

Golf Insider

By T.J. TOMASI

BIRDIES AND BOGIES

Too little insurance can be a good thing

Joe Durant turned pro in 1987 and five years later, unhappy with his play, he quit golf for a real job. Bad move. He was as abysmal as you could be at selling insurance — none, nada, zip policies sold. Even I can calculate the residuals on zero sales.

Fortunately, his failure left him no alternative but to rededicate himself to golf, and Durant did well enough until this year when he hit rock bottom again. But this time he stuck with it. Good move.

Durant was sinking fast on the money list when he was robbed, losing his passport, computer and other personal items. The next day he shot a 67, and it so pumped him up that he went on a scoring binge with high finishes, culminating in his first victory in five years when he won this year's Funai Classic at Disney World.

Most people quit just before something good happens. But not Joe Durant. Now he's convinced that his swing is all the insurance he needs.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



Cox News Service

"I was not very happy with some of the mistakes I was making in the middle of tournaments. I went back to Sweden and worked hard on my game, and found that I was overswinging a bit. So I shortened my swing, and I am pretty pleased with the results after that."

Two weeks after saying this, Annika Sorenstam (above) had four birdies in the final round to finish at 18-under at the Dubai Ladies Masters for a six-shot runaway win.

SCHEDULE

All Times EST
LPGA TOUR
ADI Championship
 • Site: West Palm Beach, Fla.
 • Schedule: Thursday-Sunday
 • Course: Trump International Golf Club (6,514 yards, par 72).
 • Purse: \$1.55 million. Winner's share: \$1 million.
 • Television: The Golf Channel (Thursday-Saturday 2-4 p.m.; 7:30-9:30 p.m.) and NBC (Sunday, noon-2 p.m.).

PGA EUROPEAN TOUR / ASIAN TOUR
Hong Kong Open
 • Site: Hong Kong
 • Schedule: Thursday-Sunday
 • Course: Hong Kong Golf Club (6,703 yards, par 70).
 • Purse: \$2 million. Winner's share: \$335,000.
 • Television: The Golf Channel (Thursday-Sunday 1-4 a.m., 9 a.m.-noon).

GOLF SPOKEN HERE

Peg

A slang term for a tee, which is a tool to raise the ball off the ground. A peg or a tee can be used only in the area designated as the teeing ground — the area where you begin play on each hole.

IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR GAME



Futures Tour star Jee Hee Lee practices the bump-and-run (left). Even though the ball will be airborne as soon as Pony hits it, it will look more like a putt than a chip. Note how close she is to the ball, a very similar posture to her putting stance.) For the bump-and-run (right), let your club swing through the hitting zone as an extension of your arms so your clubhead "chases" the ball to the target as Lee is doing here.



Bump-and-run to the rescue

In the photos above, Futures Tour player Jee Hee "Pony" Lee is practicing a situation similar to one you probably faced at least once in your last round of golf — a 20-yard shot from a tight lie to a green that slopes away from you. Under these circumstances, even if she hit a perfect job shot, the closest she could get is 15 feet past the hole.

The bump-and-run is the best shot to use here. This is a low shot with minimum backspin that lands well short of the green (the "bump" part) and bounces along the ground to the green then rolls to the hole (the "run" part).

The key is to choose a club with enough loft to get the ball off the grass before it starts its roll to the hole. A rescue club (say 20 degrees) is an excellent choice as it has enough loft to lift the ball out of difficult lies, and its long

ABOUT THE WRITER



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shaft allows you a compact swing that's low to the ground.

This shot is like a chip in that your weight starts, stays and finishes on your front foot to ensure that you make contact with your hands leading the clubhead. Unlike a chip, however, the ball is positioned just forward of the center of your stance, creating a flatter angle of attack and less spin.

Also, to produce more power, you should employ a partial wrist cock on the backswing.

Cocking your wrists with a synchronized slight turning of the chest adds force as required so you can hit the bump-and-run up to 80 yards when you have to keep the ball "under" heavy wind or to fit other conditions such as hard, fast fairways and greens.

Remember that you should never try a shot on the course that you haven't practiced, so take a bucket of balls to a practice green area like Pony does and experiment with this shot before you try it on the golf course. Once you get used to how the ball reacts in varying circumstances, the bump-and-run will save you lots of strokes.

Summary of the basic mechanics:

1. Weight on the front foot.
2. Ball positioned forward of center.
3. Use a slight wrist break with a tad of chest turn.

THE GOLF DOCTOR

Taking stock of your arsenal

The end of the season is a great time to re-evaluate your clubs. First check the loft on your driver. If the degree of loft isn't stamped on it somewhere, have a pro measure it for you.

Having too little loft is a big mistake. If you don't like what you have, hold an "audition." Try out all kinds of demo models.

Use some impact tape and check how often you hit each driver in the center of the clubface. Remember that solid contact in the center of the clubface is the key to good golf shots.

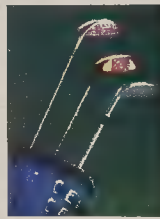
Consider dumping the long irons from your set and replacing them with high-lofted fairway woods and rescue clubs. It's up to you, of course, but I'd say if you don't have a 7-wood and at least one rescue club, you're doing yourself a serious injustice.

Check your wedges. If you don't have a sand wedge, get one. And think about adding an L-wedge (60 degrees) to your set, or having your 56-degree bent to 58 degrees and adding a 54-degree gap wedge.

Have a club fitter or golf professional check the shafts in your clubs for two things: (1) Are they the proper flex for you? (2) Do they match throughout your set?

Another way of doing this is to hit various demo clubs, and hit the clubs of some of your friends. Try all of the basic flexes: regular, stiff, extra stiff, seniors.

And last, are your grips the proper size? If you think they're too small, wrap some gauze around the handle and hit some practice shots. Feel good? Maybe you need bigger grips.



Cox News Service

The end of the season is a perfect time to evaluate your clubs.

If you're a woman, ask about women's flexes. And while you're visiting the club fitter, have the lie of your irons checked as well.

And last, are your grips the proper size? If you think they're too small, wrap some gauze around the handle and hit some practice shots. Feel good? Maybe you need bigger grips.

TEERING OFF

Tiger is great, but Tom was simply terrific

We are privileged to live in the age of Tiger Woods, so sometimes it's easy to forget that just a few short years ago another great golfer dominated the game — Tom Watson.

Watson won five British Open titles, two Masters championships (where he

also holds a record for 21 consecutive cuts made) and one U.S. Open. But his majors don't even hint at how

Watson dominated the PGA Tour from 1974 to 1984. During those years, he was never lower than 12th on the money list, and topped the list five times. He was the PGA Player of the Year six times during that same stretch, and he won three consecutive Vardon Trophies for having the lowest scoring average on tour.

The thing that defined Watson more than anything else was his grit in head-to-head battles with Jack Nicklaus. These contests weren't at match play, but they were under conditions that were similar to match play.

In the 1977 British Open at Turnberry, Watson and Nicklaus were paired together for all four rounds. After two rounds, they were tied. In the third round they shot matching 65s. In the final round, the two wrestled back and forth until Watson sealed the victory by one shot with a birdie at the last hole for consecutive 65s. Nicklaus shot 68.

Five years later, at another dramatic seaside venue, the two men locked horns again. This time it was the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach, and they were tied at the crucial 71st hole (the par-3 17th). While Nicklaus watched on television, Watson yanked a 2-iron into the heavy Open rough, leaving a tough pitch. It seemed Watson might have a hard time making par, giving Nicklaus his fifth Open title.

Legend has it that after Watson pulled his sand wedge from the bag, caddy Bruce Edwards said, "Get it close," to which Watson replied, "I'm not going to get it close; I'm going to make it." Watson did indeed make it, and went on to birdie the 18th hole for a two-shot victory.

The most important lesson you can learn from Tom Watson cannot be taught on the practice tee, and that is fearlessness. You have to develop that quality from within. (Although it does help your fearless factor if you practice hard and improve your game.) Even though Watson's well-remembered triumphs over Nicklaus were at stroke play, he applied that same fearlessness at match play, compiling a 10-4-1 record in four Ryder Cup appearances.

GOLF BY THE NUMBERS

60

Shooting a 60 is quite an achievement, but on the PGA Tour, it doesn't guarantee a win. Case in point: This year, Justin Rose (at Disney) and Pat Perez (at the Bob Hope Classic) both shot 60 in the first round and both failed to win the tournament.

DON'T MISS IT



Home sweet golf course

Looking for a place to search quickly and easily for a piece of golf course real estate? Then Don't Miss GolfCourseRealty.com.

You can list your property or search the extensive registry for your own getaway golf estate. And there's more than just listings.

The site offers information on golf communities, golf courses and message boards, along with a variety of helpful and interesting tips on golf real estate.

ASK THE PRO

Q: About the belly putter: Do you think belly putters and long putters should remain legal? And do you think the USGA and/or the R&A will make belly putters and long putters illegal in the future? — *A.L. from the Web*

A: "Legal" is the wrong word; "conforming" is better. And I believe they should remain conforming. They offer no special advantage — if they did, everyone would use one.

They are great for short putts, but tough for long ones. Some swear by them; some swear at them.

The call by some tour pros to ban the belly putter started after Ernie Els lost to Trevor Immelman

at the 2004 Deutsche Bank-SAP Open. Els commented that it was unfair for a player to anchor the putter to his body and called for banning it. But how can it be "unfair advantage" if everyone has the option to use it?

And if the argument is that it doesn't look good, ruins tradition, etc., how about that awful-looking claw/saw grip, or Andy North's "shorty" putter that bends him over like he's looking for a lost contact lens? Should they outlaw the short putter, the long putter, the claw, the saw, left hand low and the belly putter? No way — too many careers are at stake.

Remember back when the ruling bodies of golf ruined Sam Snead's

comeback by changing the rules so neither he nor anyone else could putt croquet-style? One story is that the influential Bobby Jones, watching Snead putt squatting astride the line with the putter between his legs, shook his head and said, "That must go." And shortly thereafter the USGA changed the rule.

By the way, I have tried both putters. The long putter waded in the wind like a weather vane, and I almost impaled myself with a belly putter by picking a tricky two-foot-out of the hole and forgetting that the putter was still in place.

(Ask The Pro a question about golf, e-mail him at TJInsider@aol.com.)