

Putting Practice Indoors

How to make winter practice productive

For those of us who spend our winters in Upstate New York working on our putting can be not only a method of dealing with cabin fever, but also an opportunity to build rock solid putting fundamentals. All the drills I work on indoors in the winter are the same as the ones I practice outdoors in the summer. Practicing your stroke indoors can be incredibly effective if you know how.

I would highly recommend reviewing the previous clinic notes on putting before you get started building an indoor program. Both are available on TICountryclub.com (click on the Instruction heading).

PUTTING STANCE WIDTH and POSTURE

PUTTING POSTURE Stability and Mobility Explained

PICK A TARGET

The best putter I know is my good buddy Nick Owen, who is the PGA Professional at Glenwild Golf Club in Park City, Utah. Nick and I worked together for years at RedStick Golf Club in Vero Beach, Florida. I once asked Nick what he thought about when he putted. He said, “when I putt, I picture the cup sticking out of the ground instead of sitting below ground”. That’s both the simplest and a most effective visual I have ever heard. Think about how much easier putting would be if the only objective was to hit the cup at any speed?

Frankly it would be difficult to miss the target inside of 5 feet if all we had to do was hit the cup. See the photo below for an illustration.



Making putts is obviously more difficult than that. The hole is beneath the ground which requires an element of speed to account for the laws of gravity.

The golf hole is 4 ¼” in diameter and the golf ball is 1.68” in diameter



Putting to a regulation sized cup or a poster board cut out (right photo) can be helpful for practicing but it doesn't help you work on speed control.



If roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the golf ball hits the hole, you will most likely make the putt regardless of speed (unless it's airborne because you hit it so hard!)



With that in mind, I bought a candle that represents the size of the hole that would accept any putt. For \$1.50 at Target, I have a perfect indoor target to aim at.

*This is also an incredibly power visual that you can use like Nick Owen does. If you have a tough, downhill 3-footer (thinking about hole #6 on the Old Course) instead of worrying about missing the putt, thinking about hitting an above ground target...like a candle!

TIGER'S PUTTING DRILL

I learned this drill from watching Tiger Woods. Here's the link to a hypnotic video of Tiger warming up at the PGA Championship:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kYNjoUqohc>

1. Find a straight putt and mark the spot on the green or in this case carpet
2. Set your putter head down and place two tees **in front** of the golf ball and just wider than the putter head (for a carpet put the tees upside down)



Measure the tee width and aim at the skinny candle

3. With your right arm only start making strokes (lefties use the left arm only)



“One Arm Cabin Fever Drill” – A great way to tighten up your stroke preseason

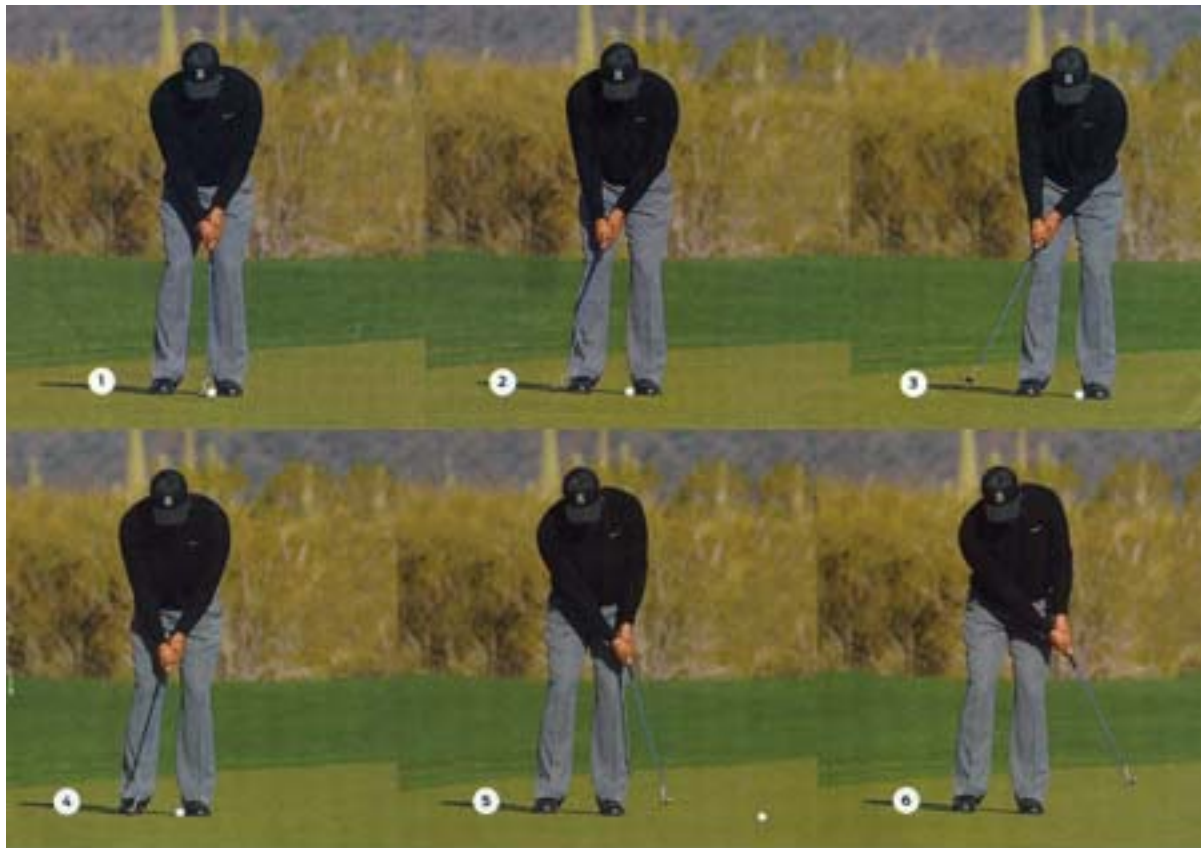
I love this drill because it stresses the two most important components of a good putting stroke.

1. Core and head stability
2. Dominant arm control

For a right-handed player, having your right arm and shoulder control the stroke is by far the most athletic and natural option. Taking the left arm off the putter forces you to activate your core and stabilize your head. Tighten your

stomach muscles or belly button and don't move your chin until the ball is in the hole.

An important fact about our anatomy to keep in mind is that your spine and your collarbone are always perpendicular (think of a T). They do not move independently of each other. Therefore, if your spine stays in posture your shoulders will rock **both up and behind you**. When practicing this drill (or any putting drill) your goal is complete freedom of movement in the shoulders. Even on short putts, try to keep them as active as possible. If you watch pro tournaments on TV, watch how active each player's shoulders are. You can clearly see the back shoulder rise for each player on their backstroke.



Golf Digest Dec. 2007, Photos by J.D. Cuban

Head remains stable: Logo on his hat never moves. Right shoulder rises on the takeaway, left shoulder rises on the forward stroke and follow through.

I like to think of the spine as a type of rope. To straighten a rope, you must tighten both ends. Regarding the putting stroke, I focus on my belly button and my chin. If the belly button and my chin remain stable through out the stroke than the shoulders will "rock" up and around my thoracic spine with out any impingement.

TIMING, TEMPO, RHYTHM

When I am practicing in the living room by the fireplace on a dreary Upstate afternoon, I am always working on my timing, tempo and rhythm. You've probably heard those three words before in golf instruction. They might seem like they are referring to the same thing, but they are 3 distinctly different concepts.

TIMING: The amount of time it takes to execute your back stroke and forward stroke (until contact) Example: Back Stroke .60 seconds, Forward Stroke .30

TEMPO: The ratio of those two numbers: In this case it would be 2:1

RHYTHM: Exerting the same amount of force at two separate changes of direction. In the putting stroke there are two starting points: the initial takeaway from address (start of the back stroke) and the transition from back stroke to forward stroke.

THE BLAST MOTION SENSOR

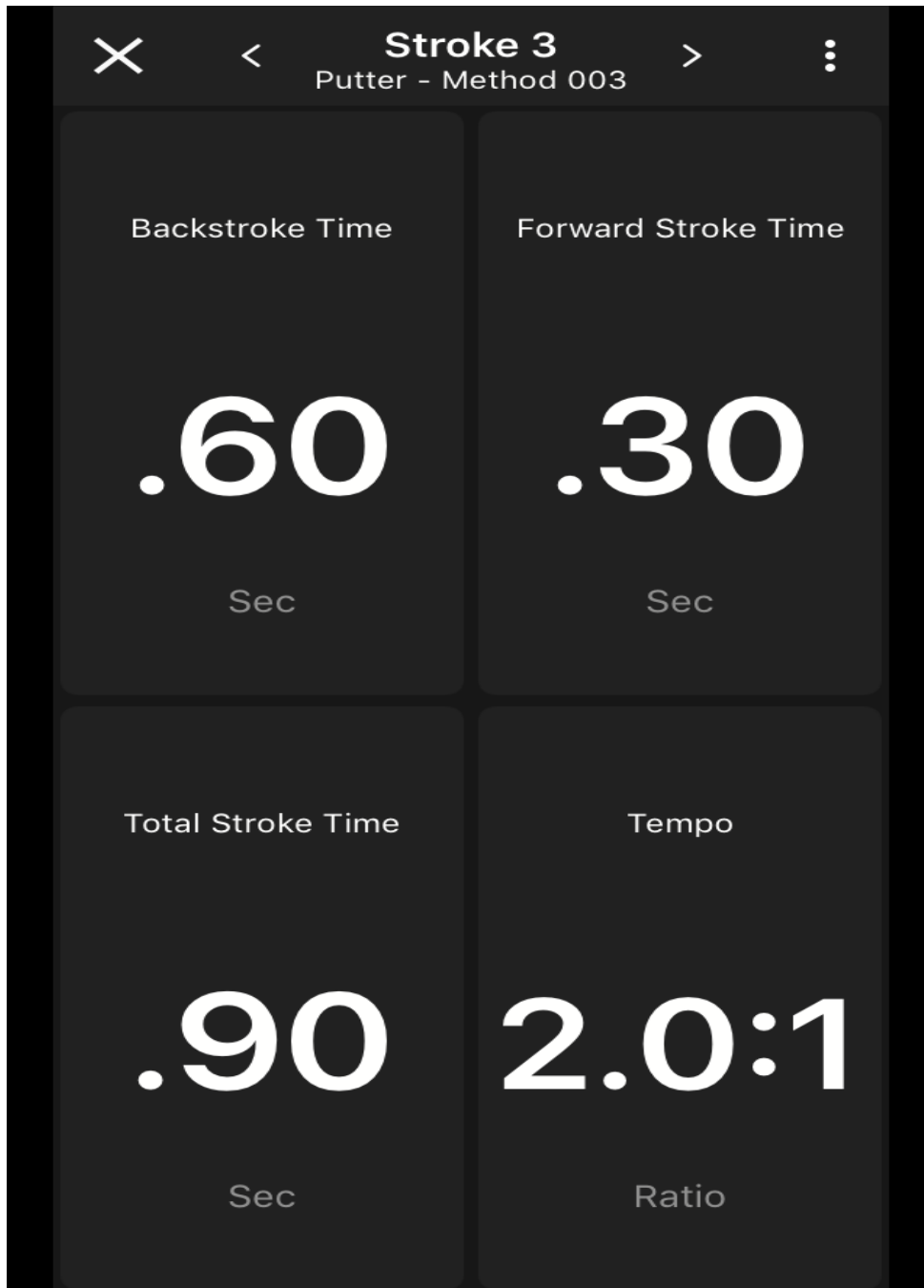


To work on these, I use my BLAST MOTION sensor. This is an incredible training aid that registers all the relevant data from a putting stroke. The BLAST MOTION team has collected data on over 100,000 strokes from the best players in the world. The evidence was overwhelming. The best players in the world consistently have:

BACKSTROKE TIME: .60 seconds

FORWARD STROKE TIME: .30 seconds

TEMPO: 2:1



Just 4 of the possible metrics that the BLAST MOTION sensor can calculate

These are my ideal numbers (for my height 6'1"). These are the goals I set for my self whether I am practicing indoors or outdoors. It has made practicing my stroke indoors incredibly productive. My brother Brian and I will have competitions to see who can have better numbers. Adding pressure always makes practicing more effective. It's become a running joke that we bring our sensors to family parties.

Keep in mind that with equal rhythm, the timing of a lever is only dependent on the length of the lever.... regardless of the size of the stroke. The reason tour players can repeat their timing so consistently is because of the stability of their structure.

“Practice doesn’t make perfect. Practice only makes permanent. Perfect practice makes perfect”

We have already addressed structure in the previous clinic notes on ***PUTTING POSTURE Stability and Mobility Explained***. Now we need to add rhythm to our structure to produce the perfect putting stroke.

As we noted above, we need equal force for the two changes of direction... and we want it to be controlled by our dominant arm. For me I want to control my back stroke with my right shoulder moving up and around me. For the forward stroke I want my right bicep to swing under my chin. If I can match those two functions with equal energy and speed, I have perfect rhythm. A silent, rhythmic count in your head of 1-2 can help. Don’t be afraid to say it out loud until you get your cadence right.

I know a great putter who says “Grey-Goose” to herself. Whatever works for you!