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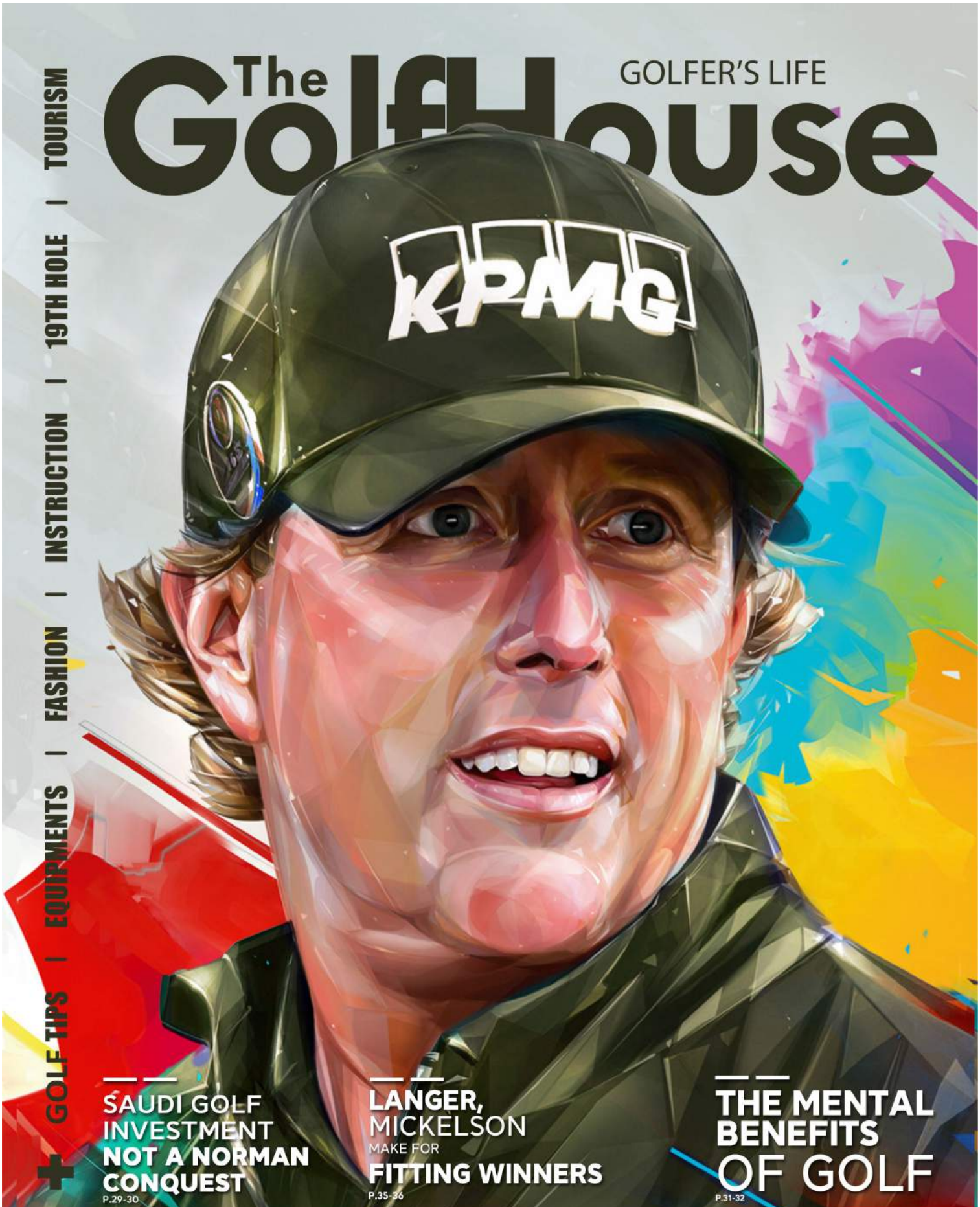

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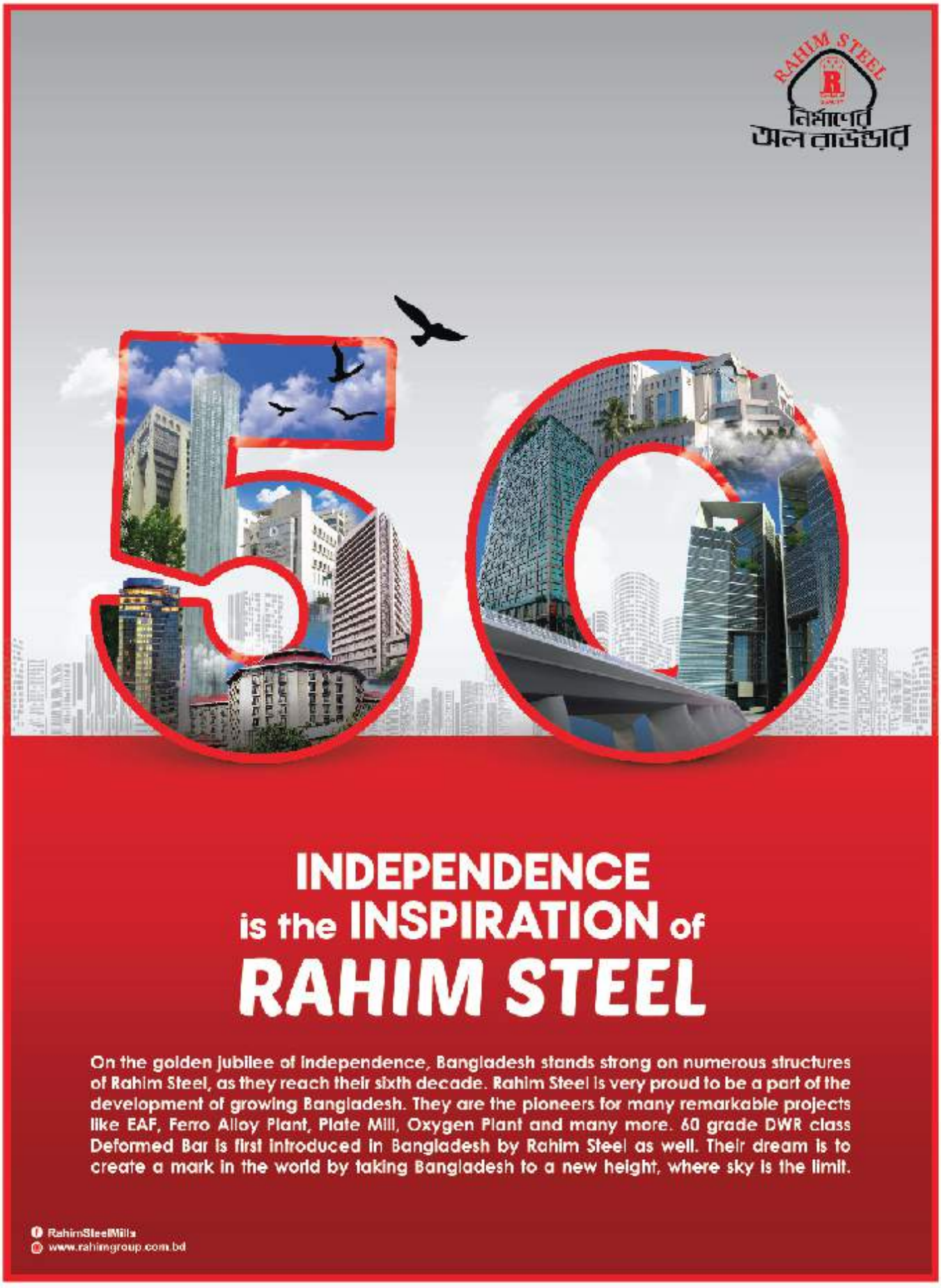
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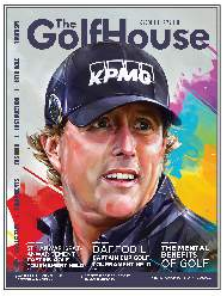

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EDITOR'S CHOICE



Despite numerous rejections and hate, a breakaway premier golf league for the elite is still being planned for a 2023 start date. This breakaway tour is separate from that of the proposed Saudi-funded Super League, which has not gone away.

Forward

Nazrul Hosen Ayon
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GOLFER'S LIFE

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BROOKWATER
GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

Designed to be a social and sporting centrepiece to the planned residential community that bears its name, the Brookwater Golf & Country Club is celebrating 20 years as part of the South-East Queensland golfing landscape in one of the fastest population growth corridors in the country.

Much has changed in and outside the fairways over this time with the City of Springfield continuing to leap out of the ground at a rapid rate from what was, in the 1980s, a vision in the mind of founder, Maha Sinnathamby. Today, nearly 3000 residents call the Brookwater enclave home with the last land release – Brookwater Dress Circle – to include 14 golf course frontage lots in an elevated position behind the 1st green and along the 2nd hole.

'The Chairman', as he is fondly referred to by even his own family members involved in the business, is still an enthusiastic participant in all things Springfield and Brookwater in addition to being a regular and approachable figure around the club.

True to his early vision, the now Troon Golf-managed Brookwater is a club that continues to welcome a blended patronage of club members, corporate golf and social players alike. As has been the case with most golf clubs the world over during the pandemic, rounds are up but the club is keen to ensure a balance is maintained to allow for members (just under 400 at the time of writing) and the broader community to enjoy access to the Greg Norman and Bob Harrison-designed golf course.

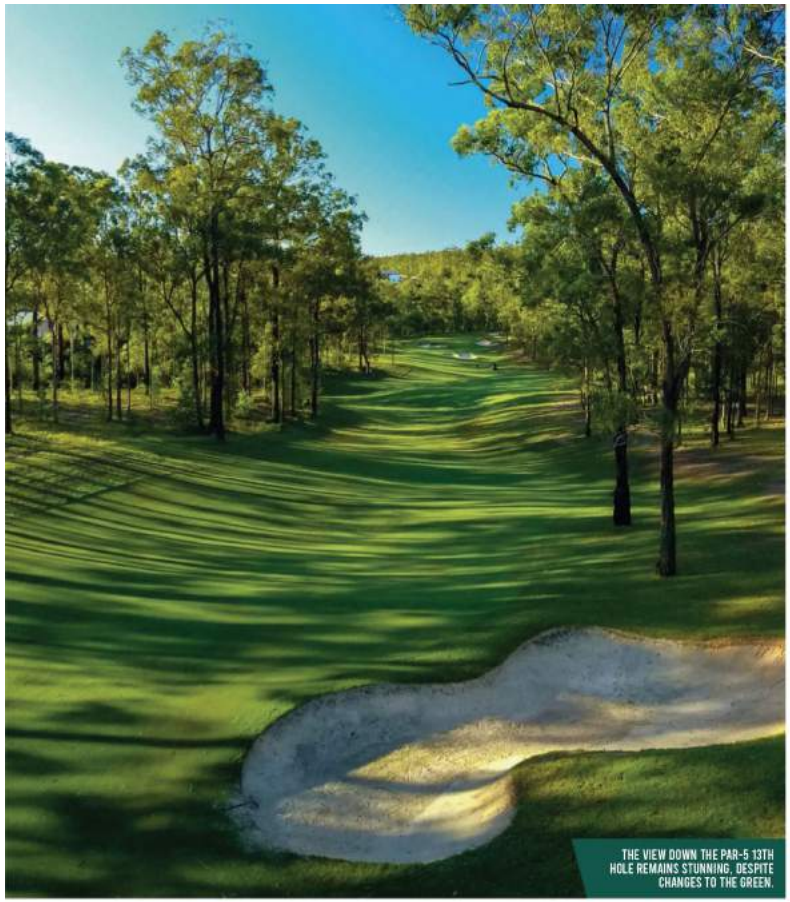
Having two local products with prominent international sporting pedigrees calling Brookwater home, and holding both club championships, is perhaps the icing on the cake in this celebratory year for all involved at the club and in the community.

At the time of writing, 20-year-old men's champion Louis Dobbelaar was ranked the No.4 best amateur in world golf and in the midst of a stunning run of success in some of America's most prestigious events – highlighted by victory in the North & South Amateur at Pinehurst, joining no less than Jack Nicklaus, Davis Love III and Curtis Strange on the trophy. I played with Dobbelaar at Brookwater when he was just 14-years old and no more impressive and engaging young man could you have found. It was only a matter of months later that he had won the New Zealand Amateur to kick start what has already been a hugely impressive amateur career that also includes the most recent Australian Amateur title.

Of course, on the women's side, the feats achieved in the past 12 months by local Woodcrest College Student made good, Ashleigh Barty, barely need replicating here. Barty has cut a swathe through women's tennis and achieved a lifelong ambition in winning the Wimbledon Singles title just a few months ago.

The same unassuming girl, who is more than content being at home, playing golf at Brookwater and walking her dogs started her brilliant run of success in the past year with a 7 & 5 victory over Anna Milne in the 2020 Brookwater club championship final last September.

Whether Milne playfully takes any credit for her role in setting the Barty juggernaut on its way – no doubt many of us would if in her shoes – is uncertain but there can be no doubting the immense pride the club and local community have for their homegrown



THE VIEW DOWN THE PAR-5 13TH HOLE REMAINS STUNNING, DESPITE CHANGES TO THE GREEN.



THE CHALLENGING APPROACH INTO THE HEAVILY-BUNKERED GREEN OF THE PAR-5 17TH HOLE.

heroes in both Barty and Dobbelaar.

Much like Barty, who is in the process of building a new home to put down more roots in the area she loves, the golf course has also developed significantly in nearly two decades as one of the more eye-catching and exhilarating inland golf courses in this country.

Carved from virgin bushland that features breathtaking elevation changes, natural water courses, cavernous bunkering and plenty of 'hero' shot making opportunities are features of a layout that has spent much of its time locked at or very near the top of golf course rankings in both Queensland and Australia.

Not wishing to rest on their laurels, changes overseen by Greg Norman Golf Course Design were commissioned a few years ago that focused heavily on upgrading the green complexes and surrounds, including some of the signature bunkering.

As a result, many greens have had some of the more severe contours softened and, in some cases, the surfaces have been significantly enlarged to create more accessible targets.

A number of the exacting bunkers guarding greens right to the putting surface edge have either been removed completely or redesigned to be more playable and easily maintained. The 1st green is the earliest and most obvious example that greets you during your round, with a cavernous pit at the right of the green removed completely in favour of short grass, allowing for a less penal bail out option.

Nowadays, if you choose the set of tees commensurate with your skill level, regular and returning players to Brookwater will find a more egalitarian course that still provides a test for the very best but is far more approachable for an expanded range of golfers.

If there has been any criticism levelled at the original layout over time, it's been that despite being a 'must play' and a tremendous visual experience, Brookwater was most certainly regarded as demanding and exacting even for the most experienced and accomplished of players.

The recent alterations and the clearing of a lot of trees and undergrowth from the sides of the fairways as part of the project have expanded some of the more restrictive corridors of play, opening up more opportunities for people to play the ball on the ground or in the air. Being punished by way of losing a bagful of golf balls for straying just off the mark into the lighter rough around Brookwater has largely become a thing of the past, to be perfectly frank.

Condition-wise, the strategic removal of a number of trees to improve aeration and reduce perennially shaded areas from some greens, in particular, have contributed to turf conditions that are far healthier and more consistent than in years past. Expanding the size of many of the greens has improved the inevitable wear and tear caused by traffi c and, it goes without saying, now allows for a greater variety of pin positions.

No greater example of this improvement exists at the par-5 13th hole, perhaps the most photographed of the many stunning holes Brookwater has to offer, but with a green that was compromised more than most from shade and high traffi c. The green surface is now bigger than the original and dramatically improved but the majestic setting remains when viewed from back up the snaking fairway.

The 1st and 9th greens are other examples where width has been added, improving not only the options available to play the holes but the condition of the surfaces as a result. Despite being a relatively short par-4, the old 9th green was notoriously diffi cult to hit even with a short iron approach as it was quite narrow from front-to-back.

Pulling the green surface more to the right into what was a shallow chipping area barely alters the look of the approach from the fairway but overall, it has resulted in a demonstrably improved outcome.

In a course design career spanning more than 100 golf courses, Norman retains a soft spot for the layout in his home state that has since played host to a number of Queensland Open Championships and other signifi cant events.

"It's a course that I am extremely proud of and the recognition the course has received as being one of the best layouts in the country has exceeded my expectations." Norman told me some years ago. "It's still one of my favourite creations.

Brookwater offered a fantastic site to work with and ranks very high on my list of golf course design projects that I have been involved with."

South Australian Nick Cullen, winner of the fi rst Queensland Open held at Brookwater in 2013, had this to say before the championship concluded in his favour in front of colourful crowds that gathered in the amphitheatre setting behind the 18th green.

"Brookwater is the kind of course you need to play if you want to play the best golf courses in Australia, if not the world." Almost 20 years on from opening day, that sentiment continues to ring true of Brookwater.



5TH ANWAR ISPAT-ANWAR CEMENT CAPTAIN GOLF TOURNAMENT HELD



The 5th Anwar Ispat-Anwar Cement Captain Golf Tournament was recently held at the Army Golf Club in Dhaka. A total of 720 amateur golfers participated in five categories – senior, junior, regular, ladies and veteran. Major General Nayeem Ashfaq Chowdhury emerged overall champion. Nazrul Islam became veteran champion, Giasuddin emerged senior champion, Fatema Motiur finished ladies champion and Sheikh Samir Hossain became junior champion. Bangladesh Army Chief General S M Shafiuddin Ahmed distributed prizes among the winners at the end of the four-day event.











DAFFODIL CAPTAIN CUP GOLF TOURNAMENT HELD



Daffodil Captain Cup Golf Tournament was recently held at the Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka. Around 600 amateur golfers from within and outside the country, including 15 from five overseas nations, participated in the three-day event.

Salman Khan emerged as the winner while Major Jakir Ahmed finished as runners-up in overall category. Mrs Fatema Motiur became the ladies winner.

Chief of Bangladesh Army General S M Shafiuddin Ahmed distributed prizes among the winners at a gala event at the KGC auditorium at the end of the tournament.









DAFFODIL CAPTAIN CUP

Galleries















2022PRESIDENTSCUP

THE NEW INTERNATIONALS

IN SEPTEMBER 2022, A UNITED STATES 'DREAM TEAM' WILL AIM TO EXTEND ITS TWO-DECADE DOMINANCE OF THE PRESIDENTS CUP. BUT ALL IS NOT LOST FOR THE INTERNATIONALS, WITH A WAVE OF IN-FORM DEBUTANTES JOCKEYING FOR A FIRST CRACK AT THE AMERICANS.

The countdown to the 2022 Presidents Cup has begun, and with the Americans convincingly overcoming the Europeans at the Ryder Cup they will be buoyant about their chances of holding both trophies as the sun sets on September 25. U.S Captain Davis Love III will have an embarrassment of player riches lining up to represent the stars and stripes at Quail Hollow Golf Club in Charlotte, North Carolina. It is difficult to see any player from the dominant American Ryder Cup team not playing their way onto, or being selected, for the matches against the Internationals in ten months' time. Steve Stricker took six debutantes into the matches at Whistling Straits, with all covering themselves in glory as the Americans regained the Ryder Cup 19-9 on the back of a terrible run of 12 losses from 17 matches dating back to 1985.





THE CORE OF THE 2019 PRESIDENTS CUP U.S TEAM WILL BE BACK IN ACTION AT QUAIL HOLLOW.

But it was arguably the strongest American team ever assembled in either Cup event. The 12-man team boasted six major champions, an Olympic gold medallist and 10 of the world's top-13 players. The old guard of Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson have represented the States for the last time but the new guard of American golf – the youngest team in the 94-year history of the Ryder Cup – will be favoured to dominate both team events for at least the next decade.

For the Internationals, the dominant U.S Ryder Cup victory presents an ominous sign of what may lie ahead at Quail Hollow. After all, the Internationals have only won the Presidents Cup once since 1994. That was, of course, back in 1998 on 'home ground' at Royal Melbourne Golf Club. On American soil, the closest the Internationals have got to a win was at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club in 1996 when the U.S prevailed 16.5 to 15.5.

***

Qualifi cation for the International team started at The Open Championship back in July and will run through until the 2022 BMW Championship in August. The team will be comprised of the top-eight players from the Presidents Cup International Points list, with the remaining team members to be selected by Captain Trevor Immelman. Tournaments from the 2022 PGA Championship to the BMW Championship will carry a 25 percent points premium so players in the best form leading into the event have the potential to rise quickly into an automatic selection position.

The make-up of the 2022 International team, as a result, has the potential to be very diff erent to the one that was edged out 16-14 by the Americans at Royal Melbourne in 2019. Members of that side – like South African Louis Oosthuizen, Mexico's Abraham Ancer, reigning Masters Champion Hideki Matsuyama, from Japan, Korea's Sungjae Im, Chilean Joaquin Niemann and Aussie duo Cameron Smith and Marc Leishman – are certainly in the frame to back up for another Presidents Cup campaign.

But it is the wave of emerging stars putting their name forward through good performances and victories that will have Immelman excited about his team's chances. In these Cup debutantes – just as was the case for the Americans at Whistling Straits – there will be no scar tissue from being on the receiving end of one loss after another, which has hampered International teams of years gone by.

Canadian duo **Corey Conners** and **Mackenzie Hughes** are among the rising stars looking to make their Presidents Cup debut in 2022.

Conners, who narrowly missed a captain's pick in 2019, is ranked the No.33 in the world (at the time of going to press) and has been a consistent high performer on the PGA Tour during the past two seasons. While his only victory was back in early 2019 at the Valero Texas Open, Conners has racked up an impressive nine top-10 placings since the start of 2020. Furthermore, he's banked a top-25 result in 59 percent of his PGA Tour starts in that time.

Likewise, Hughes' past two years have been a standout in a professional career dating back to 2013. Eight top-10s, including podium fi nishes on three occasions, was highlighted with his best result in a major – a T6 at the 2021 Open Championship behind Collin Morikawa, which was just a month after Hughes held a share of the U.S Open lead into the fi nal round.

The biggest surge toward fi rst-time Cup selection is expected to come from an impressive quartet of South Africans including **Christiaan Bezuidenhout** (world ranked No.40), **Garrick Higgo** (No.49), **Erik Van Rooyen** (No.53) and **Dylan Fritelli** (No.90).

Bezuidenhout won back-to-back events on the European Tour at the end of 2020. He didn't just win he was four and fi ve strokes clear respectively. The 27-year-old made the cut in all four majors this year with a T30 at the PGA Championship being the highlight.

In the PGA Tour's wrap-around 2021-2022 season, Bezuidenhout will be based in the US after carding a closing 64 to fi nish third at the Korn Ferry Tour Championship to lock in his fi rst PGA Tour card.

"It was a big boost for me to get my PGA Tour card," said the South African, who had made 26 consecutive cuts worldwide at the time of writing. "It's been a while since I played badly though. Things have been going very well for me, which is great. We all know that golf is a series of ups and downs. But right now, I'm doing the right things most of the time."

Higgo, as has been covered in John Huggan's feature starting on page 36, is one of the most improved players in professional golf during the past two years. His continuing upward trend in the world rankings will ensure he is in the conversation for a Captain's pick if he doesn't play his way straight onto the team as one of the top-eight International qualifi ers. And, like any International player, who is yet to line up against the Americans, Higgo is motivated to be a part of the team that breaks the US dominance.

"It is a big motivation for me to be on a team that beats the Americans," he told John Huggan. "I think we can. We have so many good players coming through, so the team will have more depth, which is what has been needed."

Van Rooyen is the latest South African to win on the PGA Tour. His victory in August at the Barracuda Championship, in his fi rst full year on the U.S circuit, came after a terrible run of six missed cuts in his eight previous starts. Top-10s in two season-ending FedExCup events cemented his reputation as a rising PGA Tour star.

"And I think as a whole we are (South African players) are quite motivated in general. Ernie, for me at least, was really the one that set the tone from a South African perspective.

"Obviously Gary Player and guys before him. But Ernie and Retief were really the eras that I look up to. And they set the tone for us and there's so many great players coming

> "GARRICK HAS GOT SUCH A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD OF HIM. HE'S PLAYED EXCEPTIONAL GOLF THE LAST TWO YEARS."
>
> – FELLOW SOUTH AFRICAN, ERIK VAN ROOYEN.

He's keen to follow in the footsteps of hischildhood idols Ernie Els and Retief Goosen, while the recent successes of Oosthuizen and Higgo is further motivation to play well and enjoy the benefi ts from that.

"Garrick has got such a bright future ahead of him," Van Rooyen says. "He's played exceptional golf the last two years.

"And Louis obviously is someone I've always looked up to. And I played a lot of golf with him the last year or so. Ever since my wife and I moved back to the U.S. we live nearby each other.

"Louis . . . he's so good on the golf course. And the way he handles himself, his calm demeanour, his patience, it's really something I took away from him. We all know he's a fantastic ball striker, but the way he handles himself, that's something I wanted to copy. And it's something I look up to.

through at the moment because of that."

International team debutante at Royal Melbourne, Joaquin Niemann, is likely – based on form – to be joined by fellow Chilean **Mito Pereira**. Mito who?

Mito has been, arguably, the in-form player anywhere in the world since May. The 26-year-old started the year on the Korn Ferry Tour and in his eighth start he finished T2. It was the result that seemed to fill the then 295th ranked player in the world with enough self-confidence to take his game to the next level.

The next month, after two more top-10s, Pereira won the Rex Hospital Open in a play-off. He repeated with a second win the ▶





following week, at the BMW Charity Pro-Am, and was immediately promoted to the PGA Tour.

There were obvious nerves in his first two starts, with a missed cut and mid-field finish, but a T4 at the Olympics and three consecutive top-six finishes followed. Then, at the opening event of the 2021-2022 wraparound season, he banked the largest cheque of his career after an outright third placing at the Fortinet Championship. He's now ranked No.82 and climbing.

"To start the season well, it's powerful," Pereira said at the Fortinet.

"You can get a lot of points, you can play through the season with less stress, so it's a great start of the year and I hope I can just keep going."

Based on his performances in the second half of 2021, Pereira – who has moved permanently to the U.S. and plans to marry there in January – is a player, who could bring a much-needed no-fear attitude to the International line-up.

"Mito's not scared of anything. He's an old dirt bike racer, and he was a guy that definitely had the mentality that when he got it going good, he's not scared to go

> "IF I PLAY GOOD GOLF, I'LL PROBABLY QUALIFY ANYWAY, IF I DON'T PLAY GOOD GOLF I WON'T QUALIFY AND I PROBABLY DON'T DESERVE TO GET PICKED."
>
> – LUCAS HERBERT.

win it," Pereira's Texas Tech college coach Greg Sands told the Golf Channel. "You don't see that quality a lot, and when you see it, it's pretty noticeable and he definitely has that."

Three Japanese players – Takumi Kanaya, Ryosuke Kinoshita and Rikuya Hoshino – have all made inroads in 2021 and will finish the year with a higher world ranking than what they started it with.

The biggest mover has been Kinoshita, who combined two wins on the Japanese Tour with another four top-10 results. The second of those victories illustrated the 30-year-old's ice-cool approach to the game. He not only fired a closing 10-under 62, but he birdied the first extra hole of a sudden death play-off to snatch the title.

And then there are the Aussies – a foursome of tournament winners yet to taste the adrenalin rush of Presidents Cup competition.

Lucas Herbert, Min Woo Lee, Cameron Davis and Matt Jones have all won tournaments on the main Tours in 2021. In Europe, Herbert and Lee won the Irish and Scottish Opens respectively, while Jones claimed the Honda Classic and Davis, the Rocket Mortgage Classic, on the PGA Tour.

All four have, as a result, made significant advances into the Top-100 of the world ranking. But it will be Herbert and Lee with the best chance of cracking a spot in Immelman's team as both are already in the top-60 of the world ranking.

Interestingly, Captain Immelman was one of the first to jump on Twitter to congratulate the pair of young Aussies after their victories.

Like Pereira, both Herbert and Lee have the shot-making fearlessness that is well-suited to matchplay and they've already shown that, under pressure, they can rise to the occasion.

And there is the motivation to see and, be a part of, an International victory. Herbert was just three-years-old, and Lee, five-months-old, when Peter Thomson's team lifted the trophy in 1998.

Herbert, who recently gained his PGA Tour card for the 2021-2022 season through the Korn Ferry Tour finals series, has always placed a priority on trying to make the International Presidents Cup team.

"If I play good golf, I'll probably qualify anyway, if I don't play good golf I won't qualify and I probably don't deserve to get picked," Herbert previously told Golf Australia magazine.

Davis is the most-improved of the quartet, having risen 160 spots in the ranking in 2021, and his victory came in a gruelling five-hole sudden death play-off. But it was how he made the play-off that showed the 2017 Australian Open champion never counts himself out of the contest. Davis holed a miraculous greenside bunker shot on the 17th hole for eagle and calmly made birdie down the last to join the playoff with American Troy Merritt and, potentially, future Cup team mate, Joaquin Niemann. It was the kind of win Captain Immelman would be best advised not to forget before heading to Quail Hollow.

"I haven't experienced any Presidents Cups, I haven't experienced any professional team events," Davis said after his win. "I haven't experienced a playoff like that or even a playoff in a professional event before. It's the first time for me.

"All you can do is prepare and give it your best shot. You know, that's my first time and I'm really glad it's a positive vibe from that one, so hopefully next time we can do something similar.

"I hope Trevor was watching."

WILL JASON DAY MAKE IT TO QUAIL HOLLOW?

The short answer to the above question is… probably not.

At the time of going to press, the 2015 PGA Champion and former World No.1 had not played a competitive round of golf since August 20, when he carded rounds of 73-73 to miss the cut at The Northern Trust. It was his seventh missed cut in a light schedule of 15 PGA Tour starts in 2021.

This year, there were bouts of illness, allergy attacks and ongoing issues with his back, which he tweaked again on the eve of the Memorial Tournament in June, forcing his withdrawal.

"I'm not 21 anymore, so it doesn't recover like it used to," Day said later that month. "It's just hard to have an injury like this or not even an injury, but have a stiff back knowing that I have to go out and play."

Opening rounds of 68-62 at the Travelers Championship was a sign Day may have turned his game around, and he ultimately earned a top-10 finish. But it has been slim pickings since and his world ranking, at No.78, is the lowest it has been since mid-2010. And heading in the wrong direction.

Winless on the PGA Tour for more than three years, and without a top-five since August 2020, Day will not only have to overcome his dodgy back but find the confidence that saw him a permanent fixture in the world top-10 for several years.

Only then will Day come close to nudging ahead of the debutantes lining up for their chance.



HEND PUMPED TO RETURN TO ASIA

Australian Scott Hend, one of the Asian Tour's most prolific winners, has expressed his delight that the Asian Tour will resume play at the end of this month – following a 19-month break because of the pandemic – in the second of this year's "Our Time" videos, produced in collaboration with Tour partner Rolex.

"I have already set aside my time, if these events are going to be on, I am going to go and play and support the Asian Tour as much as I can," said Hend. "I appreciate what it [the Asian Tour] has done for me, and I want to try and give back to support the events. I love playing golf in Asia, the sooner they can get going the better. I think it will be awesome."

Hend is a 10-time champion on the Asian Tour, winner of the 2016 Asian Tour Order of Merit title and sits second on its Official Career Earnings with over US$5million.

He first started playing on the Asian Tour in 2007 and the following year he claimed the Pertamina Indonesia President Invitational in Indonesia – his maiden Asian Tour title. It opened the floodgates for more success, including three in 2013, two in 2016, two Macau Opens and three events jointly sanctioned with the European Tour.

He makes no secret about his close affinity for the Asian Tour.

He added: "I would like to see it [the Asian Tour] right up in number three in the ranking on Tours to play. It would be good to hear people say 'Asian Tour is fantastic, I wanna be there, I can make a living there, it's very competitive, that's a place I want to be a member of'."

Three of his Asian Tour victories came in Thailand so he will start as one of the favourites when the Tour resumes this month with the two-event Asian Tour Phuket Series.

The Blue Canyon Phuket Championship tees-off from November 25 to 28 on the Canyon Course at Blue Canyon Country Club, while the Laguna Phuket Championship will be staged the following week at Laguna Golf Phuket.

Both events boast prizemoney of US$1million and will be followed by two events being planned in Singapore in January that will bring to a conclusion the 2020-21 season.



EUROPEAN TOUR REBRANDS AS DP WORLD TOUR

The European Tour and DP World recently announced that the international professional golf circuit will be renamed the DP World Tour starting in 2022.

The DP World Tour will see single-season prize money surpass the $200 million mark for the first time, with a new minimum prize fund of $2 million for all tournaments solely sanctioned by the DP World Tour.

"The entire ecosystem of our Tour will be strengthened because of this hugely significant deal, and that was essential to us and to DP World, who have been an incredible supporter of our Tour as well as golf more widely, from grassroots through to the elite professional game," European Tour chief executive Keith Pelley said in a statement, noting that the partnership coincides with the 50th anniversary for both the European Tour and DP World.

"The DP World Tour is, therefore, a natural evolution of our decade-long partnership, and the presence of 'World' in our new title better reflects our global reach."

Beginning Nov. 25 with the first round of the Joburg Open, the 2022 DP World Tour will feature a minimum of 47 tournaments in 27 different countries, including new tournaments in the United Arab Emirates, Japan, South Africa and Belgium, as well as an expanded Rolex Series comprising five events -- the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship, Slync.io Dubai Desert Classic, Genesis Scottish Open, BMW PGA Championship and the season-ending DP World Tour Championship.

For the first time, three tournaments will be co-sanctioned with the PGA Tour -- the Genesis Scottish Open, Barbasol Championship and Barracuda Championship. This sanctioning partnership is a result of the strategic alliance between golf's leading men's professional tours.

"Thanks to the support of long-standing partner DP World, today's announcement significantly elevates the European Tour on a global basis," said Jay Monahan, PGA Tour commissioner and a European Tour board member. "We are excited for the continued growth and evolution of the European Tour, as well as the momentum this provides toward our Strategic Alliance. I've said before that our respective Tours are positioned to grow -- together -- over the next 10 years faster than we ever have at any point in our existence, and today's announcement is another point of proof in those efforts."

---Agencies

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SAUDI GOLF INVESTMENT NOT A NORMAN CONQUEST

SAYS ASIAN TOUR CHIEF

Greg Norman and his billionaire Saudi backers are not taking over the Asian Tour, insists the circuit's chief, after the Australian great's new company pledged $200 million to create 10 new tournaments.

Nor is the former world number one launching a breakaway "super league" via his plunge into the Asian Tour that shook the golf world, tour commissioner and CEO Cho Minn Thant told AFP.

Norman last month revealed he was the CEO of newly formed LIV Golf Investments, a Saudi sovereign wealth fund-backed company committing $200 million to 10 new global events on the Asian Tour schedule over the next decade.

Scant on detail, the announcement was interpreted by some as the first move in establishing Norman's oft-touted "super league" that could split men's professional golf and threaten the dominance of the US PGA Tour.

Such speculation is wide of the mark, Cho said, while acknowledging that Norman has ambitions to create a superstar golf circuit separate to the main tours.

"I think there's been a misconception that LIV Golf has taken over the Asian Tour and we are going to get the 'LIV Golf Tour' or the 'Saudi Tour', which is incorrect," said Cho, speaking by video link from Jupiter, Florida, where two-time major winner Norman is based.

"They are a promoter who are adding 10 events to our tournament schedule. Our structure remains the same," assured Cho, who is finalising details on a 25-event Asian Tour 2022 calendar.

'Most lucrative season'

It will begin with the $5 million Saudi International on February 3-6.

That is not part of the new Norman-funded 10-event series but is expected to attract stars such as Dustin Johnson, who won in 2019 and 2021, when the tournament was sanctioned by the European Tour.

The 10 new events, likely to kick off in the Middle East and Europe, will join long-standing Asian tournaments such as the Hong Kong Open and Maybank Championship in Malaysia.

To take part, players such as Johnson will need a release from the US PGA Tour, which a year ago formed a "strategic alliance" with the European Tour to counter the threat of any breakaway circuit.

"Obviously, before, they were almost assured of being released," said Cho.

"But now I guess it's a little bit harder... just because the PGA and European Tours may feel that we're somewhat more competitive."

Cho's focus now is on rekindling the Asian Tour, on hold since March 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The interrupted 2020-21 season resumes later this month after a 20-month absence



with two $1 million tournaments in Thailand and will conclude with two more in Singapore in January, ahead of the new season launch in February.

Cho revealed the new Norman-backed events will be full-field with "70 to 80 Asian Tour members" with slots available to the top 200 in the world, plus others including elite amateurs.

"To have 10 tournaments with prize money above $1 million each has basically never before been seen on the Asian Tour," said Cho.

"It's very likely to be the Asian Tour's most lucrative season."

Saudi 'sportswashing'

The majority shareholder in LIV Golf Investments is the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF), one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds and behind the takeover of Premier League football club Newcastle United.

It has brought accusations of Saudi "sportswashing" of the Gulf kingdom's human rights record.

"I think the political agenda is never going to be far from the conversation," said Cho.

"We're open to having the conversation.

"And our response is basically that we're very fortunate that they are interested in golf and it's good for the game of golf," said Cho, who noted that PIF has also invested in the likes of Uber.

Cho acknowledged that Norman and his Saudi backers harbour ambitions to start a "super league", in which the game's stars could compete for guaranteed payouts in individual and team events.

"Sure, it's certainly one of their ambitions to start a league," admitted Cho.

"If the best players in the world decide that it's something that they want to be part of, there's no reason why the Asian Tour shouldn't be part of it," he said.

"But let's face it, the PGA Tour is still the pinnacle tour that everyone wants to play, and it always will be."

---AFP

THE MENTAL BENEFITS OF GOLF



There are figures we can point to that measure golf's growth during the pandemic—how many rounds were played, how many clubs were sold, how many more new golfers emerged in the absence of other options. What is impossible to quantify is how many people got out of bed each day because of golf.

Perhaps we overestimate the value of a tee time. But in the same way the pandemic forced us to identify some activities as reckless and others as safe, it also drew a line between the pursuits that left us hollow and those that infused us with purpose. Even as we know there are emotional challenges facing golfers, it's worth noting that for the majority of us, golf still does far more good than harm. It pulls us outside and away from the doom-scrolling temptations of our devices. It connects us with others. And it's proven to be a low-stakes training ground for how we navigate and process disappointment.

In the U.K., Dr. Roger Hawkes oversaw the Golf & Health Project that was established to underscore the benefits of golf. Among its published findings was that playing golf regularly can help "reduce anxiety, improve confidence and boost self-esteem, all of which contribute to improved mental well-being." According to Hawkes, former chief medical officer of the European Tour, those findings played a role in government officials prioritizing the opening of golf courses.

"Prior to the pandemic, the idea was that policy makers, especially in countries where golf is still emerging, would be more likely to invest in a sport with proven benefits," Hawkes elaborated. "The pandemic has focused everyone's minds on mental health and well-being and highlighting the published evidence was a factor in the UK government allowing golf to be resumed much earlier than other community sports."

While it is not a new concept to extol golf's role in clearing our heads, the pandemic has emerged as an unanticipated game-changer in reframing the sport as something we not only want to do, but perhaps something we should do as well. But even then, the reasons extend beyond the bullet points offered in studies. For starters, let's acknowledge that the game isn't a substitute for real therapy—nor, for that matter, does it even guarantee you will leave the course happy. But oddly, this is helpful, too, since even the game's many frustrations can be constructive in cultivating resilience.

"It's not just being out there that's good for you, because there are a lot of miserable golfers," said Jeff Ritter, a Golf Digest top teacher in Oregon whose Make The Turn performance program is as much about overall wellness as lower scores. "But there are a lot of inherent lessons in the game that if you embrace, can teach you a lot about mindset."

Where golf differs from yoga or running—two other activities that promote mental health benefits—is that playing golf invites a steady drumbeat of negative feedback. Or as Ritter puts it, "you have 70 to 100 opportunities to feel shitty at the end of a round." How could that possibly be good for our well-being? Because golf eventually forces you to learn how to frame unpleasant outcomes to make them more palatable—otherwise we'd all have quit the first time we topped a drive.

Think of it as strength training for your mind. It might not feel good in the moment, but it gets us to a better place nonetheless.

"I tell people all the time, you have chosen to play and learn a really challenging game," Ritter says. "This was your choice, so you need to find the joy within the struggle. And if you can't do that, you shouldn't be out here."

One of the exercises Ritter prescribes with his students involves a batch of paper clips. For every negative thought they entertain while playing, they're told to take a paper clip out of one pocket and put it in the other, thus allowing them to measure precisely how often negative thoughts creep in over 18 holes. There is a strict golf application to this—like many coaches, Ritter stresses that you're better positioned to hit a good shot when in a positive frame of mind—but the practice extends beyond the golf course. As with other forms of therapy, the first step in confronting a pattern of thoughts is fostering an awareness of them.

"We always say that golf reveals who we are, and one of the things that golf reveals is all the ways we think," Ritter said. "We use the golf course to learn about ourselves."

Granted, there are few golfers among us who seek the game out for four hours of self analysis. More likely it's the opposite in that we use golf to get out of our own heads and connect with others. In the earliest days of the pandemic, we adapted new habits—standing six feet apart on tee boxes; waving awkwardly goodbye at the end of rounds instead of shaking hands—not just because we wanted to get some swings in. It was also because we craved interaction with others.

Back then the need felt extreme, but it underscored the essential social nature of golf that sustains us in normal times as well. The older we get, it seems, the more this need sharpens, something author Tom Coyne first explored in an essay for The Golfers' Journal, and later in his book A Course Called America. Coyne's thesis is that men especially—although certainly not exclusively—struggle to develop new friendships as they drift into middle age. Golf allows for an easier path, and provides a fertile setting for venturing past superficial small talk.

"I call the first tee the universal place of accord," Coyne said by phone. "We're all in a common pursuit and it's hard for all of us. I think male relationships suffer from ego and golf is such a humbling endeavor that ego is wiped out by the third hole."

As Coyne notes, though, it's not just that golf is hard. It's also how golf fits the specifications of the type of "shoulder-to-shoulder" relationships that men prefer. The phrase, popularized by University of Maryland Professor Geoff Greif in his 2009 book on the dynamics of male friendship, Buddy System, speaks to a common distinction between male and female relationships. Whereas women in general are more comfortable in face-to-face interactions that dive more readily into substantive topics, men tend to get there circuitously by way of a shared activity—working together, watching a ballgame, and yes, playing golf.



"Golf is one of the few sports where you really have the opportunity while competing to actually communicate with somebody," said Greif, who is also a golfer. "In tennis and basketball, there's not a lot of time. But in golf you have four hours. It's a shoulder-to-shoulder activity but you also have a chance to talk a great deal."

And remember, it's not just that golfers need other golfers to fill out a foursome and check each other's alignment. Especially as we age, and perhaps our professional and family lives enter less frenetic phases, our opportunities to connect dwindle, and golf fills the void.

"Lack of social interaction has been shown in a number of studies to be a significant risk factor in the older population," Hawkes said, adding that in one study, a lack of social interaction proved to even be worse for people than smoking.

Ultimately, the best way to measure golf's influence on our well-being might be by subtraction. Again, look to the fraught early days—and in some regions, early months—of the pandemic, when assorted restrictions left us bottled inside our homes without an outlet. Or for those who live in northern climates, just think of a typical winter, when the greens are frozen over, and our group texts go silent.

"Golf depression is a real thing," Coyne says. "There are months when I can't play golf and I feel squirrely, cooped up. Everything has a diminished outlook.

"In golf season, meanwhile, I'm out walking, I'm exercising, I'm seeing people. The world looks a little brighter."

TRUE GRIT TIGER WOODS MADE A 10 A YEAR AGO AT THE MASTERS.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER IS WHAT MAKES IT SO INCREDIBLE



Significance comes with time, at least normally. Seldom does a sporting moment cut through on a deeper level instantly. It is hindsight that allows us to appreciate the gravity of a situation. There are, though, exceptions—goosebump-inducing episodes that immediately convey unmistakable import. Jeter's last hit at Yankee Stadium. The Miracle on Ice. Tiger's first Masters win. Tiger's last Masters win.

Twenty-two years after Woods showed the world what its next sporting icon looked like, and 18 months after he reminded the world to never count him out, Tiger played a seven-hole stretch that falls into both categories: remarkable in the moment and more so, perhaps, with the passage of time. On that gray autumnal Sunday, those seven holes felt poetic. Given the events of the 12 months since, they're downright eerie.

The 2020 Masters, played in November due to the COVID-19 pandemic, feels in many ways like it took place a decade ago. You'll recall that Woods wasn't anywhere near the lead; his game couldn't keep pace with the galloping horse that was Dustin Johnson that week. This wasn't about the score he posted on Sunday, a four-over 76 that saw him finish 19 back of DJ. It was how he got to that number.

Woods had seen his round sputter before he stepped to the par-3 12th hole, Augusta National's iconic nook that, one year earlier, hoodwinked his competition and handed him a most unlikely victory. In turn, he proceeded to make the same mistake that Poulter and Brooksy and Tony and Francesco made, misjudging the wind and spinning one back into Rae's Creek. He then dropped and made the same mistake Jordan made by failing to find dry land with his third. His fifth found the back bunker, his sixth the water again, his eighth the green. Two putts from there added up to a septuple-bogey 10. It wasn't just his worst-ever score at the Masters; it was the worst of his entire career. Woods had played 23,789 holes on the PGA Tour without venturing into double digits. Of course, it happened on the hole that proved pivotal in perhaps the craziest victory of an amazing career.

Augusta has always had a flair for drama, but this approached a different level of tragic irony. Father Time had prevailed once again. The shots were ugly. The movements between them were downright cringeworthy. After playing his eighth shot from the sand, he searched for the least-painful way to pull himself out of the bunker before ultimately using his wedge as a cane. He was a beaten man.

Until he wasn't.

"This sport is awfully lonely sometimes," Woods said that day. "You have to fight it. No one is going to bring you off the mound or call in a sub. You have to fight through it."

What happened next defied belief. It probably shouldn't have, but it did. Woods was nine over for the round when he made the uphill climb to the 13th tee, and he was limping toward the worst round of his Masters career. Hell, the guy had serious work to do to break 80. He proceeded to rip a tight draw around the corner, quite possibly his best drive of the week, and two-putted for birdie. Another birdie at 15. And 16. And 17. And, for good measure, one more on 18. He had never finished a round with five birdies over his last six holes. He had certainly never made five birdies in his last six holes after an embarrassing episode on perhaps golf's most famous hole. Woods had a genuine smile on his face when he slipped the green jacket onto DJ's broad shoulders. That finishing flourish washed away a vile aftertaste. You'll never see a more impressive 76.

"That round was a monument to Woods' competitive instincts," says longtime golf writer Alan Shipnuck. "When he plays his best golf it is a wonder to behold. But it's actually more riveting when he's struggling. I'm not sure any player has ever fought as hard for every single stroke. The birdie binge had little to do with his proficiency at golf. It was all heart."

Woods' right-hand man/swing consultant/business partner/best pal, Rob McNamara, puts it more succinctly: "He just simply never gives up."

We're not going to compare a bad golf hole to the gauntlet that has been Woods' last 12 months. December brought a fifth back surgery (remember that?), and February a harrowing car accident. Anyone who's seen the wreckage knows Woods is lucky to be alive. He has done his best to avoid the spotlight since. He's provided only vague updates on his progress and his future. He has not appeared or spoken publicly even once. But this is 2021, and he is Tiger Woods, and so clandestine images and Bigfoot-like videos have surfaced. He's walking in the latest one. There's only a hint of a limp. He has returned to his favorite spot: a few yards behind Charlie, watching his son swing a golf club. He is, by all accounts, extraordinarily grateful to simply be a dad again.

He may never play another round of competitive golf again. The man himself has not said a single thing about a potential comeback. But with each additional grainy clip that surfaces and each first-hand account we hear from his pals ...

"His competitive side is not going to let him hang it up without at least giving it a try," said Justin Thomas on the No Laying Up podcast. JT's in that extra-exclusive inner circle, seeing Tiger three times a week when he's home in Jupiter

"I know how determined he is, and I know he's going to at least try to give something again."

Woods could so easily have played those last six holes in a few over, signed for 83, complained of a deteriorating body and faded into the background. No one would've blamed him. But, as McNamara conveyed, the man simply does not quit. And while Woods' body could well prevent him from returning to the arena—he is, after all, a 45-year-old with a fused back and a bum knee, coming off a traumatic leg injury—one needs only to think back to the events of that Sunday afternoon for a definitive illustration of Woods' fighting spirit. He would not go quietly then. Why would he now?



LANGER, MICKELSON MAKE FOR FITTING WINNERS

AT THE PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS FINALE

They each have a locker in the World Golf Hall of Fame, but Phil Mickelson and Bernhard Langer hold distinct places in the PGA Tour Champions universe. The former is the senior circuit's reigning phenom, the later its living legend. On November 14 at Phoenix Country Club, they both reaffirmed their status with historic victories to cap the 2020-21 super season.

Posting a bogey-free 65, Mickelson claimed the tournament title at the Charles Schwab Championship, shooting a 19-under 265 over 72 holes. Fending off Steven Alker by a shot, Lefty earned his fourth title in six career senior starts, joining Jack Nicklaus as the fastest to four in PGA Tour Champions history.

"It's fun to come out on top, and to get back and play here in Phoenix is a special feeling," said the 51-year-old. "Amy [his wife] and I have had so many great years here; the birth of our first two children were here, we met here over at Arizona State and spent so many great years here. It's so fun for us to come back and play in front of everybody one."

Posting an up-and-down 69, Langer finished solo 17th in the tournament, seven back of Mickelson. It was still good enough, however, for the German to claim the senior tour's season-long Charles Schwab Cup (and an accompanying $1 million bonus) for a record sixth time.

"I'm just overwhelmed, you know, at 64 to win this thing six times," Langer said. "It will probably be my last one, I'm almost sure of that, but it's very, very special."

Both Mickelson and Langer got some help on Sunday from Jim Furyk, the 54-hole leader who must have thought all the holes were covered in plastic during the final round. Furyk started the day at 16 under and proceeded to shoot a one-over 71, one of just two over-par scores posted by a player who finished in the top 20. Had Furyk won the tournament proper, he also would have claimed the season-long title. Furyk still had a chance at besting Langer on the final hole, needing to chip in for an eagle 3 on the par-5 18th from wood chips to the left of the green. It didn't happen.

Langer's performance over the course of the PGA Tour Champions 2020-21 super season was remarkable for its consistency. He played in all 39 events and posted 24 top-10 finishes. He won only twice, running up his career senior victory part to 42, but was a constant presence on leader boards.

"It's really amazing how Bernhard has played so well for so long, but he works at it," Mickelson said. "He works so hard at it and is in the gym constantly and he's constantly working out, recovering and practicing and hitting balls. His work ethic is second to none and the results show. He's kind of the gold standard for what professional golf is about. You have talent, but you've got to put in the time and work in to have success."

Still, Langer nearly saw all the work go for naught when back spasms flared up early in the week. During his opening round Thursday, Langer said that he was close to withdrawing from the tournament after only three holes, playing through the worst pain he can remember having in his career. But each day he got progressively better, to the point where he broke his age by a shot with his Saturday 63.

Mickelson, having become the oldest winner of a major title with his victory at the PGA Championship in May, was a less frequent participant at the senior level. When he did play, he did so with enthusiasm, genuinely enjoying rekindling old acquaintances.

"It's been fun for me to play out here and see so many guys that I grew up and spent decades with, life-long friends," Mickelson said. "Then to play well and have some success is very meaningful."

In turn, his peers appreciated Mickelson making the effort; Kirk Triplett told Lefty during his round Friday just how big a deal it was to the rest of them that he support the PGA Tour Champions.

Mickelson is set to celebrate his 25th wedding anniversary this coming week. Langer is flying to Germany to have a procedure done on his knee that will keep him from hitting balls for six to eight weeks. Indeed, both sounded ready to hang up their clubs for a while.

Both will do so knowing full well they accomplished big things in 2021—and hope for more of the same in 2022.



COMPARE YOUR GAME...

Meet Colin Scott.
He plays at Barnham Broom G&CC in England where his handicap index is 13.
Since he started using Shot Scope V3 in July 2021, Colin has recorded 29 18-hole rounds using the system's shot-tracking facility. As we will see, this is enough data to reveal a huge amount about his game ... though the picture will become more accurate as he records more shots.
Shot Scope's Strokes Gained system divides the game into four key areas: Tee shots, Approaches, Short Game and Putting. We will take each part in turn to see what the data shows Colin about the state of his game. But fi rst, let's examine his overall performance.

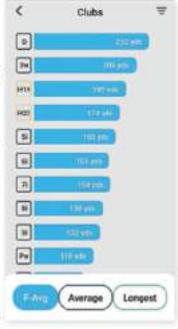


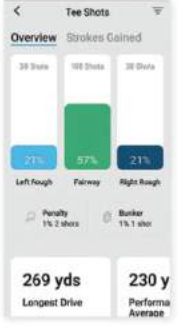
GENERAL PLAY

Taken from the system itself, this graphic lays out Colin's game in each of the four categories. Shot Scope shot benchmarks are currently based around scratch, 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 handicaps, and we've compared Colin to a 10-handicapper because this is a goal of his. As we can see, he is gaining shots on a 10-handicapper in short game and particularly in putting, but losing shots off the tee and approaches. Interestingly, his performance tails off on the back nine, something that he could try to combat by eating and drinking better throughout the round or perhaps improving fi tness levels.
Overall, his positive Strokes Gained fi gure of 0.59 against a 10-handicapper shows how well he has been playing.

TEE SHOTS

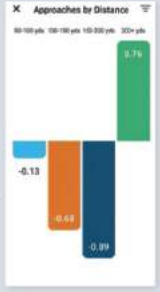
As we move into individual parts of the game we begin to see how, in the most effective analysis, the Strokes Gained fi gure leads us back into more traditional stats to get to the bottom of the issue.
Colin is losing .27 shots a round against a typical 10-handicapper – not massive perhaps, but certainly an area he can target. Looking fi rstly at distance, we can see his driver average is 232 yards, this against a 10-handicap average of 256.
This is a signifi cant drop, and certainly the reason for his relatively slightly poor performance with driver. Gaining 24 yards sounds quite diffi cult, but he may want to investigate his equipment in terms of custom fi tting or optimising shaft/loft, which can yield quick gains.
As for accuracy, Colin hits 57% of fairways with an even spread of right-left misses.
Against a 10-handicap average of 49%, Colin is well ahead and this will help lessen the impact of the lack of distance ... though as that Strokes Gained fi gure shows, being 24 yards longer and 8% less accurate would actually save him shots. If Colin wanted to take lessons with a coach, the focus should certainly be on creating more speed and distance.





APPROACHES

Look back at Colin's general play data and we can see this is his worst area – he loses nearly a full shot a round against 10-handicappers on approach play. Why is this so? Shot Scope data breaks his approach play down into four distances: 50-100yds, 100-150, 150-200 and 200+. Given his below-average distance from the tee, we might expect to see him losing shots from more than 200 yards. However, against 10-handicap golfers this is actually Colin's strongest distance. He loses ground mostly between 100 and 200 yards.





Breaking this down to a pattern of his green misses, we see Colin leaves 47% of his approach shots short. This is almost every other shot. This would suggest that Colin should hit more club ... and perhaps shift his target zone from the front or middle of the putting surface to the back. Only one shot in 20 goes through.

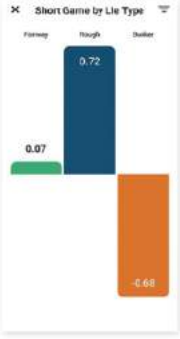
Diving deeper into approach distances and green success, we can see how Colin's chance of hitting the green lessens the further away he is. Of course we would expect this to a degree, but in Colin's case it is quite dramatic; he is almost twice as likely to hit the green from 50-100 yards away than from 100-150 yards, a huge drop-off. As well as pinpointing the areas where Colin's ironplay needs work, this data suggests how when playing a recovery shot or lay-up, Colin should look to get as close to the green as possible. One further point: Colin has not hit the green at all from any distance when in fairway bunkers, so in plotting his strategy he should give them a wide berth ... at least until he has worked on this part of his game.

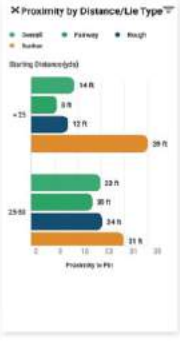


AND IMPROVE IT

SHORT GAME

Colin's short game saves him .10 shots per round compared to a 10-handicapper – again, just slightly better. If we left it there he would probably be happy enough to leave his short game alone and focus elsewhere, but breaking that fi gure down using Strokes Gained data, we discover some interesting truths.
We see here that while Colin's short game is pretty much bang on average for a 10-handicapper, he is massively better from rough (.72 shots) and equivalently bad from sand (-.68). His bunker play is clearly letting him down; these stats have revealed a clear opportunity for improvement.
A second standout stat from Colin's short game is that in his best distance category – inside 25 yards – he averages an 8ft proximity from the fairway.
If he were to peg out an 8ft circle around the hole on the practice green and practise chipping into it from that range, he'd doubtless expect to get every shot inside that distance. Yet this is his average. This is where stats perform the key role of managing expectation. Too often we see golfers unhappy with a chip or pitch which in fact is around their average; when they know this, they can see the shot not as a failure but as a chance to hole the putt and keep momentum in their round.



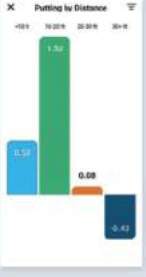


PUTTING

This is easily the strongest area of Colin's game. He picks up a whopping 1.71 shots per round against 10-handicappers. It would be quite easy to suggest there is no area for improvement; however, analysis reveals a couple of areas for him to consider ...

1. PUTTING FROM 3-6FT

Colin's make percentage is very good on short and medium putts, but if we were being highly critical there is room for improvement between 3 and 6 feet. His average of 68% is below the 75% we would expect to see in a good putter.



ELSEWHERE, HIS PUTTING PERFORMANCE IS IMPRESSIVE..

- When we examine Colin's miss pattern, we see 59% of putts come up short. That might sound high, but we routinely see 80% plus as golfers putt to the hole rather than past it..
- His 21.3 holes-per-3-putt fi gure is also strong, in fact even putting him ahead of a typical 5-handicapper who averages a 3-putt every 20 holes. For a 10-handicapper, the fi gure is 14.6 holes per three-jab.



2. PUTTS FROM LONGER THAN 30FT

Strokes Gained data by putting distance shows that while Colin is strong up to 30ft, his performance drops off above that distance. This means he is not getting the ball close enough from range. This is most likely due to issues with distance control, an area he should target.



WHERE COLIN CAN REALLY IMPROVE

This may seem like a lot of data collection and a lot of effort, but in fact this is done automatically by Shot Scope software. All Colin has to do is pull up the appropriate screens in the app. But the important element here is that the picture this data paints is based on evidence, not guesswork. Colin is left with four major takeaways ...

DRIVING
Check driver set-up and optimisation to try to increase distance from the tee.

APPROACH
Take a club extra from between 100 and 200 yards to hit more greens.

SHORT GAME
Have a bunker lesson.

PUTTING
Improve lag putting outside 30 feet.

COLIN IS A GREAT
example of how a golfer can use Shot Scope's Strokes Gained data to better understand their game. There is so much to be learned – and, most importantly, he can measure his improvement across his game. He can now take the right action to start shooting under 80 regularly.

YOU'VE SEEN HOW IT WORKS ... NOW LEARN FROM THE BEST!
Strokes Gained has identifi ed the best golfers on the PGA Tour in four major scoring categories. Turn over to see how you can learn from what they do ... so well.

SG MASTER
SERGIO GARCIA

Sergio is not at the top of the PGA Tour's Strokes Gained: Driving stat at the time of writing – that honour goes to Bryson DeChambeau – but he is third on the list, gaining on average just over 0.8 of a shot per round on the fi eld, or more than three shots per tournament. That's exactly where he fi nished the 2020 season. The reason for his consistency – and indeed the reason I've selected him as a role model here – is a fantastic move from the top that the typical slicing amateur can gain a lot from copying. Let's take a look...



SHALLOWER SHAFT

This image captures Sergio a beat before he really starts to turn on the power. The massive point to note here is just how shallow the clubshaft is – closer to horizontal than vertical. Shallowing the shaft – or at least avoiding a steep one – is a key driver skill, and no one does it better than Sergio.

CLEAN SWEEP

The driver is a long club, and because of this it needs to be swung on the shallowest plane of any club in the bag. Only then can you sweep the ball off the tee, creating the ideal impact conditions for such a low-lofted club. In contrast, the typical club golfer gets too steep, hits down on and across the ball and struggles to make effi cient contact.

CLUB ANGLE FOCUS

Shallowing the club – sometimes called laying the shaft down – can happen naturally through good sequencing and body mechanics; a lower-half-led unwind promotes it, while an arm/shoulder start down gets you steep. But you can also encourage the move by focusing on the club itself, and that's what we'll work on here.

BENCHMARK STATS: FAIRWAYS HIT FROM THE TEE

Scratch – 50%
5 – 48%
10 – 49%
15 – 48%
20 – 46%
25 – 46%

HONE SERGIO'S SKILLS
THE CARRY BAG DRILL

For this drill you are going to need a stand or carry bag. Placed in the right position, it becomes a great guide for the angle on which you need to move the club from the top.

❶ BAG GUIDE

Place the bag behind you, its base somewhere behind the ball and feet behind your toe line, as shown. Leave just enough room to swing the club back. When you have the bag in position, take your driver set-up and swing to the top.

❷ SLOT THE CLUB

Now, for this drill, feel like you are going to slot the club back into the bag as you start down. Naturally, to achieve this you have to put the club on the appropriate angle, set by the bag. To feel that angle, take your lead hand off the club and point the butt down into the bag. Feel the hand position and forearm rotation that recreates the bag's angle in the shaft.

❸ PERFECT PITCH

Practise this move from the top, noting how the arms and club feel when on that ideal, bag-dictated angle. As it starts to become more familiar, remove the bag and hit balls repeating the same move. You might not get the club as shallow as Sergio but, ideally, with your lead arm horizontal, the clubshaft will be somewhere close to a 45° angle, midway between horizontal and vertical.







TOO STEEP

For reference, here is the steep, over-the-top move that is the bane of club golfers across the globe. As you can see, it creates a steep angle in the club that is all wrong for returning it to the bag. ▶

APPROACH PLAY

SG MASTER
COLLIN MORIKAWA

With approach shots raining down on the pin at will at Royal St George's, it's not surprising to learn the Open champion has gained a scarcely credible 1.5 shots per round and six shots a tournament on his competitors through his approach play. This puts him right at the top of SG: Approach the Green, a half shot ahead of his nearest rival, Paul Casey. Naturally his impact and ballstriking get a lot of the credit, but what really impresses me about his technique is a glorious, deliberate takeaway move that sets the whole thing up. It's a move anyone can learn from.



PLANE AND PATH SET-UP ACCURACY

With accuracy paramount, path and plane are essential to great iron play. A good first move away sets this up, while a poor one can take your swing in a direction it can never recover from. For too many club golfers, this is the unfortunate reality.

ONLY CONNECTED

An online first move means an optimal blend of arms and body moving the club away, and this is where Collin excels. Whether it's a wedge or this fairway wood, he makes the same, steady move away from the ball. The whole thing looks so connected and synchronised.

THREE GREAT SIGNS

This image captures Collin with the clubshaft around horizontal – a really useful checkpoint in the swing. The three key things to note are ...

- His hands remain in front of a rotating chest.
- The shaft is close to parallel to his target line (in fact it's very slightly left, indicating Collin is playing his preferred fade shot).
- The clubface is close to his spine angle.

BENCHMARK STATS: GREENS IN REGULATION

Scratch – 61%
5 – 44%
10 – 36%
15 – 24%
20 – 17%
25 – 10%

HONE COLLIN'S SKILLS
SET PATH AND PLANE WITH THE 'HANG-10' DRILL

Here is an easy way to feel that arms/body connection right from the first move away. It's a drill you can do at home, at the range or even as part of your pre-shot preparation.





❶ ADDRESS: SET THE BODY/ARMS CONNECTION

Take your regular golf stance and posture, but without a club. Make the 'Hang 10' sign with your trail hand – cocking the thumb and little finger into a right angle. Place the thumb against your ribcage, the little finger against the inside of your lead-arm elbow.

❷ TAKEAWAY: HOLD THE ANGLE

With your arms so positioned, make a takeaway move. Swing back until your lead arm is near-enough horizontal. As you make this move, place your attention on your trail hand and that right-angled relationship between your chest and arm. Keep it intact throughout this first move.

❸ TRY IT WITH THE CLUB

Repeat the 'Hang 10' takeaway drill until you start to get the feeling of how it helps sync and connect the body and lead arm. Then pick up a mid-to-short iron and look to repeat the feeling on your first move away. Swing back till the clubshaft is parallel and make two key checks...

- The shaft is at or close to parallel with your target line.
- The leading edge of the clubface mirrors your spine angle. ▶



SG MASTER
KEVIN NA

Over the past few years Kevin Na has rarely been out of the top-10 of the PGA Tour's Strokes Gained: Around the Green list, but this year, at the time of writing, he's at the very top. On average Kevin gains .633 shots on the fi eld on every round he plays, giving him a 2.5-shot advantage during a four-round tournament. Let's examine where he is so good ...



HANDS AND ARMS: SOFT
This image captures much of what makes Kevin so consistently sharp around the green. You can see the softness in his hands, which look like they are barely gripping the club. Similarly, there is a feel of fl ex and lightness about his arms. They have delivered the club, but they are not dominating his action.

CLUBFACE: SQUARE
Take a look at the clubface: it is square to the arc of this short swing, looking neither down at the ground (shut) or up to the sky (open). This reveals a lack of manipulation during the stroke, the club tracking through on a natural plane and with natural rotation.

BODY: ENGAGED
Now look at Kevin's shoulders and hips: they have rotated, as evidenced by the extra fl ex in the trail knee, and are very much part of the stroke and strike. This relates to the key takeaway from Kevin's fantastic short-game action: Everything moves the club, not just the hands and arms.

BENCHMARK STATS: SUCCESSFUL SCRAMBLES

Scratch – 47%
5 – 41%
10 – 31%
15 – 21%
20 – 20%
25 – 18%



HONE KEVIN'S SKILLS CLUB IN FRONT DRILL

To get your action closer to Kevin's, work on this simple drill. You don't hit balls with it, so you can do it at home as well as at the course or range. The drill simply asks you to feel the club is in front of you as it works back and through.

1 DOWN THE SHAFT
Start by taking your regular chipping stance, feet just a few inches apart. Take a wedge, but take your hold right down at the bottom of the grip, lead hand on the rubber, trail hand on the metal. Take your set-up, noting how the handle points up towards the middle of your body.

2 BACKSWING: CLUB STAYS IN FRONT
Make a short backswing, clubhead to around knee height. As you make this move, focus solely on keeping the butt of the club trained on the centre of your core. To do this you have to keep your hands quiet, with your shoulders and chest driving the move.

3 THROUGHSWING: BUTT TO CORE
Swing through, again to a point where the club is at knee-height or just past. As with the backswing, keep the butt looking back at your core, your hands relatively passive and your shoulders and chest rotating. Final check Your governing thought, as we've seen with Kevin Na's action, is to feel your whole body is contributing to the action – knees, hips and shoulders as well as arms. Allow a subtle weight shift into your front foot as you make this move. As you fi nish, check the clubface is square to your arc, neither rolled over or held off





SG MASTER
LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN



This year, the South African has managed to get his head and shoulders above the very best putters on the planet. With an average of just over a shot a round gained on the field, he is an incredible 0.2 shots ahead of second-placed Brendon Todd at the time of writing. The same 0.2 gap separates the next 15 on the list. There are two particular elements I would pick out from his simple action that we can learn from. We'll tackle them in turn ...

1 DISTANCE: RHYTHM

At the root of Louis's phenomenal distance control is the rhythm of his stroke. At your next opportunity watch both the length and pace of his stroke. His backswing and throughswing lengths are almost always identical, paving the way for controlled putter speed and judgement of pace. Louis can adjust force simply by making the stroke longer or shorter, and that's a great way to putt.

2 DIRECTION: FOREARM/ CLUBSHAFT RELATIONSHIP

Louis's amazing ability to deliver a square blade to the ball time and time again owes a lot to the way his arms complement the putter. His upper arms stay close to his sides, elbows fairly bent, but grip and posture allow his forearms and putter shaft to form one continuous line. This is a great way to take the hands and wrists out of the stroke, and allow the more consistent upper arms and shoulders to control the movement.

BENCHMARK STATS: PUTTS PER ROUND

Scratch – 29.4
5 – 30.2
10 – 31.2
15 – 33.1
20 – 33.1
25 – 33.8

HONE LOUIS'S SKILLS DRILLS FOR DIRECTION AND DISTANCE

Now we've seen how the best in the world does it, let's look at a couple of ways we can hone our own putting stroke in these two key areas ...

DISTANCE: GO TOE-TO-TOE

Here is one simple practice idea to improve your rhythm: play the ball centrally in your stance, and use your toes as a reference point for backswing and throughswing lengths. If you need more power, widen your stance to set a longer stroke.

EASY POWER CONTROL

Practise swinging back to opposite your trail toe and through to opposite your lead toe – and experiment with changing distance by altering stance width. As you work on your throughswing, you'll feel how reaching the lead toe comes a little easier than you may have thought; most club golfers over-assist acceleration instead of letting gravity do the work.
DIRECTION: CREATE ONE LINE

SET THE LINE

Take your putter and grip it as usual. Now stand upright. Allow your elbows to flex comfortably by your sides, so your forearms are horizontal. In this position, let the putter hang until its shaft is also level with the ground. You have now formed one continuous line from elbows to putter head.

CALMER HANDS

Now, without altering that arms/club relationship, tilt from the hips to lower the club to the ground. That strong line – elbows to clubhead through the hands – should be intact. Hit putts from here, feeling how much quieter the hands and wrists feel during the stroke.









GET A LITTLE HELP FROM THESE FRIENDS

EVERY GOLFER NEEDS HELP WITH THEIR GAME. IT IS WHY TOP PLAYERS STILL HAVE COACHES TO LOOK OVER THEIR SWING, AND IF YOU'VE EVER WATCHED TOURNAMENT PLAYERS PRACTICE, WILL HAVE NOTICED A VAST ARRAY OF TRAINING AIDS FROM THE SIMPLE TO THE HIGHLY COMPLEX IN USE.

THESE ARE SOME OF THE BEST AVAILABLE OPTIONS ON THE MARKET TO FAST TRACK YOUR OWN IMPROVEMENT. IT IS CERTAINLY NOT EVERY TRAINING AID, BUT EACH IS PROVEN AND TARGETS A SPECIFI C AREA OF THE GAME.



SPORNIA SPG-7 PRACTICE GOLF NET

Covid has created the need to practice your game at home, and there is no better way for those fortunate to have the space, than to put up a hitting net to take full swings with real golf balls.

Spornia, the fi rst to create a pop-up practice net, have created one of the best options possible on the market with its SPG-7 that has proven hugely popular around the world over the past 18 months and won high praise.

"This is a quality net, make no mistake ... because let's face it, nets ain't nets," said our own Karen Harding when testing the SPG-7.

The lightweight design easily folds into its carry bag, but the features make the SPG-7 so much more than just a willing receiver of your shots.

The target sheet reduces noise and wear and tear, while also being angled to return the ball to your feet. The balls actually slide down the sheet to stop bouncing balls on hard surfaces.

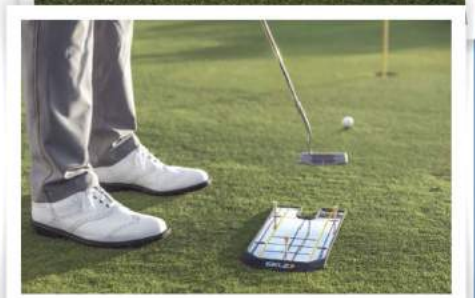
There are swing guide marks on the fl oor of the net to help improve your path and alignment, there is a roof attachment so you can easily hit wedges, a chipping basket allows for accuracy focus and short game practice, can be made more stable with provided ropes, can be used inside and out, and is rigorously tested so it is built to last well beyond the pandemic.

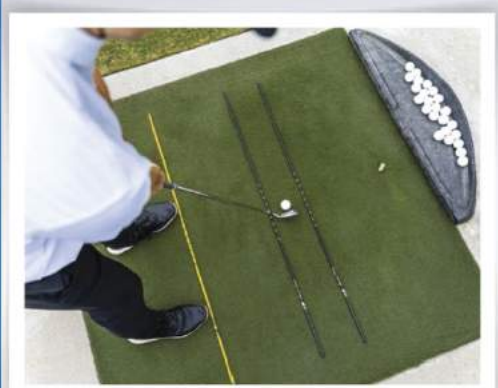
Simply put, the Spornia SPG-7 is the Rolls Royce of practice nets.

PUTTING MIRROR

This is another of the training aids you will see with great regularity from the putting green at your local course to the PGA Tour.
Eye position, alignment and setup are of the upmost importance when putting and the Eyeline Putting Alignment Mirror and SKLZ True Line Putting Mirror are among the pick of the bunch.
Both offer instant feedback that the likes of Rory McIlroy and Tiger Woods use to improve their stroke, with gates able to be created with tees to assess how the putter head is travelling through impact.







SKLZ PRO RODS

If you are looking to improve your golf game quickly, there is nothing better than homing in on your alignment. And some alignment sticks are just the way to do it.

Although an exceptionally simple piece of kit, these sticks have multiple uses, can sit in your golf bag all the time, and will remain a part of your practice routine even if you are teeing it up at a major.

Lying one stick along your foot line is a great way to check your body alignments are running parallel to the target, while a stick pointed towards the ball can reinforce ball position.

Beyond the basic use, many coaches use alignment sticks as path guides, and even run through a belt loop for an advanced player. And they can also be stuck in the backyard as a chipping target.

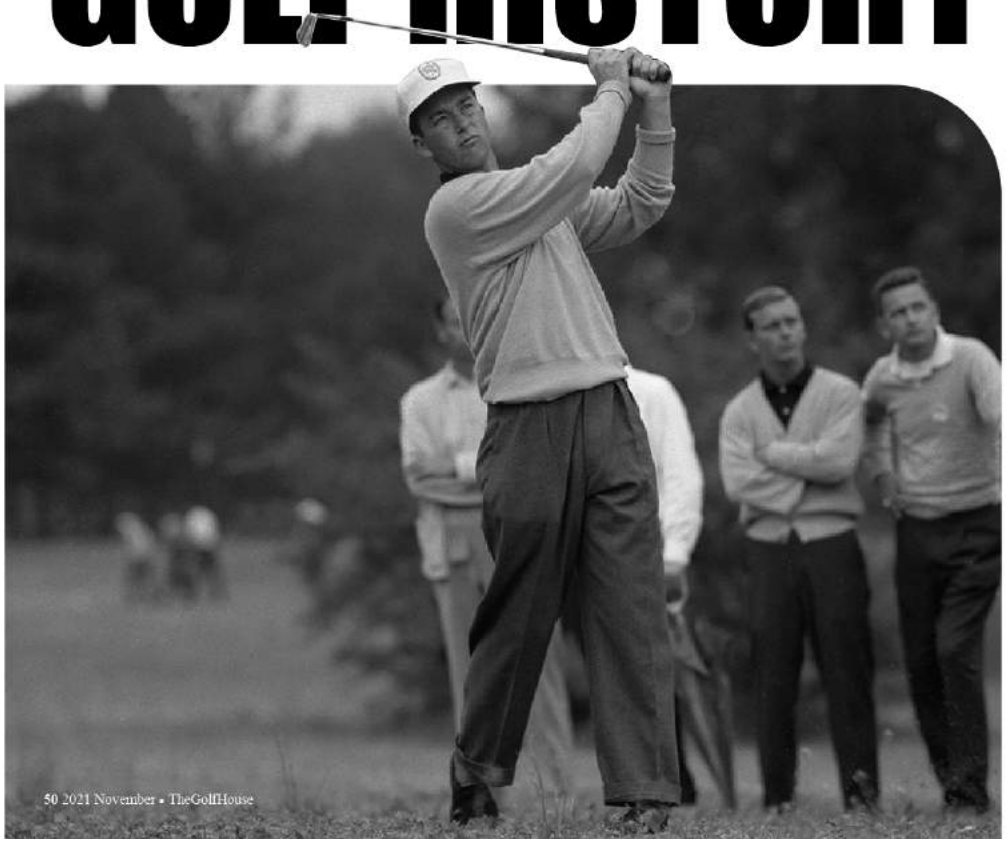
AI GOLF THE GATEKEEPER

The best way to improve your golf is via instant feedback, and Australian designed The Gatekeeper putting training aid does just that. The product endorsed by one of the country's top coaches, Gary Barter, and major champion Stewart Cink.
Attached to the shaft of any putter and adjustable to suit your needs, The Gatekeeper promotes perfect path, minimises face rotation and creates perfect tempo through the weighted ball that will only pass through the gate if the path and face are square, and the tempo is smooth.
Conveniently small and coming in a carry case that fi ts easily in your golf bag, The Gatekeeper comes with multiple sizes of the weighted ball to increase the diffi culty of your practice.





SIX BEST REDEMPTION STORIES IN GOLF HISTORY







Redemption in golf comes when a golfer returns to glory after serious trauma and incident has impacted his or her golf career. Redemption is not simply coming back and returning to form after a slump. Redemption is about overcoming a life-altering incident. These redemption stories are often inspiring to read about, but it's more about the determination of an individual to not let the circumstances of illness, injury or prejudice stop them.

Ben Hogan

Ben Hogan was one of the greatest golfers in the game's history, but his life almost came to an end when the car he was driving in 1949 collided with a Greyhound bus.

Hogan sustained numerous injuries, including a broken collarbone, pelvis and ankle. The accident also crushed one of his ribs.

It appeared questionable that Hogan would ever walk again, let alone return to his golf career. However, the gutsy Hogan worked tirelessly to rehab from the injuries.

A year later, he was back playing competitive golf on the tour even though he was weakened and in pain. His redemption story reached the heights when he won the 1950 U.S. Open, beating the legendary Lloyd Mangrum and George Fazio in an 18-hole playoff.

Babe Didrickson Zaharias

Babe Didrickson Zaharias was one of the nation's most dominant female athletes of the 20th century.

While she excelled in all sports, her excellence on the golf course made her a legend.

However, while she had a bigger than life persona—much like her namesake Babe Ruth—she was quite human.

In 1953, she was diagnosed with colon cancer. Despite the illness, she played successfully on the LPGA tour in 1954. She eventually underwent colon cancer surgery in 1954.

Less than a month after the operation, she was back at her sport, competing in the U.S. Women's Open Championship. Despite the pain and weakness caused by the surgery and illness, she won the championship.

She wore a colostomy bag while competing, but she did not let that stop her, and she took home her 10th major championship.

Ken Venturi

The 1964 U.S. Open was certain to belong to one of the game's great players. Perhaps, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player or Billy Casper.

Anyone but Ken Venturi.

Venturi was best known for his three close-call losses in the Masters in 1956, '58 and '60. In 1961, he had been in a debilitating car accident.

In the 1963 golf season, Venturi won less than $4,000, and his biggest sponsors dropped him. He was not invited to the 1964 Masters, and he was ready to quit the game of golf.

Venturi was also enduring personal problems, including a divorce and a battle with alcohol. However, instead of quitting, he battled on and came to the 1964 U.S. Open at Congressional with a new determination.

He was in contention after two rounds, and in those days, the championship closed with 36 holes on the final day. Venturi shot a 66 in his first round, but the 100-degree heat made it feel as if he was playing inside an oven.

A physician recommended he not play the final 18 holes because he risked heat exhaustion that could be fatal.

Venturi would not quit. He shot 70 in the final round and won the U.S. Open.

Lee Trevino

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Lee Trevino was one of the most successful and colorful characters on the golf tour. Trevino would enthrall the press with his stories and then go out and hold his own with Jack Nicklaus and the other great golfers of the day.

However, that changed in 1975. Trevino was playing in the Western Open when he was struck by lightning.

He suffered back and leg injuries and endured multiple surgeries. Despite the interventions, he was permanently weakened by the injuries.

However, he did not quit. He continued to play on the tour, and he used touch and accuracy to overcome his loss of power. He became a master shotmaker and won eight more times on the tour after the lightning strike.

Charlie Sifford

Charlie Sifford was to the PGA tour what Jackie Robinson was to baseball.

Sifford was an excellent golfer, but because he was African-American, he was denied the opportunity to play on the tour until 1960. He was 38 years old at the time.

He eventually won the 1967 Greater Hartford Open and the 1969 Los Angeles Open. He also won the 1975 PGA Senior Championships.

Prior to 1961, Sifford was forced to play in smaller tournaments and exhibitions.

Despite the prejudice he encountered for decades, Sifford never gave up. He was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2004.

Paul Azinger

Paul Azinger was on his way to becoming one of the best players in the world in 1993.

He had won the 1993 PGA, was a Ryder Cup star and had 11 career victories.

However, as the season went along, he played with a worsening pain in his left shoulder.

The pain turned out to be non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a form of cancer that can be fatal.

Azinger was forced to endure six months of chemotherapy and five weeks of radiation.

He came back to the tour in late 1994, but he was weak and no longer the same competitor.

Nevertheless, he did not quit.

He continued at it until he finally won on tour again in 2000 when he was victorious by seven strokes at the Sony Open in Hawaii.

While he never won again on the PGA tour after that, his comeback and redemption was memorable.



RANGAMATI
A NATURAL BEAUTY PARADISE - BANGLADESH

"FEEL THE BEAUTY OF NATURE"

Want to spend some time in the middle of nowhere, where a sinuous lake winds its way through the highlands, milky cascades pour from high above green hills, and tribal people's simple lifestyle relieves stress? To savor all of these natural delicacies, visit the Rangamati tourist attractions.

Top Rangamati tourist spots:
Kayaking/Boating on kaptai lake: The Kaptai Lake is one of Bangladesh's most renowned tourist destinations. It was established after the Kaptai Dam was built, making it the country's largest manmade lake. This place is for those people who love adventure. Flowing around forest hills, valleys, and plain lands; this huge manmade like features heavenly scenic beauty.
A number of restaurants and resorts may be found in the surrounding area. There are also separate playgrounds for children. It is one of the best things to do in Rangamati because it is close to the town.
Rangamati Hanging Bridge- The Rangamati Hanging Bridge has become the city's symbol. In Bengali, the name of the hanging bridge is also known as jhulonto bridge. It has a length of 335 feet and is placed over Kaptai Lake. One of the nicest things to do in Rangamati is to stand in the middle of this bridge and take in all of the natural beauty that surrounds it. The blue lake reflecting the shades of green foliage, tucked away between two little hills, appears to be calming. As it is a little away from the town, you will have to keep aside at least a couple of hours for the whole tour.

Kaptai National Park-
The Kaptai National Park covers a total area of 5464 hectares. The park is located next to Kaptai Bazar in the Rangamati District's Kaptai Upazila's north-eastern corner. It is a popular tourist site for all types of travelers in the country. Every single year more than 50000 peoples visit this green heaven. Wild lives in the Kaptai National Park include Deer, Elephant, Jungle Cat, Monkey, etc. Adventures are including Boating, Picnic spots, Speed boat cruising, Water skiing, and Hiking.

Shuvolong Waterfalls- Shuvolong Waterfalls, located near Rangamati, is a hidden gem. An exotic attraction is a spot that can only be accessible by boat. It takes around 2 hours to get to the waterfalls and about the same amount of time to return. It is recommended that visitors set aside at least half a day to explore this location. It will be worthwhile, though, because the waterfall is breathtaking, especially during the rainy season. Lunch is available at a couple of restaurants near the Shuvolong Waterfalls.

Sajek valley-Surrounded on the east by the hills of Mizoram and on the north by the hills of Tripura, the Sajek Valley, which once saw insurgencies, now showcases Bangladesh's cultural diversity by involving people of various ethnicities in the development of tourism in the area for their economic and social benefit.











The river Sajek separates Bangladesh and India, and the territory named after it is the country's largest union, falling under Baghaichori Upazila in the Rangamati hill district.

Since 2014, people have been flocking to this location. Many of them begin to enjoy this valley since it allows them to play with clouds. Many visitors compare this location to India's Darjeeling. From Dhaka, it will take about 6 hours to get to Khaghrachorri. Changi, Kasalong, and Maini were three high mountain rivers that flowed through the valley. It is stunning in any season. This region is always surrounded by green Cape Mountains, mysticism, and divine tranquility. Tourists arrive all year and are enchanted by the incredible beauty of this location. It is situated in the green slopes of the Kasalong mountain range, affording guests the tranquil and exotic beauty of nature.



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