

Get Ready, Get Set

IF YOU'RE not sure what to expect from your golf swing one shot to the next, take a look at the way you set up to the ball. Golfers who don't follow a specific set-up routine are leaving too much to chance, and run the risk of getting into different positions every time up. How much does that affect the resulting swing? I'd say 90 percent of your swing is predetermined by your set-up.

And that's not an exaggeration. Fact is, the way you relate to the ball at address dictates how you move the club and your body during

the swing. For instance, if your posture starts too upright, the swing will tend to be very flat, or around the body, putting the club too far behind you on the backswing and promoting an over-the-top move coming down.

If you need another reason to focus on the set-up, consider that it's easier to make preswing changes than swing changes. Address positions can be adjusted before the instinct to hit the ball takes hold. Point is, try to standardize every shot as much as possible, then let the swing be a simple athletic motion, with a clear focus on your target.

Want more consistency? Look no further than your set-up



Start with the Grip

STAND UP straight and let your left arm hang at your side. Place the grip of the club in your left hand and push down with your thumb, seating the handle in the fingers (above, left). This is a natural position for your left hand and should be the starting point in taking your grip.

Cock the club up in front of you with your left hand, hinging the wrist just as it does in

the swing, and add the right hand, also setting the grip in the fingers. Wrap the right thumb over the left hand, fitting the lifeline of the right hand over the left thumb (above, right).

To check that your grip corresponds to a square clubface, hold the club out in front of you and make sure the leading edge of the clubface is perpendicular to the ground.

Aim Face and Set Posture

FROM BEHIND the ball, extend the club in front of you, visually connecting the ball and the target. Select an intermediate target—an area on the ground 12 inches in front of the ball and on your target line (right). This spot will help you square your clubface to the target when you take your address.



Walk to the side of the ball and take a half-step with your right foot, the ball opposite the middle of your body. Tilt forward from the hips, keeping your spine straight and your chin up, and place the clubhead behind the ball (left). Your arms should hang freely beneath your shoulders. Using your intermediate target, set the leading edge of the clubface at a right angle to the target line. Now your clubface is square.



TODD SONES, one of *GOLF* Magazine's Top 100 Teachers, owns and operates the Todd Sones Impact Golf Schools at White Deer Run Golf Course outside Chicago.

Now 36, Sones changed the PGA at the age of 18 and quickly took a keen interest in the teaching side of the business. Since then, Sones has twice been named Illinois PGA Teacher of the Year and his current list of students includes Scott McCarron and Robert Gamez, both winners on the PGA Tour.

Sones, who takes an enthusiastic approach to teaching, is a vocal proponent of adjusting a player's equipment to fit his body before changing his swing.

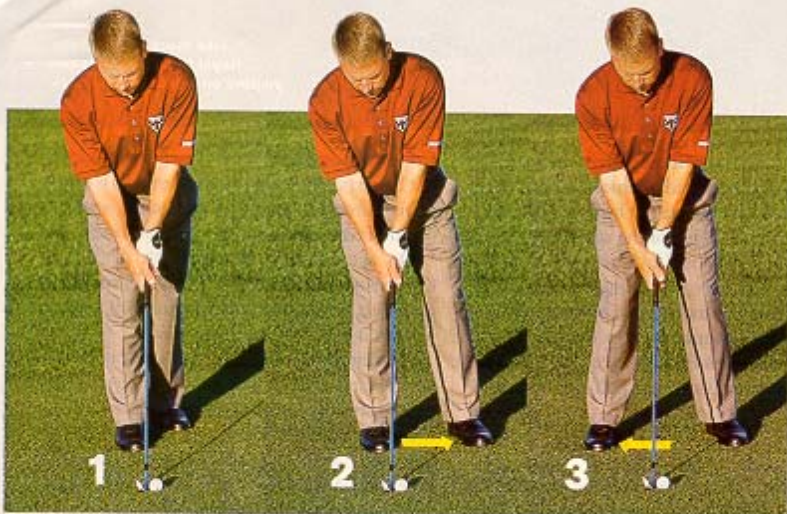
For more instruction from Todd Sones, tune into

THE GOLF CHANNEL ACADEMY LIVE

Aug. 24 8:00-9:00PM

Aug. 25 8:00-9:00PM

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Position Ball and Take Stance

WITH YOUR FORWARD TILT already established, set your stance by stepping toward the target with your left foot, then stepping away from the target with your right foot (see sequence above). With the short irons (7-iron through sand wedge), play the ball in the middle of your stance, making equal steps left and right. With the middle to long irons, play it off the left side of your chest; with the woods, opposite the left armpit.

A word on stance width: Your insteps should be about as wide as your hips when hitting irons. For woods, the insteps should be at shoulder-width. More flexible players may want to use a wider stance. Now you're ready to go.

