

Monterey County SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2008

Getting the right spin on your golf game

Roger Maltbie, a member of the PGA Tour and television golf commentator, once said "golf is a game of spin."

This is a very profound statement when you think about it because if we can control spin, we can control the following aspects which are so important in any part of our game but particularly our short game.

- ▶ Trajectory: The height that the ball travels
- ▶ Release: The amount that the ball bounces and rolls
- ▶ Distance: How far the ball ultimately goes

There are four ways to create spin or the lack of it. We can change the loft on

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the clubface. For example, the easiest way is simply to change clubs (e.g. from a 7-iron to an 8-iron; the 8-iron has more loft).

Another way is to move the handle forward (toward the target) or backward (away

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Tip

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from the target) thereby creating less or more loft on the clubface. Obviously, the more loft that we have on the clubface, the more spin will be imparted to the ball.

The steepness of the angle of attack. In other words, if I hinge my wrists on the backswing I will create a steeper approach into the ball than if I do not hinge my wrists. This pressure of a steeper angle of attack creates more spin.

The plane or swing path affects the amount of spin. For example, when we hit a "cut shot" we are swinging across the target line with an "open" clubface. Thus, the ball is traversing across the clubface diagonally versus straight up

the clubface. This greater surface area that the ball travels across the clubface creates more traction and therefore more spin.

Last but not least and the most sophisticated of the bunch is speed. If you hinge your wrists quickly on your backswing and then bring your club back down to the ball as fast as you can with your hands and an abrupt finish, you will create more spin than a lazier swing. The faster you accelerate then stop, the more the ball will run up your clubface and grab in the grooves. That groove-grab produces spin.

Please note that if you buy a wedge that's designed to rust, give it time to do just that, so you can realize its spin-producing benefits.

When Camillo Villegas ask his best friend on tour, Vijay Singh, how he spun his wedges so well, Vijay retorted, "When was the last time you

changed your wedge heads?"

Camillo could not remember.

Vijay replied, "I change mine every 3-4 months."

Of course, not all of us get free equipment to do this, but it gives you an idea of how important traction, friction, and grooves are to create spin, and when you hit as many shots as Vijay Singh, you are bound to wear this traction off and therefore the spin ratio as well.

No matter what shot anyone teaches you, you should be able to deduce from the above four criteria what the shot is applying. Ask yourself is the shot emphasizing loft, steepness, plane, and/or speed.

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