



## *Hyatt Regency Maui Kaanapali Classic*

### **“How I Tuned Up My Golf Swing on Maui” By Glen Putman**

December 1997. Gary Player, his son Wayne, and fellow senior tour pro Graham Marsh are huddled around a television set after the second round of the Hyatt Regency Maui Kaanapali Classic October 18.

After a disappointing round, Player has just come off the driving range at the Kaanapali Golf Course and into the adjacent teaching facility of local pro Roger Fredericks, who runs the Kaanapali Golf College.

For the day, Player turned in a score of 76 on the beautiful 6,590-yard, par 71 track that is surrounded by the West Maui mountain range, white sand beaches, and the blue Pacific. That five-over effort followed an opening round 68 and the popular South African was not pleased with his Saturday game.

While Fredericks, a teaching pro who began his career in Southern California, racks up an old video of Ben Hogan swinging through dozens of balls during a practice range clinic, Player, his son who also is serving as his caddy, and Marsh have their eyes glued to the screen.

Fredericks constantly uses a toggle switch to push the images of Bantam Ben forward and back in slow motion as the three men point and nudge each other.

"Look at his right elbow, Marshy," cries Player. "It's actually coming away from his hip." This contradiction of the normally accepted version of the classic Hogan swing was fascinating to the two senior golfers. And it went on and on. For more than 25 minutes they had Fredericks play and replay the 30-year-old tape, showing Hogan hitting every club from driver through wedge on some far away driving range over three decades ago.

The two Senior Tour golfers continually pointed and commented to each other about Hogan's technique, seeming to hope to infuse their own swing with that of the diminutive Texan merely by talking about it.

Marsh was particularly excited to find that even in spite of tight hip flexors caused by a near-fatal auto accident, Hogan was rotating fully and pulling his elbow away from his body.

Just as any weekend duffer, both Player and Marsh, of course, were seeking to capture some pearl of insight that would improve their own swing and, ultimately, their score.

After the video session, Player returned to the practice tee along with Fredericks at his side to work on his swing.

Fredericks, who has earned quite a reputation for being able to help tour players, placed a six-inch long, wooden two-by-four about three inches behind Player's ball and instructed him to push the board back with his club on the take-away and then hit the ball as usual.

Sure enough, Player's first effort soared high and long, with just a tiny controlled draw. For another 15 minutes he whacked mid irons well past the 200-yard marker into a strong Maui head wind.

Standing nearby, I was struck by the realization that this "wood block" push back technique was the same tip Fredericks had given me the day before. During my session, I struck the ball more solidly than I ever have before, and along with the crisp ball contact came more distance and accuracy. And much more confidence.

Well, it helped me and may have helped Player a bit since he improved in the final round to card a 72 during a very windy Sunday closer that saw Hale Irwin win his ninth Senior tour title of 1997 in just 21 starts. Irwin's popular victory ties him with Peter Thomson's record in 1985 for most official senior wins in one season.

Roger Fredericks credits Pete Egoscue, a non-golfer physical therapist, with teaching him about anatomy, biomechanics and kinesthesiology. Egoscue is also praised by Jack Nicklaus with saving his game a few years back.

"This is controversial," says Fredericks, "but a lot of golf instruction is a joke. Most golf teachers are pretty good at understanding the golf swing, but I've never met one who knew the anatomy."

All golfers are different, and even the great ones have radically different swings.

"Fred Couples will never swing like Arnold Palmer, and neither of them will swing like Lee Trevino," says Fredericks. "But they all are successful. What is obvious is that great golfers have two things in common: (1) pronounced shoulder rotation from the very beginning of their backswings, and, (2) significant hip rotation at impact and in the follow-through to the finish.

"We call it showing two cheeks (of the buttocks)," laughs Fredericks. Both of these movements require flexibility, according to Fredericks, who believes that the average tour player has 50 percent more flexibility in the upper body than the average person, and two-thirds more pelvic rotation.

Fredericks has some solid evidence to prove his teaching techniques pay off. Posted on his tiny office wall are letters from former Kaanapali Classic champions Bob Charles and Harold Henning thanking him for his help.

"Golfers in Maui are, indeed, very fortunate to have such a FIRST CLASS teacher on their door step," wrote Henning in December 1995.

And in January, 1996, two months after winning the title, Charles wrote the following: "Thank you for contributing to my success in the Hyatt Kaanapali Classic. The swing thought you gave me from the video cam was put to good use and gave me much needed confidence in my swing."

And finally, Bruce Summerhays, who battled Irwin over three rounds to finish second in the 1997 tournament, wrote to Fredericks in March to say, "Thank you for the video tape sessions. I enjoy working with someone who understands a person's swing based on the individual's body function, or dysfunction."

Oh yeah, do I push away that two-by-four during swing practice in my backyard? You bet I do!

For golf instruction from Roger Fredericks, call 808/661-0488 or 808/667-7111. A half-hour video analysis is \$45. A half-day session runs \$145. Next to Fredericks, Gary Crowel runs Golf Dynamics, a comprehensive club-fitting system that revealed to me that my extra-long irons were still an inch too short. Call Gary at 808/283-8865. Reservations for the Hyatt Regency Maui can be made by calling 800/772-0011 or 800/233-1234. The Hyatt activities desk can also arrange tee times and instruction sessions.