

Expert Shotmaking Advice from the Co-author of the
BESTSELLING
The Plane Truth for Golfers



Golfweek's 101
Winning Golf Tips

John Andrisani

GOLFWEEK'S 101 WINNING GOLF TIPS

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co-author of the bestselling
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Introduction

The game of golf is played on courses around the country that, though finely manicured, are anything but perfect, especially when compared to the other settings where other sports, such as basketball, bowling, and billiards are played. Typically, on public and private courses, tees are not perfectly flat, fairways are rolling in spots, and greens often feature two tiers or subtle undulations. Then, of course, there are water hazards, bunkers, trees, and rough.

Granted, on par-4 and par-5 holes, you get to tee the ball up when driving. Still, holes usually curve left or right, so you need to work the ball around the corner of a dogleg. And, if you do hit the ideal shaped tee shot, for example a draw, you still have to hit an exacting approach shot the right distance and in the right direction to land the ball on the green and avoid trouble.

Short par-3 holes demand even more precision, because greens are usually smaller. Therefore, if you choose the wrong club, steer the swing instead of employing a tension free action, or hit the wrong shot, you are going to face a challenging pitch, chip, or sand shot to put the ball in position to save par.

I think Ben Hogan was right to relate one's handicap to the number of errors the player makes during a round. Nowadays, the majority of club-level recreational golfers shoot in the 90s on a par-72 course, so obviously they make a high number of shot-making errors. The irony is that the average golfer is not totally at fault. I say that because I believe there is misinformation being passed on to recreational golfers by teachers across the country. More importantly, golf instructors do exactly what the great teacher and 1948 Masters champion Claude Harmon, Sr. said a teacher should never do: "Teach swing instead of teaching golf."

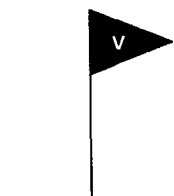
Claude Harmon knew what his son Butch Harmon (former teacher of Tiger Woods) and other great instructors, as well as great players, know: To become good at golf and shoot good scores, you must be able to hit a wide variety of tee-to-green shots that require setting up and swinging differently than you normally are accustomed to doing.

It's my hope that the 101 shots showcased in this book will help you reach your goal of becoming a shot-making virtuoso; a player who is able to handle any course situation you are confronted with for your golfing lifetime.

John Andrisani
December 2006
Gulfport, Florida

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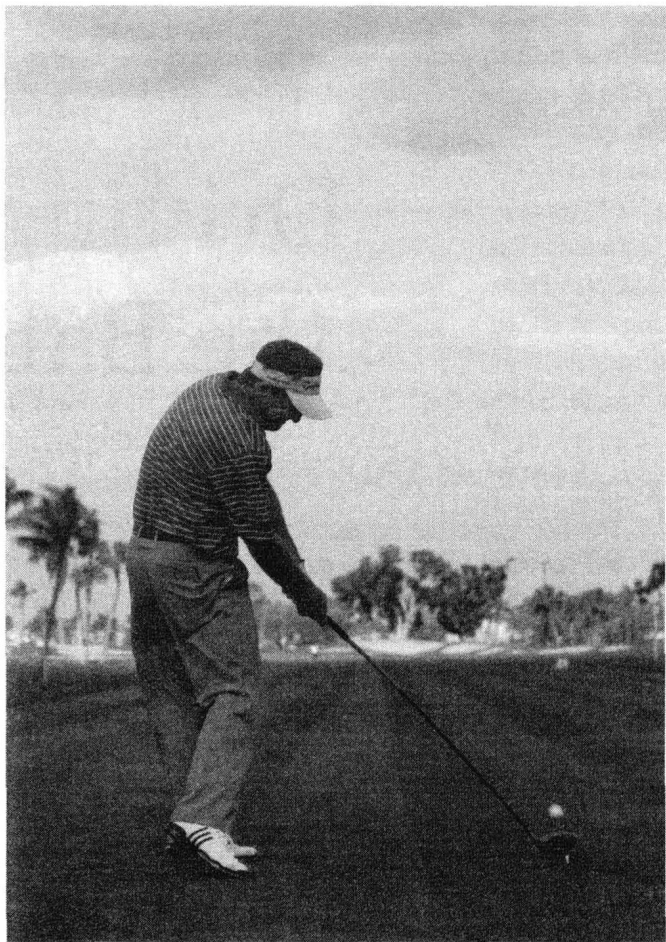
Driving the Ball

The key objective on par-4 and par-5 holes is hitting the fairway, yet course-design features and weather conditions require you to play creative shots to land the ball in scoring position

The first shot played on either a par-4 or par-5 hole, off a tee and between two markers placed several yards apart on an area of manicured grass called the tee-box, is the drive. The purpose of the drive is to hit the ball within a strip of short grass called the fairway, running all the way from the tee to green, ideally in an area that allows you to hit an attacking shot into the green.

The legendary golfer Ben Hogan once said, "If you can't drive the ball, you can't play golf," as if talking to the majority of players who struggle with this department





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Fred Funk, one of the world's best golfers at hitting controlled drives.

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of the game, often slicing drives into trees, water, or rough bordering the fairway.

Ironically, I believe one reason average golfers fail to hit a high number of drives on to the “short grass” during a round of golf has less to do with a lack of talent and more to do with a lack of knowledge regarding how to properly set up to the ball. Let me explain.

When driving, many amateur golfers fail to sweep the ball cleanly off a tee and powerfully into the air because they address the ball in the same way they do when setting up to play a short iron club. Rather than playing out of a wide stance that will provide a strong foundation for swinging the driver (the longest club in the bag with an average length of forty-six inches), middle and high handicap players, in contrast to Ben Hogan in days gone by and Tiger Woods today, spread their feet narrowly apart when addressing the ball. Furthermore, many club-level players set up with their arms hanging straight down instead of extending them outward to feel a strong sense of relaxed tension as they reach for the ball. Consequently, due to incorrect pre-swing preparation, the player is set up to swing the club on a steep plane ideal for a wedge rather than a flat plane ideal for a driver, particularly if the objective is to hit a controlled draw shot.

The driver setup determines, to a large degree, the type of swing you will employ and the type of shot you will hit. So never take the address for granted.

Professional golfers and low handicap players know that in order to hit solid, accurate drives a set of basic fundamentals must be heeded. Of course, as you will learn, setup positions change according to the type of driver shot you intend to hit. Having said that, to hit the ball even halfway decently off the tee with the driver, you need, when taking your address, to fall within certain parameters, or what my friend and top-ranked teacher calls “corridors of success.” To do that, I recommend that you:

1. Play the ball approximately opposite your left heel in a stance that is a few inches wider than shoulder width.
2. Position your feet, knees, hips, and shoulders parallel to the target line.
3. Set the clubface perpendicular to an area of fairway that you have designated as your target.
4. Point the toe-end of your left foot about 25 degrees away from the target line, and position your right foot almost perpendicular to the target line.
5. Bend comfortably at the knees and waist.
6. Balance your weight evenly between your feet or place about fifty-five percent of it on your right foot.
7. Set up with your left arm and the club-shaft forming a straight line.
8. Position your hands in line with the ball or slightly ahead of the clubhead.

The other reason so many weekend golfers hit a high percentage of weak, off-line drives is they swing the club too fast and off track during the takeaway or initial stage of the swing.

The takeaway is the engine room of the swing. If the initial move you make away from the ball is incorrect, it is highly unlikely that you will be able to swing the club back along the proper path and plane and achieve your ultimate goal—the one all golfers strive for—square club-face-to-ball contact at impact. Frankly, the only way to bail out a bad start to the swing is to reroute the club back on track by jerking it. If you do that, however, you'll likely destroy your natural tempo and rhythm and, at best, hit a drive that finishes in the first cut of rough.

Make no mistake, even veteran players who have the ability to sense an early error in their takeaway can rarely correct it in time to save the swing and hit the good shot they intended. The reason: The entire golf swing takes less than two seconds, from the time you trigger the backswing until the time the ball is struck. Therefore, our reflexes cannot react quickly enough to redirect a faulty start to the swing.

Tiger Woods, like other golfing greats, employs a smooth, evenly paced takeaway action. That's because any good driver of the ball knows that a slow, smooth takeaway is the critical link to creating a strong coiling action of the body and a full weight shift onto the right side



in the backswing—two keys to swinging the club powerfully into the back of the ball with the sweet spot of the clubface finishing dead square to the target.

In addition to the vital importance of setting up correctly and employing a deliberate on-path, on-plane takeaway, the other links to good driving involve sticking to a step-by-step pre-swing routine and thinking out each shot strategically.

Whereas the typical amateur rushes the pre-swing routine, the typical tour professional:

- 1. Stands behind the ball (club in right hand, usually), looking closely at the shape of the hole, checking out hazards, and picking out an area of fairway to land the ball and be in position to hit the most aggressive approach shot.**
- 2. Stares at the target and “sees” the ball flying toward it.**
- 3. Employs one or two practice swings to relax the muscles and rehearse the ideal driver-swing.**
- 4. Walks up to the ball from the side, placing the right foot in the basic position for a driver stance and placing the club squarely behind the ball.**
- 5. Sets the left foot down and, practically simultaneously, jockeys the body into position while completing the grip and getting the pressure in both hands right; around 6 on a 1–10 scale.**

6. Looks back and forth from the ball to the target, two to three times.

Depending on what type of shot the PGA pro intends to hit, he tees the ball up in a different area of the tee-box—*not* midway between the markers as most recreational golfers do nearly all of the time. For example, when playing a right-to-left draw, the professional tees the ball up on the left side of the tee and aims down the right side of the fairway, on the line the ball will fly before curving left toward the center of the fairway.

I know this may sound like a heck of a lot of preparation for just one shot, but not if you consider these truisms:

1. The driver is the club most often used off the tee on par-4 and par-5 holes.
2. Hitting a good drive, especially on the opening hole, raises your level of confidence and relaxes you.
3. Good drives set up good scoring opportunities.

Powerfully hit, accurate drives that fly high and far in the air are certainly a plus on dead-straight par-4 and par-5 holes, particularly on a course featuring lush fairways. However, PGA Tour professionals and low handicap players know from experience that during a round of eighteen holes, different holes require different type drives. For example, on a hole that curves left, you're best served by hitting a draw around the dogleg since this shape of drive



essentially shortens the hole and leaves you a shot into the green with a short or medium iron, and these clubs are far easier to hit than a less-lofted long iron or fairway metal club.

Weather conditions and the contour of the fairway are variables that also influence your choice of drive. When hitting into a strong wind, a low shot is required. When hitting to a fairway that is fast-running, and a water-hazard or cross-bunker is within reach, an extra high drive hit with a number-3 fairway metal is the ideal shot. The reason: The ball will land softly on the fairway, short of any hazards. I could go on listing course situations that require different types of drives, but surely you get my point. So let's go to the lesson tee and learn how to play an array of drives so that you can give yourself the best chance of hitting the ball in the best scoring position on the short grass.

○ **SHOT 1: Dead-Straight Power-Play**

Situation: You are coming down the final hole tied with your match-play opponent. He's a powerful hitter.

Strategy: When all is on the line, you can put yourself on par with a more powerful hitter by employing the following method that will allow you to hit drives twenty yards longer.

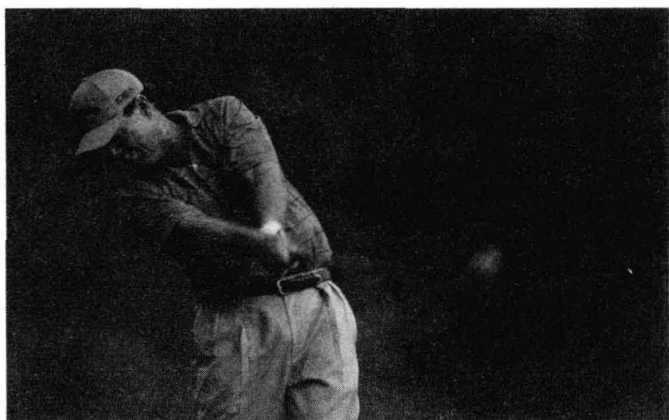
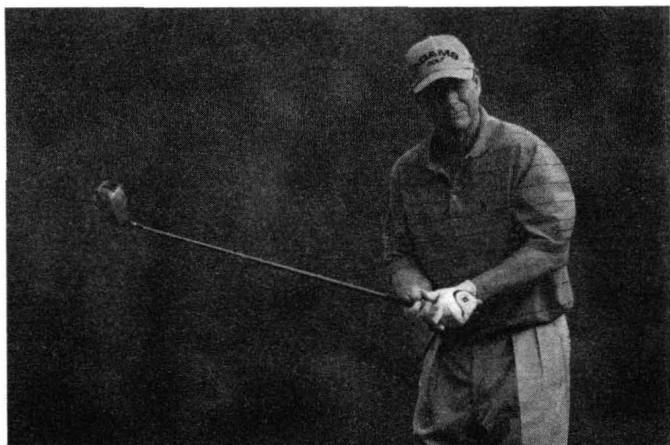
Shot-Technique Tip: At address, visualize the ball zooming off the clubface and flying down the fairway. Focus on the back center portion of the ball, precisely on the spot where you want the clubface's sweet spot to make contact. Tilt your left hip up higher than your right and make sure your left shoulder is higher than your left. Both of these setup adjustments will allow you to put slightly more weight on your right foot and leg so that, ultimately, you are poised to make a powerful upswing hit at impact.

Extend the club back longer in the takeaway, about eighteen inches, to create a wider and more powerful swing arc. Let your left heel come up off the ground to help you make a stronger body turn and longer swing. Stop swinging when the club reaches a position at the top with the club shaft parallel to the target line and the clubface is in a dead-square position. This will ensure that your club is square to the target, where it needs to be to hit a dead-straight shot.

On the downswing, replant your left heel on the ground to trigger a strong leverage action that, in turn, will allow your arms and hands to swing the club squarely into the ball at a higher speed—two ingredients for hitting an on-line power drive.

Tailoring the

Tip: There is no better model for learning this shot than Tom Watson, one of golf's all-time great players and a pro I could watch hit drives for hours.



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Two reasons why golf legend Tom Watson is such a powerfully accurate driver of the ball is that he stares intently at the target, visualizing the perfect shot before starting the swing (top), and releases the club directly at the target through the impact zone (bottom).

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○ **SHOT 2: Super-Controlled Power-Slice**

Situation: You face a tee shot on a long, very sharp, dog-leg-right, par-4 hole.

Strategy: This hole is so long that you need to cut the dogleg, as good golfers say, by turning the ball sharply around the corner.

Shot-Technique Tip: In preparing to hit this shot, follow this shot-making recipe shared with me by legendary golfer Lee Trevino.

Tee the ball low, take a narrow open stance with your right foot perpendicular to the target line instead of fanned out slightly like your left foot, play the ball off your left instep, weaken your grip by turning both hands toward the target, and position your hands higher and closer to your body.

Swing the club back well outside the target line and up to the three-quarter position.

Swing the club down across the target line to impart a high degree of slice-spin on the ball.

Tailoring the Tip: For you left-handed golfers who are looking to learn how to hit a controlled slice, the ideal pro-model is Phil Mickelson.

○ **SHOT 3: Super-Controlled Power-Hook**

Situation: You face a tee shot on a long, very sharp, dog-leg-left, par-4 hole.