

GOLF NATION



SAM PUTT LAB Test Results

April 2008

During the last month we conducted a SAM PUTT Lab test in which we tested approximately 70 amateurs. Over the coming months, we will publish short articles of our findings along with how we help our students overcome their problems.

In the past year I've begun to stop thinking in terms of right and wrong and start thinking in terms of simple and complex. I know there are some very good putters with complex putting strokes; however the more complex putting stroke, the more athletic or gifted a player has to be to putt at a high level. I know that the majority of the players I work with need to have simpler putting strokes to be more effective and repeatable.

Of the different elements we tested using the SAM PUTT Lab, path stands out as the number one problem players consistently struggle with. Of the 70 players tested, 61 were outside their intended target line, which is an 87% majority.

Like the golf swing, direction of the shoulders is the greatest influence to the path the putter swings. Since 87% of the players tested are coming outside in, it is safe to assume their shoulders are open at impact. We find the shoulders open at impact for four reasons.

The most common reason a player opens their shoulders at impact is that they are standing to the ball in the wrong posture due to an incorrect putter length. Through our experience in fitting, we have found that the industry standard of 35" best fits players at the 6'1" to 6'2" height range. Since approximately 80% of the putters sold are sold at 35", it is safe to say there are many players putting with putters too long for them. When a player's putter is too long, they will either stand up too tall or have their arms jammed up into their body. When a player sets-up too tall, with their arms blocked by their body in the through stroke, they naturally open up through impact in order to create room for their arms to swing. When a player has

been fit to a correct posture, it will allow the putter to swing uninhibited underneath the body. The player is then able to stay still and square through impact.

The second reason is they start open at address. Because human beings see bilaterally, we have a natural tendency to turn towards a target we are aiming to, when it is to the side of us. When players have this problem we ask them to aim the putter face first to their start line, then set the shoulders to square. After the face of the putter and the shoulders are aimed correctly then the player can take their stance. If a player is used to open shoulders, they may comment that they feel closed, where they are actually only square. Teaching players a routine to set-up correctly will have profound results in their putting motion.

Shoulders Square at Set-Up



Shoulders Open at Set-Up



The third reason we see shoulders open at impact originates at their set-up. A common problem we have found with players is that they hold the putter diagonally in the left palm while at the same time holding the grip in the right fingers. In effect their palms and therefore forearms don't match up. When the right forearm is positioned closer to the target line than to the left, this will also influence the putter head to swing outside in through impact. A simple adjustment to the grip has helped us to square players forearms in relation to their target. The key with a reverse overlap grip is to overlap the right pinky while setting the right palm behind the left fingers. Done correctly, the right hand and arm should be in position to naturally push in line with the target line verses across it.

Forearms Square at Set-Up



Forearms Open at Set-Up



The fourth reason a player's shoulders are open at impact is that they simply move their upper body towards the hole during the forward stroke. Once a player is set-up correctly with square shoulders and square forearms many need to learn to stay square through impact. We spend a lot of our time as instructors holding players heads still while they are putting, in effect keeping them square through impact. When a player keeps their head/sternum still during the putting stroke the putter head passes by the center of the body which in effect may feel to a player as though they are releasing the putter head through impact. Tiger is commonly known to practice hitting right arm only putts which has the same effect.

Shoulders Square at Impact



Shoulders Open at Impact



Todd Sones Impact Golf is currently ranked the 4th Best School in America by Golf Magazine. To schedule a lesson or attend a school, please contact Golf Nation at 847-202-GOLF (4653).

