

Without Lip Gloss

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The kiss of success will continue to elude you if you fail to link your muscles to your subconscious!

The story is told, perhaps apocryphally, that a famous golfer's wife, guesting on the Tonight Show, was asked by "Herrre's Johnny" whether she did anything special for her husband before a major tournament. Her innocent reply—to the delight of every non-eunuch within earshot—produced a show-stopper: "I kiss his balls."

It would be improper to describe how the average duffer would respond to such a send-off, particularly since the object of the game of golf is to lower, not raise, the score.

In all probability, the best thing a loving wife can do for her weekend hacker is to see that his shorts and the fabric softener get together in the same wash, smoothing his trek along those endless fairways.

While we can't claim that "ripe strawberry" lip gloss on your Titlist III will add yardage to your woods, or straighten a prodigal putter, we have some suggestions that may help you return from the links more "teddy" than "grizzly."

Before presenting some essential elements of a workable golf swing, it seems useful to explain why they are especially important to the beginning and the occasional golfer.

The challenge presented to the muscles and brain of the neophyte and sporadic golfer is to memorize a functional golf stroke. Put in the popular idiom, they need to "groove" their swing if they hope to shoot beneath the century mark. Since grooving a swing amounts to learning a sequence of muscle

movements, it follows that whatever swings are taken should approximate the swing-beautiful so that irrelevant or counter-productive movements are not learned. They would only have to be unlearned.

Whenever a golfer acquires a feel for the good swing it means that a complex network of interconnected brain cells have received feedback from nerves imbedded in muscle groups monitoring, storing, and transmitting the speed and degree of muscle contractions and extensions in the order they occur. This feedback loop—from muscles to brain and back—is called the kinesthetic sense.

This sense is basic to the learning of any physical movement that requires a coordinated sequence of large and small muscle group interactions. A properly executed drive is such a motion in spades. To repeatedly "nail" any golf shot requires that the kinesthetic sense has been run through the same paces again and again.

Since the mind cannot concentrate on more than one thing at a time, many a learning golfer has noticed that as he focus on a given aspect of his swing, say, slowing and limiting the backswing, the actual flight of the ball may stray like a windblown skeet, or fizzle on the launching pad; precisely because, while thinking about that controlled take-away, he forgot to keep his eyes on the backside of the ball.

All of this physiology of learning has been discussed to emphasize the importance of brainwashing the kinesthetic sense—form the very

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beginning of your assault on the links—with a few, elementary facts of swing. These elements are equally useful to the swing that has been on a sabbatical.

Take a case in point. It's the tenth anniversary class reunion. You haven't seen the three guys you used to pal around with since college (all of you one-time, would-be jocks playing and competing at every sport that came along). But now all you play is golf, and maybe a little tennis on feast days and holidays.

So, the four of you head for a driving range, acting nineteen again. Then someone boasts he can drive 300 yards. "Yeah," another sneers, "in a golf cart, maybe." Jackets and ties are doffed as your quartette begins flailing away, wafting mostly the acrid smell of scorched rubber tees; and it begins to appear that anything in the right direction—in the air—will take distance honors.

The first doffing alumnus to begin connecting, we propose, will be the one who regresses—and therefore progresses—to the following basics of keeping mind and body in some semblance of harmony.

An infatuation with the brand name, teed up so it is on the leeward, of backside, of the ball, plus a case of the stares, is real strong for openers. Keep your eye on the ball. Don't be so anxious to see how far you've drilled it, and you just might send it a fair distance. (It may sound superstitious, but if you watch the ball it will travel farther.)

Attempt to maintain a stiff left elbow during your backstroke. This will minimize the backward travel appropriately. As you drive down and sweep through the ball, your left elbow should re-extend, properly, to where it was at address, for height control. Bend elbows are for dribbling, not for driving.

Body weight, at the instant of contact with the ball, must be on your front foot, and moving forward. Exaggerate at first. Standing on your forward leg

(form take-back to follow-through), using your hind leg as an outrigger, for balance only. Yes, this is the reverse of smart hitting procedure in baseball. You don't want to swing off your back heel; in golf, all you'll drive is smog.

Present your umbilicus to the green, or, navels away. As your hands force the clubhead rapidly toward the ball, it is immensely helpful to turn the hips strongly, counterclockwise, just before impact, for Robin Hood-straight shots. Get that belly button facing the green and odds are that's where your drives will drop.

One of our four alumni buddies put the foregoing into practice and hit several of what Kenny Lee Pucket calls, "wind cheaters." But I still find it easier to write about than to his 300 yards off the tee—with or without lip gloss.
