

Driven to play better

What does a V8 Supercars driver do to escape the pressures of racing?

Well, the fact I'm here in *Golf Australia* is a bit of a give away. Like most of you, golf has become something of an obsession for me. Golf offers an opportunity to spend some time challenging myself outside my "comfort" zone ... behind the wheel, driving at high speed.

Time spent alone or with friends on the golf course allows me to relax and have my competitive edge tested at the same time. Golf is unlike any other sport. Anybody of any golfing ability can hit that perfect shot: you know, the shot that brings you back to the course next time. It's a game where I can forget what's happening in the car or on the track. It's my release valve.

I have always considered myself self-motivating; I believe this quality is responsible for my successes in motor racing. The ability to set a goal and do what it takes to achieve it.

I started racing when I was about 12 with Go-Karts in Launceston. I began my career in Formula Ford before heading to Europe to try Formula Ford and Formula 3. I returned home in 2000 and won the "Young Guns" race at the Gold Coast Indy. A contract with Ford Team - Stone Brothers Racing - followed and the rest is history. In 2003, I was crowned V8 Supercars champion.

While my golfing experience had been restricted to the occasional game with mates or a corporate golf day, it always proved a great challenge. But as the good shots became more frequent, I decided it was time to test myself and set a goal to work hard at my game in the quest for a single-figure handicap.

I've started working with Lakelands-based Srixon coach Mark Gibson, who will be guiding me through the lessons that will feature in *Golf Australia* over the coming months.

Our first lesson was a chance for Mark to assess my game. It is a strange sight when you see your swing on video for the first time. My goal is to set aside time during my time away from racing to practise and play. I will be keeping a golfing diary with a view to tracking my way down to a single figure handicap and then, hopefully, tee it up in the Tasmanian Amateur in 2005.

I also hope your game benefits from the lessons I'll be getting and you too can head toward your golfing goals.



EXCLUSIVE by 2003 V8 Supercars Champion Marcos Ambrose



At address, his weight has been too much on his heels and his spine angle too vertical. This created a poor turn in the backswing (pic 3) and resulted in Marcos dipping and sending his upper body into a reverse motion during impact. This, in turn, created less body power and a more aggressive arm swing and little chance of directional control.

All in all this adds up to less power and accuracy, which is not too good for a champion V8 driver let alone one trying to improve his golf.

The front view of Marcos' set-up shows an imbalance toward his left side at address (pic 4), which makes correct weight transfer difficult and contributed to an inconsistent strong impact.

The bulk of the power in a golf swing comes from the correct rotation of the body and transfer of weight, from trailing leg to lead leg around the time of impact. This wasn't happening for Marcos.



GOALS FROM LESSON ONE: A BETTER SET-UP AND TURN



My first swing-improvement goal for Marcos is to be better balanced at set-up, which will go a long way to ridding his backswing of a poor turn (pic 5).

By making a correct weight transfer to a firm right leg during the backswing (pics 6 & 7), Marcos will soon establish a balanced coil and a more stable top-of-the-backswing position (pic 8).

This, in turn, encourages a strong body recoil to impact, on his way through to a balanced finish on his left leg with his torso facing the target.

To achieve this, I showed Marcos some "before" and "after" video. I have given him a set-up routine that is easy to follow and easy to check in a mirror at home, or in a hotel while he is travelling.

I have also given Marcos a drill to do in front of the mirror, which will train his body to get into the correct motion and raise his sense of balance awareness for good position.

Whilst standing in front of a mirror, Marcos needs to imagine a centre line running vertically down the mirror (mirrored wardrobe doors will give a more visible guide) so he can line up the centre of his body to this line. Then it is just a matter of turning his shoulders 90° (to the target line) over his right leg and then back through so his shoulders are 90° over his left leg.

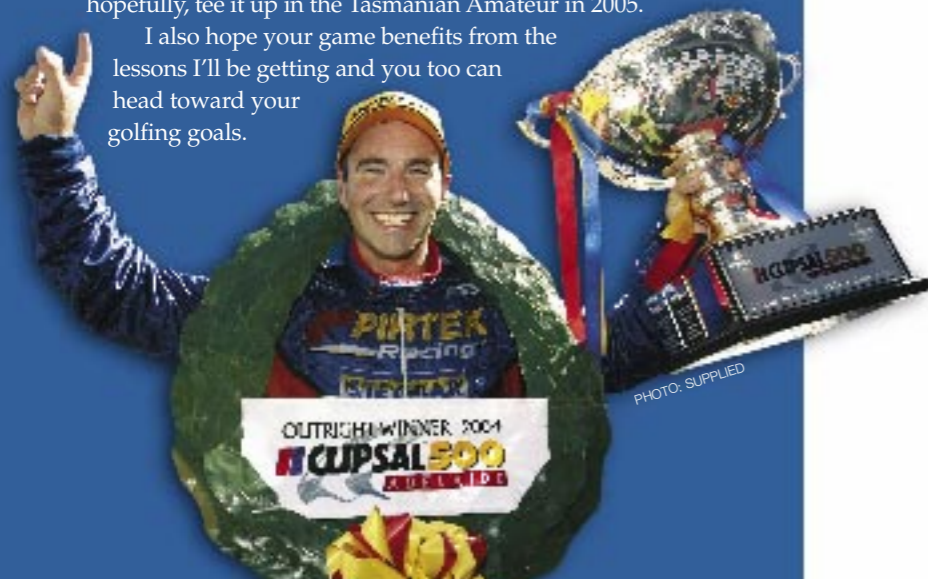
The swing concept Marcos now has is important, as is his understanding of what we want to achieve without too much unnecessary information. Too much information



only serves to cloud the important issues.

I am really looking forward to "Lesson Two" so I can see the improvement in Marcos' body positions. If all has progressed as we've planned, then we can move to the next stage. If Marcos is still uncomfortable in the new positions, we will stay with it until the body positions are almost second nature.

There is no benefit in trying to move to stage two while stage one is still causing any sort of problem. As Marcos will tell you: you can only win one race at a time.



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