

YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE  
TO THE SCORING BASICS

# Breaking 1009080



## 10-minute makeovers

This is what I hear from most of my students: Give me more power, and give it to me fast. They also talk about better putting as the quickest way to lower scores. Notice the common thread: time. If you devote 10 minutes of your practice sessions to one of the driving and putting drills described here, you'll be on your way. For more help, see the list of teachers (page 225) offering 10-minute lessons as part of the PGA of America's Free Lesson program.



By Peter Krause  
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# Breaking 100

You're still developing a consistent game, so your focus on the tee should be driving the ball in play. Nothing is more discouraging than searching in the woods all day for wild tee shots. As for putting, you need to establish a reliable stroke, one you can count on to hit the ball solidly and on your intended line every time you step up.

## Drive it in play

Don't be ashamed to bag your driver and tee off with a 3- or 5-wood. More loft and a shorter shaft will help you hit fairways. You can club up when your accuracy improves.



## Plan your lay ups

You're probably worse at half swings than full swings, worse from 50 yards than 100. Am I right? If so, be smart about where you lay up. When you can't reach a green, figure out the distance you want to leave yourself, and hit to that spot. It's much smarter than whaling away with your 3-wood and then having an awkward half shot.



## Step up a set

Courses are getting longer and harder. Be the wise one in your group to suggest playing a more forward tee. You'll find your course more manageable, develop your skills quicker and enjoy your rounds more.



## Learn to turn

Nine out of 10 golfers shooting over 100 chop down on the ball with a steep, out-to-in swing path that produces pulls or slices. The main cause of this steep chop is the reverse pivot: The player leans toward the target on the backswing, and then falls back on the downswing. If you try hard to keep your head still—a popular tip that actually prevents a natural weight shift—you probably make a reverse pivot. Instead, you need to learn to turn. Try to rotate your left shoulder over your right hip going back. Do it right and you'll feel the stretch in your midsection.

## Drill: Keep your eyes level

Take your setup in front of a mirror, and hold a club across your chest. Practice turning back—and here's the key—keeping your eyes level with the horizon. Many golfers are so careful not to move off the ball on the backswing, they wind up tilting toward the target. Let your upper body move over your right side, keeping your eye line level.



## First step to better putting

This is great practice for grooving a consistent, on-line stroke. Take your address with your putter, and stick a tee in the ground just outside the toe and another just inside the heel. Hit some putts. If you crash into one of the tees on your forward stroke, you'll know your path is either outside-in or inside-out. As your stroke gets better, tighten the "tee gate" to up the challenge.

# Breaking 90

You know your misses off the tee, and you can play with them, so it's time to add distance. You need to shallow out your approach into impact, so start swinging from the inside. It's a good idea to try to develop a draw. On the greens, try my system for judging distance. Most three-putts come from poor lag putts. Better lagging will lower your scores.

## Think 'knuckles down'

Here's a great swing thought for power: Turn the knuckles on your left hand down through impact. Forearm rotation boosts clubhead speed, so let your arms release.



## Start left, hit it straight

Slicers tend to go to the right side of the tee box to create room to start the ball left. The problem is, this promotes an out-to-in swing path, which only makes the slice worse. Instead, tee up on the left side to develop draw tendencies, such as square or slightly closed alignment and a full release through impact.

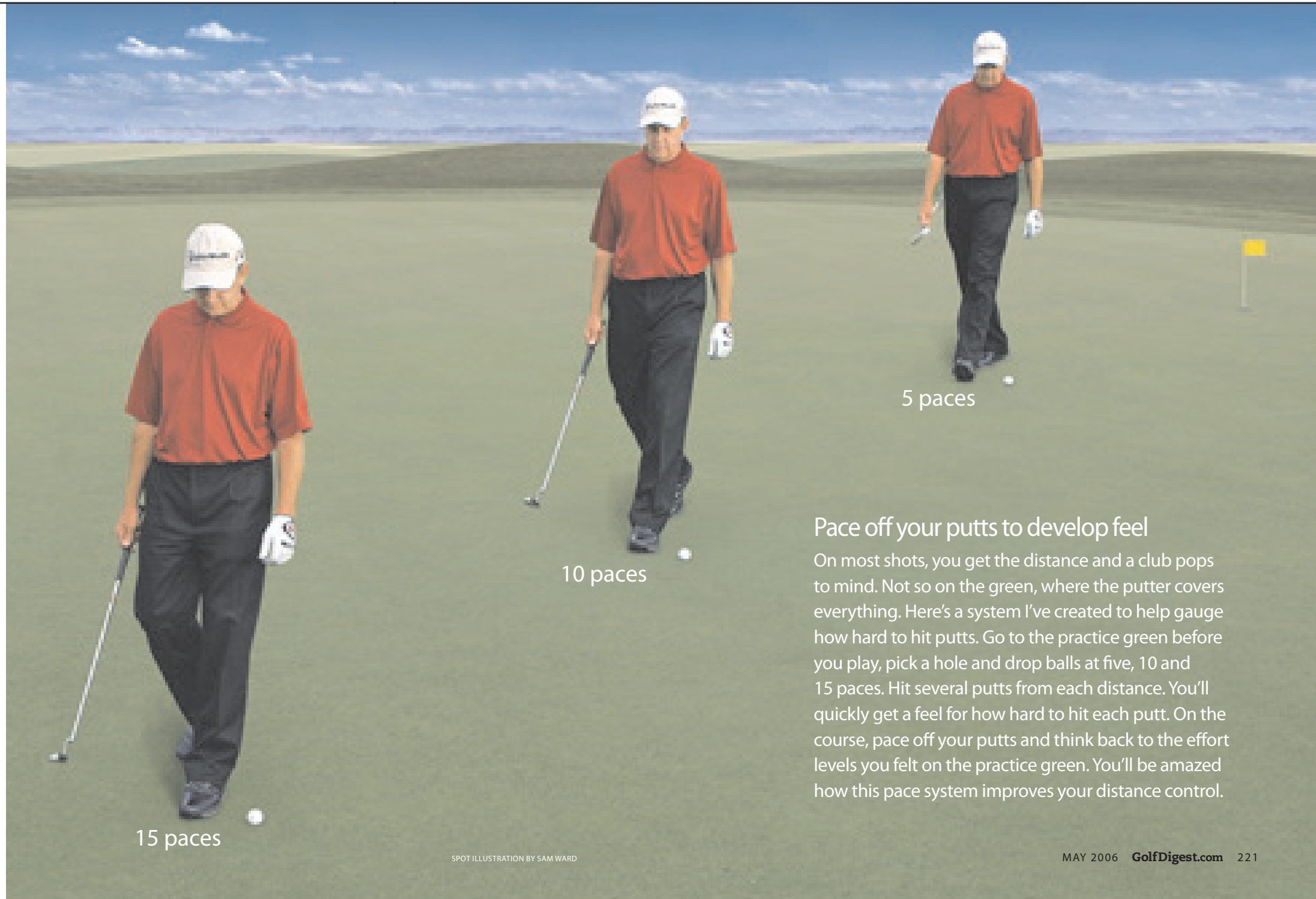
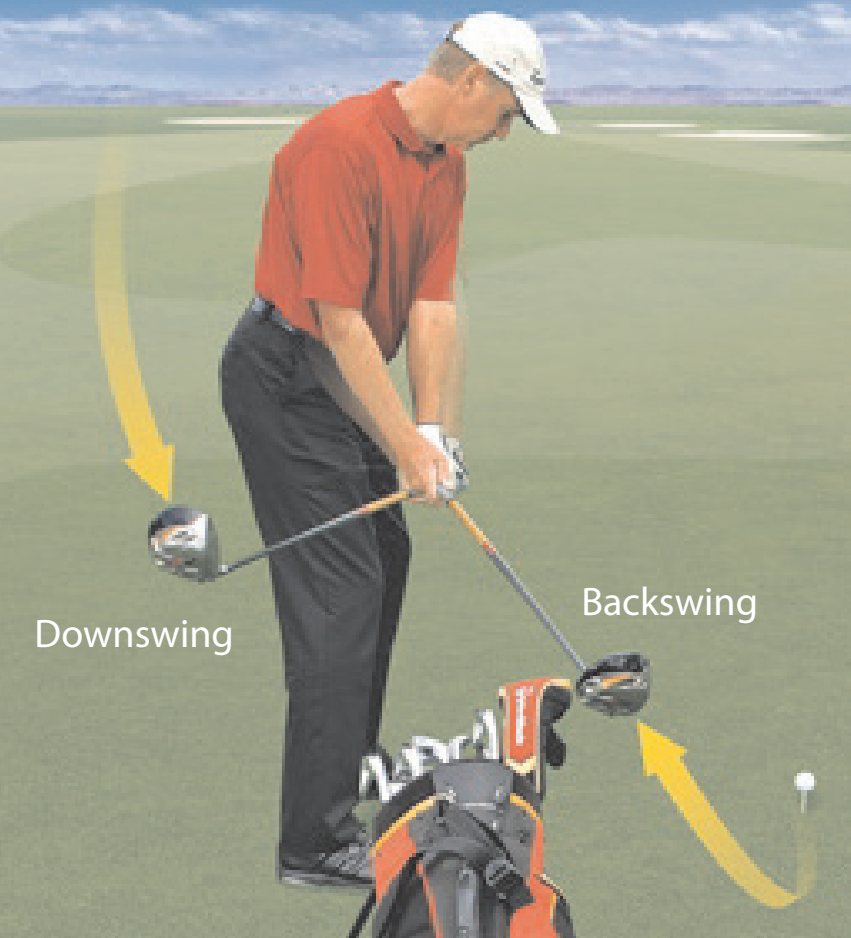


## Don't go fishing

Casting the club from the top like a fishing rod drains power from your swing. If the clubface is open at the top, with your left wrist cupped, you'll tend to cast. So keep your wrist flat and resist the urge to cast.

## Lose that over-the-top move

Most 90s-shooters swing the club too far inside going back, then loop it to the outside and hit weak slices. Try to make more of an up-and-under swing. That's up going back and under the backswing plane coming down. Set your bag just out of reach and slightly inside the target line. Practice swinging the clubhead outside the bag going back and inside the bag coming down. You'll feel the change in swing shape, and hit with more power.



5 paces

10 paces

15 paces

## Pace off your putts to develop feel

On most shots, you get the distance and a club pops to mind. Not so on the green, where the putter covers everything. Here's a system I've created to help gauge how hard to hit putts. Go to the practice green before you play, pick a hole and drop balls at five, 10 and 15 paces. Hit several putts from each distance. You'll quickly get a feel for how hard to hit each putt. On the course, pace off your putts and think back to the effort levels you felt on the practice green. You'll be amazed how this pace system improves your distance control.

# Breaking 80

At your level, you should have a predictable shot shape off the tee—eight out of 10 with the same curve is a good goal. Plus, a sharper iron game should become a focus, as should making more putts from four to eight feet. To shoot in the 70s, you need to hit more greens in regulation and make more putts from short range.

## Get to know your irons

Many golfers make club selections based on the longest shot they can hit with each club. Instead, develop a three-quarter distance, too, so you have a 10- or 15-yard range with each. Then let wind and elevation changes factor in.

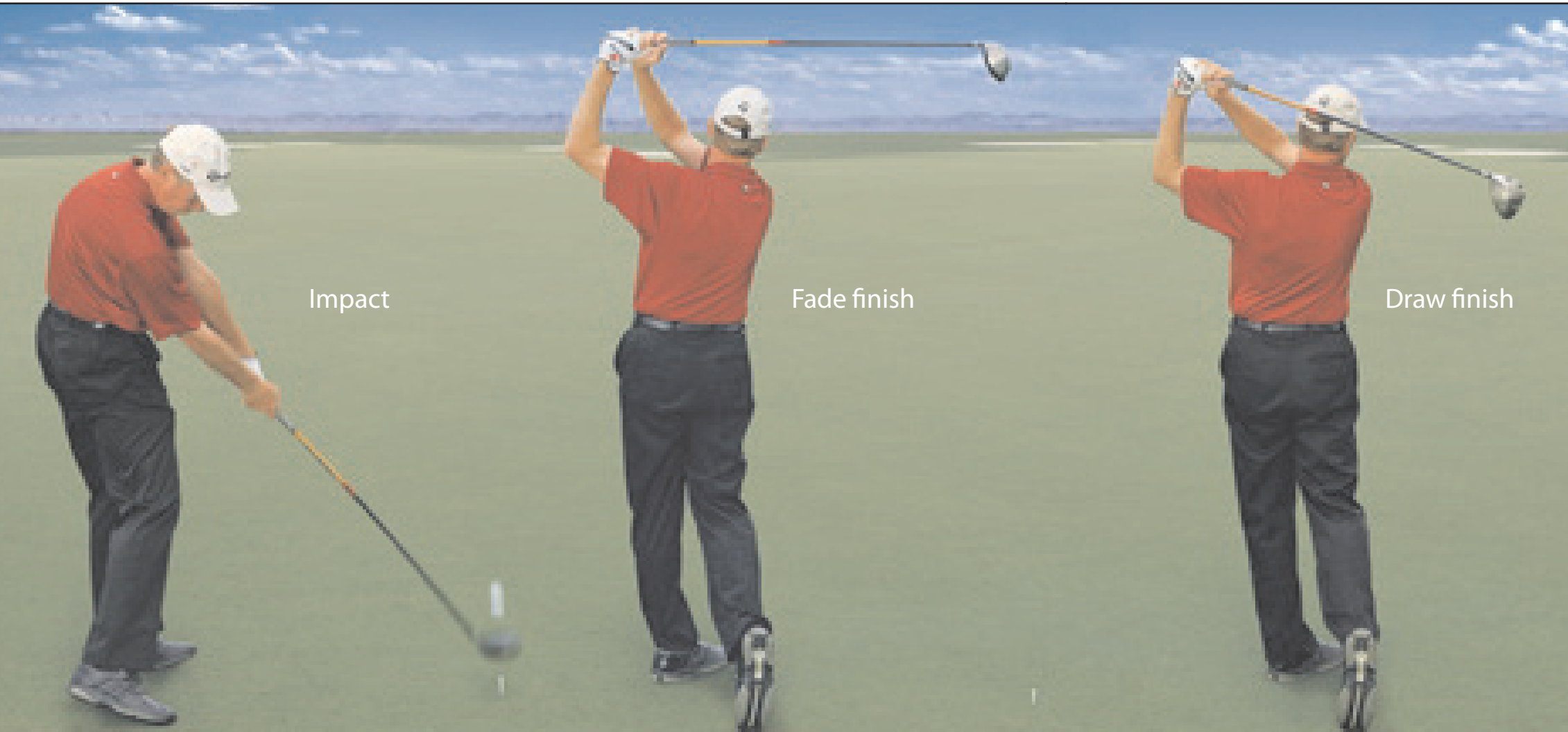


## Cut out three-putts

One quick way to take a few strokes off your scores is to eliminate three-putts. Practice stroking really long putts, from 30 feet or more, and really short ones. The more distance control you have from long range and the more confidence from short range, the better your chances to get down in two.

## Flight plans

Experiment with different ball flights. Take your 7-iron and hit shots from different setups, first with your normal ball position, then with the ball two inches forward, then two inches back. Note how the trajectory changes when you move the ball at address.



Impact

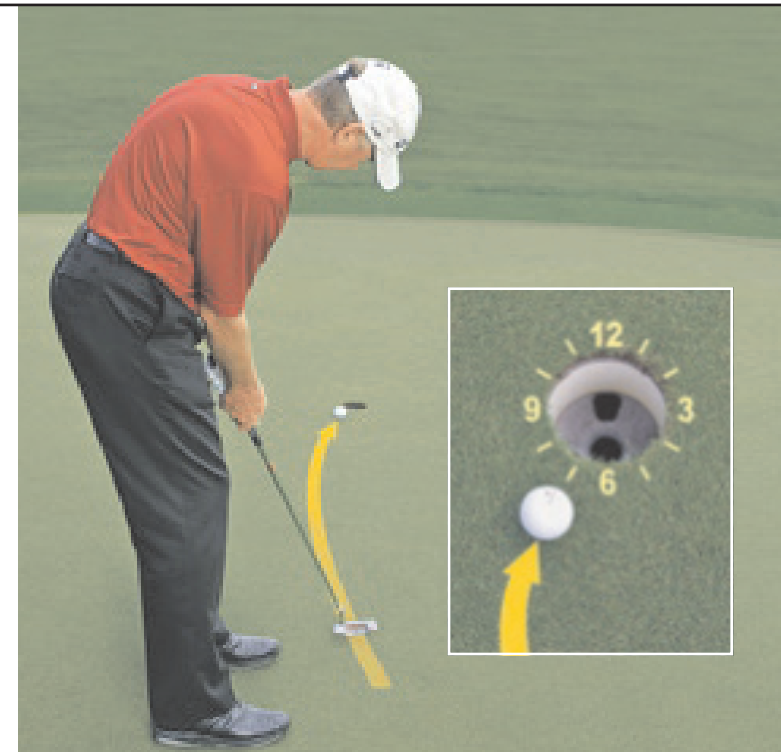
Fade finish

Draw finish

## For better driving, go to the finish

Whether you play a draw or a fade off the tee, an inside approach into impact is a must. Shift to your left side to start down, and let the club-head accelerate gradually through the bottom of the swing. To play a fade, swing the shaft

into a horizontal position over your head at the finish; this holds off the release slightly and prevents hooks. If you prefer a draw, rotate your arms fully through impact and swing the shaft into a diagonal position behind your neck.



## Clock your short putts

You probably think too much about the outcome on makable putts. Get into the process of making a good roll, and try to think less about the result. Instead of picking a specific spot, imagine the hole as a clock-face and picture where the ball should enter, based on the break. On the putt pictured above, the break is slightly left to right, so the ball should go in the hole at 7 o'clock. A bigger break would put the entry point at 8 or even 9 o'clock. Picture the other side of the clockface for right-to-left breakers.

# Breaking 70

Shooting sub-70 rounds requires that you take full advantage of scoring opportunities. A few shots here or there make the difference between 74 and 69. Work on any glaring weak spots in your game, but the quickest way to shave those last few strokes is great putting. Focus on short- and mid-range putts, those testy par-savers and birdie tries.

## Trust your reads

Good players tend to read greens well, but often fail to stroke putts on the line they picked. They aim correctly, but then try to steer the ball to the hole, instead of letting it take the full break. If you find that you miss a lot of six- to 10-footers on the low side, this might be your problem.

Try this drill: Find a right-to-left putt, and place a club on the ground just inside the heel of the putterhead and pointing down your starting line. (For left-to-right putts, place the club just outside the toe.) Stroke putts without your putter touching the club, and you'll learn to start the ball on line and let the slope take it to the hole.

