

Putting Psychology

Putting is the most important part of golf as it contributes to approximately 45% of all golfers' scores. If you want to become a great putter, you must first accept that great putters aren't born, they're made, and you too can become a great putter by taking responsibility by learning some basic technical and psychological approaches.

The worlds best putters such as Aaron Baddeley, Brad Faxon and Stan Uitley love putting, eager to get onto the putting green to show everyone how good they are. They have the belief that they can make any putt they look at, giving themselves every opportunity to hole it.

The average club golfer adopts the opposite approach, dreading getting onto the green, constantly doubting their ability and putting pressure on themselves with phrases such as "you're no good at putting" or "you missed one just like this on the 3rd". Even to the point where they hit a good putt that just misses due to influences out of there control (such as a change in wind direction or poor putting surface) and turn a well hit putt into a negative evaluation of there performance.

Poor putters get to a putt with meaning and all of a sudden change there routine and start to try harder. Even when reading the green, players will start to read way too much into the putt to the point where there filled with doubt, second guessing there natural instinct. A lot of players will change the duration of there routine, start to take longer, standing over a putt thinking of every little facet of a good putting stroke rather than thinking about the ball going into the hole.

Good putting psychology is all about taking the pressure off. The world's best putters have the ability to throw away doubt or fear and laugh off a putts importance.

"The only relationship between trying your hardest and doing your best is that if you try your hardest you'll never be able to do your best" Dr Bob Rotella, Leading Golf Psychologist.

When the average club golfer tries this for the first time they feel as if they haven't tried hard enough. By learning to routinely do this you will be able to reach you're highest putting potential.

Simple, repeatable and efficient technique is the first aspect to get right as you cannot trust something if it doesn't always work. The two important aspects to great technique are set up and how the arms and putter relate to the posture.

The ideal putting set-up (pictured below) requires very similar posture and body shape to that of your full swing, with your forearms and putter shaft forming one line. This will require your arms to be slightly bent at the elbows with the grip running through the palms of your hands.



Aaron Baddeley



Stan Utley



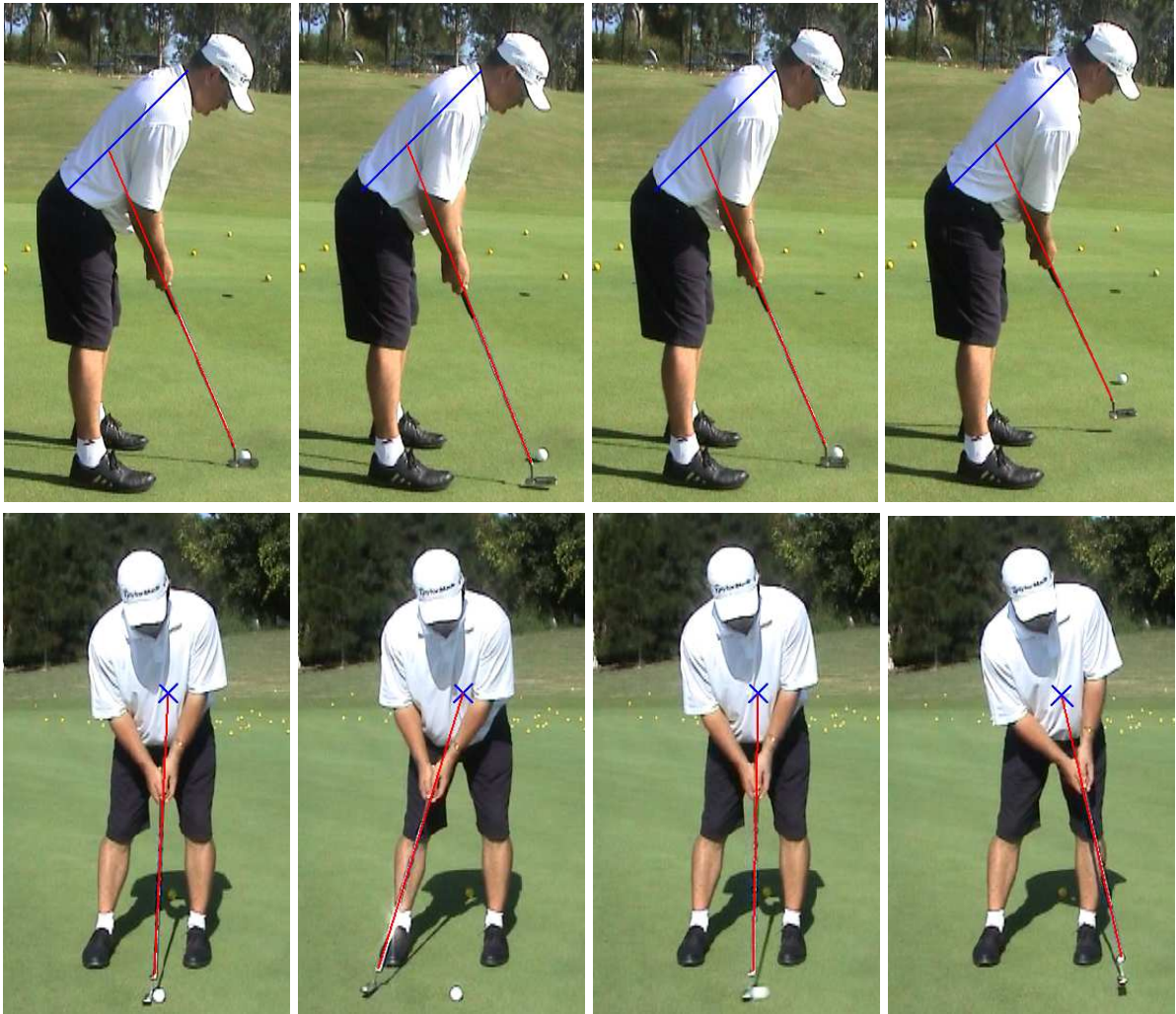
Brad Faxon



This set-up allows you to create a one lever system (with the putter and fore arms) that works around the angles of your posture

During the stroke wrist angles shouldn't change from what they were at address right through to the finish of the stroke. This is because the arms and putter shaft are setup in such a way that they maintain the same relationship to the body at all times.

This technique is best practiced and ingrained without going for a target and therefore can even be practiced at home. Ingraining this technique will allow you to get to the course and purely go through a good routine in order to give yourself every chance of making each putt, producing good technique at an unconscious level.



This will automatically create the proper path and true loft, what is proper path and true loft?

Because golf is a side on sport our equipment is designed on an angle (not vertical) to be used on an angle and therefore the proper path sees the head of the club to work in an arc in relationship to the target, not a straight line.

A good putter is designed with 4 – 6 degrees of loft in order to roll the ball properly. When the putter works on the proper path it will allow you to maintain the true loft on the putter face.

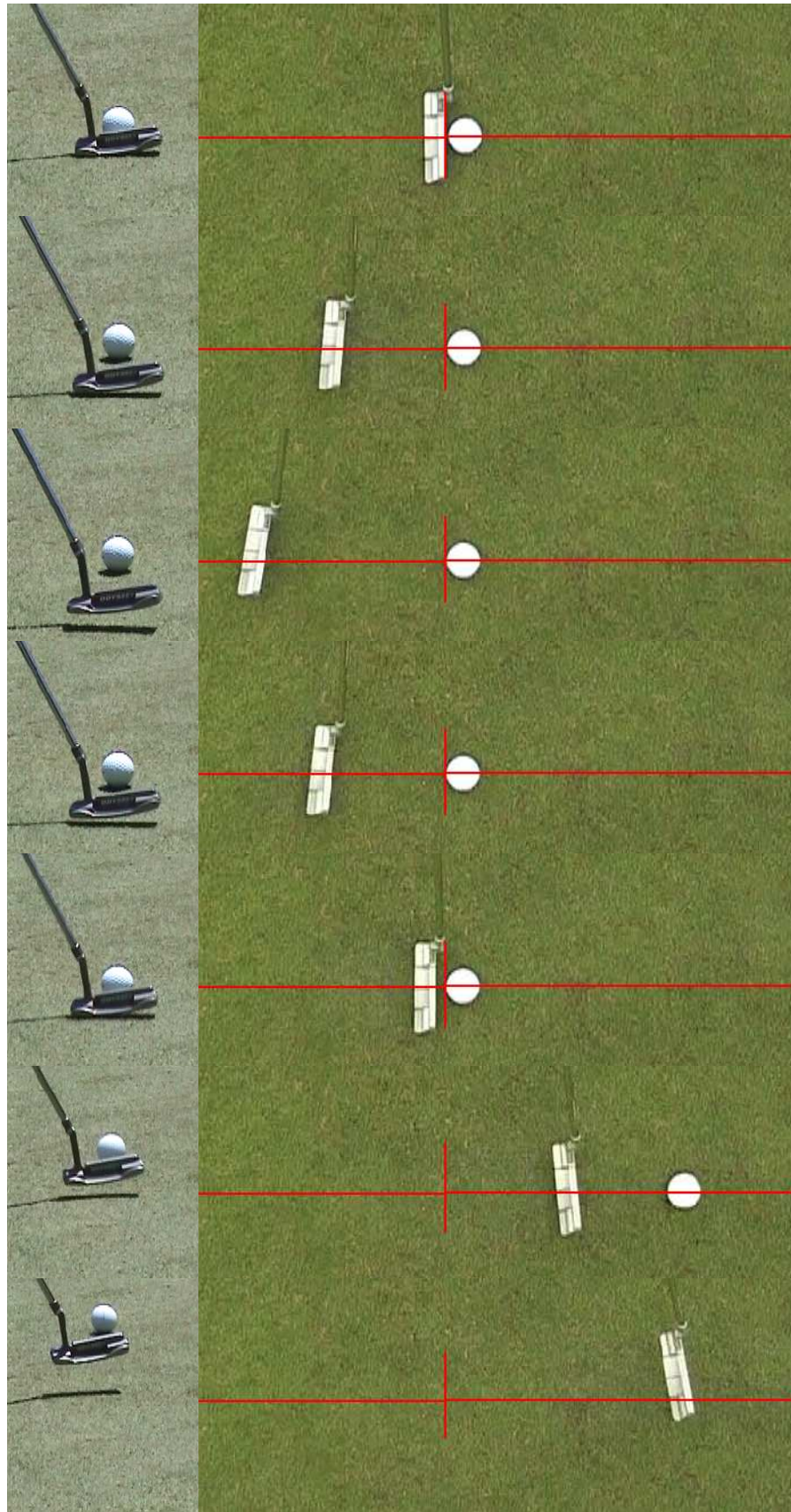
This relationship keeps the putter face matching the body at all times (true loft), working on an arc in relationship to the target line (proper path).

Without using this technique demonstrated by the worlds best putters it is possible to hole putts, you can get the ball into the hole with all sorts of technique however to perform at your optimum round after round it is essential. Everyone has the potential to be a world class putter! you don't need to be a superior athlete! Its all about simple geometry and creating to correct state of mind.

Technique check points

- Correct body angles and posture
- Forearms and putter shaft form one line
- Hands go on to putter matching each other
- Wrist angles stay constant

Proper path and true loft



Putting routine

Below is a simple 4 step routine used by Aaron Baddeley, Stan Utley and Brad Faxon. You can have your own slight variation on it, however it is crucial that you stick to the same pattern of movements, thought processes and duration.

Step 1

Read the putt

This is best done from directly behind the hole and generally your first impression is the most accurate. Don't try to look into it too much as this is only going to create doubt and you'll try to see things that aren't even there.

Step 2

Practice stroke

Make one or two practice strokes to create a feel for the putt and to visualise the ball going into the hole.

It is essential that this is done looking at your target and/or visualising the balls path to the hole, not done looking at the putter head as this will get you focusing on technique rather than the putt your going to make.

This can be done from behind or to the side of the ball.

Step 3

Set up to the ball

Address the ball and have one final look at the target.

Step 4

Hit the putt

Being in the right state of mind and sticking to your pre shot routine will ensure that you give every putt a chance of going in, anything that happens after this point is 100% out of your control.

Psychological check points

- Ingrain good technique
- Develop a good pre shot routine
- Give yourself a chance on every putt – don't create self doubt
- Accept that great putters are made, not born

If you have any questions regarding this article or would like to reach your highest putting potential contact me on 0419 588 873 or send me an email, richard@richardsladegolf.com.au.

Good Golfing

Richard Slade
Head Teaching Professional