

Smart Short Game Practice

The link
between
practice and
play

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EVER SPENT HOURS upon hours perfecting your short game on the practice green only to skull and flop your way around the main event? Or do you know what it's like to be able to chip a bucket of balls to "gimme range" before you tee off and then when it really counts you compile four extra shots from just off the green? You were thinking up-and-down.

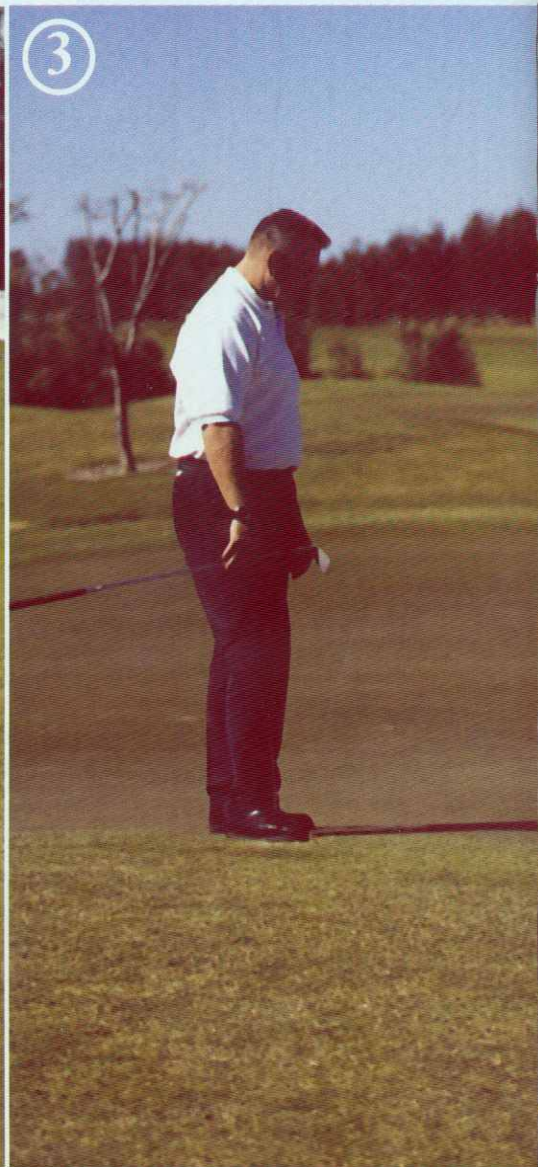
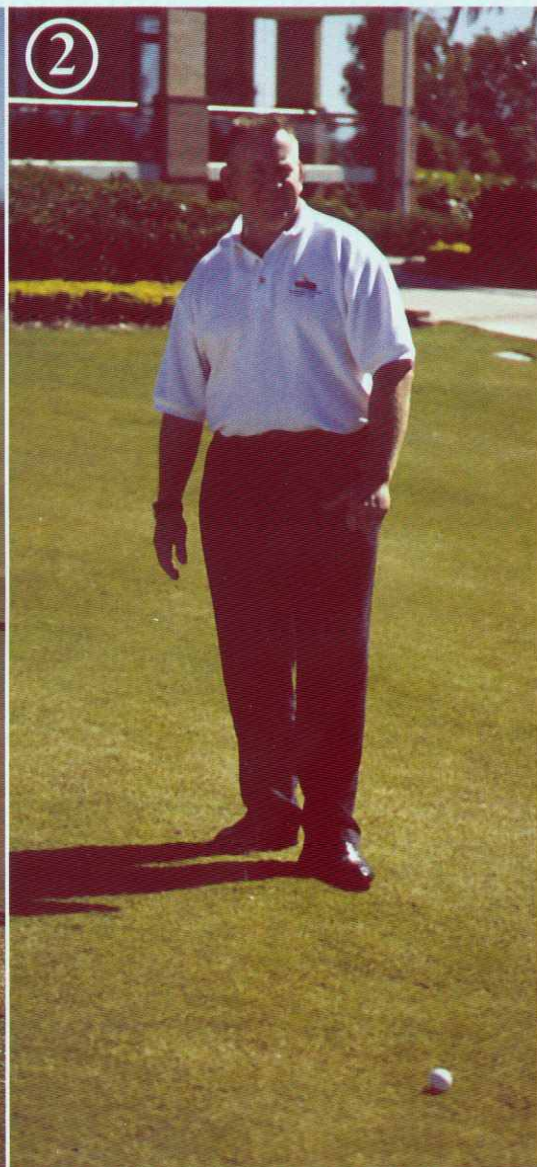
Of course you have — and so has every other golfer.

There's probably a good reason why you struggled to emulate your short game practice form on the course proper. Bringing an element of neurology into the golf swing: the right side of the

BY MARK GIBSON

brain allows you to feel the golf swing; the left side is far more analytical or technical. In practice we utilise predominantly left side (analytical/technical) and on the course it's important to utilise predominantly right side (feel).

In other words the analytical or technical side of the brain shouldn't be used on the golf course. Once on the course a golfer should be looking to reproduce and trust a feel. The golf course is not the right place to be tinkering with technique. So get your technique right on the practice fairway. Very few players utilise the practice



fairway for feel. If you can transform the technique aspect of your practice into a feel aspect of your practice then the transition to the golf course is a much easier step. I find the best way to move from technique to feel is to recreate the pressure and situations usually only found on course, on the practice fairway.

One area of the game where technique is important is the short game, however it is equally important to practice process. Here's a drill to allow you to put pressure on your short game.

Your practice fairway goal is to get up and down to win the hole in an important match...

GREG MINNS

DRILL

1. Use only one ball. There are no mulligans on the golf course so there shouldn't be any when simulating a match on the practice green. I drop the ball to ensure my lie is natural.
2. Now I go through my usual pre-shot routine. I like to check the line from behind the ball.
3. Check the putting surface and landing area and calculate the amount of roll.
4. It's time to feel the shot and paint an image of the result in my mind. A couple of practice swings finalise my preparation.
5. I've no thoughts about my technique. Feel takes over as I look to get the ball close to the hole.
6. Finish the hole. I've got this putt for a win. Now repeat the process 18 times and keep score.

