

COLUMN

Work in Progress

Compleat Golfer's playing editor is Louis Oosthuizen and this month he talks about perfecting his swing



Many times I've heard that my swing is one of the best on the Tour, which is a huge compliment, considering how many great players there are.

However, it is still something that requires plenty of work. After spending 2016 without a coach, I'm now back with my old coach, Pete Cowen. Last year, I was injury-free for the first time since I can remember and I worked on my swing by myself.

Having said that, I probably got too technical with my swing and was looking at things I normally wouldn't. But, while my swing might look smooth and 'perfect' to the naked eye, that isn't always the case.

There are certainly things I need to do right to keep

everything working well. A good-looking swing isn't technically always the best swing, but there are a few things I have looked at and can work on. Now that I've teamed up again with Pete, I can revert to just hitting balls on the range and then go to the golf course and not have to work on my swing.

As you know, I grew up in Mossel Bay in the 1990s and idolised Ernie Els; he has always had the smoothest, most powerful swing. But Mossel Bay is one of those windy places, with the locals joking that even the birds have to walk!

My mantra has always been to swing softly and take a longer iron. Playing at Mossel Bay Golf Club taught me to keep the ball low, and I'd hit 5- and 6-irons low, rather than a high 8-iron, for example. So, don't be shy to take a bigger

GARETH NELSON/AM IMAGES

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club and let that do the work, instead of trying to force something else.

The grip is also something that is a personal preference. I interlock my fingers and my right-hand hold is stronger than the left. It might not work for you, but it does for me – and that's how you should approach your own grip.

You've probably also heard people talking about your swing itself and here I cannot emphasise enough that you can't ever take the club back slowly enough. I see it so often in pro-ams, where players are

quick on the backswing, and this kills all the rhythm. When I shift my weight from my left foot to my right foot on the take-back, I often count in my head: 'One, settle, two, press, three, swing.' It allows for a great sense of flow.

Also, when you get to the top of your backswing, don't rush your downswing. Take a pause at the top of your backswing, because if you get that part right, solid impact will happen almost automatically. Build speed slowly until you max out at impact. The right

feeling is that your arms – rather than your shoulders – are falling. Try it out.

When I practise, I often hit shots with my feet close together. It automatically smooths out my swing and helps to give me a feel for my arms and body working together and in sync at impact.

Basically, that's what it takes. Now, though, you can see what goes through the mind when making the golf swing and while it might look like everything is perfect, you'll know what is going on inside my head! ☺

CAUGHT IN THE BUNKER

How often have you hit a good second shot on a par five, maybe a 3-iron or so, and it's gone one bounce and into the bunker, rolling up against the lip, with the green 150m ahead? Normally, by avoiding the bunker, you'd have fancied your chances of being on the green for three and having a putt for birdie. But, with this lie, you're not going to get to the green, so don't take the risk. Get into the bunker and move your feet around for a comfortable stance. Then, get the ball out, even five or six metres straight in front of you is fine. Don't try to be a hero, you can always reach the green with your next shot and still make par. Be safe rather than sorry. If you take the shot on, you could hit it thin and into the lip of the bunker.

