

WINTER INSTRUCTION GUIDE

Be prepared: we cover all the bases in our 16-page special



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Back to basics

Start your swing off with perfect alignment



THE off-season is a great opportunity to work on parts of the game that can take a little more time to introduce back into your technique.

Alignment is hugely important as good alignment allows everything to flow and match together. If your alignment is poor then the technique/swing will have to compensate for this.

To ensure good alignment I use shafts or alignment poles to help me establish perfect set up.



As the only thing that points at the target is the clubhead, it's important firstly to establish the ball-to-target line. I do this by laying a shaft directly in front of the ball aiming straight at my desired target. Next, I lay a second shaft down parallel to my first shaft. Once this is in place I can remove my initial shaft. As I address the ball I now must make sure that my feet, knees, hips and shoulders are parallel to the shaft.

Now my body and my club head are matching. The club points to the target and my body is parallel to this ball-to-target line.

At this point if it feels that you are not aiming at the target, your alignment has been incorrect until now. This is why it's vital to spend time establishing the correct alignment and then practising with it always there.



Sand and deliver

How to dig rather than splash from wet sand

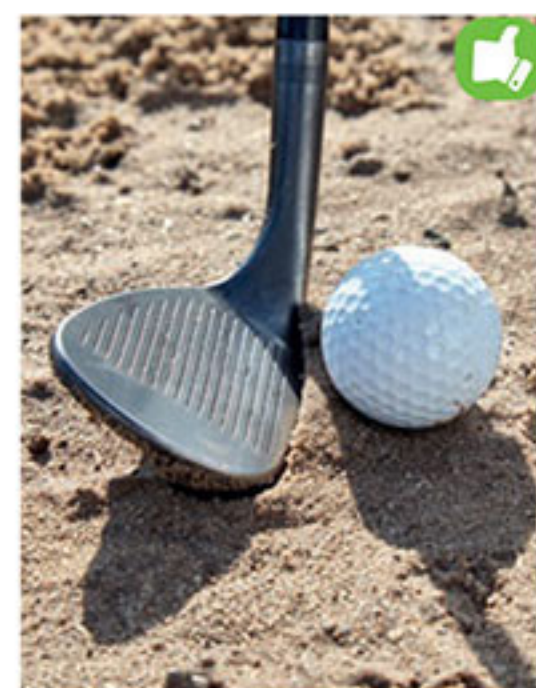


DURING the winter months, with the adverse weather we suffer here in the UK there can be situations which we are not normally used to. Bunker play is one of them. Often when we find ourselves

in the bunker the sand can be wet and heavy and a lot shallower in depth than during the summer months. With some slight adaptations to our bunker set-up and technique, we can make it easier to stay on track.



As the sand is generally shallower on the sole. However, with the we can move the ball in to the middle packed sand we will need to use the of the stance. Normally the clubface leading edge to cut in to the sand and would be open to utilise the bounce almost dig the ball out the sand.



With the club digging into the sand it's vital that the club is kept moving in to a full finish. If the club stops it's unlikely that the ball will come out – the momentum has to be maintained through the sand.



Fight the fat

Why your sternum is crucial in chipping

WHEN chipping at this time of year the turf can often be wet and cause a poor or fat strike leaving the ball short of its intended target.

To help with this we can make a subtle adjustment to our set-up to enable a clean, solid contact every time we miss a green.





Using our shirt buttons or zipper as a guide, we can shift or lean our weight slightly on to the front foot ensuring that our sternum (shirt buttons/zipper) are aligned left of the ball. This position will allow the lowest point of my swing to be in front of the ball.

An incorrect position as shown here may result in the low point being behind the ball and a strike on the ground before the ball.

Once the set-up has been adjusted it is critical to the quality of the strike that the sternum remains left of the ball throughout the swing. This will allow the clubhead to approach the ball on a slightly steeper angle of attack enabling a 'ball first' contact every time.



Using similar set-up principles we can use a hybrid club for shots which are just off the apron. With an adapted address position as above, I suggest using a putting grip and putting action to bump the ball on to the green with your hybrid.

As with any solid putting action, very quiet hands and wrists during this movement with the focus predominantly in the shoulders, keeping the triangle consistent. With the pace of the greens a lot slower in the winter months, this can often be a great alternative to the putter.



Stepping it up

Add some hang time to your driver

WET weather in the winter means wet fairways – which as a golfer means zero run on your tee shots with the driver. A lot of club golfers don't have enough loft on their

driver so that is definitely a consideration when looking at the make-up of your bag. Here are some tips to get the absolute most from your driver through the air and carry it further than normal.



Ensure that the ball position is forward in your stance, opposite the front instep. This will encourage higher launch and maximum carry. For the spine angle, when addressing the driver this is generally tipped away from the target. When I lay my driver along the line of my spine the head doesn't quite touch my knee.





To increase launch we can tip our spine a little more to the right for a slightly higher launch. We are trying to strike the ball on the upswing so it's important to stay behind the ball at impact. My spine should look similar at impact as it does at address. A full shoulder turn will give maximum power enabling us to get the most from our drive. Getting your back to the target at the top of the swing will help you to achieve this.



Heavy weight

Smarten up your striking

DURING the long winter months we have all experienced the difficulty of hitting the ball consistently from wet turf. Often, due to the surface water, we can hit the ball with a heavy strike. By adapting your set-up you

should be able to produce a more reliable strike. We generally have our weight 50-50 on our feet. With this tip I'd suggest setting the weight 55-45 which will help to get your sternum over the left side of the ball.





From here we make our backswing and feel like our weight stays fairly central. There is no conscious weight transfer to the right. As you work down towards the ball it will allow the lowest point of your swing to be past the ball giving you a more crisp strike every time.



Hip hooray

Build a better stance for 2016

HERE we see the most common fault in a poor posture. I am bending from the waist which changes the shape of my spine, giving it a curve. This type of position makes it almost impossible to make a clean full shoulder turn without changing the shape of your body.





This picture shows the correct, more neutral, posture. I have tipped towards the ball, bending from my hips. You can see the natural curves of my spine are all intact – the result of this will be that it allows me to make a full turn in my backswing, and maintain the shape of my body. The fruit of which will be a consistent strike and far more reliable shots.



You may find standing beside a mirror useful when trying this drill. Firstly stand nice and straight with your shoulders back and your chin up. Lift the club and hold it out in front of you. Now tip forward from the hips until the club touches the ground - now bend your knees until you feel the weight move forward on to the balls of your feet.



American Golf right on course

The leading retailers have unveiled a National Academy at High Legh Park Golf Club in Cheshire



A **MERICAN GOLF'S** new National Academy at High Legh Park Golf Club will ensure that "every aspect of performance is optimised."

Opened in July, the American Golf National Academy offers state-of-the-art facilities for golfers to hone their game and is the company's latest initiative designed to improve their customers' games.

With PGA Professionals in store and on the range, the latest golf equipment and fantastic golf facilities, the National Academy provides a perfect environment for an

improving golfer.

"We've given a great deal of thought to the development of an American Golf National Academy and at High Legh Park we've found a team as dedicated to improving golfer's games as ourselves," said Daniel Gathercole, American Golf's Head of Marketing.

"We have PGA Pros, the latest technology for swing analysis and fitting, nutritionists and physical trainers to help golfers reach their peak condition. In addition, we have the very best equipment available so that every aspect of

performance is optimised.

"And for anyone who just wants to blast some balls on the range or have a casual knock, we even cater for that too!"

The facilities at the Academy comprise 9 and 18-hole courses, a driving range with full fitting and analysis bays, a coffee shop, a soon-to-be-opened children's course – and of course an American Golf retail store.

This mix of first-class facilities is what first drew High Legh Park to the attention of American Golf when they began their search for a partner for their National Academy.

Gavin Beddow, General Manager at High Legh Park, said: "We've worked incredibly hard to make High Legh Park a venue that appeals to every level, from absolute beginner to tour professionals.

"Our partnership with American Golf on their National Academy has been a great experience and helps us take things to the next level where we can provide the very best facilities for improving golfers."

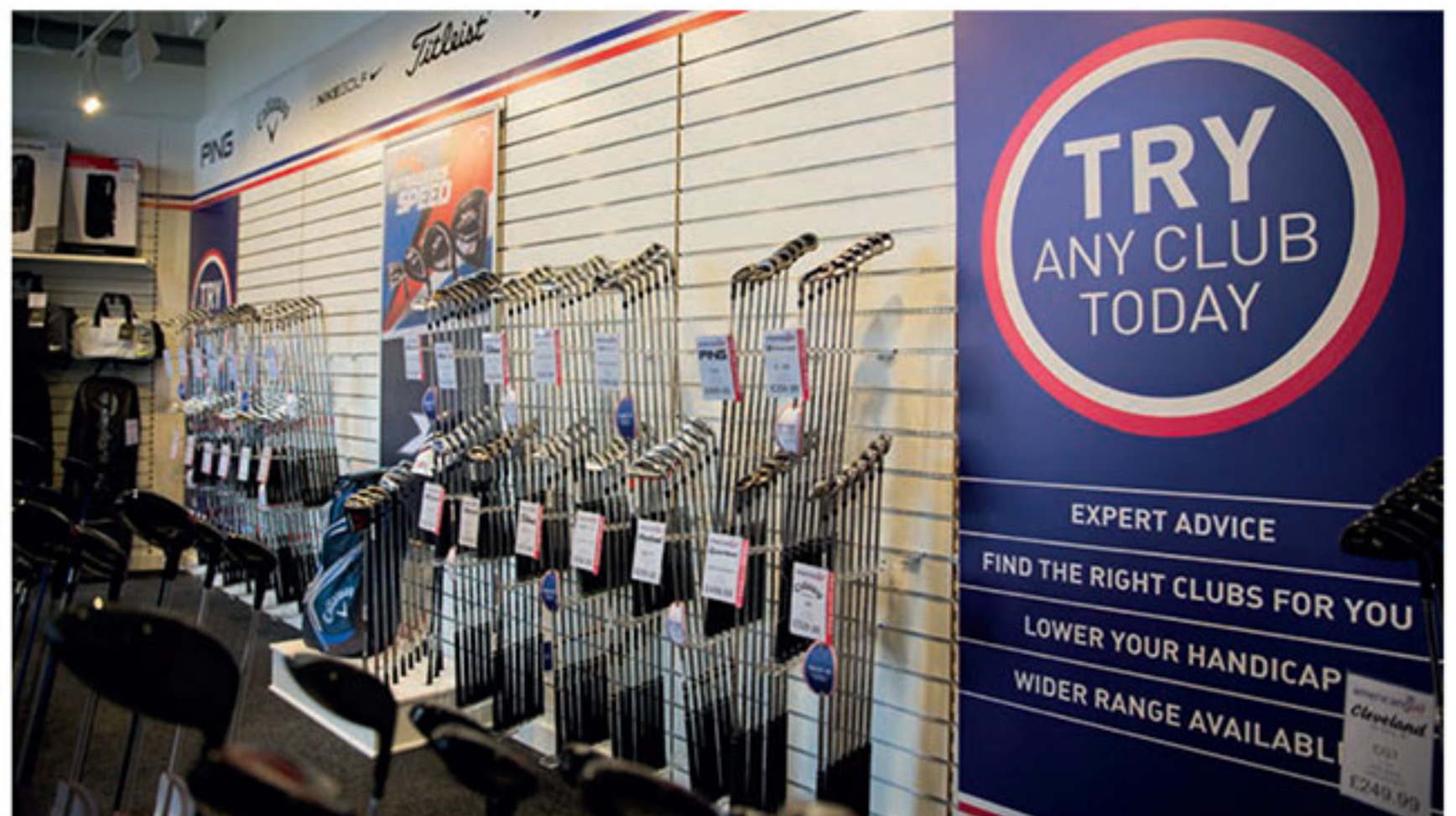
The first few months for the Academy have seen it host the final of the American Golf Long Drive Championship, become



home to a number of European Tour players and coaches and served as a focus for the company's commitment to improving customers' games.

Plans for 2016 are already underway and will see a number of American Golf initiatives aimed at growing the game based at the National Academy, cementing its place as a home club for American Golf and a National Centre of Excellence.

To find out more about American Golf's state-of-the-art National Academy, visit americangolf.co.uk/academy



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PRO TIP

When playing golf in winter, ensure you dress warmly. Layer up so that you can easily shed those layers if the temperature happens to rise during the round, but make sure you don't restrict the freedom of your swing by choosing the right combination.

Ask your local American Golf Pro for more tips!

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