

# Golf Insider

By T.J. TOMASI

## BIRDIES AND BOGIES

### Thumbs even

Phillip Archer, an unknown European Tour player, shot an opening 63 at the Abu Dhabi Golf Championship this year, taking only 23 putts as he made 10 birdies and one bogey.

Archer jumped 138 places in the putting statistics in 2006 as a result of putting lessons. So what did this pro learn that turned his career around?

"It's common sense, what (my teacher) tells you to do," Archer said. "It's got me better in terms of my weight distribution over the ball, and the big thing he changed was my grip. He's got me gripping with both palms facing each other, so my thumbs are basically the same height, and it levels up my shoulders."

### No Hogans, either

"I subscribe to the notion that Tiger Woods' seven straight is as impressive as Byron Nelson's 11 consecutive victories in 1945 because the competition is so much stronger and deeper now. I'm not saying there are 100 Jug McSpadens on tour these days, but there might be."

So says golf writer Jeff Rude. And there also might not be any Sam Sneads or Ben Hogans on the current PGA Tour. In fact, there are no worthy rivals at all for Master Woods, so the case could be made that the reason Woods wins so much is that he doesn't have much competition — certainly an iffy proposition, but at least as strong as Rude's dis of Nelson's streak.

In 1945, Byron Nelson did something that will probably never be done again: He won 11 straight tournaments. From March through August, nobody could best him, and some of those nobodies were named Ben Hogan and Sam Snead.

Except for an eight-week break mandated by the winter/summer schedule then used by the PGA, Nelson teed it up in consecutive weeks, most often driving in a car from stop to stop. Golf balls were so hard to come by that players beat them up pretty good before changing balls, making the scores he shot all the more impressive. He averaged 68.33.

Nelson had no swing coach, no sports psychologist, no regular caddy or personal trainer and no corporate jet. He skipped practice rounds and stopped practicing to conserve energy, and he played and won hurt — in one instance with a severely wrenched back he injured in a long-drive contest. During the streak, he lost weight (more than 12 pounds), and his stomach was so out of control that he vomited before each round. But he kept on playing — and winning.

Tiger's streak is just that — Tiger's streak. It's an expression of dominance, but it's not in the same league with 11 consecutive wins in the same year. Bottom line: Tiger's streak is not a rival to the Nelson streak.

How taxing was his streak of 11 in a row and 18 wins in one year? Partially in response to the incredible stress of 1945, Nelson retired after one more year, at the age of 34.

## SCHEDULE

All Times EST

### WORLD GOLF CHAMPIONSHIPS Accenture Match Play Championship

- Site: Marana, Ariz.
- Schedule: Wednesday-Sunday
- Course: The Gallery at Dove Mountain, South Course (7,446 yards, par 72)
- TV: Golf Channel (Wednesday, 2-6 p.m., 7:30-11:30 p.m.; Thursday-Friday, 2-6 p.m., 6:30-11:30 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.) and NBC (Saturday-Sunday, 2-6 p.m.)

### PGA TOUR

#### Mayakoba Golf Classic

- Site: Playa del Carmen, Mexico.
- Schedule: Thursday-Sunday
- Course: El Camaleon Golf Club (7,060 yards, par 72)
- TV: Golf Channel (Thursday, 11:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m.; Friday, 2:30-4:30 a.m., 11:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m.; Saturday, 3-4:30 a.m., 8:30-10:30 p.m.; Sunday, 2-4 a.m., 6:30-9 p.m.; Monday, 2-4 a.m.)

### CHAMPIONS TOUR

#### The ACE Golf Classic

- Site: Naples, Fla.
- Schedule: Friday-Sunday
- Course: Quail West Golf Club (7,057 yards, par 72)
- TV: Golf Channel (Friday, noon-2 p.m.; Saturday, 1:30-3 a.m., 2-4:30 p.m., 11:30 p.m.-2 a.m.; Sunday, 2-4:30 p.m., 11:30 p.m.-2 a.m.)

### LPGA TOUR

#### Fields Open

- Site: Kapolei, Hawaii.
- Schedule: Thursday-Saturday
- Course: Ko Olina Golf Club (6,519 yards, par 72)
- TV: Golf Channel (Thursday, 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Friday-Saturday, 4:30-6 a.m., 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Sunday, 4:30-6 a.m.)

## DON'T MISS IT

### Trivia trove

Lovers of golf: Don't Miss "A Disorderly Compendium of Golf" — one of the worst titles for one of the best golf books on the market. Written by Lorne Rubenstein and Jeff Neuman, two golf insiders, the book contains records, lists, anecdotes, humor and so much minutiae that the "pleasure is in the details."

Here are a few examples: the greatest golfer you never saw; the world's most underrated golf destinations; famous golf foods; famous penalties; what nobody ever tells you about Augusta National. It's available at amazon.com for \$14.



## IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR GAME



PGA Tour pro Hunter Mahan definitely "owns the club" at the top of his swing. He has not allowed his hands to drop back toward his head — they're as far away from his chest as possible, creating maximum swing width."

# Own it at the TOP

You would think, after watching the likes of John Daly and Phil Mickelson, that the longer a player's arm swing is, the faster his clubhead goes, but that is not always or even usually the case for the average player. In fact, it's often just the opposite — the longer the swing, the less the power.

Granted, some pros have long swings, but because of their flexibility and technique they only sometimes come to disaster. A less-accomplished golfer with an overswing is rewarded with high scores at the end of almost every round. The bottom line is that one player's power source is another player's power leak, and it is control of the club that marks the difference.

The key to controlling the overswing is first and foremost an understanding of a simple concept: To play golf well, you must own the club at the top of the swing. Clubs that twirl around like a weather vane in a

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storm at the top of the swing are the signature of mismanagement and should be brought to heel as follows.

### Turn with your chest

As you take away the club, focus on turning your chest away from the target. Your arms, hands and club are just along for the ride. This creates the controlled backswing plus the coil that you need for power and accuracy.

### Keep your target arm firm

You create an overswing when you collapse your target arm and fold both your elbows on the



way to the top of your swing. Instead, maintain a firm front arm and try to keep your hands as far away from your head as possible. This produces maximum width and control.

With both elbows bent and his hands collapsing back toward his head, this young man better be prepared for a long day of "hit-and-hunt."

## DRILLS FOR SKILLS

### Bump drill

The bump drill gives you the feel for proper power management.

Swing to the top of your swing and stop. Check to make sure the center of your chest is over your back foot so a line connecting the two through

your navel is vertical. Now bump (but don't turn) your hips and shift your weight to your front hip, then stop and check to make sure the imaginary line is now tilted away from the target, i.e. your navel has moved out from under your chest. If it has, then go ahead and finish the swing. You should be able to hit it about 50 yards with a 7-iron.

## GOLF BY THE NUMBERS

### The best major

Which major produces the best winner? According to Golf Digest, it's the Masters. The magazine created the following chart of the highest average world ranking of the winners of each major since 1966, when the rankings first began.

Masters	11.05
U.S. Open	26.67
PGA	38.48
British Open	41.76

In one way this is surprising because the Masters is an invitational field known for its lack of depth. It exempts past winners who are now on the Champions Tour, amateurs and foreign players who are invited at the "discretion" of the committee, all of which dilute the field.



CURTIS COMPTON / Cox News Service

The early morning light hits azaleas in full bloom in front of the clubhouse at Augusta National Golf Club, home of the Masters.

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"I like to feel my arms and chest moving at a similar speed in my backswing and forward swing. When you get that combination right, you will hit the ball a lot farther."

Stuart Appleby

## GOLF SPOKEN HERE

### "Just outside of friendship"

The distance of a putt that's long enough to make your buddy putt it.

## TEENING OFF

### Has your golfing routine crossed into obsession?

"The addiction to sports ... marks an arrested development in man's moral nature." — Thorstein Veblen

It would seem that addictions are everywhere. People are addicted to chocolate, gambling, video games, drugs, alcohol, and as the Robert Palmer rock song goes, they are "addicted to love" as well.

Mark Griffiths, a psychologist and professor of gambling studies at Britain's Nottingham Trent University, believes that behavioral addictions like gambling, shopping, exercise, the Internet and cell phone texting are just as serious as more conventional substance addictions such as drugs, nicotine and alcohol.

But what about golf — can it be addictive? Take this quiz, and if you answer yes to a majority of these questions, you may well be (scary music here) "addicted to golf":

1. Do you spend more time or money on golf than you can afford?
2. Do you borrow money to support your golf habit (golf trips, equipment, etc.)?
3. Do you golf with money meant for essentials, such as food and rent?
4. Do you neglect important responsibilities, such as work, school or family, to play golf?
5. Do you lie about or cover up the amount of time you golf?
6. Do you argue with your friends and family about golf issues such as starting times and playing in the rain?
7. Do you think about golf — a lot?

## ADVANCED SIGNS OF TROUBLE

1. At bars or at parties, do you often talk about golf?
  2. Have there been times when you did not remember what happened while you were playing golf?
  3. Have lovers, friends or family members ever told you that they were concerned about your golf? (More scary music here.)
  4. Do you sometimes "hide" golf magazines and teaching aids from your lovers, friends and co-workers?
  5. Do you sometimes skip meals at the halfway house to rush to the 10th tee?
  6. Have you ever had a driving accident or been arrested while playing golf?
  7. Do you sequester golf paraphernalia in the trunk of your car, office and garage?
  8. Do you prefer to golf alone?
  9. Have lovers or friends ever threatened to leave because of your golf?
  10. Do you sometimes play extra holes to get rid of the after-effects of a previous round?
  11. Do you give yourself weird nicknames like "Chimney Man" or "Windbreaker" that help you deal with loneliness, rejection or loss caused by golf?
  12. Do you display unexplained silliness or giddiness on the course? How about bursts of temper or bizarre behavior?
  13. When things go very wrong, have you ever tried to hide under your golf cart?
  14. Facing the stress of hitting over a water hazard, have you ever taken off your shoes and socks before you hit?
  15. Have you ever worn an adult-style diaper so you didn't have to stop golfing to go to the bathroom?
  16. Although you speak only English, have you ever played golf in a foreign language that sounds a lot like Elbonian?
  17. And the most predictive index of them all (trumpets here): Have you ever wasted precious time taking a questionnaire to determine if you are addicted to golf?
- In the end, it all comes down to this: a paraphrase of Tallulah Bankhead's description of her cocaine habit: "Golf isn't habit forming. I should know — I've been doing it for years."

## ASK THE PRO

### Stop the slice

Q: I just started playing golf a few months ago, and as most beginners, I have a horrible slice on the ball. So I was just wondering if you might know any drills or anything that I could practice to cure my slice.

— Nick, from the Web

A: I recently covered the three types of slices in more detail, but here are a few quick pointers:

1. Make sure your shoulders point slightly right of your target.

2. Turn your clubface at address so the toe is slightly

ahead of the heel (it's called "closed," i.e. the face of the club points to the left of the target).

3. Swing back and through on your shoulder line — to the right of the target.

4. Rotate your forearms (not hands) as you approach the ball.

5. Let me know what the ball is doing — feedback is key at this point.

Note: At first, just let it hook — go for control later.

(To Ask the Pro a question about golf, e-mail him at: T.J.insider@aol.com.)