

Tip of the week:

How to hit big Drives

Most players, including myself, are hitting too much down onto the ball with their drives. Hitting down on the ball is great for a wedge and an iron but because the driver is a whole different design and we are playing the ball from a tee, the swing should be



slightly different. For optimal distance you want to use a low lofted driver with an upwards hitting angle into the ball. This will produce the lowest spin with the longest carry. The proof is in the pudding as they say and numbers don't lie. The average angle of attack with a driver on the LPGA tour is 3 degrees upwards. Rory is 2 degrees up and Justin Thomas is more than 3 degrees positive into the ball. World long drive champion Tim Burke is close to 8 degrees upwards into the ball, bombing it over 400 yards.

Here are some tips to help your angle of attack become positive with the driver.

1. Ball position should be on the left foot.



2. Tilt the spine a few degrees to the right.



3. Release the club head past the hands at impact.





I experimented on the flightscope after writing the tip and came across some interesting information. My old set up with the ball less forward and less of a spine tilt I was swinging the club at 113 mph and drove it 222.4 m. My angle of attack was 1.6 degrees down on the ball.



After moving the ball forward and working on my spine tilt I got a positive angle of 1.2 degrees up into the ball. This produced a drive of 256m with exactly the same club head speed at 113mph.



After a few shots I felt comfortable with the setup and started to feel the release through impact, letting the club pass my hands at impact. The results were fascinating. Not only did my angle of attack get more positive up into the ball at 2.5 degrees but my club head speed jumped to 118.7 mph.

Let's explore the concept of brain plasticity – which is the ability of the nervous system to change its activity in response to intrinsic or extrinsic stimuli by re-organising its functions and connections.

In golf there is often a wrong perception of reality between what you feel and what is real. This is then the biggest challenge for improvement and the most surprising aspect of teaching the game. A player needs high awareness of their body in space to correctly feel the change made to a swing to ensure it is permanent.

“Feel” versus “Real” brings two challenges. Challenge 1 is the golf ball. We often do very good practice swings when the club is above the ground with no ball involved. This is because one feels the weight and momentum of the club effortlessly because there is not a hit instinct. As soon as the ball is set up, and we need to perform, the hit instinct kicks in and our bodies tense. Challenge 2 is that there is no view of what happens with your club – only feel is involved and this feel is often not true to what really happened with the club.

For example the driver tip. It would probably feel like you way of balance and the weight too much on the right leg. But in reality you have a slight spine tilt and a stronger setup.



Then how should we work this when we aim towards improvement? When being coached you have the luxury of someone watching every swing and providing real time feedback. The proof is in the pudding when we implement improvement changes in our own practice session to create sustainability. Then how do we do this? Step 1 - To achieve success in implementation you need a feedback cycle for whatever you are working on. You might want to involve alignment rods, training aids, and a capable fellow golfer watching or even reflecting on videos taken of your swing. The point is that you need to be able to find ways to evaluate what happens during your swing. Step 2 – accept that your muscles cannot speak and that your thinking is not translated through your body. Proof of this is why a new tip only works for a while. Focus on interpreting to your body what certain

shots feel like rather than thinking about the shot. It is about cementing these feeling in your body rather than the thoughts in your mind.

Brain Plasticity goes a long way – it has been proven that cognitive behaviour can be retrained at an age. In golf changing the way your brain works during a particular performance situation is the key – and it is within your control. This is a positive concept and empowers us to realise that we do not have to be stuck in golf where we currently are. No matter what your experience, skill or journey as a golfer, you can improve by using brain plasticity to your benefit.