

BUTCH'S BASICS

» People tend to get fixated on the ball and try to lift it at impact. That leads to thin contact and even topped shots. Here's a drill to get you hitting down and through the shot. On the range, tee up your iron shots like you do on a par-three. Then focus on knocking the tee out of the ground. You'll hit down more at impact and start really compressing the ball.

PLAY YOUR BEST

CONSISTENCY COUNTS

LOOK AFTER YOUR EYES

PROPER EYE CARE HELPS GOLFERS MAINTAIN VISION

BY ARUL JOHN



Dr Daphne Han (above, right), medical director and consultant ophthalmologist at SMG Vision Centre, a Singapore Medical Group Clinic, answers questions about how golfers should take care of their vision.

How should golfers protect their eyes from the sun and glare during their games?

They should wear wide-rimmed, wraparound sunglasses with side-shields that cut out 99 per cent – 100 per cent of ultraviolet (UV) light (UV A and B, lower than 400 nanometre wavelength).

A hat is also desirable to block sunlight from striking and entering the eyes.

How does ageing affect the eyesight of golfers?

Ageing causes presbyopia, the “long-sightedness of old age”, which affects all who are over 40 years old. This causes difficulty seeing at short distances.

A conservative remedy is wearing progressive glasses or contact lenses, or utilising a monovision strategy with glasses and contact lenses, where one eye is focused at long distances and another eye at short ones.

But a monovision strategy may not be ideal for golfers as it affects stereoscopic vision and can reduce judgment of distance.

What are some age-related eye visual problems that golfers face or may be more prone to?

Common visual problems experienced by golfers are blurring of vision and glare from eye conditions like cataracts and pterygium. These are related to prolonged exposure to UV light from the sun.

Cataract is hardening and clouding of the natural lens of the eye, which can reduce clarity of sight, colour vision, contrast sensitivity, cause glare and sometimes change in refraction or eye power degree.

Pterygium is a growth of excessive superficial tissue over the cornea and the cornea's corrugated surface can cause feelings of foreign bodies in the eye, dry eyes and fluctuation in vision.

What is the treatment for these conditions?

In mild cases, the treatment of these diseases is conservative, such as changing spectacles if there is any change in eye power.

Wearing sunglasses can help.

Using wetting eye drops to improve the ocular surface tends to benefit symptomatically too.

For cataracts, surgery such as cataract extraction is very advanced and can achieve excellent results.

An intraocular lens is implanted at the same time of the cataract extraction to replace the focusing power of the natural lens that had been extracted.

Cataract surgery techniques and intraocular lens designs have evolved into some of the most sophisticated surgeries in our lifetime.

The main focus of cataract extraction techniques involves the use of ultrasound energy to soften the lens material before it is suctioned out of the eye.

But recently, the femtosecond laser, a technology employed by refractive surgeons for the past 15 years, has also been introduced into cataract surgery.

A cataract surgeon can help the patient achieve better unaided visual outcome than before the onset of cataract, provided there are no other concurrent eye diseases.

Treatment for pterygium involves surgical removal and an adjunctive graft of conjunctiva (the superficial lining of the white of the eye) to reduce recurrence rate, which is typically about 15 per cent.

Cataract and pterygium surgeries are day surgeries generally lasting less than 30 minutes under an experienced surgeon.

KEEP THE BALL IN ONE PLACE FOR EVERY CLUB

BY BUTCH HARMON

A lot of what determines whether you hit a good or bad shot happens at address.

The simplest thing is ball position.

If you get the ball in the right spot, good things tend to fall into place.

Get it in the wrong spot, and things fall apart.

I like keeping the ball in the same position for all clubs on standard full shots.

Start with the driver: Play it in line with your shirt logo, and drop your right foot away from the target in a wide stance (below, left).

This sets up an upward strike.



For a middle iron, don't move your right foot out as wide and keep the ball in the same place relative to your front foot.

This narrower stance puts you more on top of the ball so you can hit down on it (above, middle).

When you get to the wedges, the stance is the narrowest and you even lean a bit towards the target at address (above, right).

From there, you can really hit down and rip a divot after impact.

In short, it's about how wide the right foot goes.

That sets the relationship of the body to the ball – but the ball doesn't move.

Butch Harmon is a Golf Digest Teaching Professional.