



THE FUTURE OF PUTTING

FACE-ON PUTTING



by David L. Cook, Ph.D.

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I have a great appreciation for the rich traditions of the game of golf. Golf is a sport built on tradition. However, I also have a passion for truth. Truth should always trump tradition, especially when it involves performance.

To understand where I am coming from, it is important to know that I have spent my life playing this great game as well as coaching those seeking answers to golf's most baffling questions. Although my reputation has been built around my expertise in sport psychology, I started my career as a competitive player in golf. I understand deeply that the mind and body must integrate to create performance.

Putting has been the topic of most distress in the players with whom I have worked. Putting confounds, frustrates, and infuriates. By far, the club that holds more players back from their scoring potential is the putter. That frustrated potential has led my search for the truth about putting.

What I have found may surprise you. The fact is, tradition has held us back from discovering the truth about putting. Tradition has had an insidious hold on too many players. The stage has been set for truth to emerge and with it, freedom for the many who have been held prisoner by tradition.

Before I introduce you to the future of putting, let's first look at how the transition to freedom has already begun. Over the past two decades the future of putting has begun to emerge, but its complete transformation has yet to be unveiled. Until now.

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The long putter introduced the idea of anchoring the grip to eliminate excess movement in the stroke. It also introduced the concept of single-joint putting, thus transferring all of the feel and movement to one limb. This mimics other fine-motor skills such as painting or writing. The long putter also allowed the player to stand taller, promoting better overall vision of the putting line.

Left-hand-low putting emerged as an answer to the breakdown of the wrists through the stroke. The belly putter established an anchor similar to the long putter, while allowing the golfer to stay with the comfort of having two hands on the club. The claw grip has many faces but basically has rearranged the lower hand so that it hangs in a more natural position, similar to a violin grip.

How the player looks at the hole has also undergone a few changes. Many have begun to look at the hole while putting, thus capitalizing on putting to a target rather than putting to a memory. Looking at the hole while putting follows other similar skills like free-throw shooting, darts, bowling, and horseshoes.

There have been other methods for sure, but these variations in how we look at the hole and how we hold the putter have introduced critical pieces of truth in putting. The one method not mentioned that came the closest to the future of putting was used by Sam Snead. He called it “side-saddle putting,” which allowed his body to face the hole although he continued to use the traditional techniques of using a short putter and looking at the ball while putting. He actually created the croquet method as well, placing the ball between his feet. But the USGA quickly banned this variation.

So let me introduce you to the future of putting. I call it “Face-On putting.” Face-On putting is the merger of the best of each of the techniques mentioned above. However, the future of putting doesn’t build on the side-on tradition; rather it establishes a new beginning.

The side-on approach to golf was established to create torque. In order to strike a ball with velocity, torque is the necessary means of force. But putting differs from every other shot in golf. In putting there is no need to create torque. Torque is used for power, and putting has no use for power. Putting has to do with accuracy. Accuracy is enhanced by details such as free joint movement, binocular vision, straight line pendulum movement, and looking at the target rather than putting to a memory.

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Face-On putting starts by facing the target, thus taking advantage of three laws of physics. First, it puts the one moving shoulder joint in position to swing freely straight back and straight through, thus allowing the putter head to stay on line throughout the stroke. Traditional side-on putting, by contrast, puts the two shoulder joints in position to swing the putter head in an arc. Secondly, Face-On putting sets the eyes in a binocular position. Side-on putting causes one eye to be closer to the hole. Finally, Face-On putting allows the player to look at the target, not the ball, while putting. Side-on putting teaches the person to putt to a memory instead of looking at the target.

Face-On putting requires a long putter. The long putter allows the player to anchor the top of the club, thus producing a pure pendulum stroke. It is best to find a long putter with an oversized, face-balanced head so that hitting the sweet spot is not an issue while looking at the target. Secondly, you need to find a long putter that has a rounded sole. Because the rules of golf require the shaft angle to be at least 10 degrees in putters, you will need to slightly lean the putter toward the toe to create a perfect pendulum. The rounded sole allows for this slight adjustment.



Face-On putting uses one joint and one arm, simplifying the movement and focusing the feel. The shoulder socket in the face-on position is free to move in a perfect uninhibited pendulum motion when the putter is gripped correctly. Gripped correctly, the thumb of the non-putting hand will be on top of the putter as an anchor and hinge. The remaining fingers are wrapped around the grip loosely. The hand is then placed against the shoulder joint of the putting arm. To get into this position with the putter on the ground and the eyes over the ball, you must lean forward and toward the ball slightly.

Your height, coupled with the length of the putter, will determine the amount of lean. The ball is played just outside and equal with the toe.

The putting hand is placed somewhere between one and two feet below the anchor hand, creating a 90-degree angle at the elbow joint.

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The putter is held between the thumb and index finger. The index finger is critical to face-on putting. It is the finger used when writing, painting, pointing, and touching. It is the primary center for feel in our hand.

The eyes remain focused on the target while the stroke is made. Before the stroke, the eyes look from the target to the ball and back, tracing a pathway for the putt. It is important for them to remain level and in a binocular position. I have found that it takes conscious effort to refrain from slightly twisting and turning the head.

There is no doubt in my mind that this is the future of putting. It brings the best of all the putting techniques together and assembles them around truth.

Becoming part of the Face-On revolution will require three things: First, you have to value truth over tradition. Second, you have to value excellence over acceptance. Third, you have to commit to change, realizing any new skill requires practice and a little getting used to.

While I can't guarantee results, I can guarantee that you will increase your probabilities for success because you will have physics and optics on your side. Because your eyes are on the target and because you have the freedom of an uninhibited joint, I believe this method is yip proof, bringing hope to the thousands who suffer from this putting epidemic.

Breaking away from tradition is first and foremost a mental issue. It requires a special mindset. I appreciate and applaud all those who had the courage and confidence to break from tradition in the search for the truth. Names that come to mind are Snead, Lietzke, Langer, and Phil Rogers, followed by golfers in more recent years such as McCarron, DiMarco, Calcavecchia, Singh, and Holmes.

It takes the heart of a revolutionary to bring freedom. Are you a revolutionary? If so, welcome to the future of putting.



A Personal Invitation from David Cook

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Face-On Putting originated with the novel, *Golf's Sacred Journey*. If you have not read it please take the time to download it off the www.sacredjourneystories.com web site and learn of the intriguing origin of Face-On putting in the village of Utopia, TX.

Secondly, if you are intrigued by the potential of this putting method, I want to encourage you to take a look at our *Face-On Putter*. You will also find it on the web site above. I studied many designs before settling on this one created by one of the country's premier putter makers, J. Sandy Reese. This patented putter's state of the art design will serve you well as you begin your Face-On journey. There is simply nothing like it on the market.

And lastly, I have two companion CD programs that compliment this article and will help you along your golfing and life journey. Check out the web site above for information about the two CD programs: *The Psychology of Tournament Golf* and *The Mindset of a Champion*.