

Has putting just got exciting?

Golfers are keen to emulate Tour pros by driving balls off the tee 300 yards plus, but what about putting? It seems to have taken a back seat. Sarah Claridge explains how putting lessons can create valuable income



If only, was the thought I had watching Lee Westwood struggle with his putting at the PGA recently, if only three or four putts had dropped during his final round it would have been a different story altogether, his confidence would have rocketed and he would have been unstoppable.

So the big question is: Is the tide changing as regards to putting for coaches, tour players and our prospective clients?

Something is happening out there. The Tour pros boom it 300 yards+, we know that; hit majestic irons to within 12 feet of the flag regularly, we know that too, but it's the art of putting that seems to have taken the game by storm recently and woken up the galleries around the greens?

But can we convert this into lesson and product income? Absolutely we can.

Here's a thought. Could it be that our obsession to hole more putts has started a

craze of 'eccentricity in putting techniques and equipment' that really does work?

In the late 80s, Peter Senior changed his putter to a broom handle putter after spending an evening on the putting green with Sam Torrance only to go from a round of 74 to a 66 overnight. But the gimmicky idea soon faded because of the stigma attached to using a broom handle. If you used a broom handle you had a big problem with your putting.

So have we been conforming and not wanting to appear to 'have a problem' with our putting for far too long now?

Unfortunately, this theory was highlighted by Monty during his somewhat critical commentary on Sky when he commented that a player pulling a belly/broom handle putter out of his bag had already admitted defeat.

Sorry Monty, you are one of my favourites, but this negativity towards 'being different' has to stop, if it works, use it. Haven't we changed?

The golf world can now brag about fresh young experimental players, more creative modern coaches and an industry needing to come up with new ideas to stay ahead. This has all got to be good for us at the front line of the industry.

With both Keegan Bradley and Adam Scott winning the last two stateside tournaments with broom handle putters surely we need to take this idea to the paying public? What are the benefits of a broom handle

putter to your members? Why do they work so well? In short they find that the belly/broom putter provides a third point of contact - the abdomen/sternum along with each hand that provides stability and balance to the stroke. Therefore, this is an excellent idea for those with excess wrist movement in their stroke. I can think of a few.

I have an idea that can be expanded on and if you're already doing it, then great you're ahead of the game.

Create a lesson product opportunity for your members to firstly generate an income and then give you the opportunity to sell 'The latest hot putting products.'

In the past I arranged a four-week putting course for our members at the Kendleshire. It was so successful that I ran four courses with eight members signed up to each course. I charged them £40 each for the four weeks, giving me a total of £1280. So that's the income taken care of. The selling of balls, putters and putting aids can be subtly incorporated into the sessions.

Suggested itinerary:

Week 1: Alignment and reading greens (followed by 30 minutes free equipment assessment). Your opportunity to talk about the importance of ball compression and using the same make of ball for consistency. Talk about length, lie, grip, weight, design of a putter to suit different conditions, postures and abilities, bring out the belly/

broom handle putters and stress what the difference is between the long putter and the conventional putter, why would tour players use them?

Remember you're not selling; you're allowing your members to experience and have fun. The products will sell as a consequence of this.

Week 2: Set up and stroke building, an opportunity to use some alignment and stroke building aids. If a player's eyes light up with enthusiasm, there is your opportunity to suggest you have this practice aid in the shop.

Week 3: Skills and drills for practice sessions, your chance to introduce fun and competition within the group. Pace control drills, par 18 for putting, putt to a tee peg, team speed putting.

Provide a score sheet to fill in as they go around. Ideally nine holes with nine drills and five minutes at each drill.

Week 4: On course putting management Take the group out onto the course to your trickiest green and teach them how a tour player would manage approach shots and putting from different scenarios around the green.

Finish off the course with prizes and or a small fact file of course content.

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