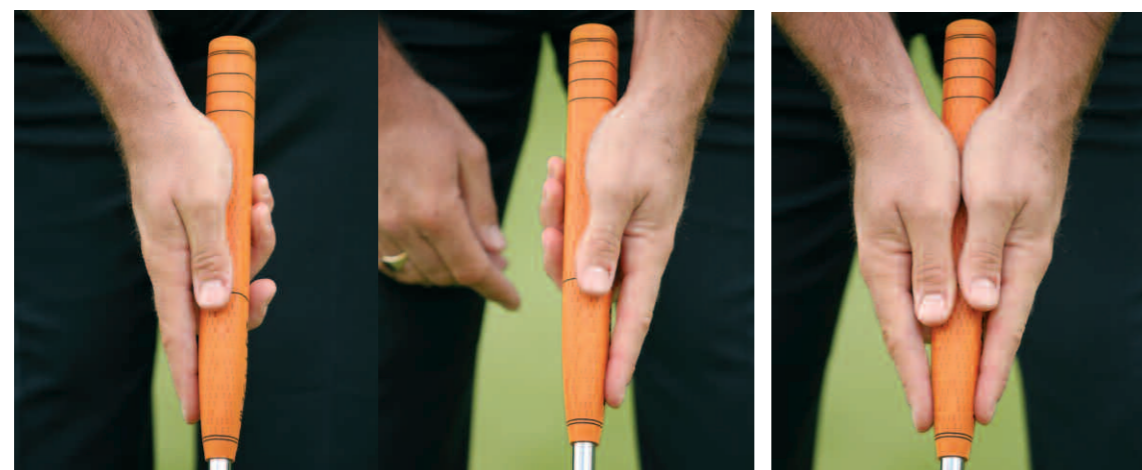




with Phillip Archer & Dr Paul Hurrion

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW REDINGTON/GETTYIMAGES

The appliance of science (and common sense) can take your putting to a new level



The oversize grip that I have been using for the last couple of months has really helped me to get my right hand comfortable on the putter and the palms-facing grip keeps the hands quiet throughout the stroke. It was Paul's idea to put the grip on sideways – just goes to show that it pays to experiment!

I have been working with Paul since November '05, and at that time I was barely keeping my tour card. I was using a belly putter as a 'quick fix' on short putts, and I managed to survive the season with it. But I knew inside that putting was my problem, and my lack of confidence on the greens was affecting the rest of my game. At the end of that season I was 148th in the putting table.

I'd heard about Paul through the grapevine and so I went to see him. The ideas he had were common sense, really, like standardising the set-up procedure and looking closely at the grip. Paul stressed the importance of a consistent set up, which sounds too simple but was a problem I was aware of. Every set up felt different to me. He helped me develop a pre-putt routine that gets me into the perfect position every time. The grip was a key issue. He helped me to position my hands in such a way that the shoulders are level. I like this palms-together grip, which I have found has been further enhanced with this oversize grip that I have been using for the last couple of months.

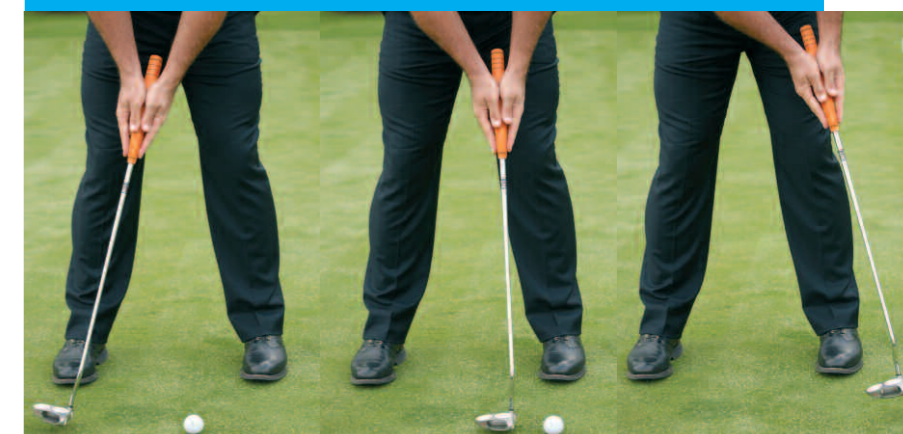
The results have been great. I'm now up to 10th in the putting stats and the result of my improvement is that I don't feel I need to stiff it all the time to have a chance of making birdies. If I hit greens, I know I have a chance to hole a putt. I shot a 60 at Celtic Manor in 2006 – actually missed a 7-footer for a 59, a left-edge putt that I hit exactly where I wanted to. The consistency of my play over the last couple of years simply reflects the fact that my confidence has spread from my putting to the rest of my game.

The same benefits can be yours if you follow Paul's advice. There is no quicker way to improve your scoring potential (and your confidence) than to improve your putting. I use the Putting Rail for half an hour or so daily, a thin silver rail that helps you to keep the putter-face square through impact. After that I simply focus on fine-tuning the set up, my grip position and the rhythm of the stroke, swinging the putter-head low-to-low for a solid and consistent strike on the ball.

With the shoulders controlling the pendulum motion, rocking about a consistent axis point (above), the forearms, hands and the putter swing back and forth as a unit. The putter-head stays low back and through – that's key

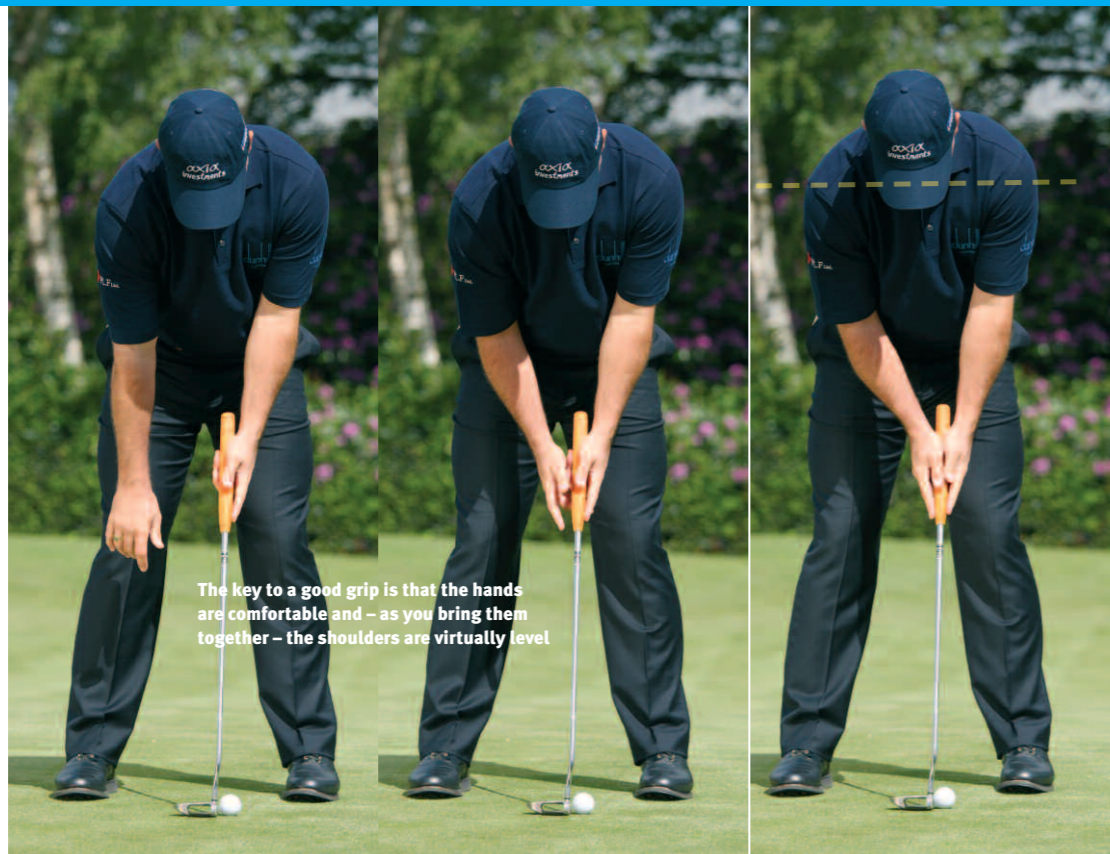


The key to developing a true and consistent putting stroke is to try and take manipulation out of the equation. And by manipulation I mean independent hand and arm movement that disrupts the true path of the stroke. My priority with students is to help them to feel that the shoulders are in control of the motion – and clearly the set up plays a tremendous part in establishing that. The shoulders are the engine, if you like, and the arms and the club are just part of a chain reaction. The putter itself simply 'fits' into the framework that we create for each individual, hence the importance of having a putter custom-fit. – Dr Paul Hurrion



THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOWING A CONSISTENT SET-UP ROUTINE

I thought I was a decent putter until Paul put me on the camera(!). The camera doesn't lie, and the putter-face was all over the place. Video analysis reveals everything, and I could see that the putter-face was going one way, my hands another. As Paul explained, the ball is actually on the putter-face for less time than it is with a driver, so the margin for error is that much smaller. The emphasis has to be on keeping the putter-face as 'quiet' as possible as you make your stroke, so that it returns consistently to a square position when it meets the ball. And that is all down to the function of the grip, posture and head position.



The key to a good grip is that the hands are comfortable and – as you bring them together – the shoulders are virtually level

As I mentioned earlier, I used to feel that my body was set up differently every time I stood over a putt. There was no definitive routine to my approach and so the results were random. Right from the start Paul emphasised to me the importance of working on a strict pre-putt routine, and it revolves around

the alignment of the most important components of the stroke. So, having carefully placing the putter-face behind the ball, my priority is to get my grip, forearm and shoulder position perfectly in tune with the line of the putt (i.e. 'square' to the path). Those are the most important elements that you have to

consider when it comes to perfecting your alignment within your set up position. I stand with my feet and hips slightly open, which is perfectly OK. Remember, it is the unit of the shoulders, arms and putter that creates the stroke – as long as those components are aimed correctly, you're good to go.



Fill your lungs with air, and feel the pivot point is here – through the sternum. The shoulders rock about that axis to create a repeating stroke

One of the things I have stressed to Phillip is the importance of maintaining his height – but by that I'm not referring to the head. I'm more interested in a player maintaining the height of the top of his spine, which is basically the pivot-point in the shoulder-controlled stroke. In other words, you're trying to keep the sternum tall, not so much the head itself. A good sensation to have here is that your lungs are full of air, so that the guiding unit of the shoulders feels proud, and you can then rock them on that pivot point. So when you consider your own posture, think about shoulder height, rather than head height. I don't mind seeing the head hung over the ball – in fact that's good as it places the eyes over the line of the putt – Paul

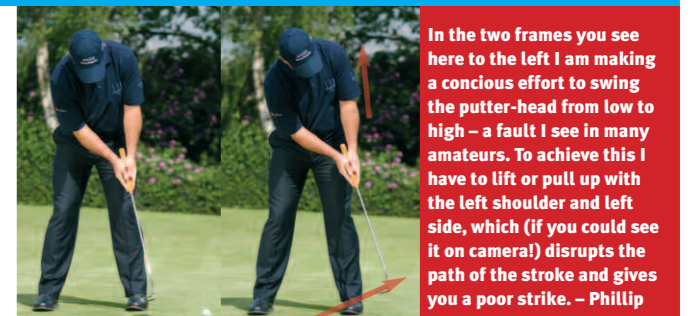


Guided by the shoulders, the unit of the arms, hands and putter respond in a chain reaction that produces a smooth on-line stroke

FOR A SOLID & CONSISTENT STRIKE, SWING THE PUTTER-HEAD LOW-TO-LOW

One of the key points that I would encourage readers to pick up from the sequence you see above is the way Phillip keeps the putter-head low all the way through the stroke. It's low going back and look at the way it stays low on the through-swing. I see a lot of golfers who work on swinging the putter from low to high, mistakenly believing they are im-

parting overspin on the ball – a fault Phil is demonstrating here (right). But what actually happens when you work on this idea is that in lifting the putter up through impact you are prone to striking the ball off the very bottom of the face, which results in a poor contact and inconsistent distance control. So do as Phillip does and go low-to-low.



In the two frames you see here to the left I am making a conscious effort to swing the putter-head from low to high – a fault I see in many amateurs. To achieve this I have to lift or pull up with the left shoulder and left side, which (if you could see it on camera!) disrupts the path of the stroke and gives you a poor strike. – Phillip

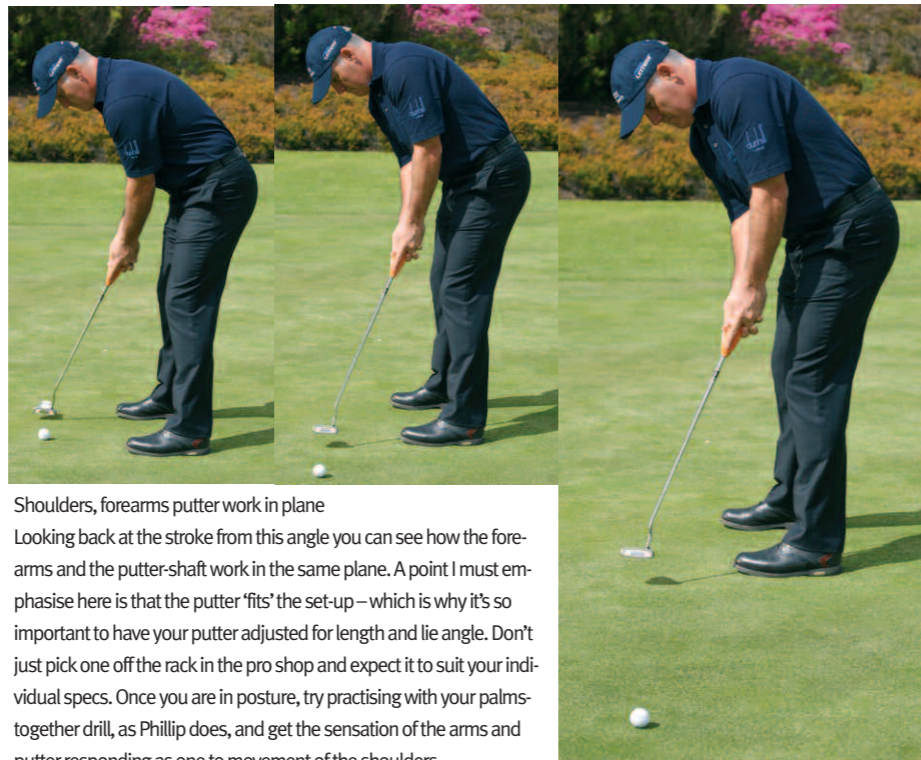


Sternum high, eyes over the ball, I make sure the putter face, forearms and shoulders are all square to the path to the hole before finally completing my grip

Hands and arms are quiet throughout and the putter works back and forth in consistent plane



With your sternum high, tilt your head forwards to get your eyes level



Shoulders, forearms putter work in plane
Looking back at the stroke from this angle you can see how the fore-arms and the putter-shaft work in the same plane. A point I must emphasise here is that the putter 'fits' the set-up – which is why it's so important to have your putter adjusted for length and lie angle. Don't just pick one off the rack in the pro shop and expect it to suit your individual specs. Once you are in posture, try practising with your palms-together drill, as Phillip does, and get the sensation of the arms and putter responding as one to movement of the shoulders.

Finally, let me introduce you to the latest of my practice gadgets – the ProStance (www.pro-stance.com). The idea behind this new device is that, having inflated to a suitable pressure (and the harder you pump it up the tougher the exercise becomes) you place it straight under the arches of your feet, and then focus on maintaining your balance as you hit putts. The ProStance highlights where your weight should be centred throughout the stroke – which is up through the centre point of your body. The role of the legs is often under-estimated in putting, and you need a good solid foundation upon which to base the repeating shoulder-controlled action Phillip is demonstrating here – Paul



WIN A PUTTING LESSON WITH DR PAUL HURRION!
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