

Avoid 'paralysis by analysis'

IN MANY ways golf must be one of the most unique and frustrating sports that one can choose to play.

Of course, this is exactly what makes it so rewarding when, on such very rare occasions, one is allowed some semblance of success.

Let's face it, we would quickly tire of golf if it was easy and if the perfect round of 36 (an eagle on every hole) could be achieved. Touring professionals can score a 62 on one day and quite easily follow this up with a 72 the next, having played pretty well. What is really frustrating about golf, though, is that hard work doesn't necessarily guarantee success! I trained for an average of seven hours a week for three months on my bicycle in order to ride my best Amashova Cycle Race this year. This I duly achieved with a rewarding time of 3:12.

I have applied this same work ethic in the past with golf tournaments, and on occasion have ended up playing worse than before!

Vijay Singh is known for his amazing work ethic on the practice range, and even he goes through a bit of a slump from time to time.

Should you then choose to not



practice at all, though, I have to warn you that you will find it very difficult to attain any level of consistency.

What this means then is that golfers need to practice "smart", as the Yanks would say. We also need to accept that there are times when there will be nothing you can do but roll with the punches and work your way through a slump in form.

On these occasions you need to proceed with caution and not rush into any swing changes when, in fact, they might not be required.

As you might know by now, I am an advocate of using drills in your practice sessions as they really do help you to feel the required movements, thus bypassing the "paralysis by analysis" scenario and freeing up your body to do what is required of it.



Here is a great drill that should help you feel how still the body needs to be when putting.

It will also help you to feel how this "quiet" body then allows the correct pendulum action to take place during the putting stroke. A third feeling that this should give you is one of passive hands and wrists throughout the stroke, as your arms freely extend toward the target.

As shown in the pictures, I am holding the putter with my left hand only and am about 3 or 4 feet from the hole (you can replace the hole with a golf ball if you wish). Without doing a back swing, I have just pushed the ball toward the target, keeping contact between the putter face and the ball for as long as I possibly can.

Should you use your body or wrists when doing this, you will really battle. Equally, you want to avoid any tension as well.

Once you have sunk six in a row like this, then you might want to try and actually putt the ball with just your left hand on the putter. Having sunk six of these in a row, now it's time to putt with both hands on the club and attempt to replicate the feeling with six more successful putts.

As soon as you miss one, you should start right from the beginning again.

I remember watching Derek James, the PGA professional at Southbroom, doing this drill for hours at Royal Durban many years ago and boy, can he putt! In conclusion then, keep the body still, don't use your hands and wrists and, above all, strive for a relaxed pendulum motion of the arms as they hang from your shoulders.

_ Lewthwaite is the Head Professional at the Westville Driving Range, in Spine Road. Contact him for all your golf instruction queries or to book lessons. People who know, go to their pro.



On the range

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