



SKILLS & TECHNIQUE

THE HOLE TRUTH



The 2006 Australian Open champion, **JOHN SENDEN**, offers you the putting basics

As anyone who watched Tiger Woods' clutch putt at the 2008 US Open will testify, you can hit every fairway in the world, but if you can't sink them when it matters, you're never going to win. Books have been written about the delicate art of putting, but John Senden, Australian Open and PGA tour champ, can put you on the right track.

PICKING YOUR PUTTER

No putter is the answer. You can use any type of putter – there are hundreds on the market – and I'm sure if Tiger picked up any putter he could still putt great. But it's about picking something that feels comfortable, fits your eye and you trust it. I use one where the toe is further past the shaft than the heel. The other way is a face-balanced one, where the shaft goes dead centre into the head. That will make for an equal-weight swing, so you go straight back and through, instead of opening the door. You should think about what you do in your long game. If you open the club head going back and close it going through, do a similar thing when you putt. When you have a putter that has more weight on the toe, rather than a face-balanced putter, the easier it is to open and shut the door.

GET THE BASICS RIGHT

My feet are about shoulder-width apart; my knees are relaxed and slightly bent. The ball position will be an inch inside my left foot and about three club heads out from the tips of my toes. Concentrate on the three points of the triangle: your two shoulders, your hands and possibly the putter head. Keep all those in unison and let the triangle flow to the putter head.

DON'T GRIP TOO TIGHT

If you have a slight lag in your putting action, you actually create a softer feel. You feel it slightly loose in your hand, you use a little more wrist

action in your putter and let the putter flow freely at the ball. You're feeling the head weight more, which will actually create a better feel of the putt and impact. If you're gripping it tight and you're being more rigid, you get less feel from the head.

USE THE BIG MUSCLES

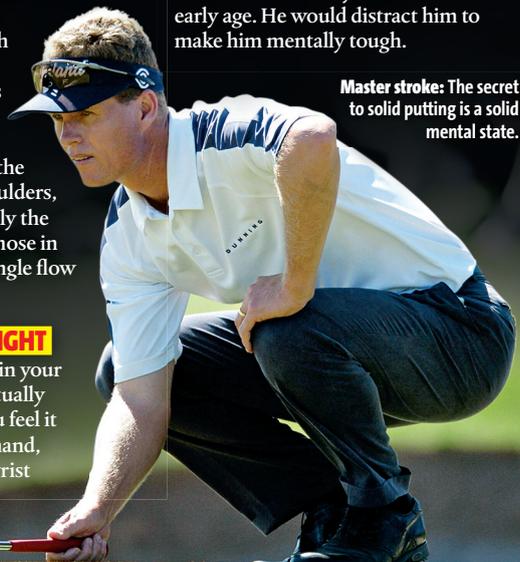
When you're under big pressure with putting, it's always good to have the big muscles working the putting stroke, rather than the smaller muscles. Concentrate on that triangle. If you can be rock-solid in your body and just let it swing, almost like a pendulum, then you will feel like your smaller, twitchier muscles aren't interfering. If you can trust the bigger muscles, you can create a better trust in your swing and the path of your putter.

"You should concentrate on the putt itself, rather than what it's worth."

PUTT THE PUTT

You should concentrate on the putt itself, rather than what it's worth. You've got to realise that if you're concentrating on your feel, your line and the slope – and not worrying about what your playing partner thinks of your stroke or how you're looking – then you're focused on what you're doing. Half the battle is between the ears. Try that out on the practice green. If you go from the practice green and you've been doing really well mentally, then there's not such a shock when you get to the real thing. Tiger is the best at it. He was trained by his dad from an early age. He would distract him to make him mentally tough.

Master stroke: The secret to solid putting is a solid mental state.



MENTAL STRENGTH

Concentrated Solution

Martial Arts expert **GARY MARTIN** on how to develop focus for sporting success



Gary Martin has been practising Chinese kung fu disciplines since he was four and owns the Gary Martin Kung Fu Centre in Sydney, Australia's largest martial arts school. The 54-year-old is also a sports psychologist.

What kind of focus are you looking for in sport?

With mental focus, there's a crossover with martial arts and all other sports. It's to do with awareness. Whether it be a martial artist in a fight or a football player in a game, there are three levels of mental focus we aim for. One is self-awareness, self-focus. For example, is your breathing under control, is your heart rate under control? Two is opponent awareness. For a martial artist, is he a tall opponent? In which case I have to go in close to fight him. Is there more than one opponent? Does the opponent have a knife? Three is situation awareness. In other words, what's going

on around us. Do I have back-up; is there bad terrain around us; are there lights in our eyes? These are the things we need to assess before we start any action.

How does that transfer to, say, footy?

A rugby league player is running across the field; he has to ensure he has a good grip on the ball, which is body awareness. He notices an opponent rushing across to tackle him from the side, which is opponent awareness. He notices his teammate, which is situational awareness; he passes to his teammate and his teammate scores. There's the three levels of focus in one example.

Do top sports people have a high level of focus?

I believe so. I don't think you can succeed at a high level in sport just on a genetic or trained level of expertise.

What techniques do you use to attain this?

In the old days, where you're standing in front of your partner slapping him on the face, getting revved up, that's now the exact reverse of what

would be classed as the proper way to prepare an athlete. But at amateur level, it's still there. If you look at most of the upper-level athletes these days, it's a level of calmness they are trying to attain. That zone is where you are totally focused on one instant of time, achieving one particular result without an emotional attachment to it.

How do you get to that place?

The majority of elite athletes these days are knowingly or unknowingly practising some sort of visualisation exercise. For example, a swimmer is about to participate in an event. In the days leading up to the event, he visualises himself on the blocks, the starter gun, himself diving in. He's heard the noise of the crowd around them, visualised each turn, the hit-out towards the end, and hitting the wall, climbing out of the pool, looking at the clock and seeing the time that he's under. They do this over and over and when the day comes, it's like they've done it a thousand times.



INNOVATION

NICE BOOTY

WHAT Nike Air Tiempo Legend

PRICE \$240

THEY SAY "It fuses technical innovation with the legendary look of the classic. Made for perfect touch, excellent ball control and superb comfort. Premium craftsmanship and superior materials guarantee a professional-level boot with optimal touch. In the upper, kangaroo leather is used for premium touch and perception, meaning better ball control."

WE SAY Look, we can't put it much better than Nike. This is truly a beautiful pair of boots. Strong enough to protect your metatarsals, but soft enough to allow great touch. They're light and feel like runners. Perhaps best of all, they're available in black, rather than lime green and gold.



PHOTOGRAPHY: CAMERON LESTRANGE (SENDEN ACTION); GREGG PORTEOUS (SENDEN HEAD).