

HOW TO READ GREENS

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improve your

PAUL HURRION

LAST MONTH I described how to use the GEL Putting Mirror for basic alignment and stroke mechanics. If you've started to practice with the mirror, you'll have begun to develop the sense of feeling for what constitutes a good stroke – and, in addition, a feel for what is a pull or a push.

I also mentioned that the mirror can help you read putts. Once you had developed the skill of holing the straight ones, I recommended you use the mirror on all types of putts – breaking, uphill, downhill and of different lengths.

Being able to read greens correctly is a very important part of improving your game and your score. There are many different factors that you need to consider before you hit the putt. However, I work on the theory, and strongly advise, that you have to know the difference between a good putt and a bad one if you ever hope to read greens correctly.

Why? Because if you don't know the difference, and the ball misses left edge, did you pull it or misread the putt? You need to do the drills using the mirror and develop kinesthetic feelings when putting. You need feedback in order to associate the correct feelings with the correct result.

You will remember from my last article that golfers will often push a putt, but a subtle misread will result in them still holing it. If they remain unaware of the basic fault they will be let down later, either by a correct stroke or a correct line and they still won't have learned anything. Learn from using your mirror.

In this article I am outlining the number of factors and steps you can take to enable you to read greens more consistently and hole more putts. Importantly, the golf ball and grass surface interaction is critical.

To be consistently successful at putting, you must continually adjust your game to anticipate how the ball will respond to the prevailing conditions of the surface of the green.

The ball to surface interaction on golf greens can be sub-divided into two areas: firstly, ball roll (this will be covered in a later edition of Asian Golf Monthly); and secondly, ball impact on the green or the effect of the green on the ball, which I cover here.

What is reading a putt?

Reading a green or putt is imagining, visualising, picturing, guessing, or calculating the line or path the ball will follow when it leaves the putter. Remember, the hole is not your target. The target should always be the 12 to 18 inches past the hole where the ball would finish if the hole was not there!

What factors go into reading a putt?

Judging a putt is a combination of speed – how fast or slow the ball will roll and,



How to Read a

Is it a magical ability to be able to read greens ... or a black art? Or is there any science to it? In the latest instalment of his exclusive series for Asian Golf Monthly, putting guru Dr Paul Hurrion explains how you can become an expert at reading greens.

therefore, how far it will travel – and line, or direction. However, speed determines line and must be the first point to address when reading a putt. Is the green level, uphill or downhill?

My Paul Hurrion Signature Range of GEL Putters has a multi-layer aluminium insert technology which enables weight to be positioned around the perimeter of

the putter head, creating a high moment of inertia (MOI) for an increased sweet spot. It is because speed is so important that I sought to develop the putters in this way.

The low torque shaft also counters clubface twist resulting from off centre hits. Nobody, even the best players in the world, hit the ball out of the same spot each time.



ad Greens

“TO BE CONSISTENTLY SUCCESSFUL AT PUTTING, YOU MUST CONTINUALLY ADJUST YOUR GAME TO ANTICIPATE HOW THE BALL WILL RESPOND TO THE PREVAILING CONDITIONS OF THE SURFACE OF THE GREEN.”

usually grows toward the setting sun or toward the closest body of water.

You can usually see the grain either by the shine of the grass – if the grass is shiny it means the grain is going away from you; if the grass is dull, it means the grain is coming toward you – or by looking at the cup after the greenkeeper has cut the hole. Brown or dead-looking side of the cup is the direction the grain is going.

General points to consider when reading a green

Green reading should start before you play, especially if you are playing a new course for the first time. Ask the professional which way putts tend to break – ‘towards the sea; away from the hill’. It’s within the rules. In addition, look out for the drainage slopes that funnel rainwater. They can be more important to you than the overall lie of the land.

The first opportunity to read a green is as you are walking up to it. Take note of the slopes as you approach the green. Pay attention to any drainage areas. Is your ball above or below the hole? Start thinking about the line of the putt as you walk to the green. The best view of the green’s slope (whether it slopes to the right or left) is from 20 yards or so away. Standing on the green can’t always tell you this.

If the terrain surrounding the green slopes to the right, then the green probably slopes to the right. If a green slopes in the opposite direction, it creates an identifiable basin where water collects.

Get any information you can from approaching chips and putts. Whether it’s your shot or that of another player in your group, pay attention ... especially if it’s on a similar line to your forthcoming putt. Don’t be confused by the initial path of a ball as different stroke mechanics impart different spins and, hence, different lines of travel. So focus on how the ball behaves as it slows down and rolls, particularly around the hole.

Check from the side of the green if you have an uphill or downhill putt.

I am trying to create a consistent energy transfer from club to ball for that half-a-millisecond when the two collide.

After the ball has left the putter face, the roll characteristics imparted by the putter gradually subside and gravity and friction act on the ball increasingly. So the more it slows, the more it will break.

What factors affecting speed and line can be considered?

- ▶Slope: Is the putt uphill, downhill, left or right?
- ▶Grass length: What’s the reading on the Stimpmeter (the device used for measuring the pace of the greens)?
- ▶Moisture: What’s the moisture level in, and on, the grass?

▶Base: How’s the firmness of the green?

▶Wind: The wind plays a subtle effect on your putt. If the wind is blowing in your face at 20 miles per hour or faster, your putt will be a foot short of the hole.

▶Grain: Applicable only on coarse-bladed grasses.

The effect of grain

When playing in warm-weather climates, such as Asia, the majority of grass will have grain (blades growing in the same direction) that will considerably affect the way the ball rolls – even giving the impression that the ball moves uphill!

It more noticeably affects the ball as it slows down. The ball will be influenced in the direction that the grain grows. It