Fundamental Golf Swing Essay, Research Paper

The Fundamental Golf Swing

As I ran up and down the tee line, I saw my father slamming the ground with a golf club. I could not understand why he was always so angry when practicing. I stopped running and watched him closely, studying his body as he elegantly whipped the club through the air. Sweat was dripping from his nose, his shirt soaked completely through. I was six years old and in awe of this man. At home he was just dad, but on the golf course, he was someone else. He was an athlete. I watched him for hours that day, and I would watch him for years to come as he practiced, trying to find the perfect swing.

The perfect golf swing is thought to be unattainable to many in the golfing world. I spent my childhood playing on a driving range, watching my father hit ball after ball. He is a PGA-certified professional who has made it his life’s work to find the perfect swing. I cannot inform you on the perfect golf swing because I have never witnessed it, though I can explain the fundamentals of golf. There are four components which make up the golf swing, stance and posture, the grip, the backswing, and the follow through. By breaking golf into these four components, I will be able to verbally illustrate the most fundamentally sound swing possible. When done correctly the golf swing has the fluidity of sand in an hourglass, combined with the power of a coiled spring. It is truly a beautiful thing to witness when refined to this level.

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The proper stance and posture enable a golfer to be perfectly balanced and poised throughout the swing. Only when this occurs will his legs, arms, and body be able to carry out their assignments correctly. Many golfers make the error of assuming the stance is only to line up the body to the target. The stance is also the step in which the golfer sets up so his body will be balanced throughout the swing. The first phase of the stance is the placing of your feet. The feet should be shoulder width apart for the majority of shots. They should be moved closer together for lofted irons and farther apart for long irons and woods. The right foot should be pointing straight away from the body, and the left foot should be pointed one quarter turn towards the target. This foot placement automatically regulates the amount of hip turn allowed in the backswing. The arms should be tucked into the body and kept as close together as possible. The left elbow should be pointing to the left hipbone and the right elbow to the right hipbone. The golfer should then assume the “semi sitting position.” This is achieved by keeping the upper body erect and the back straight, while bending the knees to attain a sitting feel. The golfer should lower his waist approximately two inches from standing upright. The final point of proper posture is the inward pointing of the knees. They should be slightly pointed towards each other.

Good golf generally begins with a good grip. A golfer’s power is generated by the movements of his body. This power is transferred from his body to his arms and from his arms to his hands. The hands are the only part of the body in contact with the club, so the proper grip is essential for quality shots. The most vital part of the grip is that both hands must act as one unit. With the back of the left hand facing the target, place

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the club in that hand so the shaft is pressed against the inside heel of your palm. The shaft must also lie across the top joint of the left forefinger. Then wrap the remaining fingers around the club with the thumb pointing downward. With the club in your left hand, face your right palm to your target. Then rest the shaft against the top joints of your four fingers. With your fingers firmly around the club fold your right hand on top of your left thumb, allowing your right thumb to rest on the shaft. If done correctly, the V formed between your thumb and forefinger on your right hand should point at your right eye when addressing the ball. There should never be pressure applied by the right thumb during the swing. A good way to accustom yourself to the correct feeling is to practice swinging with your right thumb not touching the club.

Once the posture and grip of the golfer is set correctly, the backswing begins motion. The initial move in the backswing should be made with left shoulder. Without breaking his wrists, the golfer should bring the club to a ninety-degree angle with the ground. With the clubhead pointing directly upward, the left arm should be straight and perpendicular to the ground. The golfers right elbow should now be pointing downward. As the backswing progresses, the hips should begin to turn, generating a coiling effect in the body. At the top of the backswing, the clubhead should be pointed directly at the target from behind the head of the golfer. His belt buckle should be pointed opposite the target, and the golfers chin should be in contact with his left shoulder. Throughout this action the golfer should have no movement in his knees or feet. It is imperative that the golfer’s heels remain on the ground at all times during the backswing. When all these steps are completed correctly the golfer should feel like a coiled spring waiting to

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expand. All the tension should be felt on the inside of the right foot as it digs into the turf for traction.

The follow through is initiated with the leftward thrust of the hips. As the hips turn, the body, arms, hands, and club all follow with increasing speed. Generally, this released power carries the golfer’s body completely through his finish. Not everything is involuntary though; there are a few keys to remember. Throughout the follow through, the hands should turn over. At the top of the backswing the back of the golfer’s left hand is pointed somewhat towards the target. At the end of the follow through the back of the right hand should be facing the target. The key to turning over your hands is to return them to the beginning position when impact with the ball occurs. This motion of turning your hands over is what keeps the flight of the ball straight and towards your target. The motions of the follow through are somewhat the same as the two-handed sidearm basketball pass used in the sixties. All that is remaining is to watch the ball and hit it as hard as possible. If the swing was executed properly, the golfer can hit the ball as hard as he wants. After impact, the club head should end movement behind the golfer’s head. The golfer should find himself facing his target with his left foot solidly panted while his right toe is the only part of that foot in contact with the ground.

When all of these steps are done correctly, the golf swing is a beautiful sight. This sight can easily be seen. With so many wonderful professionals on television, it is easier for young adults to see what the swing should look like. The best example of these PGA tour stars is Ernie Els. He is known on tour as “the big easy.” This name refers to his slow tempo and the way his swing seems so effortless. He is not the only

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pro worth watching however. There are other great players now such as Phil Mickelson, Davis Love, and the most popular name in golf, Tiger Woods. All of these players seem to have the fundamentals of golf understood, and with this, the golf swing can only improve. As this happens, we will see golf become a more exciting sport.

Now, my father is fifty-three years old and his body will not allow him to practice the way he did when I was young. My father now spends his days running a country club, taking time out only once or twice a week to play golf. He spends a vast amount of his free time instructing me, watching me hit balls and correcting my flaws. It is funny how things have changed. I am now the man who is soaked with sweat, cursing the game of golf, and slamming clubs into the ground. My father sits and watches me as I watched him when I was six years old. I now realize my dad has given me one of the greatest possible gifts he could give me; he taught me the fundamentals of golf. I have learned so much from him about the golf swing, but I realize I will never have a perfect swing. I hope to someday become a golf professional so that I can teach young golfers all of the things I have learned. If others do the same and teach children how to correctly swing a golf club, the game of golf will continue to prosper and the perfect swing will finally be made.