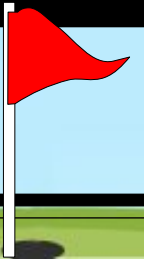


PLAYING THROUGH



Say hello to Christian Smith, Magnolia Point Resident and Golf Member, current handicap “0”. Christian graduated from Stetson University where he played number one on the university golf team. One will often see Christian practicing and playing at Magnolia Point. In addition to local and state amateur events, Christian is in demand as a partner in Magnolia Point events.

HIT DOWN TO MAKE IT GO UP

A lesson for Irons, Hybrids, and Fairway Metals

A common flaw seen in most high handicappers is them trying lift the ball in the air by hitting up on it. To make solid contact with a golf ball, it has to be compressed. The only way to do that is to strike down and through the ball. If you’ve had the opportunity to attend a professional event or a high level amateur event, you will always notice that the players divots are IN FRONT of the ball, often times starting an inch IN FRONT of the ball. The key to getting this strike is to make sure your weight gets transferred to your forward foot in the downswing before you rotate through the shot. If a player hangs back on their back foot in the downswing, the only way to go is UP, and in this case, that is not a good thing.

A critically important thing is to check your ball position. I rarely use my feet to determine where the center of my stance is. I always use my chest because the width of the stance with the feet varies by player, and the club you are hitting. Typically, your stance should be wider on longer clubs and more narrow for shorter clubs. The feeling of the center of your stance also can get

distorted when you have uphill and downhill lies. Using your chest as the barometer keeps things consistent. For 6-iron down through your wedges, I recommend always having the ball at the center of your stance or slightly behind. For the 5-iron and above to the fairway metals, you want to sweep a little bit more, but you STILL want a descending blow. For those, position the ball slightly in front of center; maybe an inch, 2” at most.

Another helpful tip is to make sure your trail side (right for right-handed players) does not dip down in the downswing. I find it helpful to feel like my right shoulder and hip remain fairly level as I turn through the shot. Because you are bent over at address, the right shoulder will naturally drop slightly, but you don’t want to force that action. You want to try to maintain the spine angle you have at address throughout the swing.

A great drill to instill the correct feeling is to take a tennis ball and with whatever hand you throw with (right handed or left) and try to throw the tennis ball on the ground a foot or two in front of where the golf ball would be positioned in your stance. You want to throw it in front and straight down the target line. I also recommend having a wall in front of you unless you want to chase tennis balls all day!!!

Keep these things in mind and all of a sudden the ball will sound different coming off the club and your friends will be asking how you picked up 10 yards with each iron! Happy Golfing!

- CHRISTIAN SMITH

