

UNDERSTANDING SWING TECHNIQUE

The Golf Swing is a much talked about topic, and the fundamentals have evolved over the years, as they will develop further in future years. But how you do what to teach, when there are so many variations winning millions of dollars on the Pro Tour each year?

I like to refer to “**common denominators**”. I feel that these are certain points that are found in **practically** all successful swings. You can never say absolutely 100% in golf! I take the analogy of a human being – most of us have 2 eyes, 2 ears, one nose, one mouth etc but we all look different and have our own unique personalities. It’s the same in the golf swing – there are some common denominators, but also **every swing should have its own identity**. Trying to impose someone else’s swing identity on another pupil is a sure way for



Both people have 2 eyes, 2 ears, 1 nose and one mouth but each face has a different look... like the golf swing.

impending difficulties. I personally believe that Leadbetter is the best modern day golf teacher, but one mistake he may have made in the mid and late 80’s is to rigidly teach a set of pre-conceived positions.

There were a few failures as a result of this (e.g Howard Clark), but as with all great teachers Leadbetter learned quickly from his mistakes.

So what are the common denominators? Well first of all let’s also introduce the idea of **absolutes** and **preferences**. Absolutes are what I consider the common denominators, factors which are evident in 99% of successful techniques. Preferences are things which are desirable, but not essential. To explain myself further let’s talk about the grip, the way the hands are positioned on the club. At Tour Professional level, I believe it’s an “absolute” that the knuckles which are visible of the left and right hand ‘add up’ to 4, when the club is positioned at a 45 degree angle to the ground. I believe with 99% of Tour Players this will happen. So for me, the knuckles adding up to 4 is an absolute. Now, my preference is 2 + 2 knuckles (for Tour Pro’s, not for amateurs!). Most Tour Players would display this, but not all. Duval, Langer and Azinger have been three players who have been very successful with 3 knuckles on the left hand and 1 on the right. On the other side, Olazabal has been very successful with 1 knuckle on the left hand and 3 on the right. But the absolute has been maintained, i.e that the total number of knuckles visible when the club is held at a 45 degree angle is 4.



Adam Scott



The neutral Tour Pro Grip, 2+2



Ernie Els

Then once a teacher has developed his or her

absolutes and preferences, the next stage is to find **acceptable tolerances**. In Jim McLean's book, "The eight step swing", he refers to "corridors of success". I like this term as it gives certain parameters whereby tolerances (individuality) are allowed, but to a limit. Let me take an example of my "corridors of success" (acceptable tolerances) for my preferences;

To take the example of posture, my **preferences** are that a vertical line drawn from the back middle



A Sorenstam

T Woods

B. Langer

of the shoulder should touch the front of the knee. From the photos you can see that Annika Sorenstam and Tiger Woods demonstrate this perfectly. But if you look at Bernhard Langer, you can see that this line does not touch the front of his knee, but a little forward of it. For me, this represents an **acceptable tolerance**, the limit of what I would feel is still balanced and athletic.

In judging the **acceptable tolerance**, the teacher has to take into account the goals and ability of the student. A 90 degree shoulder turn with a 30 degree hip turn thus creating a high level of resistance maybe a preference with a student like Adam Scott, but not acceptable when teaching a 60 year old beginner!



To summarize, I believe every teacher should develop his **absolutes** (most learn this at PGA School), and then through education and teaching experience develop his **preferences**. Then depending upon the ability of the student the next stage is to develop **acceptable tolerances** (like Jim McLean's concept of "corridors of success"). This will foster **individual swing identity** whilst at the same time giving his or her students a solid technical backbone to their game.



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