

# Golf Insider

By T.J. TOMASI

## BIRDIES AND BOGEYS

### Slammer in the slammer

Long-hitting Jim Thorpe, who recently served time for tax evasion, was not exactly confined in an Alcatraz-type setting often portrayed in the movies, nor should he have been, since his offense was about as white-collar as they come. At the Federal Prison Camp in Alabama, the inmates have a movie theater, a weight room, basketball courts, swimming pools and two golf courses. Of course, inmates do not have access to the courses, which would be a little much, but they can work on them.

Thorpe says he gained 20 pounds, so apparently he didn't take advantage of the weight room, and the food couldn't have been too bad. Maybe he took a cue from the Paul Newman movie "Cool Hand Luke," where Luke ate 50 eggs at one sitting to set the prison record.



THORPE

CAROL LEVY/PGA TOUR

## BYGONE GOLF

### Hickory sticks

The U.S. Professional Hickory Golf Championship was held Feb. 21 at the Temple Terrace Golf Club in Florida, home to the original Florida Open in 1925. The course was chosen because it has remained unchanged from its original design in 1922.

The course played at 6,400 yards and all contestants used original hickory clubs dating from 1910 or earlier. Twenty-four golfers from all parts of the country tee'd it up with clubs provided by Dr. Jay Harris of Pinehurst, N.C.

The prize fund was \$5,000, and Leroux Ferreira (from South Africa) was the winner with a 79. He took home \$1,500 while 51-year-old David Frost (who plays on the Champions Tour) shot 81 for second and won \$1,000, a far cry from the tickets he has cashed during his many years as a professional player. Frost finished tied for fifth in the 1995 Masters using modern clubs.

How do you think you would do? If you are interested, the Society of Hickory Golfers organizes tournaments around the country. Visit its website at <http://hickorygolfers.com/links.php>.

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Haircut?"

— Bubba Watson, after being asked what he expects from Rickie Fowler in 2011

## IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR GAME

### ✓ CORE-RECT

A lot of golfers think they should "clear" their front hip, which usually means to turn it out of the way, as if hip turn was a passive, ancillary move not much related to power — you clear your hip much as you would clear the decks of an aircraft carrier in preparation for landing a jet fighter.

But there are several problems with this concept: (1) It is not a passive event; you don't just rotate your hips out of the way, and (2) The hips don't clear around behind you — they fire at the target line.

The photos below show D.J. Trahan at this year's Honda Classic. In the first photo, Trahan's left hip is slightly lower than the right. At impact, in the second photo, his left hip is much higher than his right hip. His hips haven't cleared; they have fired. There is no amble in these hips. Rather, his core is a source of power.

Note how Trahan's left leg has straightened at impact as part of the core firing. This drives the left hip up vs. around. If the hips simply spin, there is no efficient energy dump into the ball.

Also note that in the second photo, Trahan is no longer in his sit-down position. When he loses his crouch, energy flows down the shaft and into the ball. Arise from the sit-down position at the right time and you'll feel the shaft bow as the power flows on through.

Spinning your hips in a vain attempt to clear them is a drain on power and accuracy. Unfortunately, there are teachers who demonstrate the correct hip turn by placing a shaft over their hips, then rotating their hips so the shaft moves in a circle, all the while explaining how you must clear your hips to make room for the club. At least the demonstration matches the concept, but both are wrong.

I prefer to talk about the core rather than the hips, and as we'll see in next week's lesson, the core (hips) doesn't rotate to the left of target until well after the ball has gone.

## ABOUT THE WRITER



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In the early rounds of this year's Honda Classic, D.J. Trahan demonstrates the "core-rect" delivery of power to the ball as his hips (core) fire at the target line. Note how Trahan's left hip goes from being slightly below his right hip in the photo at left to being much higher in the photo on the right. It's the tell-tale sign that his hips don't simply turn out of the way of his swing; they fire energy into his club's impact with the ball.

## TEEING OFF

### Ratios govern power of impact

Curve on the ball occurs when, at impact, the clubface looks in one direction while the path of the clubhead looks in another. A square clubface looks in the same direction as the path on which it's moving, producing a straight shot.

But it's very hard to hit a shot that is exactly straight, and you will hardly ever find an expert who hits it dead straight. Watch closely and at the top of its trajectory you'll see even the straightest-looking ball fall just a tad left or right.

Thus the collision between the clubface and the ball determines its flight. No big news here, except the concept of what is actually happening is not quite so straightforward.

Think of it this way: The role of the setup is to arrange an efficient collision between the clubhead and the ball, and there are certain ratios that produce good impact.

Let's say you have the same numbers that British Open Champion Nick Price identified after measuring his swing. Suppose, like Price, your clubhead moves 180 inches from address to the top of the swing, your hands move 72 inches, your shoulders travel eight inches and your hips travel four inches. These numbers combine to produce the ratios that satisfy your impact requirements.

For example, if your hips move four inches and your shoulders eight, that's a 2-to-1 ratio. This means there are certain ratios of shoulder-to-hip turn, -to-hand distance, and -to-clubhead distance that, when satisfied, bring the clubhead to the ball on time, square and with power.

When something in your swing changes and disrupts your ratios, your swing is no longer calibrated correctly. If you tilt instead of turn your shoulders, your shoulders can't travel their allotted distance during the backswing (eight inches in the Price example), or if your hips slide too much, they can't get to their impact position on time. In both cases the ratios are broken and your swing is out of sync. The result is that impact doesn't occur when/how it should, and the ball sails off line.

The point is that when you tinker with your swing, trying out the tip of the day, you unknowingly unbalance the ratios. Then it's "Welcome to Devil Ball."

## ASK THE PRO

### Golf will boom because of the boomers

**Q:** Somebody told me that golf isn't down that much and that it will do even better in coming years. How can that be true in this downturn? — D.T.

**A:** Downturns come just before upturns, and in golf the biggest source of new, financially well-heeled golfers is the generation known as the baby boomers, the teenagers of the '60s and '70s. In this country, it's said that a boomer turns 50 every eight seconds. They currently make up a third of the population (about 78 million), and they are streaming into golf as they reach an age when the more strenuous sports lose their appeal.

Golf is healthy, so it's a good investment of their discretionary dollar. The boomers have money and

the need to compete while staying active. These demographics make them the perfect candidates for lessons, schools and a host of other golf products, especially how-to golf books.

Golf is a multibillion-dollar industry that will grow bigger as more boomers hit the links. There is an endless array of infomercials selling everything from putters that stand up by themselves to anti-slice drivers, all dedicated to the driving force behind these products and programs: boomers who want to play better golf.

(To Ask the Pro a question about golf, e-mail him at: [TJInsider@aol.com](mailto:TJInsider@aol.com).)

## GOLF SPOKEN HERE

### Hard pan

Hard pan refers to areas of ground on the golf course that are extremely hard-packed. If you use a wedge with too much bounce, you'll skull the shot off hard pan.

## THE GOLF DOCTOR

### Cracking golf's kinematic code

Ernie Els, the Big Easy, will be inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame this May. In my opinion, his swing ranks in the top 30 among his contemporaries. But while his record is good (3 majors/13 PGA wins/788 weeks in the World Top 10, the record), Els' swing looks better than it is because of his tempo. Tall at 6-foot-3, he has always been a leggy player who lays the club off when he goes off form.

For a few years, he was touted by the golf media as a member of the Big Five (Woods, Singh, Goosen, Mickelson and Els), four of whom offered just a tad of competition to Tiger, when Tiger had his C game. The big five have all struggled in recent years.

But what makes these players good even when they are off form? The answer is they have all cracked the code.

## The code

In all sports there is a code for transferring power — a golden sequence that all the great players in that particular sport adhere to. They may have stumbled on it through solitary practice and experimentation, as Ben Hogan did, or through a teacher or trainer who guided their progress.

Whatever the route, the prize goes to the athlete who finds the Rosetta Stone of his or her sport.

Usain Bolt takes 41 strides in the 100-meter dash; elite long-distance runner Alberto Salazar takes 180 steps per minute. There is an efficiency code for transferring energy and the best athletes crack the code.

In golf it's the kinematic sequence revealed over the last few years through the use of 3D motion analysis, where electronic signals record what is going on in key areas like the hips, shoulders, arms and clubhead. Watch any world-class player closely and you can see the sequence unfold:

First the hips reach their maximum rotational speed as the downswing begins. Then they slow and pass the energy to the shoulders, which peak a third of the way to the ball. Then the shoulders slow and pass power to the lead arm at the halfway point. Finally, the player allows his lead arm to slow, dumping its energy down the shaft and into the ball.

Speeding up and slowing down key body parts in sequence allows golfers like the Big Easy to generate big power. It's not a miracle; it's just physics.

## DON'T MISS IT

### YipFixx putting aid

This training aid helps with the alignment of your eyes and the length of your putting stroke. You line up the ball with the top bar, set the stroke length, and then make your stroke. It doesn't get much simpler.

I use alignment tools when I teach putting, as well as tees placed strategically in the ground to control the length of the stroke. This device is all-in-one, and it stows easily in your bag. Plus you don't need an engineering degree to assemble it. Find out more about the YipFixx at [www.startingtimegolf.com](http://www.startingtimegolf.com). The price is \$25.

