

Golf's Big Hurdle

You've probably heard that golf is an un-natural game. Maybe you've heard that golf is a left handed game played right handed. Maybe you've heard that the best way to get control over the club is to let it go out of control. Maybe you've heard that we really don't need to get strength and control from the hands (grip). If this all seems confusing, read on.

The only contact we have with the club obviously, is with the hands. You're correct if you think the way you hold the club is important. In fact when Ben Hogan wrote his "Five Modern Fundamentals of Golf", he dedicated seventeen pages to the grip. Yes, a lot of what he said was captured with drawings, but it is, to be very sure, important. The way you hold the club causes you to swing the club the way you do. If you hold it incorrectly, the wrong large muscle groups will be activated, and you will throw the club off line and off plane. After you hit enough bad shots, you will grip the club seeking more control and probably strength, thus wrecking the swinging motion even more.

The main purpose of the grip is to attach the club to our arms. If we hold it correctly, the hands will hinge somewhere in the backswing, and unhinge at the bottom of the swing due solely to the forces working on the club head. The club, if we have a good grip, will square itself up with no conscious effort on our part. This "bottoming out" and squaring up of the face will happen very consistently if we let it respond to the swinging motion, and letting it go free, before and after impact. One famous instructor said it is like putting it in the "Lord's" hands. If we are consciously trying to square the face, it will never start to happen at exactly the same moment, thus making us more inconsistent.

So how do we hold the club properly? It is very difficult for me to explain it verbally, but there are a few checkpoints that I will mention. The most important fingers are the back three on the left hand. The back of the left hand should be facing the target. The right hand should be in the fingers only, the palm directly opposing the left palm. The right thumb should fit neatly on the left side of the handle. These positions should

facilitate the hinging and unhinging of the hands during the swinging motion. To most right handed golfers who try this for the first time, it feels very unnatural. If you read about some of the great players of the game, they will say the same thing. “It feels terrible for a week or two, but then it starts feeling better. The confidence comes slowly. If you question anyone who has had to make a major grip change, they all say the same thing. “ I am glad I did!” The grip hurdle is one of the hardest things for a person to clear, but there is a wonderful, meaningful, healthful game on the other side, one that most people get excited about, even passionate about.