

Playing Through

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TAKE IT AWAY. PART 1.

Since we are still somewhat in the giving season, I thought it only fitting to talk about *taking away!* Taking the club away that is. This is a follow up to a previous article but based on common flaws I've seen recently with some of my playing partners that just make the swing harder than it needs to be. The takeaway really sets you up for the downswing, so if you do certain things incorrectly, it makes it really hard for your body to kind of go on autopilot as you change direction and get into the impact zone. I am going to focus on the most common fault where people get the club too far behind them in the backswing which results in what we call getting 'stuck'. There are three main areas of focus that contribute to the swing getting behind someone in their takeaway; wrist action, arm swing, and hip turn. In this first edition, I am going to focus on the wrists and how they can become a culprit in putting you in a bad position.

Wrist action: One of the most damaging things I see a lot of players do is to turn their wrists parallel to the



ground as they are taking the club back. It's often called radial deviation but basically means you are turning your wrists side to side, in a horizontal fashion that directs the clubface around your body. This is detrimental for a couple of reasons. One is that the clubhead is twisting and moving more horizontally to the ground. This flattens the swing plane which makes it very hard to hit down on the ball. The other is that when the clubface gets so far inside, there is no way to go but out on the downswing so it causes the swing to reroute into a steep position that produces a glancing blow to the ball. Also, a lot of horizontal or radial wrist action causes the clubface to work independently of the rest of the swing which forces you to control the clubface with the small muscles in your hands and fingers which is extremely difficult to do. The clubhead gets very heavy when moving at our typical full swing speeds, so controlling it with our small muscles creates instability, an increased reliability on timing, and a very inconsistent golf swing.

So, what you want is to have your wrists setting in a more up and down type of hinge, not left and right. This keeps the club more in front of your body as you turn back and promotes a more upright plane which allows

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you to deliver the club to the ball much more easily. A great way to feel the correct movement is to set up over the ball like you normally do. From there, set your wrists upwards towards your chin so that your thumbs are parallel to the ground. Without any further movement in the wrists turn your shoulders and arms so that your back faces the target (or as close as you can get). This is the upward wrist inflection that is needed to set the club properly. The club will still follow the turn of your body and move inside, but it won't be doing it independently which allows your larger muscles to maintain control.

Another thought I have which I find useful is to act as if you were going to throw a tennis ball at the ground in front of where the golf ball would be in your normal setup position. To do this, your trailing hand would set back towards the wrist to get that snap you want when you throw something. You wouldn't have your wrist stiff with your hand and wrist in line with no angle. That slight bend, or set back of the wrist is the angle we shoot for with the trailing hand at the top of the swing. The lead hand just tracks along with that movement

and falls into that little cradle with the grip of the club between the two hands.

Lastly, picture a pane of glass that would be a couple of inches behind your heels and extend vertically above your head. If you twist the wrists horizontally and parallel to the ground as you start your swing, the clubhead would quickly route behind your body and break the glass.

When the club is on plane and not getting behind you, it makes it exponentially easier for your body to turn and deliver the club back to the ball. Give a few of these drills and thoughts a try and I'll bet you'll realize you were making it a little harder than it needed to be.

And, many thanks for all of your support for the newsletter and my articles! See you on the course!



Photos: Editor

