

# The Hacker

## No. 1 I think I know what I'm doing wrong....

Why is it that golfers find watching hour after hour of golf on the TV just as fascinating as playing? They never watched it before they started playing. The answer is simple. The minute you take up golf you understand – instantly! – How difficult the sport is and just how brilliant the top professional golfers are.

To the outsider it looks such an easy game. Long clubs, decent sized ball, large hole – a doddle. But then you take your first swing and no doubt miss the ball completely.

For the majority of people this auspicious start quite rightly closes their golfing career before it has a chance to catch its first breath. But for us poor mugs that make up the minority that is left, it is the start of a doomed love affair. I say doomed because no matter how often you play or how long you play for, golf will always wear the trousers in this relationship.

To add insult to injury, the better you get the harder it gets. To begin with the goal is simple, try and actually make contact with the ball. But assuming you let the path of true love take its course then you will slowly follow the traditional route of golfing courtship. Once you have got over the embarrassing stage of first hit, then follows the sneaky trips to the driving range, practice swings with a hairbrush in front of the mirror and airswings in your office with all the shutters pulled close. In time you get brave and book up a few lessons before eventually plucking up the courage to consummate the relationship and join a club and get yourself a bona fide handicap. That's when your problems really start. Because just as with all other relationships in life, you didn't realise quite what you were taking on when you first started.

At the beginning you were content with actually being able to make contact with the ball, but now you are into 'obsession' territory. You're starting to try and draw the ball, fade it, spin it, check it. Now you've got to worry about what every single inch of your body is doing during the swing. How is it possible to put everything together at once and hit the perfect shot?

Just when you're considering a divorce from the demon spouse you discover golf on the TV. Which brings me neatly back to my opening remark. We can't take our eyes off golf on the TV because of two reasons – firstly we admire just how good they are. Shot after shot perfectly off the club head, all controlled fade or draw, not a hint of hook or slice. Swing after swing is perfectly executed under the ultimate pressure of spectators and cameras. To be good at golf you must be able to control the twin ogres of body and mind, and the professional's do this without, it seems, breaking a sweat. But second, and perhaps more important, is that it gives us hope. It proves to us that the game can be mastered. When you are feeling low and have racked up another ton in the monthly medal for another 0.1 handicap increase, there is nothing like watching the pro's on tour to raise the hairs on the back of your neck and get you itching to rush back out on the course.

There is always something to learn from watching the professionals and you sit glued to the screen hoping to discover the missing link from your game that will click everything else in to place

And that's the crux, golfers are many things (stupid, obsessive, dedicated...) but more than anything we are ultimate optimists. How else could we bounce back from every kick in the teeth that the Golfing Gods inflict on us? No matter how bad we play, or how many we shoot, we still walk off at the end of the round with the immortal words: 'I think I know what I'm doing wrong....'