



Matching with

Perception Reality

In the latest article in an exclusive *Asian Golf Monthly* instructional series, putting guru Dr Paul Hurrion explains why correct alignment of the eyes and the putter-face is vital in the process of developing and repeating the mechanics of a sound putting stroke and suggests drills that can help you set up for success on the greens.

OUR HIGHTECH LABORATORY at the main Quintic facility in the English Midlands has the latest computer software, including Quintic BallRoll, and high-speed video equipment. However, a dozen balls and my GEL Golf Putting Mirror are among the most important training aids that I use with golfers the first time they set foot into The Quintic Putting Laboratory.

Correct alignment of the eyes and the putter-face is vital in the process of developing and repeating the mechanics of a sound putting stroke. And yet it's no exaggeration to say that upwards of 95 per cent of the top amateurs and PGA professional golfers who pass through the door display fundamental flaws in their alignment that demand some sort of compensation during the putting stroke itself.

However, by simply following my step-by-step sequence and alignment drills, you can easily reduce or eliminate any manipulation in your putting stroke.

When you stand over the ball, if your perception of the ball-to-target-line doesn't match reality, then it is going to be very difficult to consistently hole putts. When coaching golfers I usually have to ask: 'Why are you not aiming the putter at the target?' After all, I assume they are not doing it on purpose and generally they believe that they are aiming on the target line. So, are you aiming the putter where you think you are?

The simple routine you see me demonstrating (*picture 1*) is designed to confirm both the alignment of the putter-face and the position of the eye-line above the ball. If you are serious about improving your putting, then my advice is to get yourself kitted out with a GEL Putting Mirror and follow my rules below. I will also be suggesting a number of other drills you can practise with the GEL Putting Mirror in my next article in *Asian Golf Monthly*.

The objective of this lesson is to confirm that the alignment of your eyes and the putter-face is absolutely square to your tar-



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get line. How many golfers use a line on the ball to align to the target or even the manufacturer's logo? I would imagine the majority have tried it at least once.

Consider this familiar scenario. You have an eight-foot putt with the line at the right edge, so you study the putt from behind and align the line on your ball at the right edge of the hole. Everything looks good. You go through your pre-shot routine and align the putter-face behind the ball. Then, one final look at the hole. But suddenly the line on the ball isn't aiming at the right edge of the hole any more. It's aiming straight or even left half. Help!

You either back off and check the line on the ball, or you end up pushing the putter and manipulating its path. So why didn't the line on the ball match the target line? Simple: *perception* didn't match *reality*.



Alignment Drill

As I mentioned, one of the big problems I see is misalignment of the putter-face. But with the help of this practice drill that is impossible. Find a straight putt on the green (or even a flat surface at home or in the office); align 10 golf balls as demonstrated (picture 2), with the last ball past the hole. (The hole is not your aim point; you should always be aiming 18 inches past the hole as this is where the ball should finish if the hole wasn't there!)

Alternatively you can use a chalk line, or even a laser, to help you achieve perfect alignment, thus creating a striking visual of an eight-foot putt. The key to this drill is that when you are looking from behind the line of balls, they are perfectly straight. It may take you a couple of attempts to be happy with all 10 balls and the hole to be in a straight line ... so there can be no argument as to where the line of balls is aiming.

Now set yourself into position over the first ball (picture 3). You know you are looking at the perfect line to the hole, so if this line appears in any way distorted it's because your *perception* doesn't match *reality*. You have been misaligning for some time and need to recalibrate your sights or you will continue a tendency of manipulating the putter-face during the stroke.

Often it is a case of adjusting the eye position over the top of the ball. But

you may say: 'Look at **Justin Leonard**, his eyes are considerably inside the ball'. The answer is simple – that is where he sees a *straight* line. It is totally individual; we are all different. Some of us are right eye dominant, others left, and some have no dominance at all. So should we *all* be coached to stand the same? Definitely not.

You may have read or been told that your eyes should be directly above the ball. That is a good starting point and by placing the GEL Putting Mirror around the first ball, you can check your eye position at address. Rotate your head (not your shoulders) and look down the line of the balls (picture 4). Do they appear in a straight line? If so, then great, this is the correct eye position for you.

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However, the majority of golfers will see the balls as a subtle curve. The curve may be left-to-right, or right-to-left, resulting in the perhaps sub-conscious feeling of a need to 'draw' or 'cut' the ball in order to follow the perceived line. *Perception* must equal *reality*. You *do not* want a tendency to manipulation during your putting stroke!

Try a number of different eye posi-

tions in your set-up posture until you perceive the line of balls to be straight. Once you have the perception of a straight line, check your eye position in the GEL Putting Mirror – this is your new eye position; note the relative position of the ball and your eye position.

Remember, golfers visualise differently; some inside the line, some directly over and some outside the line. It may be slightly inside or three feet inside – it doesn't matter. The key is that you must find that straight line. Your reflection in the mirror allows you to use the tram-lines to get your eye-line perfectly square to the target line, while the transverse lines on the mirror help you to set the putter-face square to the target line. It is simple (and necessary) to have the lie and length of your putter checked and adjusted once you have found the correct eye position.

Rehearsing this routine two or three times a week for 10 to 15 minutes is all it takes to realise the true line to your target and aim your putter-face along it. That is a major function of your set-up position and the more often you rehearse the pre-shot routine, getting yourself into a good set-up position, the better your putting will be.

I use this drill for all the golfers I work with to enable correct alignment with accurate visual perception. The trick then is to ensure you are in this posture on the golf course each and every time you hit a putt!