

A FINE BALANCING ACT

improve you

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PAUL HURRION

In the first article in a new and exclusive Asian Golf Monthly instructional series, putting guru Dr Paul Hurrion explains the importance of strength and balance.

A Fine Balancing Act

PUTTING has often been described as a game within a game, or even a 'black art'. Searching for the perfect stroke has caused heartache. Putting represents close to half the strokes most golfers would use in a full round of golf and is in many ways a miniature version of the full golf swing. Yet perplexingly it remains the area of the game least taught and least seriously practised.

The majority of coaching magazines, manuals and text books suggest 'feel' as the key to success, along with a 'good technique'.

A good technique is required in order to create the confidence necessary to hole putts. However, what parameters constitute a good technique? I am of the firm belief that putting is a strength exercise. The ability to create a stable posture and pivot point is essential if the putter is to be returned consistently to impact from address.

It is often stated by golf teachers that it is best to stand comfortably at address,

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Three-time Major champion Padraig Harrington has an excellent putting technique, with stable posture and pivot point. Picture by Getty Images.

relaxed over the ball prior to hitting the putt. Inevitably that creates an individual style of putting.

Bio-mechanical research undertaken at Quintic Consultancy has analysed the time for ball and putter head contact. For a medium putt length (15 feet) it is approximately half a milli-second (0.005 second).

That is even less than the ball contact with a driver (anywhere between one and three milli-seconds depending on club head speed, golf ball compression and driver characteristics). Clearly there is no time for the golfer to react or hope to control their putter during such a short contact time with the ball.

It follows that success is solely defined by the consistent delivery of the putter's face. So next time you miss an eight-foot putt, don't be so hard on yourself. But do think about how you can help yourself to hole it next time.

My aim for the golfer is to create a consistent and repeatable putting action that enables them to start the ball on the line that they have read, every time and under pressure!

Therefore, the need to create a



Paul McGinley at practise with the ProStance golfing balance aid.

more powerful set-up position at address. As a result of being in great balance, his body mechanics have changed, for example knee flexion and spine angle.

Consistency of address is vital for success. Putts are never on a completely flat green, so the human brain is always causing the body to compensate for each different set-up. The ability for the golfer to compensate comes from kin-aesthetic feedback – the sense and feel of the surroundings and the contours of the ground. Clearly the brain can cause more certain adjustments if the body is working from a consistent and powerful base.

The ProStance (www.pro-stance.com) golfing balance aid is an inflatable device that ensures weight is concentrated through the centre of gravity of the golfer's body. Initially it makes it more difficult for the golfer to stay in balance, but the brain and body learn very quickly to adjust to the new situation.

Within a few putts and without thinking, users will identify where their own weaknesses lie and begin to refine their balance. With the option to increase and reduce the pressure inside the ProStance, it can be easily tailored to any shoe, size, weight and difficulty.



stable and solid base during the putting stroke, along with a fixed pivot point from which to execute the stroke consistently, is vitally important. The address position is the first stage in developing a consistent and repeatable technique and I will be discussing this in the next of my series of articles in *Asian Golf Monthly*.

I use up to five high-speed cameras and Quintic Bio-mechanics computer software that gives me instant feedback on head, shoulder and body movement ... and much more. The cameras record up to 2,000 frames per second and show in infinite detail how the ball comes off the face of the putter.

The cameras pick up so much that the naked eye just cannot observe. I also use a pressure pad (force platform) under the feet of the golfer that indicates how the weight shifts during the putting stroke.

The more the body moves, the more manipulation of the putter head will be needed – and that is the path to inconsistency. I aim for perfect symmetry and control, aiming to hit squarely out of the middle of the putter every time.

The image above (left) is of Padraig Harrington's weight distribution at address with a putter, before and after strength exercises and coaching. The before image highlights the body moving backwards during the putt (the white tail below the central red dot is the trace of body moving away from the centre during the stroke).

After working with 'ProStance' (a balance training aid for golf), Padraig's body weight is better distributed. Most importantly, the after image shows almost perfect stability during the putting stroke. This is a result of Padraig working on a

ProStance results from my 10 years of research and development with professionals and amateurs alike. In fact, it's the professional game that cannot get hold of the product fast enough. Over 70 Tour players already trust this unique product, including multiple Major winner Harrington, Paul McGinley, Rory McIlroy, Robert-Jan Derksen, Henrik Stenson, Bradley Dredge, Philip Archer, Richard Finch and Becky Brewerton.

Before ProStance was created, the only way to determine if an individual was perfectly balanced was to use force or pressure platforms. Such expensive bio-mechanical equipment can only be afforded by a few golfers and even then cannot be used easily 'on the range', but with ProStance we have developed a simple, inexpensive yet highly effective alternative producing the same end result.

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 CD T 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