

Cover Story: Fix Your Posture, Fix Your Swing

By Roger Federicks



David M. Clarke, Editor

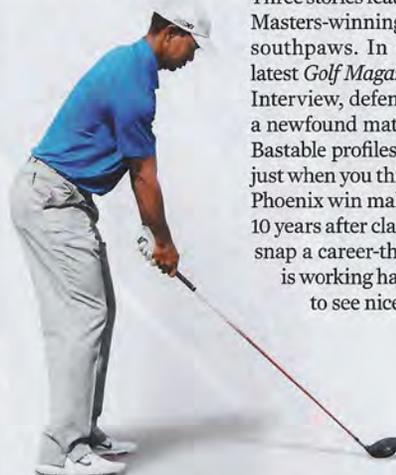
FROM THE EDITOR

MAKE YOUR FINAL STAND

WE SLUMP OUR SHOULDERS when stuck in traffic. We contort our bodies into laughably small coach-class airplane seats. As I type these words, my spine is hunched over my keyboard, and I vaguely resemble a question mark. Modern life affects our bodies and, by extension, our swings—and neither one for the better. In this month's cover story, golf-fitness pioneer Roger Federicks and *Golf Magazine* instruction editor David DeNunzio explain that there's an ideal type of posture that frees our bodies to swing at their best. You're probably not taking a proper stance, which leads to swing flaws and compensations. The good news? By copying simple keys from Tiger Woods—the Tour's standard bearer for perfect posture—you can instantly make better contact without a swing change. See p. 138 to get ideal posture and more power. It's time to make a stand.

It's also time to consider a new set of irons. As you'll see in our 17-page ClubTest that spotlights 28 models, today's irons are far more technologically advanced than they were just a few years ago. Many brands are borrowing high-tech bells and whistles now used in woods: The faces of today's irons are thinner and livelier, which leads to faster ball speeds and more consistent yardage. Irons are also more forgiving than ever, especially in our Game-Improvement and Max Game-Improvement categories. There's never been a better time to choose your weapons.

Finally, after planning this year's 28-page Masters preview, we discovered a happy accident:



Three stories feature Masters-winning southpaws. In our latest *Golf Magazine*

Interview, defending champion Bubba Watson reveals a newfound maturity and ambition. Senior Editor Alan Bastable profiles the ever-unpredictable Phil Mickelson; just when you think Lefty's best days are behind him, his Phoenix win makes him a clear favorite at Augusta. And 10 years after claiming a green jacket, Mike Weir looks to snap a career-threatening slump. The likable Canadian is working hard to win again. I hope he does. It's great to see nice guys finish first.

THERE'S AN IDEAL TYPE OF GOLF POSTURE THAT FREES OUR BODIES TO SWING AT THEIR BEST. COPY TIGER'S ADDRESS STANCE TO INSTANTLY MAKE BETTER CONTACT WITHOUT A SWING CHANGE.

David M. Clarke
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FIX YOUR Posture, Swing

MATCH YOUR SWING TO YOUR POSTURE TYPE FOR 20 EXTRA YARDS



Tiger's posture is perfect (see page TK), both at address and while swinging the club. It explains why he generates upwards of 120 mph of swing speed without falling off-plane. Since your posture probably isn't as good as Tiger's, or any other Tour pro's, stop copying their swings and adjust for your own posture.

By ROGER FREDERICKS
with David DeNunzio

FUNCTIONAL POSTURE

Your joints stack up on one another with your feet pointing forward.



FORWARD POSTURE

Your head, shoulders, and hips lean forward and your abs feel weak.



UNDER POSTURE

Your hips tilt up due to a lack of strength in and support from your lower body.



ROTATED POSTURE

Your torso is rotated open, the result of overusing your right side in almost everything you do.



GOLFERS COME in all shapes and sizes, but the truth is that there's only one type of posture that allows your body to function optimally when swinging a club. In this correct posture, the joints in your body stack up perfectly like the rungs on a ladder: shoulders over hips, hips over knees, and knees over ankles. While you certainly

had this ideal posture at one time, you probably don't have it now. The hours you've spent sitting at a desk, idling in traffic, slumping in your favorite section of the couch, and hunched over a keyboard have wreaked havoc on your natural design. Modern lifestyles have not only changed the way you look (see photos, above), they have changed the way you move your body. So when you try to swing

like players with good posture (i.e., your heroes on the PGA Tour), you're asking your body to perform tasks it simply can't complete. What you get instead is a swing rife with compensations and devoid of speed and power.

You can attack this problem in two ways. The first is to improve your posture through stretching and exercise. Visit golf.com/fitness for a special video

series on how to make this happen quickly and easily. The second is to tailor your swing to *harness* your postural limitations instead of constantly trying to fight them. Identify your posture type, then apply the appropriate setup and swing fixes on the following pages. Not only will you see immediate improvement in your ballflight and distance, you'll decrease the risk of pain and injury.

Photography by
ANGUS MURRAY

FORWARD POSTURE

Tight hips and chest pull your shoulders and head forward while restricting your turn



HOW YOU KNOW YOU HAVE IT

Your head and shoulders lean forward. Also, your feet are splayed when you stand. You have this posture because you've taxed your back muscles while underusing your abs, what typically happens if you spend your day sitting at a desk or, ironically, you play a lot of golf and practice a lot.

HOW IT LIMITS YOUR SWING

Common problems caused by forward posture include poor balance (your weight naturally shifts to your heels to offset the weight that's leaning forward), a flat swing (because your chest muscles are tight), and a restricted hip turn (because your hips are too busy pulling your shoulders and head forward).



I HAVE FORWARD POSTURE!

Richard Huver, 9-handicap

"I've always been more concerned with the plane of my swing than my posture, even though my friends tell me to stand taller at address. Since I've been working on trying to improve my posture, my swing isn't as flat as it used to be and I'm coming over the top less and less. I've improved more by getting the tightness out of my chest and hips than with any lesson I've had in the past."

HOW TO SWING WITH IT

You can offset many ill effects of forward posture by simply altering your address position.



FIX 1 Narrow Your Stance

Since your tight hips limit the amount you can turn, use a narrower stance. The farther apart you spread your feet, the more trouble you'll have rotating. You can turn more with your feet closer together without placing stress and strain on your body.



FIX 2 Stand Taller

Stand closer to the ball and don't bend over so much. Address the ball so that there's only a fist-size gap between the butt of the club and your body. As is the case with narrowing your stance, standing taller lets you rotate more with less effort.



FIX 3 Strengthen Your Left-Hand Grip

Because forward posture restricts your power muscles (i.e., those in your hips and shoulders), you need more hand and arm action to produce sufficient speed. Rotate your left hand clockwise on the handle to engage your wrists and place more of your swing power in your hands.

UNDER POSTURE

Weak legs make you lift instead of coil



I HAVE UNDER POSTURE!

Tim Tomlinson,
13-handicap

"I've never had good posture. I've lived a pretty sedentary lifestyle, and have a lot of neck pain and suffer headaches from time to time. I wasn't surprised by what my swing looked like when I saw it on video. Trying to fix my posture by simply sticking my rear end out didn't work, but since I've started working on my leg strength, I've never seen more improvement in my swing."

HOW YOU KNOW YOU HAVE IT

Your hips tilt upward and you've lost the S-shaped curve in your spine (flat back). You have this posture because your hip flexor muscles have become too weak to do their job, which is to support your upper body. Also, your shoulders and head jut forward to counterbalance the effects of your center of gravity having moved back toward your heels.



Flat back
and weight in
the heels at
address.



Lifting the
club raises
you out of
your posture.

HOW IT LIMITS YOUR SWING

Imagine a quarterback trying to complete a pass with a defensive lineman's arms wrapped around his legs. That's you swinging with under posture—all upper body. Because of this, you lift the club up in your backswing and lose your spine angle, moves that rob you of coil and sap energy from your swing.

HOW TO SWING WITH IT

You can still hit decent shots with under posture, but only with the following changes.



FIX 1 Widen Your Stance

Although I generally don't prefer wide stances, you need more lower-body support. A wider stance provides a more stable foundation to help curb your tendency to lift the club.



FIX 2 Use a Strong Grip

Since you use mostly your arms and hands when you swing, go with a stronger grip [both hands rotated to the right]. Also, hinge your wrists to the max to make up for your lack of hip turn and lower-body speed.



FIX 3 Fake Your Turn

You make your backswing by simply lifting the club to the top. You need to train your body to swing the club back with your upper body, arms, and wrists working in unison. Try this drill:

- Stand in a balanced address position. While maintaining your posture and spine angle, fold your arms and set the shaft on your right shoulder.
- Make a relaxed shoulder turn, keeping the shaft on your shoulder and staying in your spine angle.
- Push your arms away from your torso. Now you're perfect.

ROTATED POSTURE

Your overused right side makes you swing over the top



I HAVE ROTATED POSTURE!

Gilbert Barnes,
24-handicap

"I'm very right-hand dominant. If you want a laugh, watch me throw a baseball left-handed—it's not pretty. Also, most of the injuries I've suffered have been to my left side. I never knew how much this affected my swing until I started working with Roger. The first thing I noticed was how far to the right I aimed. No wonder I swing over the top! I'm looking forward to fixing my posture and getting my swing back on the right track."

HOW YOU KNOW YOU HAVE IT

The left side of your body is ahead of your right, like you're constantly set up open. You have this posture because, like most people, you are right-hand dominant and have overworked your right side. Other telltale signs of rotated posture are a dipped right shoulder and feet that naturally point in different directions.



Lined up to the right.



Over-the-top downswing.



Left hip spinning out.

HOW TO SWING WITH IT

Get your swing pointed back in the right direction despite the fact you're rotated to the left.



FIX 1 Pull Your Right Foot back

Set up parallel to the target line, then drop your right foot back a few inches. This will square your stance even more and make it easier to turn you hips and shoulders in unison for a smoother, on-plane takeaway.



FIX 2 Square Up Your Left Foot

Flaring your left foot out isn't a bad thing, but when you pair it with your rotated posture, you cause your left hip to spin out even more on your downswing (photo, above right). Setting your left foot square to the target line [i.e. toes pointed straight ahead] makes it a lot easier for your weakened left hip to accept weight and shift laterally before turning through impact.



FIX 3 "Hold" Your Right Shoulder

Since your rotated posture and low right shoulder tend to force the club out and over the top, try to keep your right shoulder back for as long as possible following your transition. The idea is to hold back your right shoulder while bumping your left hip toward the target. This will help you approach the ball from the inside.

STRETCH YOUR WAY TO BETTER POSTURE golf.com/fitness.

Take years off your game and strokes off your scorecard

Applying the changes on the previous pages will go a long way to improving your contact and distance. I've had students add up to 20 yards to their drives simply by adjusting their address to match their posture. That's just the start however. If you're serious about getting your posture back to a functional state and taking your game to a whole new level, follow the exercise protocols on golf.com/fitness. In between, perform the exercises on this page that match your posture problem. Do them about five times a week. They're not strenuous, and the more you perform them, the more likely you'll get your body back in proper alignment.

Posture videos, lessons, and dedicated programs to fix each posture type on golf.com/fitness.

For more information on the Postursizer and Slant board, visit fredericksgolf.com.

FORWARD POSTURE STRETCH

A slant board (\$70) and Postursizer (\$99) will accelerate your path to better posture. If you suffer from forward posture, hold the Postursizer behind your neck while standing on the Slant Board in front of a wall and pull your elbows back. **This stretch effectively opens up your torso and eliminates the tightness in your chest (what's causing you to lean forward).** Bending forward while standing flat on the ground with the Postursizer behind your neck is a great way to stretch out your hips, the tightness in which is also bring you forward and out of your natural design..



UNDER POSTURE STRETCH

You'll remember this one from junior-high gym. Rest your back against a wall and pretend you're sitting in a chair. **This simple exercise is one of the best for building leg strength (the lack of which is forcing your hips to point up).** Try to hold this position for ??? seconds. Add to the exercise by placing a foam roller between the wall and the small of your back. This will help you restore the S-shaped curve that's missing in your spine.



ROTATED POSTURE STRETCH

Your goal is to re-establish the balance in both sides of your body. The "crocodile twist" is the stretch for you. Lie on your back and place the heel of your left foot on top of the toes of your right. While keeping your shoulders flat on the ground, rotate your hips and legs to the left as far as they can go. Hold for a count of 10. After a few sessions you should feel more balanced with your shoulders lined up and level.

