yard fade for every shot (movement to the right for right handed golfers), then you have to ensure that you start the ball 10 yards to the left of your intended target. If you hit the shot properly then your ball will start left and then fade into your target. The opposite is true if you hook your ball.

It is important that you understand this concept because if you align yourself improperly then your mind and body will collide. In other words the mind will force the body to make a compensation in your swing to send the ball towards your target. This generally results in an over the top move and a poor result.

Now you are ready to align yourself. This is a part of the pre shot routine that was discussed in a previous article. There are many ways to align yourself to your target and you need to find one that works for you.

Begin by standing behind the ball approximately 10 feet. Pick out a target that you want the ball to start at. Keep in mind that if you fade the ball to the right 10 yards (for right handed golfers), then your target has to be 10 yards to the left of where you want the ball to end up. Be very specific when you pick a line that you want your ball to start on. In other words, choose a tree or the edge of a sand trap to align yourself too.

Now, draw a straight line in your minds eye dissecting your target and the ball. From here you pick a point no more than 1 yard in front of your ball that sits on that line. That point now becomes your target!

From here you now address the ball aiming your club at that intermediate target and then set your body up square to your golf club. If done properly you are now ready to hit the ball. If you make a good swing the ball will fly towards your target.

Understanding the proper way to align yourself to your target is critical to hitting great golf shots. It does not matter if you are putting, chipping or making a full swing you need to align yourself properly. Be sure the next time you are on the range you have a target in mind and that you are not just hitting the ball.