

Posturing for Success

In the latest article in an exclusive *Asian Golf Monthly* instructional series, putting guru Dr Paul Hurrion argues that a correct posture in putting is just as important as in the full swing.

IN MY PREVIOUS ARTICLE I asked the question: "What parameters constitute a good putting technique?" I am of the firm belief that putting is a strength exercise. However, standing correctly to the ball is the centrepiece of my putting instruction – get this right and the rest of my 'keystones' fall easily into place.

Your goal at address is to establish a posture that allows your shoulders to rock in a pendulum motion without any need for excess hand action or other compensations which won't hold up under pressure. The ability to create a stable posture and pivot point is essential if the putter is to be returned consistently from address to impact.

The main issue I find with many amateur golfers is that their putter isn't fitted correctly. They may have bought the latest model, borrowed a putter from a friend, found one, been given one as a 'hand me down' or even looked through the second hand bin to find the answer to putting success. As a result, the golfer fits their posture around the putter, rather than correctly fitting the putter to their posture.

Would you play with irons that were too long or too short? Or with the lie angle too upright or too flat? Custom fitting for the full shot part of the game is becoming more and more standard practice. However, custom fitting for putters, in my opinion, is lagging considerably behind. This is something I believe you have to get right in order to improve performance on the greens.

In association with GEL Golf (www.gelgolf.co.uk/fitting-centres-coming-soon-1293-0.html) I am working to give everyone the chance to address this problem. The fitting process only takes about 30 minutes from start to finish ... but the results on the greens are there for all to see long afterwards.

In the accompanying diagrams, I have highlighted the key parameters I look for in the posture of a golfer at set-up. If the set-up is not correct, there will be unwelcome compensations within the stroke as a result. I am looking to create a consistent and repeatable putting action that enables you to start the ball on the line that you have read – every time and under pressure!

The address position is the first stage in developing a consistent and repeatable technique. Looking from the 'Ball to Target Line', the first aim is to have the top of your back flat and horizontal to the ground; it is not a tilt from the hips but more from the mid section of your back.

Imagine a DVD case, or even a glass of water, resting on this top section of your back. As a result, your face is flat and looking directly to the ground. This horizontal position allows your shoulders to rock on a 'square-to-square' path. If your top of spine



Tilt forward so that the top of your back is parallel to the ground

Check that a line drawn up the shaft runs through your right forearm.

You know you're standing the correct distance from the ball when your left hand sits underneath the top of your back.

Flex your knees slightly, with your weight even over your heels and toes.

Sole your putter so that it sits directly under the centre of your chest.

Set the handle over the ball

Place 55% of your weight over your left foot and 45% over your right.

angle isn't horizontal, you will start to create an arc in the path of your shoulders. And if you consider that with a medium putt length (say 15 feet) the ball stays in contact with the putter face for approximately half a milli-second (0.005 second), you will realise that with an arc in your putter path there is only slight opportunity to get the putter face exactly square at impact.

In addition, check that an imaginary line extended from the shaft runs through your forearms. This will ensure that even the slightest wrist break will not cause the putter face to rotate.

If you are standing the correct distance from the ball, your left hand will be sitting underneath the top of your back. You are looking for the left hand to be directly underneath the pivot point (Cervical Joint No 7) at the base of the neck – or where the label is on the collar of your shirt!

Finally, your knees should be slightly flexed, with your weight even between heels and toes – remember the ProStance from my last article? As a result, your body is in a very efficient bio-mechanical position to create the desired pendulum stroke with the posture enabling the path of the putter to be dictated by the shoulders and not the hands.

The second stage is the face-on position which has two key factors to be aware of. The first is ball position. The yellow vertical line runs directly through the leading face of the putter and the sternum. The putter needs to sit at the bottom of the arc of the pendulum. If it sits in front of the line (more towards my left foot), the natural path of the pendulum will go down into the ground. Many players are guilty of this, often catching the putter with the ground on the backswing. As a result, manipulation is required in order that the putter doesn't strike the ground on the take away.

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Secondly, I look for the weight to be slightly more on the left foot to encourage more of a 'pulling' stroke. You don't often see a caravan being pushed by a car ... and I believe the putting stroke should be a pulling action with the ball 'getting in the way' at impact, rather than hitting at the ball.

Golfers who hit at the ball tend to have more of a right side bias. As a result, the ball often jumps off the face which impedes the desired true roll until further down its path. Finally, I do encourage a slight forward lean of the putter shaft. However, this is personal and an important part of the custom fitting process is to ensure the putter face has the correct amount of 'loft' at impact. This is an area I will be covering in more detail in later articles in *Asian Golf Monthly*.

The images and explanations above are my basic template towards finding the correct putting posture. As individuals we are all different, even in respect of two golfers of the same height whose limb lengths will be different.

With the golfer in the correct putting posture, I use my GEL custom fitting tool, to calculate the individual length of the shaft, the loft and the lie of the putter. When you have been fitted like this, the key imperative is to replicate your putting posture every time you are out on the greens.

I hope you can see that this is all a logical process and that only until you have practised and achieved the correct posture, and have been professionally fitted for your putter, can you truly begin to excel on the greens to the best of your ability.

Dr Paul Hurrion is among the world's foremost putting coaches. His passion for golf has led to a specialism in putting analysis and advice, assisting European Tour professionals and holding PGA accredited Putting Clinics. Through his work with Pdraig Harrington, he advised Hi-Tec on the bio-mechanical design dynamics of their new CDT Golf Shoe. Paul has recently designed a signature range of putters for GEL Golf. For further information, visit www.quintic.com or www.paulhurrion.com