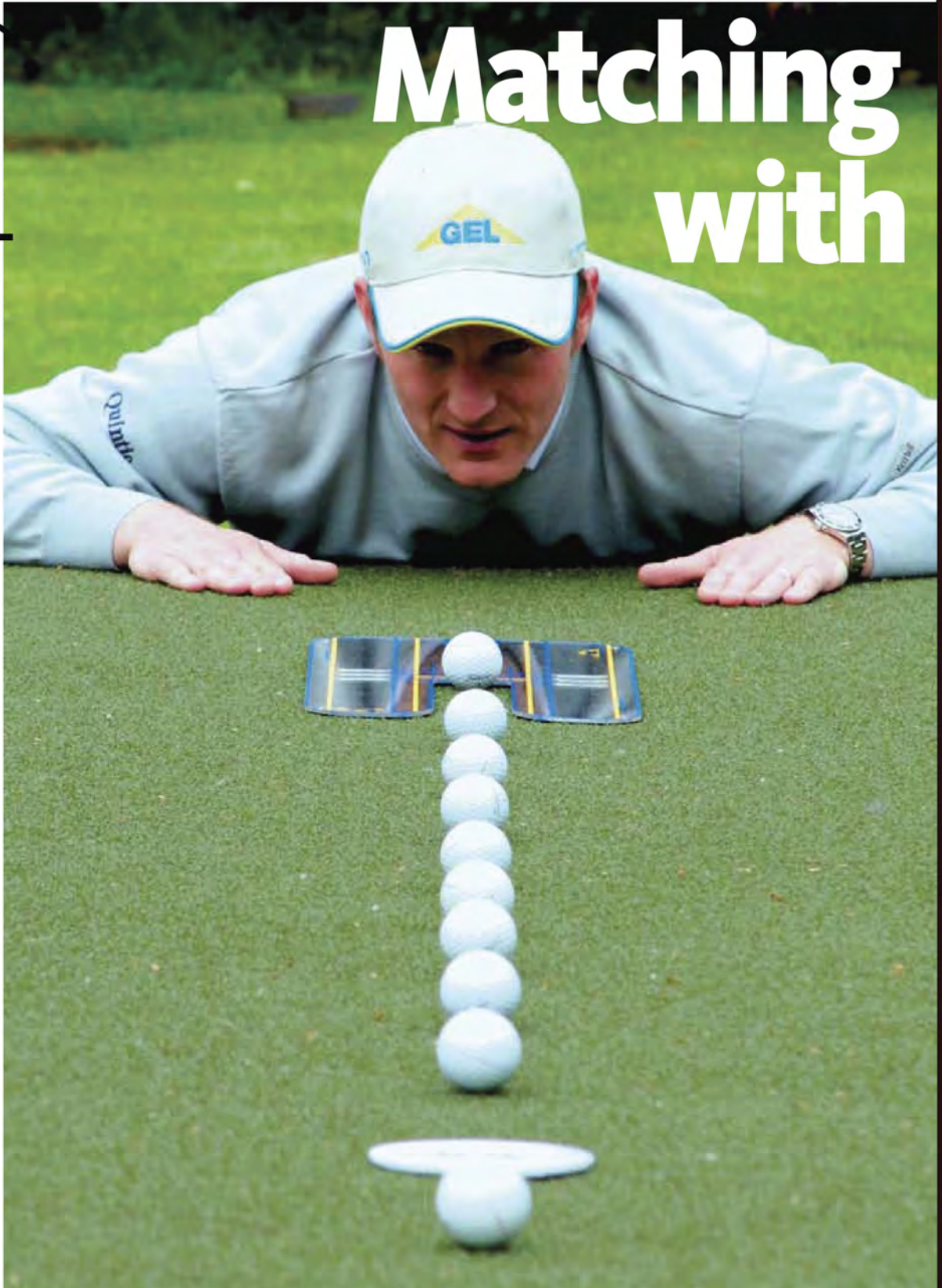


MATCHING PERCEPTION WITH REALITY

60
improve you

PAUL HURRION

Matching with



Perception Reality

In the latest article in an exclusive Asian Golf Monthly instructional series, putting guru Dr Paul Hurrion explains why correct alignment of the eyes and the putter-face is vital in the process of developing and repeating the mechanics of a sound putting stroke and suggests drills that can help you set up for success on the greens.

OUR HIGH TECH LABORATORY at the main Quintic facility in the English Midlands has the latest computer software, including Quintic BallRoll, and high-speed video equipment. However, a dozen balls and my GEL Golf Putting Mirror are among the most important training aids that I use with golfers the first time they set foot into The Quintic Putting Laboratory.

Correct alignment of the eyes and the putter-face is vital in the process of developing and repeating the mechanics of a sound putting stroke. And yet it's no exaggeration to say that upwards of 95 per cent of the top amateurs and PGA professional golfers who pass through the door display fundamental flaws in their alignment that demand some sort of compensation during the putting stroke itself.

However, by simply following my step-by-step sequence and alignment drills, you can easily reduce or eliminate any manipulation in your putting stroke.

When you stand over the ball, if your perception of the ball-to-target-line doesn't match reality, then it is going to be very difficult to consistently hole putts. When coaching golfers I usually have to ask: 'Why are you not aiming the putter at the target?' After all, I assume they are not doing it on purpose and generally they believe that they are aiming on the target line. So, are you aiming the putter where you think you are?

The simple routine you see me demonstrating (picture 1) is designed to confirm both the alignment of the putter-face and the position of the eye-line above the ball. If you are serious about improving your putting, then my advice is to get yourself kitted out with a GEL Putting Mirror and follow my rules below. I will also be suggesting a number of other drills you can practise with the GEL Putting Mirror in my next article in Asian Golf Monthly.

The objective of this lesson is to confirm that the alignment of your eyes and the putter-face is absolutely square to your tar-



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get line. How many golfers use a line on the ball to align to the target or even the manufacturer's logo? I would imagine the majority have tried it at least once.

Consider this familiar scenario. You have an eight-foot putt with the line at the right edge, so you study the putt from behind and align the line on your ball at the right edge of the hole. Everything looks good. You go through your pre-shot routine and align the putter-face behind the ball. Then, one final look at the hole. But suddenly the line on the ball isn't aiming at the right edge of the hole any more. It's aiming straight or even left half. Help!

You either back off and check the line on the ball, or you end up pushing the putter and manipulating its path. So why didn't the line on the ball match the target line? Simple: perception didn't match reality.



Alignment Drill

As I mentioned, one of the big problems I see is misalignment of the putter-face. But with the help of this practice drill that is impossible. Find a straight putt on the green (or even a flat surface at home or in the office); align 10 golf balls as demonstrated (picture 2) with the last ball past the hole. (The hole is not your aim point; you should always be aiming 18 inches past the hole as this is where the ball should finish if the hole wasn't there!)

Alternatively you can use a chalk line, or even a laser, to help you achieve perfect alignment, thus creating a striking visual of an eight-foot putt. The key to this drill is that when you are looking from behind the line of balls, they are perfectly straight. It may take you a couple of attempts to be happy with all 10 balls and the hole to be in a straight line ... so there can be no argument as to where the line of balls is aiming.

Now set yourself into position over the first ball (picture 3). You know you are looking at the perfect line to the hole, so if this line appears in any way distorted it's because your perception doesn't match reality. You have been misaligning for some time and need to recalibrate your sights or you will continue a tendency of manipulating the putter-face during the stroke.

Often it is a case of adjusting the eye position over the top of the ball. But

you may say: 'Look at Justin Leonard, his eyes are considerably inside the ball'. The answer is simple – that is where he sees a straight line. It is totally individual; we are all different. Some of us are right eye dominant, others left, and some have no dominance at all. So should we all be coached to stand the same? Definitely not.

You may have read or been told that your eyes should be directly above the ball. That is a good starting point and by placing the GEL Putting Mirror around the first ball, you can check your eye position at address. Rotate your head (not your shoulders) and look down the line of the balls (picture 4). Do they appear in a straight line? If so, then great, this is the correct eye position for you.

"THE MORE OFTEN YOU REHEARSE THE PRE-SHOT ROUTINE, GETTING YOURSELF INTO A GOOD SET-UP POSITION, THE BETTER YOUR PUTTING WILL BE."

However, the majority of golfers will see the balls as a subtle curve. The curve may be left-to-right, or right-to-left, resulting in the perhaps sub-conscious feeling of a need to 'draw' or 'cut' the ball in order to follow the perceived line. Perception must equal reality. You do not want a tendency to manipulation during your putting stroke!

Try a number of different eye posi-

tions in your set-up posture until you perceive the line of balls to be straight. Once you have the perception of a straight line, check your eye position in the GEL Putting Mirror – this is your new eye position; note the relative position of the ball and your eye position.

Remember, golfers visualise differently; some inside the line, some directly over and some outside the line. It may be slightly inside or three feet inside – it doesn't matter. The key is that you must find that straight line. Your reflection in the mirror allows you to use the tramlines to get your eye-line perfectly square to the target line, while the transverse lines on the mirror help you to set the putter-face square to the target line. It is simple (and necessary) to have the lie and length of your putter checked and adjusted once you have found the correct eye position.

Rehearsing this routine two or three times a week for 10 to 15 minutes is all it takes to realise the true line to your target and aim your putter-face along it. That is a major function of your set-up position and the more often you rehearse the pre-shot routine, getting yourself into a good set-up position, the better your putting will be.

I use this drill for all the golfers I work with to enable correct alignment with accurate visual perception. The trick then is to ensure you are in this posture on the golf course each and every time you hit a putt!

Dr Paul Hurrion is among the world's foremost putting coaches. His passion for golf has led to a specialism in putting analysis and advice, assisting European Tour professionals and holding PGA accredited Putting Clinics. Through his work with Padraig Harrington, he advised Hi-Tec on the bio-mechanical design dynamics of their new CDT Golf Shoe. Paul has recently designed a signature range of putters for GEL Golf. For further information, visit www.quintic.com or www.paulhurrion.com

PERCEPTION REFLECT THE REALITY ?

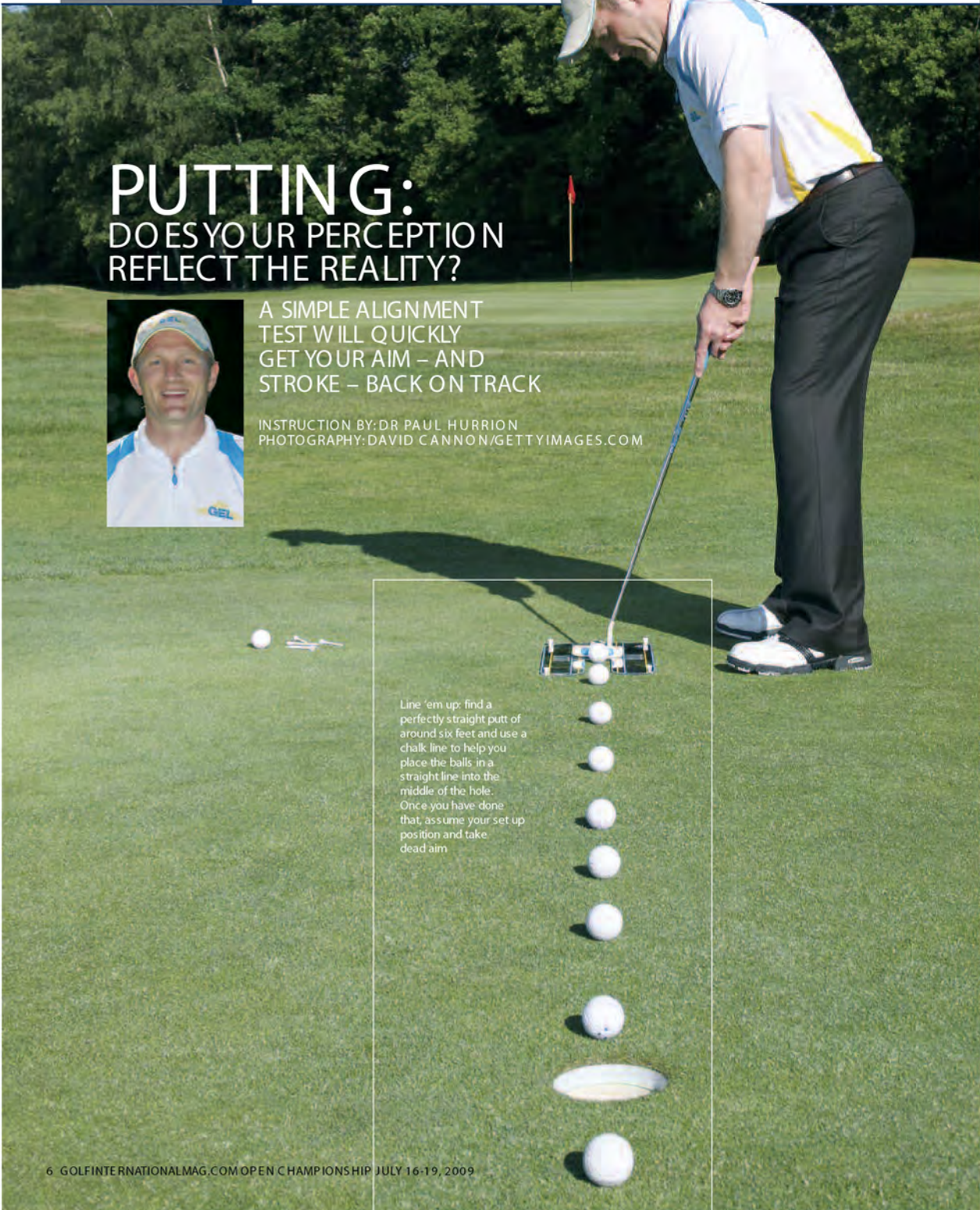
PLANET GOLF **G** THE PUTTING DOCTOR

PUTTING: DOES YOUR PERCEPTION REFLECT THE REALITY?



A SIMPLE ALIGNMENT
TEST WILL QUICKLY
GET YOUR AIM – AND
STROKE – BACK ON TRACK

INSTRUCTION BY: DR PAUL HURRION
PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES.COM

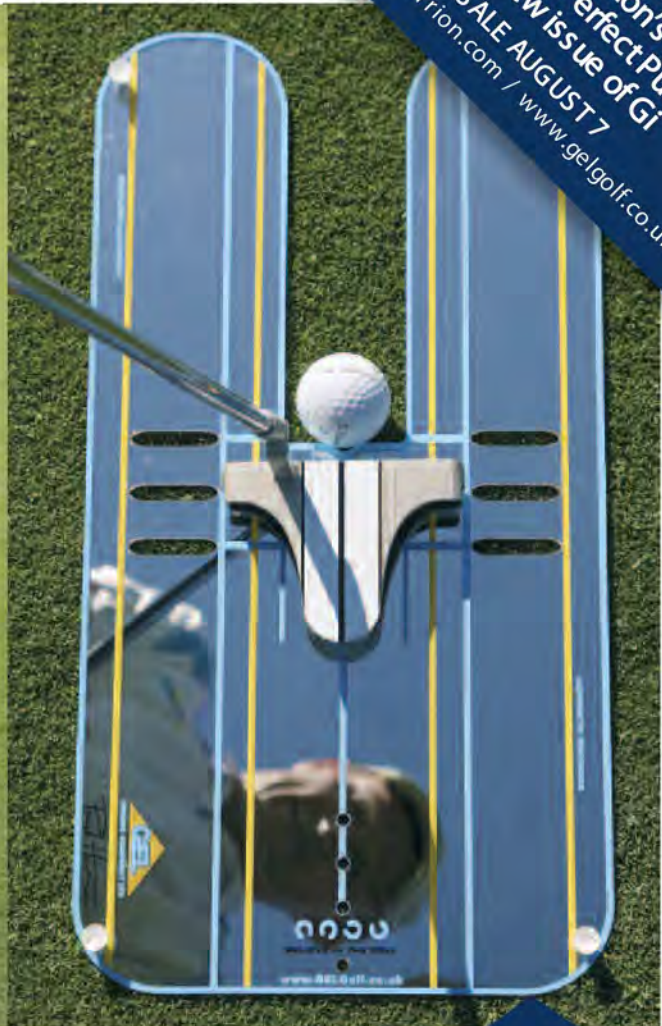


Line 'em up: find a perfectly straight putt of around six feet and use a chalk line to help you place the balls in a straight line into the middle of the hole. Once you have done that, assume your set up position and take dead aim

DON'T MISS
Paul Hurrior's
Nine Drills to Perfect Putting
in the new issue of GOLF
ON SALE AUGUST 7
www.paulhurrior.com / www.gelgolf.co.uk



Now here's the test: when you remove all but the middle ball and the one directly behind the hole, do you still see this as a straight putt? For the majority of golfers, some adjustment to the position of the eye-line is necessary to see a straight line



Before you can seriously set to work on the details of your set-up and stroke it's vital that you have the ability to 'see' and relate to a perfectly straight line to the hole from a short distance (and you'd be amazed at the variation in the perception of 'straight' that I find with leading tour players). So the first thing I do with a new student is challenge his/her perception of a straight line with this test from six or eight feet or so. [This is something you can do yourself on a putting green (or at home indoors) and it will very quickly reveal how closely your perception of a straight line matches up with reality.]

The first thing you have to do is find a straight putt of six feet or so and then create this dead-straight line of balls, placing one last ball directly behind the hole (as you see left). To do this it's a good idea to use a chalk line (indoors I use a builder's laser - you can pick up both of these products at a good hardware store).

Once the balls are in place, the next step is to set yourself up to the object ball (ideally within a putting mirror) and take dead aim at the second ball in the chain. The key is to focus on squaring the putter-face to that near ball and then, once you are satisfied with your aim, look up to view the line to the hole. What do you see? Does the line of balls still appear straight into the middle of the hole?

It's no exaggeration to say that nine times out of 10 the an-

swer is 'no' (and I'm including tour players in that analysis). The line of balls will either appear to curve either gently left to right or right to left into the hole - and if that's your experience then clearly your perception of what is 'straight' is at odds with the reality (because we know for a fact that the line of balls is dead straight). To correct this most fundamental of alignment issues, you will need to adjust your posture - and, most critically, your eye line - until you see that line of balls as running true into the middle of the hole. Using the putting mirror will help you to check this every time you practice.

As a result of running through this test with Rory McIlroy recently we found that he needed to add an inch to the length of his putter to accommodate for the fact that he needed to stand a little taller and bring his eye-line just inside the line to the hole for him to match perception with reality. That's where he saw the line of balls as being straight. Before, his eyes were too much over the ball, and he felt that he had to pull the ball back on line.

We are all different. Some of you, like Rory, will need to adjust your eye line inside the target line to see straight, others will need to move closer to it or even slightly outside. But one thing's for certain: matching perception with reality is the first step to better putting

Secured in place with tee pegs, the putting mirror is a vital tool when it comes to grooving set-up habits. In this case, it will help you identify the correct alignment of the eyes in order to see the straight line to the hole