

## THE ANATOMY OF PUTTING

Ben Hogan used to say there is no similarity between golf and putting: "They are two different games, one played in the air, the other on the ground."

Putting, only one of golf's many aspects, eats up about half the strokes. Obviously, the best road to lower scores is better putting.

A survey of pros showed 80 percent of them practice putting the most. Yet amateurs practice mostly other things.

In putting, age makes a difference. At 55 or 60, avoid an awkward or cramped putting stance. Don't go into a deep crouch that strains your thighs.

Gene Sarazen believes golfers 50 and older should straighten their right forefinger down the shaft of the putter to keep the blade square.

He says older golfers sometimes can't keep their knees absolutely still. He suggests firming up the wrists and standing straighter to relieve the strain on bent legs.

Of course, you have to bend over some to get your eyes directly over the ball. This is very important.

The left elbow should be pointed along a line parallel to the hole. Bobby Jones once said:

"...By moving my left elbow away from my body until it is almost directly toward the hole, I am able to create a condition of relaxation and easy freedom I can get in no other way.

"I cannot resist the temptation to say that this position comes very close to being a panacea for all putting ailments. The left arm moves forward always keeping in that position. With the elbow out and the left hand gripping the club so the back of the hand is presented squarely to the hole, I find the tendency to turn or flinch is almost entirely eliminated."

Jones said putting is a condensation of the basic golf swing—slow on the backswing; a swing, not a lift; and increasing momentum into the ball.

Bob Rosburg, a great putter, says the most important thing is: "Strike the ball with the clubhead accelerating at impact."

Try different stances. Jones distributed his weight evenly on both feet. Walter Hagen kept most of his weight on his front foot.

The square stance is good for a square hit. But it gives you a feeling you can't see the hole. With the open stance, such as Jack Nicklaus uses, you have a feeling of seeing the hole better.

There is a temptation to look at the putter blade as it's going back to see if it's square. Don't. Keep your eyes on the back of the ball.

Most good golfers place all fingers of their right hand on the putter. This gives right-hand control. The left forefinger overlaps the right little finger. Whatever grip you use, make sure the back of your left hand faces the hole.

Johnny Miller says, "I have a feeling that my right hand is going directly at the cup."

Arnold Palmer and Gene Littler are arm putters. Billy Casper and Bobby Locke were wrist putters. Most pros, including Nicklaus, use a combination of wrist and arm.

Julius Boros advises, "The center of the cup must be kept in mind. Don't just hit in the general direction." For long putts, Nicklaus says, "I visualize a six-foot circle around the hole and hope to stop the ball within this circle, preferably two feet short of the hole rather than two feet long."

Jones also cautioned about being too bold. He said, "A dying putt has three chances to go in: front door, right-side door, left-side door."

A practice tip: Walter Travis, one of the finest putters ever, would place four balls three feet from the hole in each direction. If he sank them all, he'd move the balls back six inches and putt again. Once he missed, he started over again at three feet.

Try to remember how you missed putts—too long, too short, left or right. If there's a pattern, try changing the position of the blade, feet, or hands.

A final thought: Don't think too hard about the ball dropping. That's thinking ahead. Instead, think in the present. Think of an easy grip, slow backswing, smooth stroke and follow-through. Think of the line and distance. The result will take care of itself.

As you improve your putting, you might find that your new skill and confidence will seep into your use of other clubs, improving your entire game.

**Raymond Schuessler**

## MYRTLE BEACH, S.C., IS SITE OF 1983 GCSAA GOLF CHAMPIONSHIPS

Two Myrtle Beach, S.C., golf courses have been selected to host the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's 1983 golf championships, GCSAA Tournament Committee Chairman Edward Dembnicki, CGCS, announced.

The annual championships, which are expected to attract a capacity field of 288 golf course superintendents are guests, will be played at Arcadian Shores Golf Club and at Myrtle Beach National Golf Club, Feb. 17 and 18. Tournament headquarters will be in the Myrtle Beach Hilton Hotel. The course or courses that will host a companion ladies tournament will be announced at a later date, Dembnicki said.

Golfers will compete in the 36-hole, stroke play event for two championships that have been GCSAA traditions since 1938 and 1946. Superintendents will compete individually in four championship flights for a silver trophy donated in 1954 by the United States Golf Association, and in foursomes representing GCSAA's 97 chapters for an antique silver cup given by the Scottish Golf Greenskeepers Association in 1972. The tournament format also includes flights for seniors, club officials and GCSAA conference exhibitors.

The two courses should provide a challenging test for GCSAA's golfers, Dembnicki, who is superintendent of the Arcadian Shores course, said. Arcadian Shores, a seven-year-old layout designed by Rees Jones, is listed among **Golf Digest Magazines'** top 100 courses in the United States. It is a 6960-yard course rated at 73 strokes.

Myrtle Beach National was designed and built by Arnold Palmer eight years ago, and its West Course, where the tournament will be played, is a 6,900-yard championship layout with a course rating of 73. Its superintendent is GCSAA member Fred Męda.

Both courses are part of the "Grand Strand", a seaside resort area that has grown in the past 15 years to include 33 golf courses. Its permanent population of about 40,000 swells each summer to more than a quarter of a million.

"It's a real haven for golfers", Dembnicki said. "They're so golf-oriented that we're assured of a lot of local interest. The golf season usually starts about the time we will be there," he noted.

GCSAA is a professional association of golf course superintendents founded in 1926 to promote the art and science of golf turf management. It's more than 5,000 members are located throughout the United States and 21 other countries.