

Relax grip on the club

THERE are three things in life that cannot be avoided: death, taxes and your golf game going "pear shaped"!

I'm sorry to be the one to have to break this to you, but it is one of those enigmas of golf that cannot be explained.

Take Retief Goosen, for example. Who can explain how he can play so well in nearly winning the Masters in April and then inexplicably miss four cuts in a row on the European Tour? It must be said sometimes outside influences can affect your golf game adversely, but there are really times when the "feel" for golf can just desert you.

I advise golfers to treat one bad game with a shrug of the shoulders and to just put it down to experience. You know the saying: "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

Even two bad games in a row doesn't require alarm bells to go off just yet, but you might want to start warming them up a bit.

Should you have a third successive bad round of golf though, then the sooner you see your trusted PGA professional for a golf lesson the better because, believe me, something destructive has crept into your golf swing and you do not want it to make its home there!

Today's golf tip is a perfect example of this. The fault that I



am going to illustrate to you here is one that is probably the most destructive of all, outside of the dreaded shank.

It is such a hard fault to diagnose for yourself as, besides being infuriating, it can lead to a variety of ball flights and trajectories as well as such opposite results as thin and fat shots. At its worst, it can turn a perfectly competent golfer into a "fore"-shouting beginner.

Looking at the pictures, you will notice (left) that I have incorrectly let go of the golf club with the last few fingers of my left hand at the top of my back swing.

Strangely enough, this is often caused by holding the club too tightly to start with, which in turn restricts the length of your back swing.

Realising that you need to



swing further back, you then have to let go as described as your only other alternatives are to bend your left arm or sway your head and body away from the ball (and your playing partners have told you time and again to keep your arm straight, haven't they?).

So, if holding tighter and straightening your left arm aren't the answers, then what is? Ah, that's where I come in.

In the second picture, I am holding the club with a strategically placed golf tee between my palm and the grip of the club. The trick here is to ensure that the peg doesn't fall out when I cock or hinge my wrists.

This drill should give you the correct feeling at the top of the backswing.

This feeling is one of allowing the club to have freedom of movement without losing total control. It is also a feeling of width, where your hands and the club remain away from the body, but without using tension to achieve it. Two other reasons that could cause this fault to arise are: trying to swing further back than your flexibility will allow, and using too much right arm and hand to swing the club on the way back – both of which could lead to the amateur teacher's favourite ... the bent left arm.

There, I finally said it! Cures for these two faults (with accompanying drills) can be found in earlier articles I have written on the backswing. I hope you will all be joining me in watching a rather large contingent of South Africans in their attempt to win the Open Championship.

I wouldn't be surprised if Richard Sterne comes close and, as usual, I will be hoping that our more experienced world-beaters are near the top of the leader board at about the time that you are reading this column.

I will also be hoping once again that Boo Weekley doesn't find form this weekend!

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On the range

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